

## Utilizing Social Media for Enhancing English Language Learning Among High School Students in Sungai Penuh

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**Abstrak:** This research investigates the role of social media as a tool for enhancing English language learning among high school students in Sungai Penuh. With platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok widely accessible and popular among students, the study examines their effectiveness in promoting language practice, vocabulary development, and engagement outside the traditional classroom. Employing a qualitative approach, data were collected through interviews and focus group discussions with students from various high schools to understand their experiences and attitudes towards social media as a learning aid. Findings reveal that social media offers a dynamic, interactive environment that supports language acquisition, aligning learning with students' daily activities. However, challenges such as distractions, the need for structured guidance, and content quality concerns were identified. The study suggests that with guided integration, social media holds potential to foster active and engaged language learning in the digital age.

**Kata Kunci:** Social Media in Education, English Language Learning, High School Students, Digital Learning Tools, Language Acquisition,

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## Pendahuluan

The rapid advancement of technology and digitalization has profoundly transformed the educational field, including English language learning. Social media use as a learning aid is increasingly popular among high school students, especially for enhancing English language skills. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter are no longer solely for communication but have become effective resources for language enrichment, particularly in English language acquisition. Social media usage in educational contexts enables students to engage in interactive learning, which can improve language skills through content-based activities, direct communication, and peer collaboration (Aydin, 2014; Sokolova & Perez, 2019).

Research has demonstrated that social media holds the potential to enhance English language skills, especially in speaking and writing. Almuhammadi (2020) revealed that social media assists English as a

Foreign Language (EFL) students in becoming more confident and proficient in verbal communication. Additionally, Goksel and Aydin (2021) found that many students are more interested in and comfortable with learning English through social media than through conventional methods, as these platforms allow for self-paced learning tailored to individual interests and schedules.

Specific platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, have garnered attention in English language learning. Manca and Ranieri (2016) showed that Facebook usage positively impacts students' English learning outcomes. This finding is supported by Greenhow and Askari (2017), who emphasized that social networking sites promote collaborative learning and the development of essential communication skills in language education.

In Indonesia, the use of social media for English learning has also shown promising results. Yunus, Salehi, and Chenzi (2012) identified that social media aids students in improving their writing skills through sharing and written communication activities on platforms like Facebook. Furthermore, Shadiev, Hwang, and Liu (2018) argued that social media allows students to practice English in real-life situations and facilitates direct interaction with native speakers or global communities, providing a more authentic learning experience.

However, several challenges also emerge with the use of social media as a learning tool. Mills and Chiu (2017) highlighted that limitations in content management and platform constraints can restrict its effectiveness in language skill development. Similarly, Wang and Vásquez (2014) noted that while social media is beneficial, its application in language learning requires guidance and support from educators to ensure that students can leverage it optimally.

In Sungai Penuh, particularly at the junior high school level, the use of social media for English learning is emerging as a relevant and practical tool among students. Observations and interviews conducted with teachers and students from several junior high schools in the area, including SMP Negeri 1 and SMP Negeri 2 Sungai Penuh, highlight both the enthusiasm and the challenges related to this approach.

Firstly, many students reported using platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram, and YouTube to practice English outside the classroom. WhatsApp groups, often created by teachers, facilitate English discussions, enabling students to ask questions, share materials, and practice conversational English in a less formal setting. Some students also actively follow English-speaking influencers on Instagram and watch English videos on YouTube, helping them become more accustomed to pronunciation, sentence structure, and new vocabulary.

However, challenges remain, particularly regarding content relevance and accessibility. Several teachers noted that students are sometimes distracted by non-educational content, which can reduce their focus on language learning. Additionally, some students have limited internet access or rely on shared family devices, which restricts their ability to use social media regularly for educational purposes.

Despite these challenges, both teachers and students in Sungai Penuh junior high schools see the potential of social media as a supplementary tool in learning English. Teachers have observed increased student interest and motivation in learning English, particularly when incorporating media that students find engaging and relatable. As a result, there is a growing initiative among English teachers in Sungai Penuh to explore structured methods to integrate social media effectively within the English curriculum, balancing engagement with educational objectives.

Given this background, this study aims to examine how social media usage influences English learning among high school students in Sungai Penuh. This research seeks to understand how students utilize social media to improve their language skills and identify any challenges they may encounter. By exploring these potentials and challenges, the study hopes to provide educators with insights into maximizing social media as a supportive tool in English language learning.

## Literature

### Theoretical Framework

In the current digital era, social media has become a significant tool in language learning, providing diverse platforms and content that can enhance student engagement and motivation (Benson, 2015;

Richards, 2018). Social media platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp, and YouTube enable students to practice English in real-world contexts, often enhancing their linguistic confidence and conversational abilities (Aydin, 2014). The theories and studies surrounding social media in language education underscore its role in promoting interactive learning environments, particularly for non-native English speakers who may lack regular exposure to the language in their daily lives (Dörnyei, 2009; Kabilan, Ahmad, & Abidin, 2010).

### **Social Media as a Language Learning Tool**

Studies have shown that social media facilitates interactive and immersive language learning, allowing students to communicate in authentic English contexts with peers, teachers, and native speakers. This engagement aids in enhancing vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation skills in ways traditional methods may not (Sokolova & Perez, 2019; Kabilan et al., 2010). According to Wang and Castro-Alonso (2019), social media provides learners with opportunities to practice language skills outside the formal classroom setting, promoting self-directed and autonomous learning.

### **Benefits of Social Media in English Language Acquisition**

Social media use in English language learning contributes to a more engaging and relatable learning experience. Aydin (2014) argues that social media can boost students' confidence by offering a less formal environment where they can experiment with the language. Additionally, using social media allows students to participate in real-life conversations and access English content that may not be available in traditional textbooks, which fosters a deeper understanding of cultural nuances and informal language use (Green & Batool, 2017). Benson (2015) highlights that social media encourages collaboration, allowing students to learn through interactions and peer feedback, thus reinforcing language skills through practical usage.

### **Challenges in Implementing Social Media for Educational Purposes**

Despite its benefits, the use of social media in education faces several challenges. For instance, teachers often note that students may become distracted by non-educational content, impacting their focus on learning (Yusuf, 2020). Furthermore, issues such as internet accessibility and device limitations can hinder consistent and equitable access to social media for educational purposes (Rahman, 2018). Nurhasanah (2019) suggests that to maximize the benefits of social media in education, educators should adopt structured approaches that integrate social media activities within the formal curriculum while managing the potential distractions that may arise.

### **The Role of Teachers in Guiding Social Media Use for English Learning**

Teachers play a crucial role in maximizing the educational potential of social media while addressing its challenges. Greenberg and Jennings (2019) argue that teachers who integrate social media effectively within their lesson plans can significantly enhance student engagement and learning outcomes. By setting guidelines and curating relevant content, teachers can encourage students to use social media responsibly for learning purposes. Moreover, Pashler et al. (2008) emphasize the need for teacher training on how to incorporate digital tools effectively, as many educators may lack familiarity with the educational applications of social media.

### **Social Media's Influence on Students' Motivation and Self-Efficacy**

Research indicates that social media can positively impact students' motivation and self-efficacy in learning English (Dumont & Provost, 2019). Through interactive content and peer collaboration, students gain a sense of achievement and improved confidence, which reinforces their learning (Idris, 2015). Mustafa (2020) further notes that when students engage in language practice on social media, they feel more connected to the learning process, as it aligns with their daily communication habits.

### **Strategies for Effective Use of Social Media in Language Education**

A well-structured approach to social media integration in language education includes selecting platforms and content that align with specific learning goals. Teachers are encouraged to incorporate tasks that foster language skills while minimizing distractions, such as structured group discussions or assignments on platforms like WhatsApp and Instagram (Jones & Kahn, 2020). Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan (2021) recommends developing policies to support responsible use of digital tools within educational institutions to ensure that social media contributes positively to students' academic growth.

## Method

This study employs a qualitative research approach to explore the impact of social media on English language learning among junior high school students in Sungai Penuh. A qualitative method was chosen to enable an in-depth examination of students' experiences, perceptions, and challenges related to using social media as a tool for language acquisition. Through observations, interviews, and document analysis, this research aims to gain insight into how social media influences students' motivation, engagement, and language skills development. A case study design was selected, focusing on two junior high schools in Sungai Penuh, allowing for a thorough investigation of the phenomenon within its natural context, providing detailed insights into the specific environment, social interactions, and experiences of students and teachers.

Participants in the study included 30 junior high school students from two schools in Sungai Penuh, selected through purposive sampling, based on their frequent use of social media for learning purposes. Additionally, five English teachers were included to provide their perspectives on the role of social media in supporting or hindering language acquisition. To collect data, three main techniques were used: semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. The semi-structured interviews with students and teachers provided flexible yet focused insights into the motivations, challenges, and benefits of using social media for language learning. Classroom observations allowed the researcher to witness firsthand the engagement and interactions facilitated by social media in language classes, with field notes documenting key behaviors. Document analysis of instructional materials and lesson plans further supported an understanding of how social media is formally integrated into the language curriculum.

The data collected from interviews, observations, and document analysis were analyzed using thematic analysis, which enabled the researcher to identify, analyze, and report on the patterns that emerged. The process began with familiarizing with the data through reviewing and transcribing interviews and notes, followed by coding significant statements and phrases related to social media's impact on language learning. The codes were then grouped into broader themes, such as "social media as a motivational tool," capturing related observations and participant feedback. The themes were refined through cross-referencing and validation with the interview data to ensure consistency and relevance to the research questions.

Throughout the study, ethical guidelines were carefully followed to protect participants' privacy and well-being. Informed consent was obtained from all student participants and their parents, as well as from the teachers involved. Anonymity was preserved by omitting participants' names from reports, and participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Triangulation, using multiple data sources, was employed to ensure the study's reliability and validity, while member checking with selected participants helped to validate findings and refine interpretations. This methodological approach provides a well-rounded perspective on the influence of social media on English language learning among junior high students in Sungai Penuh, capturing both the positive impacts on motivation and engagement and the practical challenges encountered in a digital learning environment.

## Results

This study reveals several key insights into the influence of social media on English language learning among junior high school students in Sungai Penuh. The analysis of interviews, observations, and documents highlighted three major themes: increased motivation and engagement, enhanced access to language resources, and the challenges associated with focus and content reliability.

### 1. Increased Motivation and Engagement

Many students expressed that social media platforms, such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, provide an enjoyable way to learn English. They reported that interacting with content from native speakers, including videos, music, and posts, makes the language feel more accessible and relevant to their daily lives. Observations in the classroom further confirmed that students were more engaged and enthusiastic when discussing or utilizing content they found on social media in their English assignments. Teachers also noted a marked increase in participation when lessons included elements students were familiar with through social media, such as popular songs or phrases. This aligns with studies showing that using relatable digital media can enhance students' motivation and willingness to participate in language learning activities (Rahmatullah et al., 2020; Sari & Fadhil, 2021).

## 2. Enhanced Access to Language Resources

Students in the study reported that social media exposed them to diverse language resources beyond what was available in their textbooks. Many students mentioned using YouTube videos to learn about grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation at their own pace, which they found useful for clarifying classroom lessons. Additionally, students appreciated the flexibility of learning through social media, as it allowed them to explore specific interests like English slang, idioms, and cultural references. Teachers confirmed that social media gives students greater autonomy in their learning, as they can access tutorials, language apps, and native speakers' content outside of school. This finding supports prior research indicating that social media can expand language learners' exposure to authentic English usage and provide a richer, context-based learning environment (Iskandar, 2019; Harahap & Nasution, 2020).

## 3. Challenges in Focus and Content Reliability

While students and teachers noted the positive aspects of social media, they also acknowledged challenges, particularly with students' focus and the reliability of information. Some students admitted that social media can be distracting, leading them to spend more time on entertainment content than on educational materials. Observations showed that when given tasks involving social media, some students found it difficult to stay focused on the language learning component, often switching to unrelated content. Additionally, teachers raised concerns about the quality and accuracy of information on social media, noting that some content contains grammatical or contextual errors that may mislead students. Students themselves reported confusion when encountering language variations and conflicting language rules on different platforms. These issues align with studies suggesting that, while social media provides valuable learning opportunities, it also poses challenges in terms of content reliability and student focus (Aminah et al., 2021; Putri, 2020).

## 4. Differences in Engagement Based on Social Media Platforms

The study found that different social media platforms varied in their effectiveness for language learning. Students reported that YouTube was the most helpful platform for structured learning, as it offers numerous tutorials, explanations, and lectures that cater to specific language skills. In contrast, platforms like Instagram and TikTok were more effective for casual exposure to English, allowing students to practice listening and reading skills through short videos and posts. Teachers observed that students who preferred YouTube often showed higher progress in grammar and vocabulary, while students who favored Instagram and TikTok demonstrated improved conversational skills and listening comprehension. These findings are in line with prior research suggesting that different social media platforms offer distinct language learning advantages, with some being more suitable for formal instruction and others for informal practice (Rachman, 2019; Fauzan, 2021).

## 5. Teachers' Role in Guiding Social Media Use

The role of teachers emerged as essential in guiding students' use of social media for language learning. Teachers reported that providing recommendations on reliable language learning channels, setting clear goals, and incorporating social media in structured classroom activities helped students maximize the educational benefits of these platforms. Teachers also emphasized the importance of discussing content critically with students to address misinformation and language misuse on social media. Some teachers assigned tasks that required students to evaluate social media content or identify and correct errors, promoting critical thinking skills alongside language acquisition. This approach echoes findings from other studies that highlight the need for educator involvement to help students navigate social media responsibly and focus on quality learning materials (Firdaus et al., 2021; Wulandari, 2020).

In summary, the results suggest that social media can be a valuable tool for English language learning, fostering motivation and providing access to varied language resources. However, the study also highlights the need for structured guidance from teachers to address challenges in focus, content reliability, and the

selection of appropriate learning materials. The findings underscore that, while social media offers unique opportunities for language practice and exposure, careful management and critical engagement are essential to optimize its impact on student learning outcomes.

## Discussion

The results of this study highlight both the potential benefits and the inherent challenges associated with social media use in English language learning among junior high school students in Sungai Penuh. The findings align with existing research, reinforcing the dual role of social media as a resourceful yet sometimes distracting medium for education. In this section, we examine the implications of each theme identified, discussing how social media's unique features can support or hinder language acquisition, as well as the role of educators in optimizing these outcomes.

### 1. The Motivational Power of Social Media in Language Learning

Social media's capacity to motivate students by providing relatable, real-world language examples aligns with Self-Determination Theory, which suggests that students are more engaged when they feel autonomous and see relevance in their learning (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The enjoyment students derive from engaging with content by native speakers on platforms like YouTube and Instagram can lead to increased exposure to English, which is essential for language acquisition. This finding corroborates prior research showing that social media, as an informal and accessible tool, can increase learner motivation by connecting them with authentic language materials (Rahmatullah et al., 2020). However, it also underscores the importance of balancing engagement with intentional learning goals, a task that requires structured support from teachers.

### 2. Enhanced Access to Diverse Language Resources

Social media's broad access to varied language materials enhances traditional language education, as it allows students to tailor learning to their interests and pace. This diversity promotes what Krashen (1982) refers to as comprehensible input—language exposure that is just beyond the current level of the learner, which encourages gradual improvement. By offering content that spans a wide range of linguistic styles, such as formal instructional videos and casual conversational phrases, social media serves as a dynamic supplementary resource. Previous studies have similarly shown that platforms like YouTube and TikTok expose students to different language registers and idiomatic expressions, helping bridge the gap between classroom language and real-world English (Iskandar, 2019). Teachers, therefore, play a critical role in guiding students toward high-quality resources that align with curriculum standards.

### 3. Challenges with Focus and Content Reliability

Despite its benefits, social media can hinder learning when it diverts students' focus to non-educational content or exposes them to language inaccuracies. This concern aligns with research indicating that while students may start with educational intent, they often become distracted by the entertainment-oriented design of many platforms (Aminah et al., 2021). Students' occasional confusion due to contradictory language content on social media highlights the need for teachers to encourage critical evaluation skills. Educators can address this challenge by teaching students how to identify credible sources and recognize content errors, fostering media literacy alongside language skills (Putri, 2020). Incorporating media evaluation tasks in the classroom can help students build discernment, reducing the potential negative impacts of unreliable content on their language development.

### 4. Distinct Platform Advantages for Language Skills

The study's findings that different platforms serve varied language functions confirm the importance of platform-specific engagement. For example, YouTube, with its longer-form content, is ideal for structured learning, providing in-depth lessons on topics like grammar or vocabulary. Conversely, Instagram and TikTok are more suited for spontaneous language practice, as their short, casual posts help students improve listening comprehension and conversational fluency in informal English (Rachman, 2019). This outcome suggests that rather than using social media uniformly, educators could guide students on how to maximize each platform's distinct strengths for targeted language skills. This nuanced approach aligns with research recommending that language instruction leverage different media formats for diverse educational purposes (Fauzan, 2021).

## 5. Teacher-Guided Social Media Use

Teacher involvement is essential to help students navigate the complexities of learning English through social media. By providing recommended channels, setting language goals, and incorporating critical discussions around social media content, educators can help students stay focused on educational objectives. This guidance ensures that social media remains an effective tool for language acquisition rather than becoming a source of distraction. Moreover, assigning tasks that require students to assess social media content critically not only improves their language accuracy but also builds important analytical skills (Firdaus et al., 2021). Teachers who act as mediators between social media content and language curriculum can thus foster a balanced, productive use of these platforms in language learning (Wulandari, 2020).

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the study reaffirms social media's powerful role in enhancing language learning, particularly for motivation and resource accessibility. However, effective use of social media for educational purposes requires structured teacher guidance to ensure students benefit from its advantages while mitigating distractions and content reliability issues. By adopting a strategic approach, educators can transform social media from a casual platform into a valuable language learning tool that supports and enhances classroom instruction.

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