



THE SOCIAL MEDIA DISCOURSE ANALYSIS TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' EFL CRITICAL THINKING IN UNIVERSITAS TRIDINANTI

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Abstract

This study explores the impact of social media discourse analysis on enhancing the critical thinking skills of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students at Universitas Tridianti. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. The study involved 150 EFL students divided into control and experimental groups. Quantitative data were gathered through pre-test and post-test assessments, analyzed using descriptive statistics, inferential statistics (paired and independent sample t-tests), and ANCOVA. Qualitative data were obtained from semi-structured interviews and documentation observation, involving 10 participants from the experimental group. Quantitative findings revealed a significant improvement in the critical thinking skills of students in the experimental group, with mean post-test scores increasing from 60 to 75, compared to a smaller increase in the control group. Qualitative results supported these findings, highlighting increased engagement, motivation, and enhanced critical thinking skills due to the interactive and collaborative nature of social media platforms. This research is novel in its focused application of social media discourse analysis within an EFL context at Universitas Tridianti, providing context-specific insights and practical implications for similar educational settings. The integration of both quantitative and qualitative methods enriches the understanding of social media's educational impact. The study concludes that social media discourse analysis effectively improves EFL students' critical thinking skills at Universitas Tridianti.

Keywords: social media, discourse analysis, critical thinking, EFL students, mixed-methods

INTRODUCTION

Social media has emerged as a powerful instrument in educational settings in recent years, providing new opportunities for participation and learning. Students studying English as a foreign language (EFL) can use social media platforms to practice language skills, engage in conversation, and improve their critical thinking skills. The use of social media for educational purposes is supported by several theoretical frameworks. Vygotsky's (1978), Suhendi (2018), Knapp (2019) and Brau (2020), social constructivist theory emphasizes the importance of social interaction in cognitive development, suggesting that collaborative learning environments, such as those provided by social media, can enhance critical thinking. Additionally, Saykılı (2019) and Peter and Ogunlade (2024), connectivism theory posits that learning in the digital age involves connecting information across a network of knowledge, which aligns with the way social media operates.

Moreover, Gee (2018) argues that the informal and often spontaneous nature of social media communication encourages students to think critically about language use, audience, and context. Social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn, offer rich, interactive environments where students can practice and enhance their language skills. These platforms expose students to a variety of linguistic styles, cultural nuances, and real-time interactions that are difficult to replicate in traditional classroom settings.

The experts in education and linguistics have highlighted the potential benefits of integrating social media into EFL education such as Namaziandost et al. (2019) and Istifci and Ucar (2021), social media platforms offer authentic language experiences and diverse perspectives, which are essential for developing critical thinking. Similarly, Aloraini and Cardoso (2020) emphasize that analysing social media content allows students to critically evaluate information and engage in deeper cognitive processes. They argue that the informal and interactive nature of social media can promote active learning and critical discourse analysis.

Critical thinking is a pivotal skill in EFL education, as it enables students to analyse and evaluate information, construct logical arguments, and engage in reflective and independent thinking. These skills are essential for navigating the complex information landscape of the 21st century. According to Utami et al. (2019) and Tahereh

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et al. (2021), critical thinking involves interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation, which are necessary for academic achievement and effective communication.

A review of recent studies demonstrates the impact of social media on enhancing critical thinking skills among students: 1) Al-Mahrooqi & Denman (2018): This study explored the use of social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook to enhance engagement and critical thinking among EFL learners. The researchers found that students who actively participated in social media discussions exhibited improved abilities in critical analysis and argumentation; 2) Chen and Bryer (2019): Investigating the role of social media in promoting collaborative learning and critical thinking, this study found that structured social media activities led to significant improvements in students' critical thinking abilities, as they allowed for the exploration and evaluation of diverse viewpoints; 3) Tess (2020): Conducting a meta-analysis on the impact of social media on student learning outcomes, Tess concluded that social media, when used effectively, enhances critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaborative skills by providing students with opportunities for interactive and reflective learning; 4) Kabilan, Ahmad, & Abidin (2018): This study examined the use of Facebook for developing critical thinking skills among Malaysian EFL students. It revealed that students who engaged in thoughtful discussions and reflections on Facebook demonstrated higher levels of critical thinking compared to those who did not use the platform and 5) Yunus, Salehi, & Chenzi (2019): Exploring the impact of social media on EFL students' critical thinking in a Chinese university, this research found that social media platforms facilitated the development of critical thinking skills by encouraging students to analyse, evaluate, and create content in the target language.

Despite the promising findings, several gaps remain in the existing literature: 1) Context-Specific Studies: Most research has been conducted in Western or non-specific educational contexts. There is a lack of studies focused on Indonesian universities, particularly in the context of EFL education at Universitas Tridinanti, 2) Longitudinal Studies: Short-term studies dominate the field, leaving a gap in understanding the long-term effects of social media discourse analysis on critical thinking and 3) Pedagogical Frameworks: There is a need for comprehensive frameworks that guide the integration of social media discourse analysis into EFL curricula, addressing both theoretical and practical aspects. To address these gaps, the following research questions are proposed: (1) How does social media discourse analysis impact EFL students' critical thinking skills at Universitas Tridinanti?, (2) What specific aspects of social media discourse are most effective in enhancing critical thinking among EFL students?, (3) How can educators at Universitas Tridinanti effectively integrate social media discourse analysis into their EFL teaching practices?, and (4) What are the long-term effects of social media discourse analysis on the critical thinking abilities of EFL students at Universitas Tridinanti?

The rapid proliferation of social media has significantly transformed the landscape of communication and information dissemination, particularly among younger generations. For students learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL), social media platforms provide an unprecedented opportunity to engage with authentic language use and diverse perspectives from around the world. At Universitas Tridinanti, there is a growing interest in exploring how social media discourse analysis can be leveraged to improve students' critical thinking skills, a crucial competency for academic success and informed citizenship. Universitas Tridinanti seeks to maximize these potentials by conducting methodical social media discourse analysis of its EFL students' critical thinking abilities.

METHOD

The research used mixed-methods design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to comprehensively investigate the impact of social media discourse analysis on the critical thinking skills of EFL students at Universitas Tridinanti. Creswell (2018), mixed-methods research provides a comprehensive framework for integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches. The guidelines on designing and conducting mixed-methods research inform the study's overall design.

This design allows for a robust analysis of the data, providing a detailed understanding of how social media interactions influence critical thinking. 1) Qualitative Method; a) Content Analysis: Social media interactions of the experimental group collected and analysed. This will include posts, comments, and discussions from platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp groups dedicated to the EFL course. Matthew et al. (2019), qualitative data analysis will inform the techniques used to analyse interview and focus group data, ensuring rigorous and systematic analysis, b) Interviews: Semi-structured interviews conducted with selected students from the experimental group to gain deeper insights into their experiences and perceptions of using social media for critical thinking development. Patton (2015), qualitative research and evaluation methods support the design and execution of interviews, ensuring they yield rich, insightful data. 2) Quantitative Method; a) Survey: A pre-test and post-test survey will be administered to measure students' critical thinking skills before and after the intervention. The survey includes standardized critical thinking assessment tools, such as the California Critical Thinking Skills Test (CCTST), adapted for the EFL context. Suryanti and Nurhuda (2021), insights into critical

thinking assessments guided the selection and adaptation of measurement tools for the pre-test and post-test surveys; b) Experimental Design: The study adopt a quasi-experimental design with a control group and an experimental group. The experimental group engage in social media discourse analysis activities, while the control group follow the traditional EFL curriculum.

The population for this study consists of 150 EFL students at Universitas Tridinanti. Using stratified random sampling, the students divided into two groups: 75 students in the experimental group and 75 students in the control group. Stratification ensures that both groups were comparable in terms of demographic variables such as age, gender, and language proficiency. Techniques for Collecting Data; 1) Interviews: Conducted 10 students from the experimental group to gather qualitative data. These recorded and transcribed for analysis, 2) Social Media Interaction Logs: Data collected from students' interactions on social media platforms. Consent obtained to monitor and analyse these interactions and 3) Pre-test and Post-test Surveys: These administered to both groups to quantitatively measure the change in critical thinking skills. Techniques for Analysing Data, 1) Qualitative Analysis used thematic analysis: For analysing interview and focus group transcripts. This involves coding the data and identifying recurring themes related to critical thinking development and social media discourse and content analysis: For analysing social media interactions. This involve coding posts and comments to identify patterns and categories that indicate critical thinking, such as questioning, argumentation, and evidence-based reasoning and 2) Quantitative Analysis; a) Descriptive Statistics: To summarize the demographic information of the sample, Inferential Statistics: (1) Paired Sample T-tests: To compare pre-test and post-test scores within each group, (2) Independent Sample T-tests: To compare the post-test scores between the experimental and control groups, (3) ANCOVA (Analysis of Covariance): To control for any pre-existing differences between groups and assess the effect of the intervention on critical thinking skills.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Qualitative Results

The qualitative component of this study involved semi-structured interviews, with 10 participants to answer the first research question. The aim was to explore how social media discourse analysis impacts EFL students' critical thinking skills at Universitas Tridinanti. Participants: 10 EFL students from the experimental group who actively engaged in the social media discourse analysis intervention.

Key Themes Identified:

1. Engagement and Motivation
2. Critical Thinking Development
3. Collaboration and Communication
4. Challenges and Limitations

Table 1. The Result of Representative Interviews Quotations

Theme	Description	Representative Quotations
Engagement and Motivation	Students found social media platforms engaging and motivating for learning.	“Using social media made learning more interesting.” (AL) “I was excited to participate in discussions online.” (AN)
Critical Thinking Development	Students reported improvements in their ability to analyse, evaluate, and create content.	“I feel I can think more critically about topics now.” (AD) “Social media discussions helped me see different viewpoints.” (LN)
Collaboration and Communication	Increased collaboration and communication among students, enhancing their learning experience.	“We discussed and shared ideas more freely on social media.” (BM) “Working together online made it easier to understand complex topics.” (AT)
Challenges and Limitations	Some students faced difficulties such as distractions and the need for better guidance.	“Sometimes, social media can be distracting.” (OS) “I needed more guidance on how to focus on educational content.” (DS)



Depend on the table above, the researchers' descriptions and insights representative interviews quotations are as follows:

Engagement and Motivation

Supporting Quotations:

"Using social media made learning more interesting."

"I was excited to participate in discussions online."

Description:

Students reported that the interactive nature of social media made learning more engaging and enjoyable. They felt more motivated to participate in discussions and complete assignments due to the familiar and dynamic environment of social media.

Insight:

Incorporating social media into the EFL curriculum can significantly enhance student motivation and engagement, which are critical for sustained academic interest and participation.

Critical Thinking Development

Supporting Quotations:

"I feel I can think more critically about topics now."

"Social media discussions helped me see different viewpoints."

Description:

Participants noted significant improvements in their critical thinking skills. They felt more capable of analyzing information, evaluating different perspectives, and constructing well-informed arguments due to their interactions on social media.

Insight:

Social media discourse analysis effectively fosters critical thinking by providing students with diverse perspectives and encouraging deep, reflective engagement with content.

1. Collaboration and Communication

Supporting Quotations:

"We discussed and shared ideas more freely on social media."

"Working together online made it easier to understand complex topics."

Description:

The collaborative nature of social media facilitated better communication and idea exchange among students. They appreciated the ease of sharing resources and feedback in real-time, which enhanced their learning experience.

Insight:

Social media platforms can significantly enhance collaborative learning by facilitating seamless communication and idea sharing among students.

2. Challenges and Limitations

Supporting Quotations:

"Sometimes, social media can be distracting."

"I needed more guidance on how to focus on educational content."

Description:

Some students experienced challenges such as distractions from non-academic content and a need for clearer guidance on how to effectively use social media for learning purposes.

Insight:

While social media has great potential as an educational tool, it is essential to provide students with structured guidance and strategies to minimize distractions and focus on academic content.

Documentation Observation

This step used by the researchers to answer the second research questions, as presented above:

Observation Focus:

- 1) Participation: Level of student involvement in social media discussions.
- 2) Quality of Discourse: Depth and relevance of contributions to discussions.
- 3) Engagement: Frequency and type of interactions (posts, comments, likes).
- 4) Critical Thinking Skills: Display of analysis, evaluation, and synthesis in posts and comments.

Table 2. Key Observations

Observation Aspect	Description	Examples
Participation Levels	High participation rates with regular contributions from most students.	Frequent posts and comments on discussion threads.
Quality of Discourse	Improved quality of discussions with in-depth analysis and critical evaluations.	"This post critically examines the pros and cons of the topic."
Engagement Levels	High engagement with active involvement in discussions and collaborative projects.	Group projects completed through social media collaboration.
Critical Thinking Skills	Students demonstrated skills such as analysis, evaluation, and synthesis in their contributions.	"This analysis shows a deep understanding of the issue."

The researchers write down the descriptions and insights from observations to answer the third research question, as follows:

1. Participation Levels:

Description : High levels of participation were observed, with most students regularly contributing to discussions.

Insight : The interactive and familiar environment of social media encourages active participation and continuous engagement in learning activities.

2. Quality of Discourse:

Description : Students' contributions showed increased depth and quality, with more critical analysis and thoughtful evaluations.

Insight : Social media discourse analysis promotes higher-order thinking skills by encouraging students to engage deeply with content and articulate their thoughts clearly.

3. Engagement Levels:

Description : High levels of engagement were noted, with students actively involved in discussions and collaborative projects.

Insight : The collaborative nature of social media facilitates sustained engagement and enhances the learning experience through peer interaction.

4. Critical Thinking Skills:

Description : Students demonstrated a range of critical thinking skills, including analysis, evaluation, and synthesis, in their social media interactions.

Insight : The diverse and interactive nature of social media discussions helps students develop and refine critical thinking skills by exposing them to multiple perspectives and challenging them to think deeply about issues.

Based on the qualitative results from interviews and documentation observation provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of social media discourse analysis on EFL students' critical thinking skills at Universitas Tridini. The findings indicate that social media platforms can enhance engagement, motivation, collaboration, and critical thinking skills. However, challenges such as distractions and the need for clearer guidance must be addressed to maximize the benefits of using social media in educational settings. These insights underscore the potential of social media discourse analysis as a valuable tool in EFL education, supporting its integration into curricula to foster critical thinking and collaborative learning.

Quantitative Results

This section, the researchers used to answer the fourth research questions, what are the long-term effects of social media discourse analysis on the critical thinking abilities of EFL students at Universitas Tridini.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics provide an overview of the pre-test and post-test scores for both the experimental and control groups. This information helps to understand the central tendencies and dispersion of the scores. The result could be seen at the table 3 below:

Table 3. Result pre-test and post-test Experimental and Control Groups

Group	Test	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Maximum	Minimum
Experimental	Pre-test	75	60	10	75	45
Control	Pre-test	75	61	9	73	47
Experimental	Post-test	75	75	9	85	62
Control	Post-test	75	65	9	78	50

The table shows the means and standard deviations for both groups in pre-test and post-test conditions. The experimental group had a mean pre-test score of 60 and a post-test score of 75, indicating a significant improvement. The control group's mean scores also improved but to a lesser extent (from 61 to 65).

Inferential Statistics

Inferential statistics determine if the observed differences in the descriptive statistics are statistically significant. Its presented by paired, independent samples t-test and ANCOVA, as show below:

The paired sample t-tests indicate that both the experimental and control groups showed significant improvements from pre-test to post-test scores.

Table 4. Result of Paired Sample T-tests

Group	Test Comparison	Mean Difference	Degrees of Freedom (df)	t-value	p-value
Experimental	Pre-test vs Post-test	15	74	10.52	< 0.05
Control	Pre-test vs Post-test	4	74	3.47	< 0.05

The significant increase in post-test scores within the experimental group (df (74) = 10.52, $p < 0.05$) suggests that the social media discourse analysis intervention had a positive effect on improving the students' critical thinking skills. The control group also showed a significant increase in post-test scores (df (74) = 3.47, $p < 0.05$), but the improvement was less pronounced compared to the experimental group. However, the experimental group had a much larger mean difference (15) compared to the control group (4), indicating a stronger effect of the intervention.

Next, the researchers continue analysis by using the independent sample t-test shows a significant difference in post-test scores between the experimental and control groups, with the experimental group scoring higher on average.

Table 5. Result of Independent Sample T-tests

Comparison	Mean Difference	Degrees of Freedom (df)	t-value	p-value
Experimental vs Control	10	6.89	148	< 0.05

The significant difference in post-test scores between the experimental and control groups ($t(148) = 6.89$, $p < 0.05$) further supports the effectiveness of the intervention. The experimental group's higher mean post-test score indicates that students who participated in the social media discourse analysis improved their critical thinking skills more than those who did not. This suggests that the social media discourse analysis intervention was effective in improving critical thinking skills.

The last, the researchers applied ANCOVA to conducted to control for pre-existing differences between the groups and to assess the effect of the intervention on post-test scores.

Table 6. Result of ANCOVA (Analysis of Covariance)

Source	Sum of Squares (SS)	Degrees of Freedom (df)	Mean Square (MS)	F-value	p-value
Pre-test Scores (Covariate)	315.62	1	315.62	5.98	< 0.05
Group (Experimental vs Control)	1714.56	1	1714.56	32.56	< 0.05
Error	7743.84	147	52.67		
Total	20374.00	150			

The ANCOVA results, controlling for pre-test scores, show a significant effect of the intervention ($F(1, 147) = 32.56$, $p < 0.05$). The adjusted mean post-test scores were significantly higher for the experimental group compared to the control group, confirming the effectiveness of the social media discourse analysis intervention in improving critical thinking skills.



The quantitative analysis, including descriptive statistics, inferential statistics, and ANCOVA, demonstrates that the social media discourse analysis intervention significantly improved the critical thinking skills of EFL students at Universitas Tridianti. The experimental group showed a notable increase in post-test scores compared to the control group, confirming the intervention's effectiveness. These results provide strong empirical evidence supporting the integration of social media discourse analysis into EFL curricula to enhance students' critical thinking abilities. The descriptive statistics reveal the central tendencies and dispersion in scores, the inferential statistics confirm the significance of the observed differences, and the ANCOVA analysis controls for pre-existing differences to validate the intervention's impact. These comprehensive results underscore the value of using social media discourse analysis as an innovative educational tool in EFL contexts.

DISCUSSIONS

The increased engagement and motivation observed in the experimental group can be attributed to the interactive and familiar nature of social media platforms. The findings suggest that these platforms make learning more engaging and appealing, which is crucial for critical thinking development. This observation is supported by previous research indicating that social media can enhance student engagement. For example, Dabbagh and Kitsantas (2012) found that social media promotes self-regulated learning and increases student motivation. The present study corroborates these findings, showing that social media discourse analysis not only engages students but also significantly improves their critical thinking skills. The study also found that social media facilitated better collaboration and communication among students. The experimental group showed higher levels of interaction, idea sharing, and feedback compared to the control group.

This finding is in line with the work of Greenhow and Askari (2017), who found that social media fosters collaborative learning environments. The interactive features of social media allow for real-time communication and resource sharing, which can enhance the overall learning experience and contribute to the development of critical thinking skills. Despite the positive outcomes, some challenges were noted. Students in the experimental group occasionally faced distractions from non-academic content on social media. This highlights the need for structured guidance on effectively using social media for educational purposes. Rheingold (2010) emphasizes the importance of digital literacy, suggesting that students need to be taught how to navigate digital platforms effectively to maximize their educational benefits. Providing such guidance could help mitigate the distractions observed in this study and further enhance the positive impact of social media on critical thinking skills.

The quantitative results of this study demonstrate the significant impact of social media discourse analysis on the critical thinking skills of EFL students at Universitas Tridianti. The use of both descriptive statistics and inferential analyses, including paired sample t-tests and ANCOVA, provides robust evidence of this impact. The descriptive statistics revealed that the experimental group had a substantial increase in mean post-test scores compared to their pre-test scores. Specifically, the mean score for the experimental group increased from 60 to 75, whereas the control group only saw a modest increase from 61 to 65. The paired sample t-tests showed that the improvements in the experimental group's critical thinking scores were statistically significant ($t = 10.52, p < 0.05$). In contrast, while the control group also showed significant improvement ($t = 3.47, p < 0.05$), the magnitude of improvement was notably smaller. \

These findings align with previous research indicating that digital tools can effectively enhance critical thinking skills. For instance, Yang and Wu (2012) found that digital storytelling significantly improved students' critical thinking and learning motivation. Similarly, Ku and Ho (2010) noted that the integration of digital platforms in educational settings promotes higher-order thinking skills.

The ANCOVA results, controlling for pre-test scores, further supported the significant impact of the intervention. The analysis showed a significant effect of the intervention on post-test scores ($F(1, 147) = 32.56, p < 0.05$), indicating that the social media discourse analysis had a substantial positive effect on the students' critical thinking abilities. This finding is consistent with the literature on the use of social media in education. Junco, Heiberger, and Loken (2011) demonstrated that social media tools like Twitter can enhance student engagement and improve academic performance. The current study extends this understanding by showing that social media discourse analysis specifically enhances critical thinking skills.

Novelty

This study is one of the first to explore the specific application of social media discourse analysis for improving critical thinking skills in EFL students. While various studies have examined the general use of social media in education, the focused use of discourse analysis in an EFL context is innovative. Combining quantitative and qualitative methods provides a comprehensive understanding of the impact of social media discourse analysis. This mixed-methods approach not only validates the findings through multiple lenses but also offers rich, contextual insights that purely quantitative studies might miss. Conducted within the cultural and educational



setting of Universitas Tridianti, this research provides context-specific insights that can inform similar educational institutions in Indonesia and other non-native English-speaking countries. This focus adds a unique dimension to the global discourse on EFL education.

CONCLUSION

The social media discourse analysis significantly enhances the critical thinking skills of EFL students at Universitas Tridianti. This finding is supported by statistical analyses, including paired sample t-tests and ANCOVA. Social media platforms increase student engagement and motivation, making learning more appealing and interactive. This is consistent with previous research on the benefits of digital tools in education. The collaborative nature of social media facilitates better communication and idea exchange among students, enriching their learning experience and supporting the development of critical thinking skills. While the study demonstrated significant benefits, it also highlighted challenges such as distractions and the need for structured guidance. Addressing these issues is crucial for optimizing the educational use of social media. Educators should consider integrating social media discourse analysis into EFL curricula to foster critical thinking skills. Providing clear guidelines and digital literacy training can help mitigate potential distractions and enhance the educational benefits of social media.

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