

The Use of Social Media by Higher Education Lectures in a Language Teaching Course during Covid-19 Pandemic

Ebrahim Panah¹, Melor Md Yunus², Nur Faridatul Jamalia Radzali³, Raba'iyah Norshahidi⁴ & Nurhusna Baharudin⁵

^{1,3,4,5}University College of Yayasan Pahang, Malaysia & ²Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia

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Corresponding Author: Ebrahim Panah, University College of Yayasan Pahang, Kuantan, Pahang, 25200, Tel.01162031907. E-mail: ebrahim@ucyp.edu.my



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1. Introduction

1.1 Introduce the Problem

Social media has influenced all walks of human life. Siddiqui and Singh (2016) define social media as “computer tools that allows people to share or exchange information’s, ideas, images, videos and even more with each other through a particular network” (p.71). Social media is expanding vastly in parallel with its number of users. Several popular social media include Google meet, Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, and telegram. Social media is used for communication as well as education purpose. There was a widespread use of social media for teaching and learning in higher education during covid-19 pandemic. A bulk of studies reported the use of social media for teaching pre-covid-19 pandemic, while few studies have looked at social media for teaching since covid-19 pandemic (khan et al. 2021; Sobaih, et al. 2020. Very few studies were conducted in Malaysia context from the perspectives of teachers (selvanathan, et al., 2020). Very few mixed method studies involving higher education lecturers were reported.

1.2 Objective of Study

The objective of the current study was to explore the use of social media by Malaysian higher education lectures in online teaching course

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Social media and networking have brought about changes in terms of accessibility of content, experts, and global connections for learners. This changes the concepts of learning, knowledge and teaching approach. Knowledge is viewed as existing in networks and learning is considered as the formation and navigation of these networks. Instructors interact with students in a different fashion. Learning has become more student-centered and students appreciate greater access to information, peer learners, and experts. The finding of critical review of the discussed models indicates that a single model may not be able to lay the foundation of the current study. Therefore, the current study integrates the elements of the theories to inform the processes of data collection, data analysis and interpretation.

2.1.1 Connectivism

Connectivism integrates the principles of network, complexity, chaos, and self-organization theories (West, 2018). In response to digital learning, in 2005, the theory of connectivism was introduced by George Siemens and Stephen Downes (Siemens, 2008). Learning is not entirely under the control of the person but a process that takes place within a vague environment where core elements are shifting. Learning as actionable knowledge, resides within a database or organization (Siemens, 2008). Connectivism also can be an underlying theory for social media.

2.1.2 Connectivism and social media

Social media work well with connectivism. Social media connects people through social networks. According to West (2018), “Within social networks, hubs are well-connected people who are able to foster and maintain knowledge flow. Their interdependence results in effective knowledge flow, enabling the personal understanding of the state of activities organizationally” (p.372). It is argued that connectivism starts from individual, and personal knowledge is made up of a network feeding into institutions and organizations. This knowledge feeds back into the network and consequently provides learning to individual. The knowledge development cycle, i.e., personal to network to organization enables the learners to remain current in their respective field by forming the connections (West (2018). Lectures are connected with students and their counterparts through social media.

2.1.3 Connectivism and metaphors of lecturers

The Lecturer’s role and instruction process have been changing for more than a century (Siemens, 2008). There has been argument over instructivism and constructivism concerning learning. An increase in the autonomy of learners has happened due to their ever-growing access to information. In digital learning era, several models of lecturer and learner roles and interactions were introduced: lecturer as master artist (Brown, 2006), lecturer network administrator, lecturer as concierge (Curtis Bonk, 2007), and lecturer as curator (Siemens, 2008), as demonstrated in Figure 1.

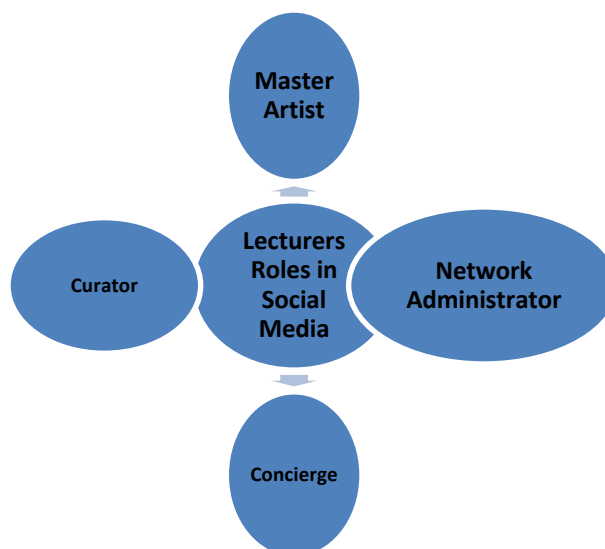


Figure 1. *Lecturers Roles in Social Media*

a) *Lecturer as master artist*

Inspired by artists and architects, Brown (2006) defines learning as “education into a practice”. In an open space like art studio, students can create sculptures, paintings, or other works of arts. Subsequently, the master artist will be able to observe students’ activities and draw attentions to innovative approaches. Learning will not be limited to the lecturer’s expertise as the activities of all learners can serve to direct, guide and influence each individual’s work. Social media in which students post their creative writings, could be amenable to artist

view of learning since students can learn from the lecturer's comments as well as peers' feedback (Siemens, 2008). Another view is lecturer as network administrator.

b) Lecturer as network administrator

Another notion is 'lecturer as network administrator' introduced by Fisher () who is a blogger and teacher. He creates an analogy between mind, as a constantly evolving set of connections between concepts, and students and learning by placing them at the center of personal learning network where they construct knowledge with the help of instructor. The lecturer is responsible for helping learners to obtain the necessary skills to create such networks for learning, assess their effectiveness, as well as work with fluid network. The learning networks should help students to develop competence to achieve the course objectives. The lecturer should encourage the learners to critically evaluate the suitability of information sources "as a part of holistic and diversified learning network". In social media, the learner's gaps are addressed by self-directed learning (through active participation in the learning network), self-reflection, lecturer's evaluation, the learning network quality, and understanding key concepts.

c) Lecturer as concierge

Bonk (2007) put forth the concept of 'lecturer as a concierge' who directs students to resources and learning opportunities that they might not be aware of, or have no idea if available or possible. Bonk (2007) suggests that instructors should introduce students to the ripe learning opportunities. He recommends that prescribed learning checkboxes should be shifting to learner designed programs. Social media provides the opportunity to explore and enables the instructors to be a tour guide by offering "soft guidance". This can happen by integrating traditional lectures with empowering the students to explore on their own.

d) Lecturer as Curator

Like Bonk (2007), Siemens (2008) recommends that instructors have two roles: experts and guides. As experts, they must have advanced knowledge of the domain. As guides, they should nurture and encourage student exploration. They produce learning resources that expose students to the concepts, critical ideas, as well as papers in the related field. A curatorial instructor acknowledges students' autonomy and understands that students will be frustrated of exploring unknown realms without a map. To Siemens, a curator is regarded as an expert learner who does not dispense knowledge but creates environments where knowledge is explored, created, and connected. Curator instructors are not in favor of traditional, teacher-centered approach. A curator instructor knows how to balance the individual learner freedom with the thoughtful interpretation of the relevant subject. In social media, as students freely explore, they see concepts, displays, and artifacts which represent the discipline. Although learners have limitless freedom to explore when engaged in subject matter, the key concepts of the discipline must be clearly reflected via instructor's curatorial action.

2.2 Previous Studies

Survey Studies report the use of social media such as YouTube, Twitter, and Wikis (Alsuraihi, et al., 2016; Raut, & Patil, 2016), WhatsApp, and Google Meet (Sobaih, et al., 2020) for education purpose.

2.2.1 Social media teaching and learning

Social media serves different functions in education. Social media is used for teaching and learning as instructional, collaborative and learner's engaging tool (Bajracharya, 2016; Burbules, 2016). Social media offers asynchronous and online discussion (Woods, & Bliss, 2016). Social media allows to enhance online engagement through online discussion, providing feedback and grading (Hamid, 2020; Woods, & Bliss, 2016). It also supports academic performance and knowledge sharing (Hamid, 2020). Users have positive attitudes towards usefulness, ease of use, satisfaction and performance enhancement of social media such as WhatsApp and Facebook for language learning (Alamri, et al., 2020; Azman et al., 2020; Ying, et al., 2021). Social media enables lecturers to (Sobaih, et al., 2020):

1. Communicate with and engage students in the courses
2. Post/check class assignment and receive/send course announcements.
3. Create stronger learning communities.
4. Post/check online lectures (live or recorded).
5. Post/check useful academic videos, links and supporting materials.
6. Facilitate online discussions related to assignments and/or projects.
7. Post/check students' academic accomplishment or achievements.
8. Post/answer comments and enquires on academic issues.

2.2.2 Social media for student support

Large scale survey Study on role of social media (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter), anxiety and counseling role (Ahmad, et al., 2021). Social media can be used for academic purpose and support (Cant, et al., 2021). Instructors can use social media to provide support and motivate students; Provide emotional support for students; Resolve issues related to students; Provide mentoring for students and help to integrate students in group works (Sobaih, et al., 2020).

2.2.3 Social media for building community and connection

Social media helps lecturers build community and connections in different ways. It helps build strong online community and supports lecturers in facilitating students' involvement and participation in activities. It also encourages students to share their social activities online. Besides, it connects students with alumni (graduates).

3. Method

3.1 Research design

The current study adopted mixed method design, which is growingly gaining popularity, to address the research questions (Creswell, & Creswell, 2017). Mixed method design "involves the collection and mixing or integration of both quantitative and qualitative data in a study" (Creswell, & Creswell, 2017, p.34). Hence, the study used mixed method to benefit from both quantitative and qualitative data analysis.

3.2 Context

The study was conducted in the context of higher education in Malaysia. Malaysian higher education lecturers are using different social media platforms for teaching Google Meet, WhatsApp, YouTube, Telegram, etc.) (Sobaih et al., 2020). It is not clear how they are using these online platforms for teaching.

3.3 Sampling

The study randomly selected 100 lectures to participate in the study and answer the questionnaire. According to Creswell, and Creswell, 2017, p.334 random sampling "means that each individual has an equal probability of being selected from the population, ensuring that the sample will be representative of the population". Thus, the rationale for the use of random sampling was to provide the chance for every member of the target population of higher education lecturers to be the study participant. From 100 participants, 85 completed the survey questions.

3.4 Survey

The quantitative study was a survey through using questionnaire. The primary purpose of using survey was to answer the questions by identifying the variables. The survey is beneficial for data collection as it allowed the researchers to reach a wide population of lectures across the country. The survey was cross-sectional as the data was collected at one point in time (Creswell, & Creswell, 2017). The study used survey by creating questions in Google Forms and submitting through emails and WhatsApp to the lectures. The survey was adapted from the questionnaire used by Sobaih, et al. (2020). Furthermore, the questionnaire contained some open-ended questions to collect qualitative data.

3.5 Data analysis

The data obtained from the close-ended questions were analyzed through descriptive statistics. Some descriptive statistics that are commonly used include frequencies, means and standard deviations (Creswell, & Creswell, 2017). The data was analyzed running SPSS version 22. The qualitative data was analyzed through thematic and content analysis.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Gender

Table 1. Gendre

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	23	27.1	27.1	27.1
	Female	62	72.9	72.9	100.0
	Total	85	100.0	100.0	

As illustrated in Table1, in total, 85 lectures have answered the questionnaire from which 72.9% (62) were females, while males accounted for 27.1% (23) of the population of respondents.

4.2 Statistics and Data Analysis

As shown in Table 3, 47.1% (40) of participants sometimes use social media, 34.1% (29), always use it; however, 2.4% (2) respondents seldom and never use social media.

Table 2. Frequency of Use

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	2	2.4	2.4	2.4
	Seldom	2	2.4	2.4	4.7
	Sometimes	40	47.1	47.1	51.8
	Often	12	14.1	14.1	65.9
	Always	29	34.1	34.1	100.0
	Total	85	100.0	100.0	

Table 3. Teaching & Learning

Activities	N	Mean	Std.
1. Communicate with and engage students in the courses	85	2.91	1.608
2. Post/check class assignment and receive/send course announcements.	85	3.06	1.553
3. Create stronger learning communities.	85	2.72	1.601
4. Post/check online lectures (live or recorded).	85	3.04	1.679
5. Post/check useful academic videos, links and supporting materials.	83	2.66	1.727
6. Facilitate online discussions related to assignments and/or projects.	85	2.98	1.732
7. Post/check students' academic accomplishment or achievements.	85	3.11	1.535
8. Post/answer comments and enquires on academic issues.	85	3.18	1.505

As indicated in table 4, most of lecturers use social media for posting and commenting (3.18) (highest). Followed by checking student's academic accomplishment (3.11), posting, checking class assignment (3.06), posting and checking online lectures (3.04), while posting, checking useful academic video, links (2.66) (lowest).

Table 4. Reasons for Using Social Media

Reasons	N	Mean	Std.
1. Provide support and motivate students.	85	3.12	1.538
2. Provide emotional support for students	85	3.07	1.502
3. Resolve issues related to students.	85	2.71	1.557
4. Provide mentoring for students.	85	2.89	1.566
5. Help to integrate students in group works	85	3.19	1.524

As illustrated in Table 5, the majority of lecturers use social media to encourage group work (3.19) highest followed by support and motivate (3.12), emotional support (3.07), mentoring (2.89), while, the lowest use belongs to resolving issues (2.71).

Table 5. Additional Reasons for Using Social Media

Reasons	N	Mean	Std
1. Build and strengthen online community.	84	3.08	1.615
2. Facilitate students' involvement and participation in activities.	84	2.79	1.599
3. Encourage students to share their social activities online.	85	2.96	1.622
4. Connect students with alumni (graduates).	85	2.98	1.633

As demonstrated in Table 6, lecturers use social media to building online community (3.08) with highest mean value, followed by connecting students with alumni (2.98), encouraging sharing social activities (2.96), facilitating students' involvement in activities (2.79). However, use of social media to build community and connection is unsatisfactory as the mean value is low (Neutral or disagree).

Table 7. Benefits & Issues of Using Social Media

Benefit	Issue
Safety	Obesity
Students' Parent support	Student Less focus & Sleepy
Tech literacy	Demanding
Independent	Lack of student understanding
Good benefit	Internet Connection
Comfort and flexibility	Student lack of Confidence
Less cost	Tech issues
Communication	not feeling at college

Table 7. demonstrates the qualitative data findings categorized into benefits and issues. The benefits include safety, students' parent support, tech literacy, independent, good benefit, comfort and flexibility, less cost and communication.

The issues include obesity, student less focus & sleepy, demanding, lack of student understanding, internet connection, student lack of confidence, tech issues, not feeling at college. Although lectures are aware of the advantage of using social media for education, they refrain to do so due to the challenging issues (Gülbahar et al., 2017).

4.3 Discussion

Overall, the findings of the study support the lecturers' roles as lecturer as master artist (Brown, 2006), lecturer network administrator, lecturer as concierge (Curtis Bonk, 2007), and lecturer as curator (Siemens, 2008). Lecturers have the role of a master artist by communicating with students, engaging them, checking assignments, posting online lectures, checking academic materials (videos & link), facilitating online discussion, academic accomplishment, answering enquiries. Lecturers play the role of administrator as they post materials such as lectures, videos, audios, texts, etc. online. Lecturers are concierge as they provide emotional support, motivate, resolve issues, mentor and integrate them into groups. Lecturers have the roles of curators as they build strong online community, facilitate students' involvement and participation in activities, encourage sharing and connect them with alumni. However, the findings indicate that social media is used for teaching and learning but unsatisfactory. Student support happens through group work, motivating, emotional support though not sufficient. Social media helps build community and connection through online community building; however, far from satisfactory.

5. Conclusion

This paper explored the use of social media for different purposes in education context. The findings of survey indicated lecturers use social media for teaching and learning, student support, and build community and connection. The findings of qualitative data revealed that social media has both benefits and issues.

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