THE MERITS OF TWITTERING IN FOSTERING ENGLISH SKILLS: EFL STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS

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ABSTRACT

English is a language that is almost universally spoken, making it accessible to all people including EFL students from Indonesia and it can be learned anywhere, especially through social media. Twitter is one of the social media that can support EFL students in fostering their English skills. Currently, many people, including EFL students, use Twitter as a social media platform. This study aims to identify EFL students' perceptions of the merits of twittering in fostering English skills. Specifically, this study investigates what English skills are fostered by twittering and what aspects of twittering contribute to fostering English skills based on EFL students' perceptions. This study used a qualitative method and collected data through questionnaires and interviews. The subjects of this study were fifty active Twitter users consisting of twenty-five high school students and twenty-five college students. The questionnaire was conducted first, filled out by fifty respondents, and then from the fifty respondents, five respondents were chosen to be interviewed. This study found that the EFL students perceive that twittering has various merits that support EFL students in fostering their four English skills. Among four English skills, reading skill was the English skill that was perceived as most fostered by twittering. This was due to the merits of twittering in fostering English skills such as reading English tweets, interacting in English, using auto-bases, and tweeting in English. At that point, the aspect that contributed the most to fostering English skills through twittering was reading English tweets. In addition, various features of Twitter could make it easier for students to foster their English skills such as tweet, space and direct message.

Keywords: EFL students' perceptions, English skills, Twitter, Twittering.

INTRODUCTION

English is a global language that is used almost all over the world. Many countries in the world use English as a language for them to communicate and convey messages or ideas to others. According to Adinda et al. (2021), English is a tool for communicating both oral and written, as well as a way of creating interpersonal relationships, exchanging information, and enjoying the aesthetics of language in English culture. In Indonesia, English is a foreign language. Indonesian people need to learn English if they want to be able to master and use English, both formal and informal learning. At this time, social media is often used by many people, social media can be used to find or share information, share stories, and be used for learning. People use a variety of social media, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, Telegram, YouTube, etc. The social media that will be discussed in this research is Twitter. Twitter is a microblogging/social

networking site where users create their content, tag, and share it. Through short messages called tweets, users can publish a variety of multimodal texts, such as prints, pictures, and short videos. Users can interact by replying to tweets, liking/favoriting them, or using mentions to bring other users into the conversation. Twitter users frequently use hashtags to share content related to specific interests (Gleason, 2018). Some Twitter users say that using Twitter can improve their English skills. This research aims to find out what aspects can improve English skills in using Twitter and what English skills increase more for Twitter users.

There were some research that discussed the use of social media to develop English skills. The first research is from Firdaus (2020) entitled "Students' Perception on the Use of Twitter to Improve Students' English Vocabulary" which discusses developing vocabulary in using twitter according to students' perceptions. The result of the interview is that students get new vocabulary through informative accounts and communication using English. Twitter users frequently include new English words that other Twitter users do not understand when reading information and 'tweets.' Then, Twitter users will look up the meaning of the new English vocabulary so that they may understand what it means, as well as the meaning of the information and 'tweets.' The second research is from Akhiar et al. (2017) entitled "Students' Perceptions and Attitudes towards the Use of Instagram in English Language Writing" which discusses the perceptions and attitudes of students in writing English when using social media Instagram. The result of the research is that Instagram is suitable for continuous language exposure because Instagram has many advantages, including mobility and accessibility via smartphones, contextualization of visual data and elements that aid learning in language classes, and promote a community of socially connected learners who communicate and socialize with one another outside of their classroom interactions. Whereas previous research discussed the use of social media Instagram in writing English and the use of Twitter in developing students' vocabulary, this research discusses the use of social media Twitter in developing some English skills.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS
Perception
According to Sinaga (2018), Perception is the process of organizing, identifying, and interpreting sensory information to represent and understand the environment.
Pamungkas & Adi (2020) describe perception as a person's assessment of anything in his environment. One of the most critical factors in effective teaching and learning is perception. Learning can only happen when a person has been exposed to a stimulus, and everyone is exposed to a range of stimuli that affect different senses on a daily basis. The way a person perceives the world around them has an impact on their perception.

Social Media for Improving English Skills
Social media is a type of mass media that is popularly used. In addition to providing information and connecting with virtual friends, social media may also be used to learn. According to Baniyassen (2020), social media has a variety of impacts on students' learning of English skills such as speaking and writing. Students can be motivated and encouraged to use social media in new ways that expose them to a variety of learning materials. Students use social media for a variety of purposes, including improving their knowledge of learning abilities such as communicating relevant and connected concerns to their learning process.

Definition of Twitter

Malik (2019), mentions Twitter is a microblogging site that allows users to share their thoughts and opinions in a "real-time message" format by sending tweets with a character restriction (initially 140, but now 280). Users can also network and converse with other Twitter users using features like hashtags, mentions, and replies. Various topics where Twitter usage has been studied include tourism, sports, government, health information, elections, and activism. Twitter is widely used for social interaction, information sharing, information seeking, self-documentation, and self-expression in addition to entertainment and enjoyment.

Gleason & Manca (2020) explain Twitter may be utilized to help students understand concepts learned in class, expanded through small group conversations, and explored through experiential activities like virtual reality and augmented reality. Content shared on Twitter can be used as a cognitive tool to help in the reflective study of the experience as well as the potential for future teaching opportunities using augmented reality or virtual reality. Twitter is used as a platform for "purposive reflection" on what was learned in class and how to apply this new knowledge to the technological embodiment's past experience. They also explain that Twitter can be used to support students' social and emotional development, as well as their "social presence," or their ability to "bring themselves" into the learning environment, as well as their learning, engagement, and course satisfaction. They distinguish themselves on Twitter by posting pictures, videos, and posing with avatars in augmented reality apps.

Features of Twitter

There are some Twitter features (help.twitter.com, 2022) that are often used by Twitter users such as Tweet, Retweet, Like, Search, Direct Message, Space, Live Video, Bookmarks, List, Topics, Polls, and Moments.

English Skills

Generally, there are four English skills among others writing, reading, speaking, and listening. According to Dwi Indriani et al. (2020), Writing is defined as the transfer of thought, feeling, or idea into language and written symbols, as well as activities for recording and communication. Meanwhile, reading is simply the recognition or identification of the words represented by the printed symbols. Further, according to Namaziandost & Nasri (2019), speaking is a significant aural/oral ability that entails making systematic verbal "speech" to convey information. And the last, listening is a part of communication that requires the participation of the listener. Listening has an important role in human life because listening is the first communication skill that humans acquire. Listening is an interpretive process in which listeners listen and then match what they hear to what they already know. Pamungkas & Adi, (2020).

METHOD

This study applied a qualitative method as the research design. According to Creswell & Creswell (2018), qualitative research is a method for analyzing data on social issues that has been contributed by individuals or groups. Researcher observes people, investigate activities, processes, and events, or discover the generally common cultural behavior of individuals or groups. The qualitative research method contains questions and procedures that come up, data collection that typically takes place with participants, inductive data analysis that develops from specific topics to general themes, and interpretations of the significance of the data by the researcher.

Respondents of the Research
The research was conducted on Twitter. Questionnaire data collection was held on 19 – 26 April 2022, and interviews were held on 30 April 2022 and 01 July 2022. The subjects of this study were fifty active Twitter users consisting of twenty-five high school students and twenty-five college students. The questionnaire was conducted first, filled out by fifty respondents, and then from the fifty respondents, five respondents were chosen to be interviewed.

Research Variables
This study consists of two variables namely the merits of Twittering as the first variable and English skills as the second variable which are focused on the main skills such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

Instruments
In collecting the data, questionnaire and interview are employed in this research. Questionnaire was conducted to answer all research questions. The questionnaire consists of six questions to which participants wrote their name or initial and answered the questions based on their point of view, and they were free to express anything related to the merits of Twitter in fostering their English skills. Questionnaires were not shared directly on the home timeline, but the researcher sent a DM (direct message) to Twitter users who were willing to fill out the questionnaire. The interview was conducted in a group discussion interview. The researcher created a DM (direct message) group on Twitter and invited 5 respondents who have filled out the questionnaire. Researchers conducted re-interview via WhatsApp group chat to obtain data that would strengthen the results of the questionnaire. There were four questions to answer all the research questions. Questions were submitted in Indonesian so that the information received was understandable. Participants were free to convey anything related to the merits of Twitter in supporting their English skills in their answers, which are based on their point of view.

Data Analysis Techniques
Data analysis from questionnaire data, the researcher made a table for each question of questionnaire to find the most answered or chosen answer by all respondents. The data from each question were interpreted by describing the responses to determine the respondents' perception about the merits of twittering in fostering their English skills. From interview data, in the first step, the researcher read the respondents' answer in an interview on Twitter Direct Message, in the second step, the researcher listened to the respondent's answer in voice notes, then wrote it down on a blank document first. The researcher then analyzed and interpreted it by describing the interview answers to find answers that will strengthen the answers to both research questions from the questionnaire.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION
EFL Students' Perceptions of English Skills that are Fostered by Twittering
Aiming to find the English skills fostered by twittering, the researcher used a questionnaire and interview to collect data. There were two questions to answer the first research question. The first question is about the English skills that are fostered by twittering and the second question is about the English skills that are most facilitated in twittering. The following is the table of questionnaire data regarding EFL students' perceptions of English skills that are fostered by twittering. Respondents could choose more than one English skill.

Table 1: The English Skills that are Fostered by Twittering

English Skills	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Writing	42	84%
Reading	45	90%
Listening	14	28%
Speaking	12	24%

The table above shows the results of the questionnaire data regarding EFL students' perceptions of English skills that are fostered by twittering. From the data, 90% of the respondents chose reading skill, which shows that reading skill was the most fostered English skill for many Twitter users. In this case, R3 stated in the interview:

> What I often see is Twitter users often use slang words, that's what makes me increase
> my knowledge to communicate with others (R3, Interview).

Twitter users usually use slang words when interacting, these slang words can add to the vocabulary of other Twitter users to be used in non-formal communications. Firdaus (2020) mentions that Twitter users frequently include new English words that other Twitter users do not understand when reading information or interaction tweets. Some EFL students don't know the meaning of some slang words, this makes them find out the meaning of the slang words and it will become a new vocabulary for them.

As many as 84% of respondents chose writing skills as an English skill fostered by Twitter. In the interview, R1 stated We can freely tweet using English even though our English is wrong because we are still learning and can be corrected (R1, interview).

Before posting a tweet, Twitter users can preview the tweet before they post it, if there are errors, they can be corrected first. Twitter users are free to tweet anything using English. The errors contained in posted tweets can be a lesson for them in writing.

Then 28% of respondents chose listening skills and 24% of respondents chose speaking skills. In the interview, R4 stated

> Speaking and listening can develop using Space, but I am more confident in speaking
> English and I can add vocabulary (R4, interview).

Space is a Twitter feature that many users use to do speaking or listening, this can be one that can foster the listening and speaking skills of Twitter users.

Furthermore, below is the data from the questionnaire results in the form of a table regarding the most facilitated English skills in twittering. Respondents could only choose one English skill.

Table 2: The English Skills that are Most Facilitated in Twittering

English Skills	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Writing	16	32%
Reading	32	64%
Listening	1	2%
Speaking	1	2%

The table above shows the most facilitated English skills in twittering based on EFL students' perception. From the data, reading skill was chosen by 64% of the total respondents as English skill which was most facilitated in twittering. In this case, R1 and R3 stated:

> Twitter is a writing-based application, so even though we just joined Twitter and haven't
> typed or tweeted, we can see other people's tweets that speak English, so the first thing
> we see is someone else's tweet, so it's reading (R1 interview).
> English skill that Twitter facilitates the most is reading because I prefer to read and see
> the interactions of other Twitter users (R3 interview).

Based on R1 and R3 in the interview, reading skill was the most facilitated English skill because of 'Tweets'. Even though Twitter users did not tweet or interact, all Twitter users could read other users' tweets. According to Malik et al. (2019), tweets that appear on the timeline have various topics, such as sports, governance, health information, elections, and activism. Twitter is widely used for social interaction, information sharing, information seeking, self-documentation, self-expression, entertainment and fun.

Writing skill was chosen by 32% of the respondents, in the interview, R4 stated:
> There are some communities on Twitter, and by communicating with people outside of
> Indonesia in the DM group, in addition to being able to gather together many people in
> one community, I can improve my English writing (R4, interview).

There are some communities such as fan clubs and learning communities on Twitter. One of the facilities on Twitter is the direct message (DM) group, which facilitates these communities to interact more closely with their fellow members in addition to interacting on the timeline.

Listening was chosen by 2% of the respondents, and speaking was chosen by 2% of the respondents. One of the facilities for listening and speaking is space, as R5 stated:
> I think Twitter facilitates listening to the most because there is Space because that space
> can help our listening and listening to people speaking English (R5, interview).

The results of the data above show that reading skill was the most fostered English skill for many Twitter users and the most facilitated English skill by twittering. Thus, it can be concluded that reading skill was the most fostered English skill for many Twitter users because twittering facilitates reading skill.

EFL Students' Perceptions on The Aspects of Twittering that Contribute to Fostering English Skills

Aiming to find the aspects of twittering that contribute to fostering English skills, the researcher used a questionnaire and interview to collect data. Researchers created an online questionnaire that was distributed to 50 Twitter users and interviewed five Twitter users who had filled out the questionnaire.

In the questionnaire, there were two question-answer columns, both questions and answers used Indonesian so that they were easier to understand and got clear answers. A table of the aspects of Twittering that contribute to foster English skills based on questionnaire data are provided below.

Table 3: The Aspects of Twittering that Contribute to Foster English Skills Based on Questionnaire Data

The Aspects	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Reading English tweets	27	54%
Interacting with other Twitter users	8	16%
Tweeting in English	6	12%
Using auto-bases (mention confess or tweet bot account)	3	6%
Reading stories in English	4	8%
Listening to English space	2	4%

The table above is the aspects of twittering that contribute to fostering English skills. Up to 54% of respondents said that reading English tweets could foster their English skills, while 12% of respondents said that tweeting in English could foster their English skills. Twitter is a text-based social media so users read and write tweets more often when twittering. Daily reading and tweeting in English can foster English skills, especially reading skills and writing skills.

Up to 16% of respondents said that interacting with other Twitter users could foster their English skills. It shows that interacting with other users using English was very influential in fostering English skills. Twitter users were from all over the world therefore Twitter users could interact with foreign users using English to understand each other. In a study conducted by Sudiran (2019), one of the students' perceptions was that Twitter helps them in fostering their English to communicate. Using English to communicate or interact on Twitter can help users feel more comfortable using English.

In addition, 6% of respondents said that interacting with or using auto-bases could foster English skills. According to Mardiana & Zi'ni (2020), auto-base is a platform for Twitter users to send topic-specific and anonymous queries via Direct Message. The name auto-base is a combination of the words "automatic" and "fanbase". Through this account, Twitter users can send any tweet anonymously or without the name corresponding to the type of bases, such as a special base for questions and a base for discussion of topics related to food, beauty, favourite artists, or even social issues. Through these bases, followers can post any questions, statements, or information they may have.

Another aspect that contributes to fostering English skills is reading stories in English, 8% of respondents said this. Currently, there are many stories created and tweeted by Twitter users, these stories are frequently referred to as Alternative Universe (AU). Alternative Universe is a story created by fan accounts. The story is fiction and the characters usually use idols, actors, public figures, or anime characters. Additionally, as many as 4% of respondents said that listening to Space is an aspect that contributes to fostering their English skills. Space is live audio that allows users to communicate verbally. Twitter users who join Space can become speakers or listeners.

The following is the table of the respondents' reasons on how twittering can foster English Skills.

Table 4: The Respondents' Reasons on How Twittering can Foster English Skills

The Reasons	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Interacting with other Twitter users using English	20	40%
Reading English tweet	8	16%
Helping to get used to English	2	4%
Finding a lot of information on Twitter	8	16%
Following various accounts that use English	2	4%
Following auto-bases (mention confess or tweet bot account)	4	8%
Increasing vocabulary	3	6%
Checking grammar using the Twitter search bar	2	4%
Sharing information in English	1	2%

According to the result of the questionnaire, the respondents admitted that twittering can foster English skills. The table above is the respondents' elaborate how twittering can foster English skills. Among the various responses, 40% of respondents said that interacting with other Twitter users using English can foster their English skills. Additionally, there are elaborations for reading English tweets and finding a lot of information on Twitter, with 16 percent of respondents accepting each response. Twitter users read more tweets since it is a text-based social network with a large audience. When someone tweets, they might learn a lot from the amount of tweets they read.

Following auto-bases can also help improve the English skills of Twitter users, 8% of respondents answered this. At this time many auto-bases are very helpful for Twitter users, including accounts related to Education. Twitter users also used this to foster their English skills. As many as 6% of respondents indicated that twittering can increase vocabulary, which in turn can improve English language proficiency. By engaging in the above described twittering activities, such as interacting using English, reading English tweets, looking for or getting information, or following auto-base, vocabulary can be increased. As in the research conducted by Firdaus (2020), students get new vocabulary from informative accounts and communicate using English. There are some new vocabularies from the user's tweet that did not reach other Twitter users. As a result, Twitter users will find out the meaning of the new vocabularies in order to understand the meaning of the tweet.

Other respondents answered different reasons, 4% of respondents answered that twittering can help them get used to speaking English, 4% of respondents answered that they follow various accounts that use English, 4% of respondents answered they use the Twitter search bar to check their grammar, and 2% of respondents answered that they shared information in English. These answers are also twittering activities that can foster English skills of Twitter users.

In the discussion of the previous data results, it was found that Reading skill is the most fostered English skill and the most facilitated skill in twittering. Some of the activities and facilities discussed in this subchapter can help foster English skills, including Reading English tweets, interacting with other Twitter users using English, and reading stories in English.

The researcher also used an interview to answer the second research question which was conducted through WhatsApp group chat using the Voice Note feature. The reason for using WhatsApp is that on Twitter Direct Message there is no Voice Note feature, so the researchers decided to use WhatsApp with the consent of the respondents. In this interview, the researchers asked questions related to their activities of twittering that can foster English skills and the aspects of twittering can foster English skills. A table of aspects of twittering that can foster English skills based on interview data is provided below.

Table 5: The Aspects of Twittering that Contribute to Foster English Skills Based on Interview Data

Respondents	The Responses
R1	Because Twitter is a tweet/typed-based application, the freedom to tweet or write tweets is one of the aspects that can foster writing skills, even if we are still mistaken or the grammar is bad.
R2	The contributing aspect in fostering my English skills is using the Space to communicate because it can foster my speaking and listening skills.
R3	Reading skills fosters when I read tweets in English that are tweeted by other users or see the interactions of other users who use English.
R4	The aspect that most influences the development of my English skills is that I frequently interact using English with Twitter users from foreign users and frequently read information, stories, or anything that uses English, it can foster my writing and reading skills.
R5	The aspect that can foster English skills while twittering is a lot of tweets in English that appeared on my timeline and my idols who I follow were written in English, and I also had some external

mutual with whom I interacted in English.

The table above is the result of an interview that discusses aspects of twittering that contribute to fostering their English skills. The respondents expressed different perspectives. R1 stated an aspect of twittering that can foster English skills is the freedom to tweet even though there are writing errors. Twitter users can freely express or share any kind of information without worrying about grammatical errors, but if there are mistakes in their tweets, it will be a lesson for them to write better. R2 stated that the aspect of twittering that can foster English skills is using Space. Space is a Twitter feature that can help users foster listening and speaking skills because based on help.twitter.com Space is a Twitter feature that allows users to have live audio conversations that are open, authentic, and unfiltered. R3 and R4 stated aspects of twittering that can foster English skills are reading English tweets and reading other users' interactions. Many tweets can be read by users, such as information, expressions, interactions, or stories. R4 also stated interacting in English can foster English skills. R5 stated aspects of twittering that can foster English skills are many tweets that appear on the timeline and interact using English. Frequent interaction in English can make users accustomed to using English so that they can develop their English skills.

From the answers of the respondents, it can be concluded that many of them answered reading English tweets is an aspect of twittering that can foster English skills, whether it is regular tweets, information, stories, or others. This supports the results of the questionnaire data that reading English tweets is an aspect that greatly contributes to fostering the English skills of Twitter users. The following is a table of respondents' elaborations about twittering can foster English skills.

Table 6: The Elaborations about Activities of Twittering that can Foster English Skills

Respondents	The Elaborations
R1	My English skills which are fostered by twittering are writing and reading because twitter is a typing/writing-based platform. Communicating in English with foreign users can improve my English skills.
R2	Twittering can foster English skills because interacting with some friends on Twitter can improve English skills and many accounts provide content about English education, for example, grammar.
R3	Twittering can foster my English because many Twitter users from other countries tweet using English to communicate, so my reading and writing skills are improving little by little and I can find out a lot of new vocabulary by reading the interactions of these Twitter users.
R4	Twittering can really foster my English skills because Twitter has a large user base, so information in English is frequently circulated, and I often interact with foreign Twitter users, so this can develop my English skills. At first, I only knew the basics of English, but after twittering, I learned more.
R5	Twittering can foster our English skills, including writing and speaking. To improve writing skills, we can write tweets in English or interact with people on Twitter using English. To improve speaking skills, we can talk in Space with people who speak English.

The table above is the result of interviews with five Twitter users who discussed that twittering can foster English skills. All respondents answered that interacting with other Twitter users using English can foster their English skills, especially reading and writing skills. This supports the results of the questionnaire data that interacting with other Twitter users using English has a big impact on fostering Twitter users' English skills. The respondents also stated that by twittering, users can get various information, learn English from several accounts, add new vocabulary, and use Space.

CONCLUSION

To answer the two research questions, the researcher used a questionnaire and interview research techniques. Fifty respondents have filled out the questionnaire and five sources have been interviewed. Based on the results of questionnaires and interviews, Twitter could foster EFL students' English skills. Reading skill was the skill that was most fostered by twittering and the skill that was most facilitated by twittering. This was supported by the aspects of twittering that contributed the most to fostering English skills that was Twitter users read more English tweets when twittering, such as tweet interactions, information, or stories. Other activities that were aspects of twittering that contributed to fostering English skills were interacting with other users, using auto-bases, searching for information, using space, etc. The results of the research data show that Twitter has many merits in fostering English skills, Twitter users could learn together with other Twitter users and a lot of information and English learning was obtained from Twitter. Most Twitter users were also kind and friendly. Currently, Twitter has many features and information that can support users to foster their English skills. Twitter users can get information from anyone at any time because of its wide reach. Twitter activities are not only reading and making tweets but there are also other useful activities by utilizing Twitter features, these activities can also help grow English language skills. Social media can be useful if used properly, one of which is useful in the field of education. Twittering has benefited the EFL students to foster their English skills because it has some activities and features that support English development. Therefore, it is suggested that EFL students take advantage of the merits of twittering for their English skills development. In addition, this research hopefully can provide inspiration and guidance for further research.

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