# THE USE OF FACEBOOK FOR SENIOR LEARNERS OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

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**Abstract**

*Social media, which reaches the world, is believed to be an informal method in learning the English language. As 56.8% of the world's population is active on social media, which equals to approximately 4.47 billion persons, this could be a large and wide possibility to be an English language learning platform. The method chosen to conduct this research is qualitative using discourse analysis, where a group of fifteen seniors aged 40-60 years old, with high school education level residing in Manado, North Sulawesi, and surrounding areas were selected as participants. The participants were asked to fill out questionnaires and interviews regarding their use of Facebook and WhatsApp and their interest in the use of English while using social media. The findings of the study showed that participants used social media mainly for expressive types of speech acts such as greetings, apologies and congratulations. The participants also tended to use the features of the social media that allowed them to express emotions mostly in pictograms, with an English word of expression, pictures, and emoticons. In addition, the plurilingual practice was also observed in the use of mixed codes which served to enhance the mutual understanding and interactions among the participants.*

***Keywords****: Social media, Facebook, seniors, high-school graduates, pictograms, pictures, emoticons*

## Introduction

The theoretical review of this thesis is an approach to theories used by the researcher to explain research problems. Technological influence and availability of technological aids, social media as the tool of English language learning, English use in social media, which provides proof of users utilization English as a Second Language which was not obtained through academic studies, and English in Indonesian Context where observation is conducted on faulty usage of English in countries studying English as a Second Language, Indonesia in particular.

While recent days in many countries the English language is already used side by side with the local or National state's language (Melitz, 2016), nevertheless, in Indonesia senior populations in rural areas may be struggling in using the language, being the consequence of not being able to obtain or pursue education subsequent to High School

in the past (Zein et al., 2020). What is interesting is, social media, namely the use of Facebook, somehow seems to be able to bridge this shortcoming.

There have not been many researches dedicated to investigating the impact of social media use in English language fluency in Indonesia through being active on social media specifically for mid- aged and seniors with limited education (Arfiandhani, 2019). It is expected that this research would provide valuable insights to understand yet other means of language acquisition which is easier, cheaper, and definitely more interesting and enjoyable (Setiawan & Phillipson, 2020).

**English Use in Social Media**

We may confirm that social media is the media to socialize through/within networking and enables interaction beyond space and time. The number of social media users increases rapidly every year, with a significant high user access during the COVID-19 pandemic times where social interaction is limited (Saha et al., 2020).

Berta (2018) states that based on statistics, English is the most used language on the internet. The order of the most used languages on the internet is reported as follows: English, used by

1.186 billion, with 60.4% of 10M websites using the language, Chinese, used by 888 million, with 1.4% of 10M websites using the language, Spanish, used by 363 million, with 4% of 10M websites using the language, Arabic, used by 237 million, with 1.3% of 10M websites using the language, Indonesian, used by 198 million, with 0.7% of 10M websites using the language, Portuguese, used by 171 million, with 1.3% of 10M websites using the language, French, used by 151 million, with 2.6% of 10M websites using the language, Japanese, used by 118 million, with 2.1% of 10M websites using the language, Russian, used by 116 million, with 8.5% of 10M websites using the language, and German, used by 92 million, with 2.1% of 10M websites using the language

It is a fact that all social media vehicles are initially developed and presented in English. The creation, development and operations of the entire system of any certain social media are initiated in the English language. In relation to how the main idea of the social media function was generated, it only makes perfect sense to go back to the basics in order to obtain the language forming this function: English. English is a global language, and we might find evidence that it is the most used language on the internet and/or social media. Statistics report that on the internet, the language most used is English (https://www.mosalingua.com/en/most-used-languages-on-the-internet/).

**Facebook for Non-formal English Language Learning**

Facebook as it is today has become the highest accessed and used worldwide site which people use for networking socially (Bosch, 2009). The number of people accessing Facebook daily is up to one billion, which gives us more proof that Facebook is used to communicate with the people of today (Van Dijck, 2012).

For the majority of the population participating in this study, Facebook is opened and checked every day. Notwithstanding, employees and housewives, business persons and farmers, they have become acquainted to Facebook with thanks to its easy access

features and picture friendly nature, yet still with abilities to state opinions and ideas personally, to speak what is in heart and to convey emotions whichever way preferred;

Up to this day the use of Facebook has exceeded 100 languages, however being the main language of the creation and development of Facebook, English is still the most used language on Facebook (Kabilan et al., 2010).

Rogers (2023) says, learning happens when: the student actively takes part in the learning process, directly deals with practical learning, whether personally, socially or in observing activities, and trying out what has been learned/obtained to rate self-success. This also leads to accepting new ideas and innovations.

We define the language learning types into three groups based on the learning intentions:

a) Formal Language Learning

The Collins English Dictionary (2014) teaches us that formal language is a language designed for use in situations in which natural language is unsuitable.

Formal learning is the type of learning conducted based on conservative intentions through formal educational levels such as schools, colleges, universities, training centres etc. There is usually a curriculum set up for this type of education conduction, which is then broken down to syllabus tailored for each learning need. Oxford languages defines formal as done in accordance with rules of convention or etiquette; suitable for or constituting an official or important situation or occasion.

b) Informal Language Learning

Coombs and Ahmed (1974) defined informal learning as an ongoing process where we obtain and collect knowledge, and abilities through media (newspapers, magazines, books, listening to the radio, accessing television and so forth) and portray usage of such in a person's daily life and activities (Greenhow & Robelia, 2009).

Johnson (2019) adapts Informal learning means to learn something that does not follow a certain formal academic educational setting. Informal learning may be in the form of viewing videos, reading articles, taking part in chat groups/rooms, games and the kind. Informal learning is not designed formally and does not have a certain goal for learning goals and basically is just a supporting activity.

c) Non-formal language learning

Coombs and Ahmed (1974) first used 'non-formal education'. They were certain that education goes farther than going to school to learn, and decided that education has the similar meaning to learning, wherever, how or whenever learning happens (Coombs & Ahmed, 1974). They then changed 'learning' into education in their studies.

Learning a language through social media, especially through Facebook, may be considered as a type of non-formal language learning, noting the characteristics and ways of learning

This research is to determine the possibilities of learning English for seniors aged 40-60 years old and above being High School graduates, or High School graduates with several semesters of study at the University, on the social media platform. The seniors who participated in this study are originated in Manado sub-urbans, North Sulawesi; the majority are still residing here while some have migrated to neighboring islands and a few to Jakarta or the island of Java.

**Research Methods**

A research design is the overall strategy that is chosen to integrate different components of the study in a coherent and logical way, thereby, ensuring to effectively address the research problem; it constitutes the blueprint for the collection, measurement, and analysis of data.

Components of the study observed in this research are the Facebook applications: its features, and activities in the application that are used which portray or imply indirect English learning activities, Facebook users – which are identified in each participant's daily activities on Facebook. Observation was made on participants' Facebook activities starting July 2022 up to December 2022, for six months, to see whether some development and/or improvement in using the English can be found. Participants of the study are 20 seniors aged 40-60+ years old, residing in Manado, North Sulawesi, High School graduates or High School graduates with several semesters study at the university.

The background of this choice of participants' type is that there was lack of opportunity for obtaining education during the years of 1970-1995 in rural areas such as the regions and outskirts of Manado, and perhaps even other rural areas in Indonesia, aside from larger towns and cities and the Java island. Thanks to the tremendous development of technology, many communications/ educational fields are now available at the tips of our fingers. The use of the English language nowadays occurs naturally, which automatically appeals Facebook users to get to know the language better.

**Results and Discussion**

The observations conducted were evident that High School graduates aged 40-60+ are using the English language through Facebook, by using available features in expressing the communication made. Data obtained from these observations are as categorized in the following tables:

**Table 1. Participants' Data (Age, Sex, Education, Occupancy, Facebook accountholder length)**

| Participant# | Age | Sex | Education | Occupancy | On Facebook since |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| P#1 | 43 | male | High School | civil servant | 2007 |
| P#2 | 55 | female | Secondary Economics School | housewife | 2010 |
| P#3 | 50 | female | High School | businesswoman | 2009 |
| P#4 | 39 | female | High School | housewife | 2009 |

| Participant# | Age | Sex | Education | Occupancy | On Facebook since |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **P#5** | 51 | female | Secondary Economics School | housewife | 2009 |
| **P#6** | 57 | male | Secondary Technical School | oilfield technician | 2009 |
| **P#7** | 57 | male | Senior High School | oilfield technician | 2011 |
| **P#8** | 57 | female | Senior High School | housewife | 2019 |
| **P#9** | 61 | male | Senior High School | direct seller | 2017 |
| **P#10** | 64 | female | Secondary Economics School | retired assistant | 2010 |
| **P#11** | 50 | male | Senior High School | mining technician | 2012 |
| **P#12** | 53 | male | Senior High School | Security Guard | 2019 |
| **P#13** | 50 | female | Senior High School | housewife | 2016 |
| **P#14** | 61 | female | Secondary Economics School | housewife | 2009 |
| **P#15** | 59 | male | Secondary Economics School | businessman | 2012 |
| **P#16** | 61 | female | Senior High School | businesswoman | 2009 |
| **P#17** | 41 | female | Senior High School | assistant | 2016 |
| **P#18** | 40 | female | Senior High School | assistant | 2020 |
| **P#19** | 40 | female | Senior High School | assistant | 2013 |
| **P#20** | 40 | male | Senior High School | assistant | 2017 |

**Table 2. Expressions of the participants on their accounts in Facebook:**

| Partici-pants list | Number of expressionsused during July-December 2022 | Description | Relevant/ Irrelevant |
|---|---|---|---|
| P#1 | 42 expressions | 1) Wedding Day ...<br>2) #Late post<br>3) Enjoying Christmas with family<br>4) Story Book Children'<br>5) 2nd Christmas with My Big Boss<br>6) Merry Christmas Everyone..!!<br>7) Jogging... | R |

| Partici-pants list | Number of expressionsused during July-December 2022 | Description | Relevant/ Irrelevant |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | **Comments**: <br> 8)  Thank you ... 2x(Picture) <br> 9)  Let's Go! (emoticon) <br> 10) With... my big boss(Picture) <br> **Comments:** <br> 11) "Happy Sunday" <br> **Comments:** <br> 12) Blessed (emoticon)(Picture) <br> **Comments** <br> 13) The ... Song <br> **Comments** <br> 14) Thanks ... 6x <br> 15) Happy Weekend <br> 16) Coast Guard..!! <br> 17) Spot... <br> 18) #5YearsAgo <br> 19) #SelfieOnTheToilet <br> 20) With... <br> 21) #ProudOfYouDear...#Selfie <br> **Comments:** <br> 22) Congratulations My Dear Niece ... <br> 23) Runner-up <br> 24) Goodness of God <br> 25) Day 3... with ... Owner ... #Stand... <br> 26) With My Dear Grandchild... <br> 27) Day 1. <br> 28) ... My Beloved Daddy... <br> 29) Don't look back with regret, look forward withhope – picture <br> 30) Before Worship <br> 31) "Happy Thanksgiving Day" <br> 32) ... Badminton Open Tournament ... 3rd Place... Notbad... #ThankGod <br> 33) Protection, Health & Strength Our LORD JESUS Certainly Give To You, Your Little Famly and For All Of Us .. Amen .. !! <br> With... My Big Boss <br> 1st Place ... Badminton Open Tournament ...Thank you ... <br> 34) Baptist Church Concert <br> 35) SOLID PLUS PRODUCTION <br> 36) Cousin Birthday Party #1st <br> 37) Morning Routine ... Grandpa + Baby sitter <br> 38) Wedding Anniversary ... <br> 39) 43 years old ... The Goodness of God <br> 40) Tutorial ... Be A Super Grandpa.. !! ...#Status...#Grandpa <br> 41) Welcome ... <br> 42) To God Be The Glory | |
| P#2 | 4 expressions | (Picture) <br> **Comments:** (emoticons) <br> 1)  Thank you | R |

| Partici-pants list | Number of expressionsused during July-December 2022 | Description | Relevant/ Irrelevant |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Thank you so much | |
| | | 2) Morning Too...God Bless (Picture) | |
| | | 3) God Bless | |
| | | 4) Happy Sunday | |
| P#3 | 45 Expressions | 1) ... HAPPY New Year 2023 | R |
| | | 2) Last Day of 2022 | |
| | | 3) Goodbye 2022 ... Welcome 2023 | |
| | | 4) Amen | |
| | | 5) Merry Christmas (video Cap Cut) | |
| | | 6) Thank you | |
| | | 7) Time to sleep | |
| | | 8) ... close order... | |
| | | 9) Late post | |
| | | 10) On the way complex | |
| | | 11) Joy to the World (emoticon) | |
| | | 12) On the sidelines of my busy life I don't forgetto capture it | |
| | | 13) Thanks! | |
| | | 14) Take Care... | |
| | | 15) God bless... | |
| | | 16) Let's Go | |
| | | 17) Be strong | |
| | | 18) Be happy | |
| | | 19) For your to day work | |
| | | 20) Jesus Bless Me | |
| | | 21) Ready guys | |
| | | 22) Dinner... | |
| | | 23) Squad | |
| | | 24) Happy birthday Bestie ... | |
| | | 25) Happy Sunday | |
| | | 26) With ... | |
| | | 27) Me & the only girl | |
| | | 28) Miss you... | |
| | | 29) Next ... | |
| | | 30) Happy weekend | |
| | | 31) Welcome ... | |
| | | 32) New the best squad | |
| | | 33) Fellowship | |
| | | 34) Chef Stay | |
| | | 35) Good vibes (emoticon) | |
| | | 36) Triple .... | |
| | | 37) Bye | |
| | | 38) Zoom blessing | |
| | | 39) ... In Jesus' Name... | |
| | | 40) Food lovers | |
| | | 41) Cappucino lovers | |
| | | 42) ... the best for ... | |
| | | 43) Love U forever My husband | |
| | | 44) Do not pray for easy lives. Pray to be Strongermen. (picture) | |
| P#4 | Expresions: 3 | 1) Wedding Day ... | R |
| | | 2) That time with my little family the most beautifulmoments | |

| Partici-pants list | Number of expressionsused during July-December 2022 | Description | Relevant/ Irrelevant |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Singapore, Singapore "Our little family wouldn't be this great without you, my husband. I'll be forever grateful for your struggles for us. Happy Birthday Dear Love Husband" 3) Birthday Party ... | |
| P#5 | Expressions: 10 | 1) Happy Sunday 2) Happy birthday my boy    I hope you're getting smarter, better be filial to parents, success always,always healthy, and hopefully you're achieve future goals. Today is your happy day, you'refinally 15th, God bless you as always. 3) Party 4) Faith Voice VG 5) #Wedding Party ... 6) Rest in peace ... 7) Soft opening cafe (Curated & Hut) 8) Happy wedding ... 9) Late post 10) Me and ... | R |
| P#6 | Expressions: 1 | Have a nice trip   GBU | R |
| P#7 | Expressions: 8 | 1) Happy New Year 2023 2) On the way to Pasteur agains home 3) ... Morning 4) Congratulation 5) Happy Birthday ... 6) That time! 7) Thank You Lord *Journey completed!! 8) Journey with ... | R |
| P#8 | Expressions: 4 | 1) .... with ... 2) .. Home 3) Late post 4) Thank You Lord | R |
| P#9 | | No English status updates or comments | |
| P#10 | Expressions: 16 | 1) Thank You Lord for every thing 2) With .... and her sister and...., and me at ... 3) Quality time with my fam and my systa fam ...lunch together for Christmas eve. 4) Late post. ..... with my belover sister .... and my 5) family.   and lunch together. 6) For all my families and friends Merry Christmasand Happy New Year 2023. God bless you always.5 (video) A Mother's Prayer 7) Late post. ... 8) Carolling Christmas ... 9) Wedding Party ... and ... 10) Quality time with ... 11) With my lovely grand daughter 12) Welcome my second Grandson... Thank you Lord. 13) Healing. healing 14) Refreshing ... 15) Dear... your beloved husband... 16) 15 Sunday Service ... 15 ... our n travel ... 16 Deep | R |

| Partici-pants list | Number of expressionsused during July-December 2022 | Description | Relevant/ Irrelevant |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | condolence... | |
| P#11 | | No English status updates or comments | |
| P#12 | | No English status updates or comments | |
| P#13 | Expressions: 2 | 1 Late Post Birthday my dearest sister ...#refreshing #with... | R2 |
| P#14 | Expressions: 8 | 1) Thanks fb, hello<br>2) Late post with .@ the plaza<br>3) Enjoy Every time...<br>4) Happy birthday, God bless<br>5) #gathering...<br>6) Old Shanghai...<br>7) Happy day...<br>8) .... with ... | R |
| P#15 | Expressions: 24 | 1) ... Happy New Year. ...<br>2) Happy Birthday in Heaven<br>3) ..... after ...<br>4) Effect ...<br>5) ... and ... Good job ...<br>6) God bless you All<br>7) Happy Sweet Seventeen ...<br>8) Special Event ...<br>9) #Late Post<br>10) Family is Everything<br>11) Come n join ... Christmas Celebrate at 07.00PM<br>12) Thanks God<br>13) Happy Wedding Anniversary...Love You mywife ...Love You my son..... Love You my daughter<br>14) ...Love You All My Big Family<br>15) Thanks God... Special thanks:...<br>16) Official...<br>17) The Children Choir of ...<br>18) Happy wedding ...<br>19) Sunday Service with My Fam<br>20) The Best<br>21) Moment ...<br>22) Checkpoint ...<br>23) Live Streaming<br>24) Vocal Group | R |
| P#16 | Expressions: 20 | 1) Thanks ...<br>2) ... Bless<br>3) ...*Late Post<br>4) Special decoration for my fam<br>5) ...dress code... Tutorial ...<br>6) My mom is always going to be the first womanI ever love. She is the role model of my life, and alifetime of inspiration for me. May God bless youwith all the hapiness in the world on your birthday,and forever, Mom. Happy Birthday.<br>7) Enjoy with bestie...<br>8) Rest in peace...<br>9) Wishing my son, who is so brave and great, a Happy Birthday! You are the most special person that I know, and today's my favorite day. ...<br>10) We will never know the exact moment when friendsip | R |

| Partici-pants list | Number of expressionsused during July-December 2022 | Description | Relevant/ Irrelevant |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | is formed. We will only know that it hasbeen there.<br>11) Go God bless you all.<br>12) Launching...<br>13) Proud of you ... We love you ...<br>14) FIELD TRIP ... Infrastructure & Property...<br>15) Know and How ...<br>16).one day tour<br>17) ... work shop ...<br>18) ..minus..., long life, always healthy, full of joy, happy with family, n Lord Jesus bless you...<br>19) Launching ... cafe by ... July ...<br>20) Event ... Maritime Youth Summer Camp ... | |
| P#17 | No status update or comments in English. | | |
| P#18 | No status update or comments in English. | | |
| P#19 | Expressions: 8 | 1) Happy new year... GBU<br>2) ...team NOTARY OFFICE...<br>3) Happy birthday ...Prayer ...<br>4) Happy wedding day ...<br>5) Stay ... have a nice day n GBU<br>6) …guys ...<br>7) ... Free... Let's go...<br>8) ... Big thanks ... | R |
| P#20 | No status update or comments in English. | | |

## Discussion

Findings confirming the research question is answered through observing the participants' Facebook accounts data are as follows:

Most of the participants have wide groups of friends with whom they may communicate, with some possibly being able to use English language in communication, whether in personal or one- on-one conversations or in group conversations. Being fluid withn the conversation or communication,participants of this study would then, also naturally, reply using English expressions to the English expressions conveyed to them, as form of comprehension.

Based on the answers to the interviews collected, the participants have interest in using their Facebook usage abilities to explore possibilities of enhancing English language skills.

Most participants are positive in willing to learn the English language through Facebook, while it might be also a means to obtain additional English skills for free and to learn silently or secretly,without comments or suffering the embarrassment to perform in front of peers, relatives, classmates, colleagues, or others.

Reviewing the data obtained from the partcipants' answers on the questionnaire, there is a strong possibility that seniors aged 40-60 and above will find a means of learning English as a SecondLanguage on social media, namely Facebook, ascertained by the characteristics of the participants' useof the Facebook

platform – frequency, which groups they join, participation in available English language learning groups, chat groups, etc.

**Conclusion**

Being active on Facebook and conducting communications in the English language most certainly will enhance a social media user and account holder's English language ability, however to achieve the target of being able to communicate in the English language accurately and fluently, progressive steps of lessons mastering is strongly advised.

Suggestions for senior learners to be able to learn English on Facebook; (1) it would be indeed very helpful if content creators and vloggers would focus and emphasize on English language mastering skills, using not only communication skills in general – which are mainly listening and speaking skills – but also set a foundation of structured English learning: grammar and structure, vocabulary, etc, (2) the message of mastering grammar, structure, vocabulary must be communicated at front in order to encourage senior learners of the importance of learning and mastering these subjects in order to become and accurate and fluent English language speaker.

Tutorials on using Facebook utilities for English language lessons content should be communicated as well; it is estimated that many seniors should prefer to conduct self-study, which is actually possible with the technology we have at present. It would help senior learners to learn more effectively on Facebook if they were entirely accustomed to all Facebook facilities, such as joining chat groups, replaying videos, pausing, forwarding shorts or reels and other help tools the Facebook may have.

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