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Social Media in the Language Classrooms: Maximizing Students' Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS)

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Abstract

Technology has proliferated and has become prominent in the education world over the past few years. Technology has become a way not only to meet the learner's needs but also to address digital literacy emphasis in 21st-century skills. This paper explores the optimization of social media in language teaching to maximize higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) among secondary school teachers. Social media platforms offer opportunities to engage students actively, promote critical thinking, and encourage meaningful interactions. By strategically incorporating social media, teachers can enhance students' learning experiences and foster HOTS development. This paper discusses key considerations and strategies for effective implementation, such as selecting appropriate platforms, encouraging collaboration and discussion, promoting critical thinking, incorporating multimedia content, providing authentic learning experiences, setting guidelines and privacy considerations, and reflecting on the impact. The integration of social media should complement traditional instructional methods, ensuring alignment with curriculum goals and educational standards. This paper aims to guide teachers in leveraging social media effectively to optimize language teaching and promote HOTS among secondary school students.

Keywords: Technology, Social Media, Educational Platforms, Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS), 21st Century Skills.

Introduction

In this day and age of digitalisation, technology has become an integral part of daily life. Especially in the educational sector, it helps educators manage the classroom. Technology is also introduced in the classroom setting to provide an entertaining and engaging lesson. Tawil (2018) expressed the necessity for educators to be well-informed about new technologies. Because technology can quickly become obsolete, the latest technology is usually more

dynamic (p. 1). Therefore, it creates urgency for educators to explore new 'assistants' that will offer Gen Z students the current teaching style.

Technology has evolved drastically over the past years, and each year, technology comes with a new and updated style. Tawil (2018) shared that the definition of technology is limited, which is constricted to digital devices like smartphones, computers, and tablets. However, such a definition narrows the vast array of mediational resources at the heart of learning processes, specifically delivering knowledge to students (p. 2). Tawil (2018) supported the statement by mentioning that educators nowadays heavily consume technology to teach, "teachers in all disciplines and particularly in languages instruction, increasingly rely on new technological processes, tools, and systems ranging from films to images, recordings, and written texts" (p. 2). From the statement, it is essential to acknowledge that educators trust technology in aiding their lessons. Moreover, it shows that educators understand the importance of incorporating technology in language learning, which assists the educators and allows the students to take charge of their learning process. Thus, it is evidently critical for educators and students to keep their teaching and learning abilities up-to-the-minute to keep up with the world.

With the rapid growth of technology, Mee et al (2020) critically mentioned that "21st-century skills refer to the core competencies such as collaboration, digital literacy, critical thinking, and problem-solving that need to be taught to help learners to thrive in today's world." (p. 684). Therefore, such an aspect demands educators to practice using technology in the classroom. Besides, it is only natural to apply and implement digital technology in learning systems by incorporating Bloom's Taxonomy concept to facilitate language teaching and learning. Bloom's taxonomy was established in 1956 to distinguish different levels of human cognition, which apparently are famous in Malaysia's educational setting (Rahman & Manaf, 2017). On top of that, Bloom's taxonomy has become prominent in pedagogy because it supports teachers and students in organising their lessons. Moreover, the practice promotes sharpening critical thinking and acknowledging strength (Derakshan & Faribi, 2015, p. 63).

Incorporating technology in language learning is a way to meet the needs of contemporary learners. Technology may assist students in broadening their perspectives by allowing them to discover knowledge beyond what they read in textbooks. In addition, the students and the educators are more likely to gain real-world experience if they incorporate educational technology. For example, educators can use search engines such as Google, Bing, or Yahoo! to help students discover the meaning of certain idioms. Educators can expand their instructions by letting the students create a podcast explaining the origin of the idioms and how to use them in writing without overusing them. The example mentioned shows that incorporating technology expands students' ability from lower-order thinking skills, which is remembering to higher-order thinking skills, which is creating. Students will improve their analysing, evaluating, and creating skills as they try to complete the project. The research is pointed to discuss these two objectives below;

1. To discuss how teachers optimize social media to teach language.
2. To explore how teachers maximize higher-order thinking skills along with social media.

Theoretical Framework

To better understand emerging technology in language learning while boosting higher-order thinking skills (HOTS), the researcher will use the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

to determine the usefulness and ease of using technology platforms used by educators. The technology Acceptance Model is one of the most important models of technology acceptance, which states that two key elements influence an individual's inclination to leverage new technology: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use (Charness & Boot, 2016, p. 394). Rusli et al (2019) stated that “perceived usefulness speaks to profitable possible outcomes, whether physiological or sociological, that can be achieved from the traits of the technology utilised.” Meanwhile, perceived ease of use “identifies a standard of minimum effort that expresses that every student will adopt a course of activity that will only use the least average work from the student” (p. 87). These two key elements identify the technologies and platforms suitable for language learning and higher-order thinking skills (HOTS). Thus, Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is necessary because it allows us to discover the advantage of social media in teaching language.

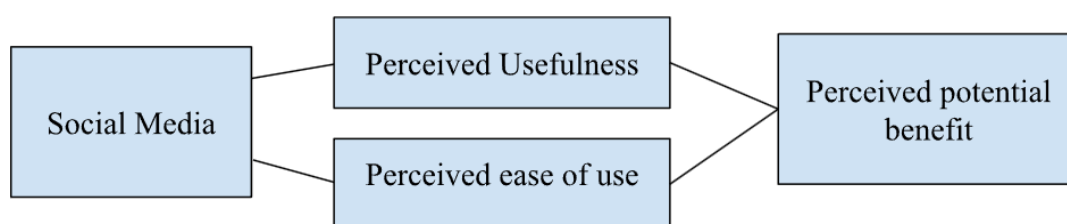


Figure 1: Framework adapted from Technology Acceptance Model (Rusli et al., 2019)

Concern about social media used in Language Teaching

Given the importance of the English language to students in Malaysia, educators need to be fluent in teaching the English language. Better yet, incorporating technology into language teaching is a way to meet the needs of 21st-century learners. Furthermore, by integrating technology into language teaching, teachers can provide students with engaging and interactive learning activities that can help to enhance their language skills. For example, using online tools such as language learning apps, language exchange websites, and virtual reality language immersion experiences can help students to practice their language skills in a more dynamic and authentic way (Li, 2017; Mukhtar, 2019). According to Srivastava (2020), educators should use technology to support the curriculum so that learners can use technology to be fluent in the language. Furthermore, a technology-enhanced teaching environment is more effective than a lecture-based class in making teaching more exciting and productive in terms of advancement (p. 107). Srivastava (2020) further elaborates that educators must properly and effectively integrate technology into language classrooms so that students can engage and apply it outside class. Thus, incorporating technology into language learning can provide additional benefits (p. 107).

Next, catering to 21st-century expectations, higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) are required to bring out the students' full potential. The problem in optimizing the use of social media in language teaching among secondary school teachers is that many educators may not fully understand how to effectively integrate social media into their teaching practice (Li, 2017). This can lead to a lack of confidence in using social media platforms, as well as a lack of understanding of how to maximize the potential of these tools to enhance learning and promote higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) among students. Additionally, according to Ghimire (2022), there may be concerns about the appropriateness of social media use in the classroom and about privacy, safety, and cyberbullying. Therefore, there is a need for

professional development and support to help teachers effectively integrate social media into their language teaching practice while promoting a safe and positive learning environment.

To address higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) effectively, the instructor should play a role in guiding and facilitating the language learners explicitly in the thinking process (Srivastava, 2020). Thus, higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) can supplement traditional teaching methods in language learning classrooms. However, few studies discuss the suitable technology or platforms that can maximise higher-order thinking skills (HOTS). Many educators are mainly interested in implementing technology in language learning (Pheng et al., 2021, p. 318). Yet, choosing technologies or platforms suitable for language learning is hard. Srivastava (2020) mentioned that “this means that teachers too need support and training for integrating technology into language teaching.” (p. 108). Therefore, exploring online applications, for example, social media used by digital native educators, would be helpful for other educators to follow and use as an advantage. Consequently, there is an urgent need to begin studying social media in teaching language to maximise its use in the classroom.

Furthermore, many papers discuss higher-order thinking skills in teaching language. But, determining which online application to enhance Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in teaching language is still under research. Especially leveraging the use of social media. Social Media has been in the 21st century for so long, but less is using it for advantage. As a result, this study will discuss teachers’ ways of optimizing social media to acquire language and higher-order thinking skills.

Bloom’s Taxonomy and Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in Education

Bloom’s Taxonomy is a famous framework frequently associated with promoting higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) created by Benjamin Bloom (Rahman & Manaf, 2017). Originally, Bloom’s taxonomy was to help people from corporate companies, but later it was used in education because of its suitability to bring out students’ abilities. Bloom believes that his idea of Bloom’s Taxonomy can help students and teachers alike discover their ability to think critically. Bloom’s taxonomy comprises two groups of thinking skills: lower-order thinking skills (LOTS) and higher-order thinking skills (HOTS). Lower-order thinking skills (LOTS) are, remembering, understanding, and applying. Meanwhile, higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) consist of analysing, evaluating, and creating.

Bloom's taxonomy is a method that educators and learners can use to assist them in language learning. It is a concept that goes beyond rote memorisation, including knowledge, application, and creation. The learning method should be two ways approach where students interact and communicate their opinions in class. Student-centred learning can, in fact, be achieved with the support of educators. Hence, this is when Bloom’s taxonomy concepts come in handy for educators to practice.

Chen (2016) mentioned that Bloom's taxonomy helps establish the language acquisition process, which comprises the components of a language, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics (p. 643). Chen explores employing Virtual Reality (VR) in English for Foreign Languages (EFL) in his work, ‘The Effects of Virtual Reality Learning Environment on Student Cognitive and Linguistic Development.’ According to the study, practising Bloom’s taxonomy and adding educational technology into language instruction, such as virtual reality, positively impacts students' language acquisition.

Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) are part of Bloom’s Taxonomy. The skills are analysing, evaluating, and creating. Lewis and Smith (1993) pointed out that the process of

higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) is a crucial yet attainable goal in the classrooms for all grade levels in every subject (p. 136). Moreover, language learners must hone their comprehensive abilities to master a language while also demonstrating the effectiveness of acquiring a language. To effectively address higher-order thinking skills (HOTS), educators should play a role in directly guiding and promoting thinking processes. Furthermore, in the age of digitalisation, language learners must assess their abilities to generate and learn knowledge through digital platforms. To be considered a sophisticated technology, the platform and tools should be capable of stimulating higher-order thinking skills (HOTS). The tools must include all six levels of Bloom's taxonomy, where students get to understand, evaluate, and create their learning.

A researcher has done a study that focuses on higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) in learning mathematics. The researchers concluded that students with higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) are likelier to succeed in their study (Tanujaya et al., 2017, p. 8). Also, the study mentioned that higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) could be used as a measurement to group students based on their abilities. However, grouping students does not imply that they are incompetent; rather, it aids educators in developing a course that is appropriate for the student's abilities and improves their critical thinking skills. Consequently, applying Bloom's taxonomy concept and practising higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) in language learning helps students become fluent in a language.

Technology Tools in English Language Learning

Technology can be tricky to use, whether online or offline. Moreover, Technology is being used successfully to support teachers and students by reaching far-flung regions globally, reducing time and space obstacles (Srivastava, 2020). To put it simply, technology can get everyone and anyone regardless of the time and place. It is an advantage that educators are supposed to grab to accommodate 21st-century learning. On top of that, Covid-19's proliferation has resulted in the shutdown of educational institutions worldwide (Mukhtar et al., 2019, p. 27). In these terrible circumstances, educational institutions must devise methods to stay in touch with pupils while still allowing instruction to continue. As a result, the online method comes in handy.

Technological tools provide much variety, which keeps students involved and makes them tech-savvy (Srivastava, 2020). The online learning method during covid-19 can be implemented in a face-to-face classroom, especially with the fact that technology literacy is in demand for Gen Z students. Srivastava (2020) researched unlocking technology for language learning. In promoting technology in language learning, the researcher pointed out that educators should accommodate technology in the language classroom because it assists students' motivation, participation, and engagement with the lesson. Furthermore, Srivastava (2020) recommended that the planning be closely aligned with the curriculum standards and that computer technology should be integrated into classes. Hence, technology tools can be helpful for educators in managing a classroom and for students to expand their horizons in language learning.

Social Media to Teach Language

The past few years have seen how social media has taken over every aspect of human lives. The growing influence of social media on communication and language learning has transformed the landscape of language education. According to a survey conducted by Pearson Learning Solutions as cited (Li, 2017) shows, a percentage of the use of social media

in teaching was up to 70%. This clearly indicates how prominent social media is in language learning. It is undeniable that apart from its fun and interesting features, social media also offers learners authentic language practice, collaborative learning opportunities, access to diverse resources, and intercultural communication experiences (Li, 2017). Besides that, Li (2017) emphasizes the need for educators to embrace social media as a tool to enhance language learning in order to promote language practice, cultural understanding and collaboration among students, which eventually addresses 21st-century skills. By integrating social media into teaching, not only teachers will gain valuable insights for enhancing the English language more effectively but also the students. It will help the students to foster self-directed learning as well as encourages creativity and critical thinking.

Mukhtar et al (2020) discussed how to utilize social media to the fullest. The researchers pointed out that social media has the potential to serve as a valuable educational resource for facilitating student engagement in English language acquisition while also offering fresh and dynamic learning opportunities for both educators and learners. The utilization of social media facilitates novel and captivating means of connecting educators and pupils, ultimately enhancing the educational experience (Mukhtar et. al., 2020). Furthermore, using social media platforms can facilitate the expression of ideas by introverted students, thus enabling their active participation in the classroom. In addition to this, educators have the ability to utilize Twitter as a means of fostering student engagement. By adhering to the platform's 160-character limit, students are encouraged to streamline their thoughts and expand their lexicon. Rather than utilizing the two-word expressions 'very happy' or 'very sad,' students can opt for the one-word alternatives 'joyous' or 'distracted.' Moreover, using social media can facilitate the exchange of ideas and inquiries between educators and learners, irrespective of location or time, thereby promoting ongoing education. In the event that students have inquiries, they may utilize social media as a means of communication, enabling teachers to respond promptly. Thus, educators have the opportunity to engage in classroom discourse regarding this matter. The outcome was characterized by a collaborative learning approach whereby learners and teachers engaged in joint discussion and participation. Finally, utilizing social media platforms to disseminate references or textual materials can contribute to a more diverse range of perspectives within a classroom setting. Hence, integrating social media platforms prompts students to redefine their approaches to learning.

Perspective from the Pre-service teacher is as important as the teacher. It is a fact that pre-service teachers will become full-fledged teachers in a few years. Therefore, exploring their perceptions on using social media in teaching writing would benefit pre-service teachers to organize their expectations, and teachers can use it to upgrade their syllabus approach. Moreover, students in the 21st century are part of the digital tools, which makes it more compulsory for teachers to be equipped with handling technology and incorporating it classroom (Lim & Noor, 2019). According to Rusli et. al, social media is one of the tools available in the market for learning. Rusli et al.'s paper (2019) discovered and discussed the perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, which resulted in finding out the potential benefits and challenges of incorporating social media in teaching writing. They discover that the utilization of social media in teaching writing presents both advantages and difficulties. The potential benefits encompass the augmentation of collaborative learning, the encouragement of self-directed learning, and the facilitation of the teaching and learning process. Meanwhile, the obstacles that teachers may encounter include diversions, inappropriate vocabulary, and plagiarism. Furthermore, effective administration is essential for integrating social media in teaching writing, and educators must allocate their time and

dedication to reviewing the online assignments of their students. The successful integration of social media into ESL writing is contingent upon a favourable educational environment and a teacher who is receptive to experimentation and open to the possibility of mistakes.

Contributions

The present research makes a significant contribution to the domains of educational technology. With the widespread adoption of virtual education in various nations, it has become imperative for educators to employ innovative strategies to ensure that language learners remain engaged in online or offline classrooms. Moreover, it should be able to guide and assist educators and language trainers in integrating the advantage of social media in teaching language while maximizing higher-order thinking skills. On top of that, educators can use this article as a guideline to use social media appropriately and to its best. For example, using social media or collaborating with the students and, at the same time, boosting their higher-order thinking skills to create meaningful learning. Furthermore, an institute or school's management may use the findings of this study as a basic guideline to set up training programs for educators on how to maximise the use of social media in teaching language while enhancing and promoting higher-order thinking skills (HOTS). Lastly, it will be helpful for the Ministry of Education. The ministry can help develop a new syllabus that caters for the needs and demands of 21st-century learning and advance educational technology in language learning, especially technology and platform that encourage higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) in public or international schools.

Conclusion & Recommendation

In conclusion, the integration of the use of social media in language teaching has the potential to create engaging and effective language learning environments. By harnessing the power of social media platforms, educators can enhance language learning experiences, promote critical thinking, and foster creativity among their students. The usage of social media not only allows meaningful interactions but as well as enabling students to engage in real-life language use and cultural exchange. Besides that, through various social media platforms, students can communicate with peers from diverse backgrounds, promoting intercultural understanding and enhancing their language proficiency. Moreover, social media provides access to a wide array of resources, including videos, articles, podcasts, and blogs, which expose students to real-world language use and help develop their comprehension skills. This exposure cultivates critical thinking as learners evaluate and analyse information, distinguish reliable sources from unreliable ones, and engage in discussions on various topics. Furthermore, to maximize the use of social media in language teaching, it is essential for secondary school teachers to provide guidance and support to students, helping them navigate social media platforms responsibly. Educators can also design structured activities that encourage critical thinking, such as in collaborative projects, providing feedback to their peers, and engaging in discussions that require higher-order thinking skills, such as analysis, evaluation, and synthesis.

As reiterated in the paper, the primary objective of this study is to streamline the comprehension of utilising social media as an educational instrument, while optimising the development of advanced cognitive abilities. In the contemporary classroom, the integration of social media and higher-order thinking skills is crucial for the development of a comprehensive learning environment. The literature review revealed a necessity to investigate the utilisation of social media. Furthermore, both educators and pre-service

educators concurred that social media should be integrated into the language classroom due to its numerous benefits, including collaboration and self-directed learning. These benefits have led to the development of higher-order thinking skills, such as synthesis and creation. The present study aims to identify the potential benefits of integrating social media into language learning.

Moreover, the utilisation of this research contributes to the advancement of educational technology, particularly in the realm of social media, by establishing a theoretical framework that guides educators and learners in optimising the potential of social media. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) can be utilised to assess the benefits and drawbacks of constructing the framework. Researchers may also utilise it to investigate additional social media platforms or interconnected web-based tools. In relation to the contextual contribution, this facilitates educators or pre service educators to establish a comprehensive and interesting learning environment, irrespective of the student's preferred learning approach, and personality type, and particularly accommodating those who are accustomed to digital technology. It is suggested that for future research endeavours, the investigation be conducted among educators themselves to gain an in-depth understanding of the utilisation of social media in the context of language acquisition. This is to guarantee that educators and learners employ it to its maximum potential and in accordance with ethical principles.

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