
The Transformation of Social Media in Arabic Language Learning: Opportunities and Risks in the Indonesian Context

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ABSTRACT: This research examines the possibilities and dangers associated with using social media for learning Arabic in Indonesia. This work aims to address research difficulties by utilising library-based research methods, which involve analysing data obtained from various sources such as publications, papers, journals, scientific articles, and related books. Next, we will examine the potential and concerns associated with the evolution of social media in the context of Arabic language acquisition. The findings revealed that educational opportunities encompassed convenient access to information and learning resources, widespread availability of global connectivity and language exchange, innovative learning methods, global reach and interactive teaching, and enhanced ease and effectiveness of student-Arabic-teacher interaction. The risks associated with using social media in education include distractions from irrelevant content, exposure to inappropriate material that can have a negative impact on students, technical issues such as unstable internet connections, and high data costs, particularly in remote areas.

KEYWORDS: the evolution of social media, the acquisition of Arabic language skills, potential advantages and disadvantages

INTRODUCTION

Man is an inherently social being who relies on the presence of others since they fulfil many essential human needs (Makhmudah, 2019, hlm. 10). It has long been established that people have at least three fundamental needs: the desire for resources, sustenance, and shelter. Humans require sustenance to sustain their existence, garments to attend to their personal needs, and a dwelling to recuperate from their endeavours. However, this does not hold for millennials, particularly in Indonesia, where an additional aspect appears to have become an essential requirement, namely 'social media' (Fikriansyah dkk., 2022). Social media has grown ubiquitous in modern life, so some individuals cannot function without it. Social media lacks user segregation, allowing individuals of all ages, from infants to adults, to utilise its platform (Larasati & Sudarmika, 2023).

The inception of social media may be traced back to the 1970s, namely in 1978, when a bulletin board system was created. This system facilitated communication through emails and software exchange, utilising telephone lines connected with modems. (Makhmudah, 2019, p. 20). The prevalence of social media steadily increases over time in tandem with technological advancements. This advancement has transformed it into an essential requirement for people, enabling them to enhance productivity and efficiency. The advent of technology in the contemporary period has significantly influenced several aspects of human existence, particularly in the realm of education, which is often seen as a crucial domain of progress (Makhmudah, 2019, hlm. 7).

The advancement of digital technology has led to a significant change in the methods and processes of teaching and learning Arabic in Indonesia. The digital era has brought about substantial transformations in educational methodologies, the availability of learning materials, and the dynamics of teacher-student interactions. (Mahdi and Uyuni, 2023). The advent of digital technology has provided unprecedented opportunities for the acquisition and mastery of the Arabic language. The availability of a wide range of ancient and modern text sources, together with the integration of technology-based educational tools, has revolutionised the method of teaching Arabic. In Indonesia, where the availability of Arabic literature is frequently restricted, digital technologies have provided a broader gateway to the realm of Arabic knowledge (Mahdi & Uyuni, 2023).

The significance of acquiring proficiency in Arabic in the 21st century should be addressed, particularly when considering its relevance in Islamic, economic, business, and other contexts. Arabic is the linguistic medium employed in the Qur'an, regarded as the divine communication from Allah to the Muslim community. A comprehensive comprehension of this language allows Muslims to enhance their comprehension of religious doctrines and actively participate in religious rituals. Proficiency in Arabic enhances one's ability to communicate more effectively within the political and diplomatic sphere of the area. Arab nations are experiencing substantial economic expansion in their economies and businesses, followed by a wide range of chances to collaborate with international corporations. Proficiency in the Arabic language facilitates lucrative commercial partnerships and enhances one's professional connections. In addition, proficiency in Arabic offers a distinct edge in the tourist business and is

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valuable in diplomacy. The existing advantages will encourage many individuals to further their knowledge of Arabic, eliminating its current disadvantages. Contemporary Arabic language acquisition employs contemporary methodologies that have been adjusted to the changing circumstances, focusing on learning in the 21st century (Maulana, 2023, hlm. 1).

In a research conducted by Evi Nurus Suroiyah titled "The Benefits of Social Media in Enhancing Listening Skills in Arabic Language Learning", it was found that using social media platforms for learning Arabic resulted in a pleasurable experience. The effectiveness and enjoyment of Arabic learning were proved by the positive reaction of students who felt joyful while utilising different social media platforms (Suroiyah, 2020, hlm. 16). Therefore, investigating the evolution of social media's impact on Arabic language acquisition in Indonesia is of utmost significance in this particular context. By doing a thorough examination, we may gain a comprehensive understanding of the potential advantages and disadvantages of utilising social media for Arabic language acquisition. This introduction will examine the evolution of social media as a means or mediator for learning Arabic in Indonesia. This study aims to analyse the changes that occur in social media about the acquisition of the Arabic language and to determine the potential benefits and drawbacks in the Indonesian environment. In the upcoming discussion, we will thoroughly examine the impact of social media change on learning Arabic in Indonesia, including the potential advantages and disadvantages it presents.

METHODS

This study involves conducting library research. The data sources for this research are acquired from pertinent literature, including books, journals, and scientific publications relevant to the selected topic. The data collecting methodology employed in this library research involves gathering information about various entities or variables, such as notes, books, papers, articles, journals, etc. Conducting research will result in discovering data and facts about many types of libraries, including papers, news, and research reports. Subsequently, the gathered data serves as the primary resource for researchers to conduct their study, ultimately leading to the formulation of a conclusion. During the data analysis, the researchers employed a historical methodology to examine how social media has evolved from getting to know one another to being a versatile platform supporting the learning process.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A Review of Social Media Development

Learning media plays a crucial role in the educational process. The media has been crucial in advancing civilisation, particularly technology and science. For instance, the development of diverse modes of transportation, such as aeroplanes, trains, automobiles, and motorbikes, enables individuals in the present period to efficiently and securely travel between different locations. Specific modes of transportation have transitioned to using electrical power. Furthermore, in the contemporary communication era, individuals can engage in more effective communication than ever through virtual or online live interactions. Modern humans can communicate, share knowledge, and build connections with people from diverse cultures throughout the globe, thanks to the use of social media. This is possible because social media transcends the barriers of geography and time.

The Digital Around The World 2019 research disclosed that out of Indonesia's total population of 268.2 million, around 150 million individuals had utilised social media, resulting in a penetration rate of approximately 56 per cent. The Z generation predominantly uses YouTube, Instagram, X, and Facebook as their primary social media platforms. Initially intended for amusement, social media has evolved to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and information as users have become more adept at utilising its features. These advancements demonstrate that the media is precisely engineered to satisfy human needs. The education field is characterised by teachers' use of many media to facilitate the teaching process (Pujiono, 2021, hlm. 2–11). Social media is derived from the Latin word "media," which originates from the Latin term "medius," meaning a guide or mediator. The term "social" pertains to matters of society. Liedfray asserts that social media is a communication medium that facilitates simple interaction, sharing, and the generation of diverse material such as blogs, images, videos, voices, and wikis.

Traditional media like print, radio, and television have been the primary sources of information for years. However, the rise of digital technology has completely transformed this situation. The advent of the Internet, social media platforms, and mobile devices has revolutionised how people, groups, and society engage and communicate. This shift not only offers novel prospects but also poses obstacles to surmount.

In 1995, Geo Cities was established as an internet platform that provided website data storage services, allowing users to view their data from any location. The inception of social media occurred in 1997 when the web 2.0 platform, sixdegrees.com, was launched, including blogging and publishing capabilities. In the same year, a website dedicated to creating personal blogs was introduced under the name "blogger."

In 2002, a new social media platform called Friendster emerged and quickly gained popularity among young people. In the subsequent year, Facebook emerged, and social media has been expanding ever since, with the introduction of diverse platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp, TikTok, YouTube, and others, each offering intriguing features and distinctiveness.

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More than 354 million Internet users in June 2015, of whom 143 million used social media platforms, such as Facebook (125 million users), YouTube (60 million people), LinkedIn (30 million), and Twitter (22.2 million people) as a lifestyle in today's digital age. Almost all groups have social media accounts, mainly because social media is used to promote goods, products, or services (Rifandi & Irwansyah, 2021, pp. 142). The use and benefits of social media are increasingly widespread, and many, with the advancement of technology and more creative people, are engaged in the world of education, so social media is not only used to socialize and communicate but can also be used to learn and teach (Rifandi & Irwansyah, 2021, hlm. 142).

The utilisation and advantages of social media are expanding and intensifying due to technological advancements and the growing ingenuity of individuals in education. Consequently, social media is not just used for socialising and communication but can also serve as a platform for learning and instruction. (Kurniati, 2022a, hlm. 123–124).

The Role of Social Media in Education

Nowadays, social media plays a major role and influences a wide range of opportunities in the global world, both political, social, economic, and educational. So, it is not surprising that educators need to explore adding educational value to the use of social media because social media can provide educational benefits to students and opportunities for further learning (Pujiono, 2021, hlm. 7).

In this era, social media has become a digital library for educators because it is easier to find material and develop science through social media (Sari, 2021, pp. 6). Social media also serves as a communication medium between school and pupils, either from educators to pupils or educators or schools to families of pupils. With social media, information is delivered to students quickly and precisely targeted so that students can understand the messages and information delivered and become more productive. When there is something incomprehensible, students can directly discuss it through social media (Sari, 2021, hlm. 6).

"Social media also serves as a communication medium between the school and students, whether from educators to students or from educators or the school to students' families. Social media conveys information to students quickly and accurately, allowing them to understand the messages and information shared, making them more productive. When something is unclear, students can immediately discuss it via social media (Puspitosari & Lokananta, 2021, hlm. 102–106).

Examples of Social Media Platforms

Research results show that using social media and its application in learning Arabic effectively can improve student learning outcomes. In her research (Marini, 2019, hlm. 73) revealed that TikTok positively and significantly impacts students' academic performance at school.

Audina (Audina & Muassomah, 2020, hlm. 87) mentioned that Instagram is a suitable social media platform to support students in learning maharah kitabah (writing skills) to explore various ideas related to Arabic writing, thus forming a habit of writing uniquely, creatively, and attractively. Similarly (Fuadah, 2020, hlm. 149) stated that Instagram is a popular social media platform among young people and is suitable as a medium for learning Arabic because it can motivate and offer interesting innovations in learning maharah qiraah (reading skills) and kitabah (writing skills).

Mustofa (Mustofa, 2020, hlm. 345) expressed that WhatsApp can be used as a medium or tool for learning Arabic. Arabic language learning using WhatsApp can be carried out by considering the skills to be taught, such as when teaching maharah kalam (speaking skills); educators can use WhatsApp to listen to and communicate with students.

Therefore, several social media platforms that can be utilized in learning Arabic in Indonesia are:

1. YouTube because it offers more comprehensive content and allows educators to adapt it as a learning medium to be used in learning activities.
2. TikTok because can be an alternative for finding inspiration and variations for learning activities and can be a preference for discovering various exciting teaching methods and media. Arabic language learning that can be taught through this social media includes short dialogues between students, retelling the contents of narrative texts, singing in Arabic, and more.
3. Instagram because it can be a source of interesting and interactive educational content that increases students' interest in learning (Muthi dkk., 2024, hlm. 111–123). Among the Arabic learning materials that can be found on this social media are nahwu (grammar), mufrodat (vocabulary), mahfudzot (proverbs), and others. Arabic language learning becomes more interesting and practical due to the presence of beneficial materials and quizzes that reinforce students' understanding of their Arabic studies.
4. WhatsApp, because it can serve as a medium of communication between educators and students through group features. Through WhatsApp, educators and students can exchange lesson information, discuss materials, and more (Puspitosari & Lokananta, 2021, hlm. 106–107). (role of communication media) The features in WhatsApp can be used to achieve Arabic learning goals and improve students' language skills, such as in online maharah kalam (speaking skills) learning, where the materials sent can be downloaded directly by students (Kurniati, 2022a, hlm. 128–129).

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5. Facebook, because it can create a space for educators and students to ask and answer questions. Facebook also provides features to upload videos, photos, documents, and more on group walls, allowing students to access them before lessons or when completing assignments.
6. X, (formerly Twitter), because it provides a quick way to upload class announcements, reminders, and real-time information about class activities (Pujiono, 2021, hlm. 8).

"Educators can choose applications to use according to the material to be taught, such as using TikTok, the voice note feature on WhatsApp, and Instagram Reels for maharah kalam (speaking skills), using the quiz or question box feature on Instagram for maharah kitabah (writing skills), using Instagram, X, Facebook, YouTube, or WhatsApp for maharah qiraah (reading skills), and using WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube, or TikTok for maharah istima' (listening skills) (Kurniati, 2022a, hlm. 134–135).

Opportunities for Learning Arabic Through Social Media

The development of information and communication technology has brought significant changes in teaching methods and information dissemination. We can easily access various learning resources, share knowledge, and communicate with fellow learners around the world through social media. This gives them unlimited access to various educational materials, which can essentially enhance their understanding and insights across different subjects (Farras dkk., 2023). If we explore further, there are several opportunities that can be leveraged through the current digital technology development as a means to build digital literacy through Arabic language learning.

First, the ease of access to information and learning resources. Social media can be easily accessed by everyone, so Arabic learning resources can be obtained anywhere. Audiovisual content and photos containing summaries of Arabic language material can boost motivation and learning outcomes (Syagif, 2023). This happens because many people share content about Arabic language materials on social media, allowing others to access the material easily. Learning is no longer confined to formal classroom lessons but breaks through the boundaries of classroom teaching into a broader community.

Second, the availability of global connectivity and language exchange. Digital literacy allows language learners to connect with target language speakers from around the world. Social media platforms, language learning communities, and language exchange websites offer opportunities for virtual language practice, cultural exchange, and building relationships with native speakers. Simple and familiar platforms that have been introduced and researched provide positive impacts on Arabic language skills, including applications like WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. Through these platforms, students can engage in conversations, video conferences, receive feedback, and interact in the language and culture (Syagif, 2023). With these opportunities, language learners do not need to travel abroad to meet native Arabic speakers. They can maximize their learning through social media by continuously practicing with friends and others.

Third, creative learning with social media. Features on Instagram, WhatsApp, TikTok, and Telegram can be optimized for this purpose. Social media not only increases curiosity and motivation to learn but also offers ease of use, attractive displays, and easily understandable content. These applications are highly relevant to students' daily lives, making them effective tools for learning. Besides the built-in features of the apps, teachers also have the opportunity to develop creative and interactive teaching methods. For example, by creating challenges in Instagram Stories, students can be invited to participate in activities that sharpen their Arabic language skills. Students can also sing in Arabic, create podcasts, listen to Arabic songs, and answer quizzes related to the learning material. There are many other opportunities to leverage social media for Arabic language learning, such as group discussions through chat features, sharing material through short videos on TikTok, and using Telegram groups for in-depth discussions. With these various methods, social media can become an effective and enjoyable tool for teaching Arabic (Kurniati, 2022b). Because Arabic language learning involves diverse and interrelated material classifications, it requires engaging learning media like social media. With these easy-to-use features, students and teachers can be creative according to their desires and motivations during the learning process.

Fourth, global access and interactive teaching. Technology provides unlimited access to a wealth of global knowledge, surpassing geographical boundaries. Learning materials, literature, and research that were once hidden in libraries can now be accessed with a single click. The increase in internet and social media usage has made access to knowledge, particularly in Arabic, more open. People today prefer internet-based resources, such as exploring knowledge sources from the internet and social media, leading authors and publishers to create literature through social media. The development of various social media platforms has also resulted in an increase in the number of educators spreading knowledge/information on social media because it is perceived as an easy and most effective medium. Teaching can also transform into a more interactive, dynamic, and personal experience. The presence of online learning platforms opens the door for students to learn from anywhere, without being bound by space and time. This allows children from different parts of the world to collaborate on joint projects, learning about cultural diversity and perspectives (Mahmudah & Paramita, 2023).

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Fifth, interaction between Arabic language teachers and students, as well as among students themselves, becomes easier and more effective. The use of social media in Indonesia opens access to global information, including quality Arabic language learning resources from various countries. With fast and affordable social media, language learners can take advantage of various online learning materials. This enables distance learning models where students and teachers can connect through digital learning platforms, allowing Arabic language learning without having to gather physically (Bustam dkk., 2024, hlm. 62).). In research by Saleh Abdullah, it is stated that teachers and students are willing to use social media in education, and they believe it will enhance their educational experience (Alabdulkareem, 2015). In Arabic language learning, native speakers are crucial for improving speaking skills. However, bringing them in requires significant funding. Therefore, social media becomes a solution for direct interaction with native speakers.

Sixth, ease of communication. A report published in the US by the National School Board Association found that the topics discussed by teenagers on social media sites are about education, specifically about certain topics and school assignments. Social media also allows teachers to combine and share materials quickly and easily, providing a collaborative learning environment where students can communicate at any time. Students can express their thoughts on social media because they feel more comfortable asking questions that they may not feel comfortable asking in class (Alabdulkareem, 2015) One such social media platform is WhatsApp, which allows them to communicate with friends and teachers through its group chat feature. Students in the classroom have diverse characteristics, both introverted and extroverted. Sometimes introverted students are shy to ask questions, so social media can become one of the most comfortable tools for communication.

RISKS AND CHALLENGES

As a learning medium, there are risks and challenges associated with the use and utilization of social media. According to Kurniati, the risks and challenges of using social media in learning include the difficulty for students to focus on learning because they are easily distracted by other apps or content, the challenge for students who do not have adequate access and internet signal, and the difficulty for students who do not yet understand how to use social media to follow the learning process (Kurniati, 2022a, hlm. 134)

In Singarimbun's research, the challenges of using social media in learning include that social media becomes a source of distraction for students as it can divert them from the learning process, the emergence of potential risks and data security issues for students, the lack of management and supervision of students in using social media, and the gap in accessibility to technology and internet connectivity. (Singarimbun, 2023, hlm. 4)

In another study, Alamsyah, Aulya, and Satriya also mentioned that media transformation in the digital era poses challenges in the form of the spread of unverified information, leading to the circulation of fake news and misinformation (Alamsyah dkk., 2024, hlm. 171–173)

Meanwhile, in Pujiono's research, the risks and challenges of social media include the emergence of consumerism, individualism, students' lack of sensitivity to the environment, the desire to obtain everything instantly, and social media becoming a benchmark for adolescence. (Pujiono, 2021, hlm. 14–15)

Awoke and Zikargae, in their research, state that the use of social media poses risks and challenges in the form of infrastructure issues, unethical and informal communication, cheating and fraud in exams, which can lead to students becoming dependent on technology and lacking confidence in their academic abilities, the lack of feedback and responsibility, confusion and dependency on social media, and the impact of social media on health, particularly eye health (Awoke & Zikargae, 2023a, hlm. 11–13)

Jaffer, Davids, and Seymour mention that the challenges of using social media for students include device constraints, student security and privacy issues, difficulty accessing data and the internet, and a lack of skills in using technology. For educators, the challenges include concerns about educator privacy, increased workload, lack of adequate training in using social media, and difficulty coordinating social media groups. For educational institutions, the challenges include interrupted or broken Wi-Fi connections, school policies that do not fully support the use of social media, and educators' reluctance to use social media in learning (Jaffer dkk., 2023a, hlm. 133–136)

The research findings above conclude that the use of social media not only presents risks and challenges that need to be addressed and resolved by students but also by educators and educational institutions. Both internal factors, such as the desire to obtain everything instantly, and external factors, such as the spread of unverified information.

Due to the risks and challenges involved, educators are required to be wise in considering the material, and setting the time and duration for using social media in learning. Although social media can be accessed anywhere and anytime, it still requires wise arrangements such as not at a time that can interfere with students' social activities in the real world, not disturbing or reducing sleep time, not providing too much material, and not asking students to discuss indefinitely (Pujiono, 2021, pp. 14-15).

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In order to achieve the goals of learning Arabic with social media, not only educators must be wise, but students and parental supervision as well. Even the role of parents is needed in monitoring and helping their children when recording assignments and so on, because not all children in elementary school are proficient in using social media (Rizqa & Muassomah, 2020, p. 89). With a good collaboration between the three, the goal of learning Arabic using social media can be realized (Kurniati, 2022a, p. 134).

To avoid undesirable things in the use of social media, active attention and supervision from teachers and parents are needed. Not only giving advice, teachers and parents need to check students' social media accounts regularly. If necessary, parents are advised to use applications that can limit social media access.

CONCLUSION

The development of social media has changed the method of learning Arabic in Indonesia. The potential of using social media in education is huge, especially in providing easier and wider access to diverse learning resources. Platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, Instagram and WhatsApp allow learners and teachers to access engaging, interactive and information-rich educational content. The use of social media also facilitates global connectivity, allowing students to interact with native Arabic speakers and broaden their cultural horizons. Creative learning methods, such as the use of short videos, interactive challenges, and group discussions through social media, can significantly improve student motivation and learning outcomes.

However, this transformation also brings of risks and challenges that need to be addressed. One of the main risks is distraction, where students can be distracted by other content on social media that is not relevant to learning. In addition, inappropriate content circulating on social media can negatively affect students. Technical issues such as unstable internet networks and high data costs are also obstacles, especially in remote areas. Lack of supervision in the use of social media can lead to ineffective learning, as well as privacy and security risks. The digital divide is also an important issue, as not all students have equal access to technology and the internet.

Therefore, it is important for educators to be wise in designing learning materials and setting the time to use social media, as well as involving parents in supervising their children's learning activities. With proper arrangements and good collaboration between teachers, students and parents, social media can be optimally utilized to support Arabic language learning in Indonesia, maximizing the potential while minimizing the risks that may occur.

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