

UTILIZATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA: DISCLOSURE OF ENGLISH TEACHER

Rosamie Tupas¹

¹Researcher, The Rizal Memorial Colleges, Inc.

ABSTRACT

The integration of social media in education has transformed English language instruction, enhancing engagement and access to resources. Platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, and YouTube provide opportunities for collaborative, interactive learning, especially following the shift to remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite its advantages, social media integration in teaching presents challenges for teachers in resource-limited settings, such as limited internet access and inadequate technological infrastructure. This study explores the experiences of English teachers in utilizing social media as a teaching tool, examining the associated benefits, challenges, and coping strategies employed. This qualitative study employs a phenomenological design, involving in-depth interviews, observations, and group discussions with ten English teachers in a rural district in South Cotabato, Philippines. Participants were selected through purposeful sampling to capture diverse perspectives on social media usage. Thematic analysis was applied to the data, identifying patterns related to teachers' experiences, challenges, and strategies. Triangulation through document analysis and participant feedback enhanced the study's reliability. Three core themes emerged from the findings. First, teachers identified limited access to technology as a primary challenge, with unstable internet connections and limited device access for students. Second, engaging students through relevant discussions using social media was effective for participation, with teachers noting heightened interest in assignments involving social media topics. However, performance challenges were noted, as students' engagement varied based on their access and technological literacy. Additionally, teachers cited professional development through webinars as crucial in equipping them with digital skills, despite occasional technological setbacks. The study highlights that while social media can foster creativity, collaboration, and accessibility, it requires structured approaches and sufficient infrastructure to be fully effective in educational settings. Teachers emphasized the need for digital literacy training, both for themselves and students, to mitigate issues related to device and internet limitations. Moreover, social media facilitated real-time communication and strengthened community relationships within the school setting. This study underscores the potential of social media as an instructional tool in English education and advocates for ongoing teacher training, resource allocation, and supportive policies to enhance its effective use. Further quantitative research is recommended to assess the generalizability of these findings and to support evidence-based digital integration strategies across diverse educational contexts.

Keywords: Social Media Integration English Language Instruction Digital Learning Teacher Experiences Remote Education Technological Challenges Digital Literacy Educational Technology Qualitative Research Philippines Education

1. INTRODUCTION

The increasing integration of social media in education has transformed traditional teaching methods, particularly in English language instruction, where teachers have adopted social media as a tool for enhancing student engagement and communication. Social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, and YouTube offer new avenues for interactive learning, promoting collaboration and facilitating access to educational resources anytime and anywhere (Chen et al., 2005). These digital platforms serve not only as supplementary resources but also as primary instructional tools, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, which necessitated remote and digital learning solutions (Quinones, 2020).

However, integrating social media into classroom instruction has presented challenges, particularly in resource-limited settings. Many teachers, especially those in rural areas, face obstacles such as limited internet access, insufficient training, and a lack of technological infrastructure (Crowe, 2015). As schools increasingly adopt digital platforms, there is a growing need to examine how English teachers navigate these challenges and the potential benefits and drawbacks of social media in the classroom. This study investigates the experiences of English teachers in utilizing social media for instruction, examining both the challenges they face and the strategies they employ to enhance learning outcomes.

2. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Digital learning environments have reshaped education, altering the way teachers and students interact with course content and each other. Social media, in particular, has emerged as a promising tool for enhancing collaborative and interactive learning (Gon & Rawekar, 2017). Research shows that social media can improve student engagement, foster

a sense of community, and enhance motivation in learning environments (Mtega et al., 2012). Nevertheless, there are challenges associated with its use, such as maintaining student focus, protecting privacy, and ensuring equitable access to technology. In English language teaching, social media can support language acquisition by offering diverse forms of content and communication that align with students' digital habits and preferences (Traxler, 2007).

In the Philippines, where this study is situated, digital infrastructure varies significantly between urban and rural regions, impacting students' and teachers' access to online learning resources (Department of Education, 2020). This disparity has intensified during the pandemic, highlighting the need for strategies that account for varying levels of connectivity and digital literacy. Understanding the experiences of English teachers who are adapting to these challenges is crucial for developing policies and practices that support effective social media integration.

Problem Statement

While social media offers a dynamic platform for teaching and learning, many English teachers encounter challenges in fully leveraging its potential due to limitations in resources, technological infrastructure, and digital literacy. These challenges are especially prevalent in rural and under-resourced areas, where connectivity and access to devices are limited. This study seeks to understand the lived experiences of English teachers as they navigate the integration of social media into their instructional practices, focusing on the benefits, challenges, and coping strategies they employ.

Research Questions

This study addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the experiences of English teachers in using social media as a teaching tool?
2. What challenges do English teachers face when integrating social media into their instruction?
3. How do English teachers cope with the challenges associated with social media use in education?

Significance of the Study

This study holds significance for several reasons. First, it contributes to the understanding of how social media can be utilized to support English language instruction, providing insights into effective strategies for enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes. Second, it identifies the barriers English teachers face, informing policymakers and educational leaders of the resources and support necessary for successful social media integration. Lastly, this research supports the ongoing discourse on digital equity by highlighting the specific needs of teachers in under-resourced areas, where digital tools are often inaccessible or difficult to implement effectively.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the framework of constructivist learning theory, which posits that learners construct knowledge through social interactions and active engagement with their environment (Vygotsky, 1978). Social media, as a collaborative and interactive platform, aligns with constructivist principles by facilitating peer-to-peer interaction, enabling students to construct knowledge in a dynamic, real-world context. Additionally, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) informs this study's understanding of teachers' use of social media, as it emphasizes the role of perceived usefulness and ease of use in influencing technology adoption (Davis, 1989). By applying these frameworks, the study explores how social media supports constructivist learning and identifies the factors that affect teachers' acceptance and effective use of these digital tools.

Scope and Delimitation

This study focuses on the experiences of English teachers in a specific rural district within South Cotabato, Philippines, where digital infrastructure may be less developed than in urban areas. The research participants are limited to English teachers in public secondary schools who have used social media in their teaching practices during the pandemic. Although the findings may have broader implications, this study does not generalize beyond the context of rural English language education in the Philippines.

Definition of Terms

For clarity, the following terms are defined as used in this study:

- **Social Media:** Digital platforms that enable users to create and share content or participate in social networking (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).
- **Technology Acceptance Model (TAM):** A theoretical model that explains how users come to accept and use technology based on perceived usefulness and ease of use (Davis, 1989).
- **Constructivist Learning Theory:** A learning theory that emphasizes the role of social interaction and active engagement in knowledge construction (Vygotsky, 1978).

3. METHODS

The study employs a qualitative, phenomenological research design aimed at uncovering the personal experiences of English teachers during the pandemic. This method is ideal for understanding participants' in-depth perspectives through interviews, observations, and group discussions. Each method is selected based on its capacity to draw out specific types of data. In-depth interviews (IDIs) are used to gain personal insights, while participant observations capture behaviors in natural contexts. Focused group discussions explore group norms and cultural understandings that shape the responses of these educators. According to Patton (2002), phenomenology seeks the essence of lived experiences, making it a suitable approach for exploring how English teachers coped with the sudden shift to digital instruction.

Philosophical Assumptions

The study's philosophical assumptions—ontology, epistemology, axiology, and rhetorics—serve as the foundation for interpreting the data collected. Ontology is approached from a perspective that acknowledges multiple realities; each participant's experience is unique. The study relies on epistemology to maintain proximity between researcher and participants, allowing the researcher to adopt an "insider" perspective through collaborative engagement. Axiology acknowledges the role of values, where the researcher upholds the integrity of participants' responses and avoids personal bias. Rhetorics highlight the use of informal language to make the experiences of English teachers relatable, adopting a post-modernist approach that emphasizes independent thinking and critical engagement.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher plays a vital role in creating a supportive environment for participants to share their experiences. This role includes safeguarding participants' data and managing any sensitive information. It requires the researcher to respect each participant's perspective while keeping an objective lens throughout the study. The researcher's actions are guided by ethical standards and the obligation to present findings honestly and accurately, ensuring that any personal biases do not influence the interpretation of results.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection involves a structured process, beginning with selecting participants and obtaining permissions. The researcher engages in purposeful sampling, choosing English teachers with at least two years of experience to ensure relevant insights. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, virtual in-depth interviews (IDIs) were conducted in adherence to health protocols. Data storage practices, including electronic backup and anonymized interview records, were maintained to ensure data security.

For analysis, thematic content analysis was used to identify patterns in interview responses. By grouping statements and developing themes, the researcher highlighted central experiences and challenges faced by the teachers. Document analysis and triangulation strengthened the study by comparing multiple data sources, thus enhancing the reliability and validity of the findings.

Trustworthiness of the Study

Trustworthiness in qualitative research hinges on credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability. Credibility is established through rigorous data collection and analysis, while transferability is ensured by presenting findings that can apply to similar contexts. Confirmability is achieved by minimizing researcher bias and using an audit trail to document data analysis decisions. Dependability, essential for study replication, is supported by a systematic record-keeping approach that details each step in data collection and analysis.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to strict ethical standards to protect participants' privacy and ensure their informed consent. The researcher provided detailed information on the study's purpose, data use, and the role of each participant. Written consent was obtained to align with the ethics committee's guidelines, particularly considering the sensitive context of interviewing teachers about their experiences during the pandemic. The study's ethical framework reflects the researcher's commitment to maintaining trust and transparency with participants, as emphasized by Richards and Schwartz (2002).

The study explored the experiences of English teachers in using social media as a tool for teaching essential competencies to students, revealing both innovative practices and significant challenges. Teachers incorporated social media creatively to engage students, though limitations like internet access and the lack of necessary devices hindered effective implementation. The following are the core themes that emerged from the findings:

Limited Access to Internet and Technology

One of the primary challenges faced by teachers and students was limited access to the internet, especially in remote areas. Many students lacked the necessary devices to participate in online tasks, while teachers struggled with unstable

connections, hindering interaction and disrupting the flow of lessons. Despite these challenges, some teachers noted that social media kept them updated on societal issues and allowed students to share perspectives on a common platform. This finding aligns with Crowe's (2015) analysis that social media can introduce digital distractions, complicating its use in academic settings.

Engaging Students Through Relevant Discussions

Teachers found social media particularly useful in English classes, where it provided relatable content for discussions and assignments. By incorporating social media topics, teachers noted an increase in student engagement. Students were eager to participate in tasks that included writing essays, conducting impromptu speeches, and creating multimedia projects inspired by platforms like Facebook and Instagram. Teachers also recognized that social media stimulated creativity and broadened exploration, allowing students to connect ideas with real-world content. This was supported by studies showing that social media promotes collaboration and self-directed learning when managed well.

Performance Challenges and Parental Support

Teacher feedback indicated that while some students actively participated in social media-based tasks, others were more passive, relying heavily on parental support. Teachers observed that students were more likely to share personal content on social media than engage in school-related tasks. Additionally, digital literacy and confidence in using technology varied widely among students, requiring teachers to tailor activities based on students' familiarity with online tools.

Coping Mechanisms for Social Media-Based Teaching

Teachers coped with these challenges by creatively incorporating social media into their teaching strategies, using platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and educational apps to foster engagement. They used social media to share information and tasks, allowing students to access materials from home. Teachers also attended webinars and training sessions, which equipped them with skills to integrate social media and other digital tools into their lessons effectively. Asynchronous learning became a helpful approach, providing flexibility and reducing the need for simultaneous online interaction, which was beneficial given connectivity issues.

Promoting Professional Growth through Webinars

The Department of Education supported teachers by providing webinars, which were instrumental in training them to use digital tools and platforms effectively. Teachers expressed appreciation for these opportunities, as they improved their ability to deliver lessons in a digital format, making the transition to online teaching smoother. The flexibility offered by these webinars allowed teachers to revisit sessions and continue professional development at their own pace, aligning with findings by Chen et al. (2005) on the benefits of asynchronous learning.

Insights and Implications

The study suggests that social media can be a powerful tool in education if managed effectively. While the potential benefits include fostering real-time communication, creativity, and collaboration, limitations such as digital access, device availability, and digital distractions pose ongoing challenges. Teachers emphasized the importance of guiding students in responsible and productive social media use, balancing academic and personal content sharing.

The findings underline a need for further research on digital integration in education, particularly in addressing infrastructure gaps and developing strategies to make digital resources more accessible. Additionally, insights from this study support the idea that professional development for teachers, particularly in digital literacy, remains essential as education continues to adapt to new technologies.

4. DISCUSSIONS

Implications and Future Directions

This chapter provides an overview of the study findings on English teachers' experiences utilizing social media in teaching and offers implications based on these findings, followed by recommendations for future research.

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of English teachers in utilizing social media as a teaching tool. By examining their insights and challenges, this research aims to contribute valuable knowledge to the field of digital education.

The data generated reflects how teachers navigate the advantages and limitations of social media in the classroom, emphasizing themes of limited access, engaging exploration with learners, and challenges in student performance. According to Quinones (2020), the digital shift has required teachers to adopt instructional practices that accommodate students' evolving needs, offering advantages like flexible learning and extended response times. However, studies have also shown that social media integration remains inconsistent, particularly in areas with limited infrastructure (Crowe, 2015).

Implications for Teaching Practice

Enhancing Creativity and Accessibility

Social media encourages student creativity, allowing students to access resources anytime. This aligns with Traxler's (2007) findings that ICT facilitates learning by providing ubiquitous access to educational materials. The integration of social media into teaching not only enables flexibility but also motivates students to take ownership of their learning. Mtega et al. (2012) describe mobile technology as attractive to students due to its portability and capacity to support learning tasks effectively.

Professional Development and Teacher Commitment

Teachers' commitment to ongoing professional development is crucial for effective social media integration. DepEd webinars have served as a key resource, allowing teachers to familiarize themselves with digital tools. Chen et al. (2005) argue that webinars provide flexibility and cost-effective training, offering synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities, which are particularly valuable in the new normal of education. These findings indicate that continuous professional training is vital for educators to remain adaptive and well-prepared.

Strengthening School Community Relationships

Social media serves as a bridge within the school community. WhatsApp, for instance, enables real-time communication, facilitating collaboration even in remote areas. Gon and Rawekar (2017) found that WhatsApp offers students and teachers instant connectivity, enhancing the learning experience by bridging geographic gaps. Such platforms promote collaborative engagement and provide a foundation for stronger school communities.

5. FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The results suggest several recommendations for future research and practice:

Innovation in Digital Pedagogy

To maximize social media's potential, schools should develop innovative, structured approaches for digital pedagogy. Liu et al. (2010) highlight that the successful implementation of digital tools is largely contingent on teacher acceptance and institutional support. A collaborative approach involving teachers and administrators could streamline the process, with the provision of guidelines to ensure effective use of social media for educational purposes.

Teacher Training and Resource Allocation

Schools must prioritize continuous teacher training and allocate resources effectively. The Department of Education can further support this through targeted training on social media applications tailored to educational contexts. Mahaney (2015) emphasizes that educators who receive consistent support are more likely to engage students through technology, thereby enhancing the quality of digital education.

Broader Quantitative Research

While this study focuses on qualitative experiences, broader quantitative research could offer additional insights into the impact of social media across varied contexts. Park et al. (2009) suggest that quantitative studies provide valuable data that can help assess the generalizability of digital practices and uncover specific regional needs, guiding policymakers and educators in developing data-driven strategies.

6. CONCLUSION

This study highlights the potential of social media in English education and identifies the need for a collaborative, structured approach to its integration. Ongoing support for educators, both in resources and professional development, is essential to leverage social media as an effective educational tool. With appropriate training and policies, social media can enhance educational experiences, fostering a dynamic, flexible, and inclusive learning environment.

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