The Integration of Social Networking Services in Higher Education: Benefits and Barriers in Teaching English

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ABSTRACT

Social networking services (SNSs) have been popular and essential media to increase lecturer-student interaction, collaboration, and communication as well as lecturers’ supervision in Indonesian universities including in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL). This mixed method study utilized a survey and interview as the techniques of data collection which specifically explored the lecturers’ perspectives on the use SNSs for personal and educational purposes as well as demographic information related to the experience and frequency using SNSs, ownership (possession) of SNSs, and SNSs popularity. The findings revealed that the participants had much knowledge and experiences with SNSs. Even though most participants found some benefits of SNSs in EFL classes including easing communication, supervision and evaluation, time flexibility, and creativity. There were two barriers that have emerged, including lack of skill and cost to use. Implications and future research are offered to improve technology integration in higher education.

KEYWORDS

Education, Indonesia, Indonesian University, Interaction, Lecturers, Teaching Media, Technology

INTRODUCTION

Technology has provided eases, applications, approaches, and strategies in education with its features. The success of technology integration in any educational programs is dependent on users’ attitudes and perceptions. The establishment of new technology integrations for the improvement of education has been a significant issue to have influences on how education is perceived, implemented, and evaluated. This integration has been an interesting object of research in higher education (e.g., Hamshire & Cullen, 2014; Georgina & Olson, 2008; Mncube, Dube, & Ngulube, 2017; Beldarrain, 2006). One of many technologies which are integrated in higher education is Social networking

DOI: 10.4018/IJVPLE.2018070104

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services (SNSs). Robbin and Singger (2014) informed the utilities of the examples of SNSs such as massaging (WhatsApp, BBM, Telegram), images sharing (Instagram, Snapchat, Pinterest), videos sharing (Vine, YouTube), audios sharing (iTunes, Sticher), micro blogging, (Facebook, Twitter, Google Plus, Path), blogging (Tumblr, Blogger, Wordpress), professional sharing (LinkedIn), and academic sharing (Google Scholar, Academia, ResearchGate).

Although, SNSs establishment was firstly proposed to establish a social interaction, the purpose has currently become popular in higher education (Greifeneder, Pontis, Blandford, Attalla, Neal, & Schlebbe, 2018) which has values on supporting relationships between lecturers and their students for learning, educators’ professional development, and content and knowledge sharing (Manca & Ranieri, 2013, 2016). Despite many educational values of SNSs in higher education, barriers in using SNSs for university lecturers have also emerged (Habibi, Mukminin, Riyanto, Prasojo, Sulistiyono, Saudagar, & Sofwan, 2018; Manca & Ranieri, 2013; Prasojo, Habibi, Mukminin, Muhammin, Ikhsan, Taridi & Saudagar, 2017; (Hadiyanto, Mukminin, Arif, Fajaryani, Failasofah, & Habibi, 2017).

In addition to the SNSs establishment in higher education, they also become a thought-provoking topic for a foreign language pedagogy including teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) where many EFL researchers conducted research in this area (Fewell, 2014; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Prasojo, Habibi, Mukminin, Muhammin, Ikhsan, Taridi & Saudagar, 2017). Mondahl and Razmita (2014) informed that foreign language learning is a collaborative and individual learning process that can be mediated through the use of SNSs. SNSs have been widely integrated in supporting language teaching and learning since they have decreased other responses of physical activities offering limitless opportunities for communication (Fewell, 2014).

For the Indonesian context, the studies on SNSs in educational settings of higher education informed various benefits and barriers viewed from students’ perspectives (Habibi et al., 2018; Prasojo et al., 2017). However, research on the SNSs integration from the perspectives of universities lecturers is limited and to fill the gap, this study was done to answer the following questions:

1. How popular are SNSs among Indonesian EFL university lecturers?
2. How do the lecturers perceive the benefits of SNSs use in higher education?
3. What barriers do they face in line with the integration of SNSs?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Networking Services

Social networking services (SNSs) used by people around the world are available in various forms (Hamid, Waycott, Kurnia, & Chang, 2014). Experts in literatures have proposed various definitions of SNSs. For example, Bartlett-Bragg (2006) defines SNSs as a range of internet-based applications augmenting group or peer interactions and as spaces for social connections, collaboration, communication, and information exchanges. The SNSs concept is a way on how to conceptualize social groupings, which emphasize interactions emerging through SNSs. Comparably, Park et al. (2015) define SNSs as web-based services provided to facilitate online-based interactions in the form of social interaction and communication. In conclusion, these definitions highlight that SNSs function as social relation and interaction tools.

However, one definition that has been mostly quoted by the majority of researchers is the one that is offered by Boyd and Ellison (2008). They defined SNSs as web-based services allowing individuals to establish public and semi-public profiles with a bounded system, to enunciate a list of other SNSs users whom they have connection and interaction with, to browse and navigate the connection lists created by other users within the system. This definition is different from other definitions, which mostly define SNSs from the perspectives of their functionality.
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