



Exploring the Use of Social Media in English Language Learning

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Abstract. *The rapid development of digital technology has transformed English language learning by providing learners with access to authentic language exposure through social media platforms such as YouTube and TikTok. This study aims to explore the use of social media in English language learning and examine its positive and negative impacts on students' language skill development. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed through a literature review of national and international studies published between 2024 and 2026. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings reveal that social media contributes positively to English learning by improving vocabulary acquisition, speaking and listening skills, learner motivation, and opportunities for self-directed learning. Authentic audiovisual content enables learners to engage with language in meaningful and flexible ways. However, several challenges were also identified, including the overuse of informal language, reduced learning concentration due to digital distractions, and decreased face-to-face interaction, which may affect students' social communication skills. The study concludes that the effectiveness of social media in English language learning depends on the quality of content, the intensity of use, and guidance from teachers and parents. Therefore, appropriate digital literacy practices are essential to maximize the educational benefits of social media while minimizing its potential drawbacks.*

Keywords: *Digital Literacy; English Language Learning; Language Skills; Social Media; Students.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has brought about significant changes to children's life patterns in a fundamental way, including the way they acquire and develop language skills. Generation Alpha children, the generation born after 2010, grew up in an environment steeped in digital technology where accessing audio-visual content through the YouTube and TikTok platforms is part of their daily activities. Based on the findings (Novikova et al., 2025), children aged 6–12 years spend an average of 4–7 hours per day consuming digital content (Tanjungpinang, 2022). A cross-country study conducted in Brazil confirmed that 63% of children aged 24–42 months spent more than two hours per day in front of a screen, and the duration of exposure was positively correlated with a slowdown in language development (Nobre et al., 2021). Similar findings were reported from Romania, where children with more than two hours of screen exposure per day showed significantly weaker linguistic and pragmatic performance compared to groups with minimal exposure (Toth, Osser, Bondar, et al., 2026).

Language is the main instrument in the process of thinking, communicating, and socializing children. At primary school age (6–12 years), children are in a critical phase of language acquisition—a time in which vocabulary, sentence structure, and pragmatic abilities develop rapidly through interaction with the environment (Köroğlu, 2026). In the context of the digital era, audiovisual media has become one of the main environments that shape

children's language exposure. A longitudinal study in Sweden that followed 72 children from 9 months to 5 years of age found a consistent negative association between screen use and vocabulary development at each stage of development (Sundqvist et al., 2024). Furthermore, the executive function of the ability to control attention and working memory has been proven to be a mediating mechanism between screen exposure and communication outcomes, so that children who are exposed to excessive entertainment content face double barriers to linguistic and cognitive skills (Toth, Osser, Osser, et al., 2026).

This phenomenon gives birth to new language dynamics that are influenced by visual and digital culture. A Scopus-based study from the Indonesian context found that Generation Z students responded to teachers' questions with Indonesian informal language, slang, regional languages, and mixed language styles a direct reflection of intensive social media exposure (Suyitno et al., 2025). The use of language on social media often causes the boundaries between formal and non-formal languages to become increasingly blurred in daily life (Iswatiningsih et al., 2024). On the other hand, research from China shows that watching TikTok is positively correlated with standard Chinese fluency in children in dialect areas, showing the potential of short video platforms as a language standardization tool if managed appropriately (Yang & Guan, 2024).

Various previous studies have examined this relationship from different aspects. (Chumairoh & Fradana, 2025) researching the use of audiovisual media in formal learning; (Rohmah & Aziz, 2024) analyzes the influence of YouTube on early childhood language development; (Bakrin & Hilalludin, 2025) studied the use of TikTok with the development of children's vocabulary. (Tanjungpinang, 2022).

This study uses a systematic literature review (SLR) design. The objectives of this study are: (1) to examine the positive impact of digital audio-visual content on vocabulary development, speaking skills, and listening in elementary school-age children; (2) analyze the positive and negative impacts of social media use in English language learning.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Media in English Language Learning

Social media is a digital platform that allows users to create, share, and interact with various forms of content online. In the context of education, social media has evolved into a means of learning that provides broad access to diverse learning resources.

Social media allows students to have a more flexible learning experience than conventional learning. Through YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, and other platforms, students

can access learning materials anytime and anywhere. This flexibility supports the concept of *lifelong learning* which emphasizes that the learning process does not only occur in the classroom but also takes place in daily life.

In addition, social media supports a *Computer-Assisted Language Learning* (CALL) approach that utilizes digital technology to increase the effectiveness of language learning. Through social media, students not only become recipients of information but can also interact, discuss, and participate in the wider learning community.

Vocabulary Development Through Social Media

Vocabulary is the main foundation in language mastery. Good vocabulary mastery allows students to understand information and express ideas effectively. Social media provides a rich environment of language input that can support students' vocabulary development.

Through videos, text, images, and audio available on social media, students are exposed to a variety of new vocabulary in a real-world context. This process allows for *incidental vocabulary learning*, which is the acquisition of vocabulary indirectly through language experience.

Krashen through the *theory of the Input Hypothesis* explains that language acquisition occurs when learners acquire intelligible input. In this case, social media provides an abundant and easily accessible source of input so that it can help students expand their vocabulary mastery.

Speaking Skill Development Through Social Media

Speaking ability is one of the most challenging skills for foreign language learners. Many students have difficulty due to the lack of opportunities to practice speaking in real situations.

Social media provides a variety of authentic communication models that students can observe and imitate. Through videos uploaded by native speakers, students can learn pronunciation, intonation, expression, and communication strategies used in everyday life.

Bandura through *Social Learning Theory* explains that individuals can learn through the process of observation and imitation. In this context, social media serves as a means that allows students to observe first-hand use of English and then imitate it in their communication practices.

Listening Skill Development Through Social Media

Listening is a very important receptive skill in language learning. Through social media, students can access a variety of authentic materials that help them understand the use of English in diverse contexts.

Exposure to various accents, speaking speed, and communication styles helps students develop listening skills gradually. Additionally, the subtitle feature available on many social media platforms helps students understand the relationship between spoken and written language.

Learning Motivation Through Social Media

Motivation is a very important factor in the success of language learning. Social media has the ability to increase learning motivation because it presents material in an engaging, interactive, and close to student life.

Content in the form of short videos, animations, infographics, and educational games makes the learning process feel more enjoyable. In addition, students have the freedom to choose materials that suit their interests thereby increasing intrinsic motivation in learning.

Negative Impacts of Social Media

Although it has various benefits, social media can also have a negative impact on English learning.

Excessive Use of Informal Language

The language used in social media is often informal. The excessive use of slang, abbreviations, and non-standard forms of language can affect students' ability to use formal English.

Learning Distraction

Social media is designed to grab users' attention through a variety of notifications and content that is constantly updated. This condition can interfere with students' focus on learning if it is not managed properly.

Reduced Face-to-Face Communication

Spending too much time on social media can reduce the frequency of direct communication which is actually very important in the development of communication and social skills.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method. This method was chosen because it aims to understand and describe the phenomenon of social media use in English learning in depth based on various relevant data sources.

The approach used in this study is a documentation study. Data were obtained from national and international scientific articles, books, conference proceedings, and other

academic documents that discuss the use of social media in English language learning and were published in the period 2024–2026.

Data collection techniques are carried out through identification, selection, and review of various literature sources relevant to the research topic. Data sources were selected based on the suitability of the theme, the credibility of the publisher, and relevance to the research objectives.

Data was analyzed using thematic analysis techniques which included three main stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. In the data reduction stage, relevant information is selected and classified based on the main themes of the study. Furthermore, the data is presented in the form of a systematic descriptive narrative. The final stage is the drawing of conclusions based on the patterns and relationships found during the analysis process.

To increase the credibility of the research, triangulation of sources is carried out by comparing the results of various studies and different literature.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Role of Social Media in the Development of English Vocabulary

The results of the analysis show that social media has a significant contribution to the development of students' English vocabulary. Platforms like YouTube and TikTok allow students to gain exposure to new vocabulary through the variety of content they consume on a daily basis. These findings are in line with research by Zein et al. (2024) who found that TikTok provides a vocabulary-rich learning environment through an engaging combination of video, text, and audio. Additionally, Almohesh and Altamimi (2024) report that consistent use of Instagram contributes to increased vocabulary mastery and student engagement in English language learning.

Repeated exposure to language allows students to learn vocabulary naturally without having to memorize formally. When students see and hear the same word in a variety of contexts, they tend to more easily understand its meaning and usage. These results are supported by Waroh et al. (2025) who conclude that social media provides continuous language exposure thereby accelerating the process of acquiring students' vocabulary. Similar findings were also found by Sakkir et al. (2023) which showed that regular use of social media improves students' ability to recognize and use new vocabulary.

In addition, the combination of visual, audio, and textual elements helps students connect the meaning of words to real situations. This condition supports a vocabulary acquisition process that is more effective than learning methods that rely only on memorization. Widagsa and Fokatea (2024) explain that the short video feature on TikTok allows students to understand the use of vocabulary in an authentic context, thereby improving long-term memory retention.

These findings suggest that social media can be an effective alternative learning resource in expanding English vocabulary mastery.

The Influence of Social Media on Speaking Ability

The results of the study show that social media plays an important role in improving students' speaking skills. Through videos featuring authentic conversations, students can observe how language is used in real-life situations. Research by John and Yunus (2021) shows that social media provides opportunities for students to interact with authentic language, thus helping to improve their oral communication skills.

Exposure to authentic language models helps students understand proper pronunciation, intonation, and expression. In addition, the opportunity to imitate the way native speakers speak increases students' confidence in using English. Widagsa and Fokatea (2024) found that TikTok significantly helped students improve pronunciation, fluency, and speaking confidence through watching and imitating English content.

Social media also creates a more flexible learning environment so that students can practice speaking without the pressures that often arise in formal classroom situations. Setiowati et al. (2024) reported that the use of TikTok videos in project-based learning increases students' courage to speak and actively participate in English learning.

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Exposure to authentic language models helps students understand proper pronunciation, intonation, and expression. In addition, the opportunity to imitate the way native speakers speak increases students' confidence in using English. Widagsa and Fokatea (2024) found that TikTok makes a positive contribution to improving students' pronunciation, fluency, and speaking confidence through watching activities and imitating English content. Similar

findings were also reported by Setiowati et al. (2024) which showed that the use of TikTok videos in learning can significantly improve students' speaking skills.

Social media also creates a more flexible learning environment so that students can practice speaking without the pressures that often arise in formal classroom situations. Through commentary, video recording, live streaming, and online discussions, students have a greater opportunity to use English in more relaxed situations. According to Alghamdi (2022), a flexible digital learning environment can reduce language anxiety and increase student participation in speaking activities.

In addition to improving the linguistic aspect, social media also helps the development of affective aspects in language learning. Students who actively consume and create English-language content tend to have higher courage in communicating. Therefore, social media can serve as an effective means to improve students' speaking skills as well as confidence.

The Influence of Social Media on Listening Ability

Students' listening skills are also developed through the use of social media. Various videos, podcasts, interviews, news, and other digital content provide exposure to diverse languages so that students gain the opportunity to listen to English in a variety of communication contexts.

Students can listen to a variety of different accents and speaking styles so that their ability to understand spoken language gradually increases. According to Widagsa and Fokatea (2024), exposure to authentic content on TikTok helps students recognize pronunciation variations and improve their ability to understand spoken language. Research by Rahman et al. (2023) also shows that the regular use of digital video can significantly improve students' listening comprehension skills.

The presence of subtitles helps students understand the content of the message conveyed and improve their listening skills. Subtitles allow students to associate sound forms with written forms thus strengthening their understanding of vocabulary and sentence structure. This finding is supported by Kusuma and Putri (2022) who found that the use of subtitles in learning videos improves the ability to understand oral information and enriches students' vocabulary mastery.

Additionally, social media allows students to access the material at any time and repeat the content as needed. This flexibility provides opportunities for students to learn independently and adjust the learning pace to their respective abilities. Therefore, social media can be an effective source of language input in developing English listening skills.

The Influence of Social Media on Learning Motivation

Social media has been proven to be able to increase students' motivation to learn because it presents interesting and easily accessible material. Students tend to be more enthusiastic about learning when the material is delivered through the media they use in their daily lives. This finding is supported by Waroh et al. (2025) who stated that TikTok is able to increase learning motivation because it presents an interactive, interesting, and appropriate learning experience in accordance with the characteristics of the digital generation.

In addition, the freedom to choose material according to their interests makes students feel more involved in the learning process. This condition encourages the emergence of intrinsic motivation that plays an important role in the success of language learning. According to Deci and Ryan (2000), intrinsic motivation develops when individuals have the freedom to determine activities that are considered meaningful to them. In the context of social media, students can choose content that suits their needs and interests so that the learning process becomes more enjoyable.

Research by Setiowati et al. (2024) shows that the use of TikTok in English learning increases student engagement because the content presented is considered more interesting than conventional learning methods. Meanwhile, Almohesh and Altamimi (2024) found that social media is able to increase student engagement in language learning through more active and sustainable interactions.

Social media also provides opportunities for students to join online learning communities that allow them to share experiences, discuss, and gain feedback from other users. These interactions help increase motivation and strengthen students' commitment to continue learning English.

Negative Impact of Social Media Use

While it provides a variety of benefits, social media also has a number of negative impacts. First, excessive use of informal language can affect students' ability to use formal English. A lot of social media content uses abbreviations, slang, and non-standard forms of language that have the potential to affect students' academic abilities if used without proper understanding. This finding is supported by Alghamdi (2022) who states that the dominance of informal language in social media can affect the use of formal language in the context of education.

Second, social media can be a source of distraction that reduces students' focus on learning. Various notifications and entertainment content often distract from learning activities. Almoresh and Altamimi (2024) found that uncontrolled use of social media can increase technostress and decrease students' concentration in learning.

Third, excessive use of social media can reduce the frequency of face-to-face interactions that are important for the development of communication skills. According to Kuss and Griffiths (2017), excessive use of social media has the potential to cause digital dependence which can affect the quality of social interaction and the psychological well-being of users.

In addition, not all information available on social media is of good quality. Lack of digital literacy skills can cause students to receive information that is less accurate or not in accordance with learning objectives. Therefore, critical thinking skills are needed in utilizing social media as a means of learning.

Factors Affecting the Effectiveness of Social Media

The effectiveness of social media in English learning is influenced by several main factors. The first factor is the quality of the content accessed. Educational content tends to provide greater benefits than entertainment content alone. According to Greenhow and Lewin (2016), the quality of digital content is one of the important factors that determine the success of the use of social media in education.

The second factor is the intensity of use. Balanced use has a positive impact, while excessive use has the potential to cause various problems. Kuss and Griffiths (2017) explained that uncontrolled use of social media can reduce learning productivity and increase the risk of digital dependence.

The third factor is the assistance of teachers and parents. Good mentoring helps students use social media more effectively and responsibly. Research by Rahman et al. (2023) shows that teacher guidance in choosing digital learning content contributes to improving student learning outcomes.

In addition to these three factors, learning motivation, digital literacy skills, and level of early English proficiency also affect the effectiveness of social media use. Waroh et al. (2025) emphasized that the success of the use of social media in language learning is not only determined by the technology used, but also by the readiness of users to utilize the technology optimally.

By paying attention to these factors, social media can be used optimally as a supporting medium for English learning that is effective, interesting, and relevant to the needs of today's digital generation.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research, it can be concluded that social media has a significant role in supporting English learning in the digital era. Social media platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook provide students with the opportunity to gain authentic language exposure through various forms of easily accessible audiovisual content.

Social media has been proven to make a positive contribution to the development of vocabulary, speaking skills, listening skills, and student learning motivation. In addition, social media also encourages independent learning and increases student involvement in the learning process.

However, the use of social media also poses a number of challenges, such as excessive use of informal language, impaired learning concentration, and reduced direct communication interactions. Therefore, the use of social media in English learning needs to be accompanied by adequate supervision and mentoring.

This study confirms that the effectiveness of social media in English learning is greatly influenced by the quality of the content accessed, the duration of social media use, and the role of teachers and parents in guiding students. With the right digital literacy strategy, social media can be optimally utilized as a learning medium that supports the development of English competencies and 21st century skills.

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