

OPTIMIZING THE ROLE AND INNOVATION OF GEN Z IN FACING OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IN LEARNING ENGLISH THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

Oleh :

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ABSTRACT

The 21st century is marked by rapid technological developments and globalization, which have had a significant impact on various aspects of life, including education. Generation Z, as a digital generation born and raised amidst technological advancements, faces various opportunities and challenges in the learning process, particularly in English language learning. Social media has become one of the platforms most frequently used by Generation Z, not only for entertainment but also as a learning support tool. This research used a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection methods using questionnaires and observations. The sample in this study was Generation Z students studying English. Data analysis was conducted using a thematic approach to identify patterns of social media use and innovations emerging in the learning process. The research findings show that although Generation Z faces challenges such as language interference and digital distractions, they are also able to utilize social media creatively and innovatively to improve their English skills, particularly in vocabulary, pronunciation, and writing. Social media also opens up opportunities for more flexible collaborative and self-taught learning. The study's conclusions confirm that social media can be optimized as an effective learning tool for Generation Z in facing the challenges of the digital era. The active role of teachers and educators remains crucial in guiding, directing, and developing critical and responsible learning characteristics.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Technological developments in the digital era have transformed the way young people, particularly Generation Z, access and learn foreign languages, including English. With their strong social media and digital literacy characteristics, Generation Z has great potential to utilize technology as a learning tool. However, challenges such as concentration problems, lack of consistent learning, and language interference remain obstacles to English learning.

Several previous studies have shown that the use of social media and digital technology can

improve students' motivation and English language skills. However, this study offers a different focus, exploring the innovation and active role of Generation Z in addressing challenges and utilizing opportunities for English learning through social media to support the vision of Indonesia Emas 2045.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the roles and innovations undertaken by Generation Z in utilizing technology and social media for English learning, as well as to evaluate the challenges and opportunities arising from the use of digital media in the context of education in Indonesia.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

Types of research

This research falls into the descriptive qualitative research category. Qualitative research is used to understand social phenomena in depth through the analysis of non-numerical data. Descriptive means this research aims to describe in detail how Generation Z utilizes social media and digital technology in English learning, as well as the challenges and innovations they face.

Research Subjects and Locations

The research subjects were Generation Z students currently studying at the high school/vocational high school (SMA/SMK) and university levels in Indonesia. Subjects were selected purposively, based on certain criteria, namely those who actively use technology and social media to learn English. The research location was online, allowing for participation from various regions.

Data collection technique

Data were collected through two main methods: questionnaires and documentation. The questionnaires were distributed online using the Google Forms platform, containing open-ended and closed-ended questions regarding study habits, social media use, and experiences using technology such as AI in English learning. Furthermore, documentation was conducted by collecting and analyzing student assignments that demonstrated their engagement with technology, such as written work edited using AI tools.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was conducted using a thematic approach. Data from questionnaires & documentation were analyzed to identify emerging patterns related to the challenges, motivations, and effectiveness of using social media and technology in learning. The steps included thoroughly reading all data, identifying key themes, categorizing the data into these themes, and developing interpretations based on the relationship between the themes and the research objectives.

Data Validity

To ensure data validity, the results from the questionnaire and documentation were compared. If similarities in patterns and information from both sources were found, the data were considered valid. Furthermore, respondents were given the opportunity to review sections of the data related to their experiences to ensure the researcher's interpretations did not deviate from reality.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Challenges in Learning English through Social Media and Technology

Based on a questionnaire survey of 50 Generation Z respondents, the main challenges they face are maintaining consistent learning (28%), unstable internet connections (14%), language

interference (8%), and limitations in live practice and the lack of subtitles in learning content (10%). This indicates that although social media provides extensive access to learning resources, internal factors and external infrastructure remain barriers.

This phenomenon aligns with the findings of Hartono and Putra (2020), who stated that online learning presents significant challenges in terms of self-study discipline and dependence on internet connections. Meanwhile, Utami and Permana (2020) also highlighted the importance of digital ethics education and time management in utilizing social media for learning.

Motivation to Learn Through Social Media

17. Seberapa penting peran teknologi dan media sosial dalam memotivasi Anda untuk terus belajar bahasa Inggris?

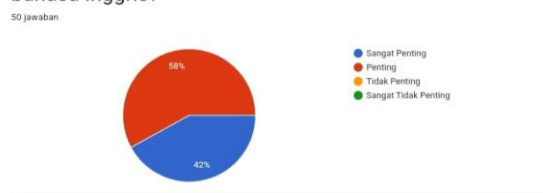


Figure 1 How important the role of technology and social media

As many as 58% of respondents reported being more motivated to learn English when using social media or digital technology. Only 42% felt unhelpful, indicating that the majority of students feel technology has become part of their learning style. Most students also stated that social media makes learning feel more relaxed, flexible, and personalized.

This high motivation is associated with the highly visual and interactive characteristics of Generation Z, as stated by Rahmawati and Sugiyono (2021). They feel more engaged when learning is conducted through digital content such as short videos

The Effectiveness of Using Social Media and AI in Improving English Skills

12. Menurut anda, seberapa efektif penggunaan media sosial dalam meningkatkan kemampuan berbahasa Inggris Anda?

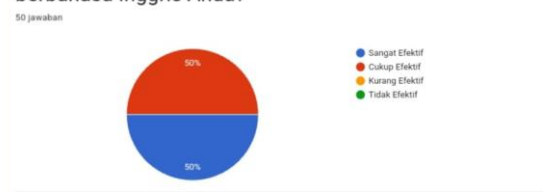


Figure 2 How effective the use of social media to improve English skills

All respondents stated that social media was effective in improving their English skills. Fifty percent rated it "very effective" and fifty percent "quite effective." Specifically, 50% reported improved vocabulary, and 50% felt a significant improvement in their writing skills, especially after

using AI-based applications such as grammar checkers



Figure 3 How big are the benefits of using social media in increasing vocabulary

The majority of respondents stated that social media had a positive impact on improving their English language skills. As many as 56% of respondents felt that the use of social media was very useful in expanding their vocabulary

Studies by Chao (2020) and Alharbi (2021) support this finding, stating that the use of technologies such as AI and social media can accelerate vocabulary and language structure mastery through instant feedback. AI also helps students identify errors independently, fostering improved self-evaluation skills.



Figure 3.4 improvement in writing ability after using social media

50% of respondents stated that they experienced significant improvements in their writing skills through the use of technology

Interaction and Access to Native Speakers

As many as 54% of respondents stated that they sometimes interact with native speakers through social media, such as through discussion forums, comment sections, or live conversations. This represents a significant learning opportunity that remains underutilized. Direct exposure to the native language in authentic contexts like this helps students understand more natural and contextual language use.



Figure 5 How often respondents interact via digital platforms

This opinion is supported by Chik (2019), who stated that informal interactions on social media constitute a form of learning "in the digital wilderness" that can significantly enrich language understanding.

The Role and Innovation of Generation Z in the English Learning Process

Generation Z demonstrates a tendency to seek innovative and independent learning methods. They use various learning apps, create English-language content on TikTok or Instagram, and experiment with techniques like digital storytelling. This demonstrates not only high initiative but also a creative and contemporary approach to learning.

Rahmawati and Sugiyono (2021) and Wu (2020) note that methods like digital storytelling can significantly improve students' speaking and writing skills because they are directly involved in producing meaningful language.

Learning Consistency and Coping Strategies

Despite high motivation, consistency issues remain a major issue. 14 out of 50 students (28%) found it difficult to maintain a study routine, primarily due to the distracting nature of social media. Therefore, strategies such as automatic study reminders, gamification, or online learning communities that provide social support are needed.

Lai (2019) emphasizes the importance of a structured approach to technology-based learning. He highlights that technological flexibility must be coupled with mechanisms that maintain the direction and purpose of learning so that students do not lose focus.

4. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

This research shows that Generation Z plays a strategic role in optimizing English learning through the use of technology and social media. Social media use has been shown to increase learning motivation, enrich vocabulary, and hone students' writing skills, particularly with the assistance of technologies like artificial intelligence (AI). However, challenges such as inconsistent learning, distractions from non-educational content, and limited digital infrastructure remain significant obstacles.

Generation Z also demonstrates innovation in learning by creating digital content, utilizing social platforms, and exploring app-based self-study methods. This potential is highly relevant to the vision of "Golden Indonesia 2045," where English language proficiency is a key to global competitiveness.

Suggestion

Given the research findings demonstrating the effectiveness of technology and social media in English learning for Generation Z, it is recommended

that further research focus on more specific and in-depth use of technology. Artificial intelligence-based applications such as Grammarly, Quillbot, and ChatGPT have been shown to help improve students' writing skills, but have not been extensively studied in the context of formal education in Indonesia. Therefore, further research is needed to determine how these tools contribute to aspects of grammar, sentence structure, and idea development in students' writing.

Furthermore, learning strategies need to be developed that can improve students' consistency and discipline in using social media as a learning tool. One approach that could be explored is the formation of a collaborative and structured online learning community. This model can provide social support and motivation for students to remain engaged in ongoing learning, while minimizing distractions from non-educational content commonly found on social media.

Further longitudinal research is also needed to measure the long-term impact of social media and technology use on students' English language competency. Such studies will provide a more comprehensive picture of language skill development, as well as changes in students' attitudes and character in the digital-based learning process.

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