


## Exploring the Benefits and Challenges of Social Media in English Language Learning: Insights from English Education Students

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### A B S T R A C T

This study aimed to investigate the potential benefits and challenges associated with using social media in English language learning, focusing on English education students. The research used a mixed-method design, incorporating questionnaires. The benefits of using social media in learning English are multifaceted and significant. English learning also enhances their digital literacy and technology skills. Social media platforms provide learners with access to authentic language use in real-time contexts, allowing them to observe and engage with native speakers, which enhances their understanding of colloquial expressions and cultural nuances. The interactive nature of social media fosters active participation and communication practice, which are crucial for developing speaking and writing skills. Social media also offers diverse content, from educational videos and articles to interactive exercises and language learning communities, catering to various learning preferences and needs. English education students have identified several challenges when using social media for learning English, alongside potential solutions to these issues. Some challenges are perceived more negatively (distractions, language barriers, and material credibility), others are seen in a more positive light (maintaining focus and self-discipline and balancing time). The perception varies across different aspects of learning English on social media, highlighting the complexity of the experience and the individual preferences and challenges of the respondents. It is essential to consider these perceptions when designing educational strategies and support systems for learners on social media platforms.

**Keywords:** Benefits, Challenges, Social Media, English Language Learning, Education

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## INTRODUCTION

Social media plays a crucial role in enhancing English language acquisition by providing a platform for learners to engage with diverse vocabulary, improve communication skills, and boost self-confidence. Studies highlight the positive impact of social media on vocabulary learning, reading, listening, writing skills, and grammar usage among second language learners. Additionally, social media platforms facilitate automated learning and visualization techniques, making English learning engaging and inspiring. The integration of social media into language instruction not only supports language acquisition but also promotes cultural awareness, learner autonomy, and task-based language teaching approaches. Utilizing social media tools like Facebook for teaching has shown to enhance English vocabulary acquisition and overall performance compared to traditional methods, emphasizing the effectiveness of incorporating social media in educational settings.

The proliferation of social media platforms has revolutionized the landscape of communication and information dissemination. Social media's ubiquitous presence has not only reshaped how people interact but has also infiltrated various domains of education, offering a promising avenue for enhancing language learning. This presence has not only

reshaped how people interact but has also infiltrated various domains of education, offering a promising avenue for enhancing language learning. Social media has a positive impact on language learners' confidence, attitude, and motivation (Zainal & Rahmat, 2020). This has been attributed to the fact that participation in social media platforms offers language learners opportunities for language improvement, exposing them to a wide range of texts (Zainal & Rahmat, 2020).

Social media provides language learners with the possibility to apply interactive channels in their language-learning journey (Khan et al., 2020). These interactive social media channels enable learners to improve their communication and develop the four basic language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The intensity of using English-language social media content is positively related to students' perceptions of their ability to speak English, including all aspects of language learning (Muftah, 2023). This study aims to investigate the perceptions, potential benefits, and challenges associated with the utilization of social media in English language learning, with a particular focus on English education students.

The rationale behind this study lies in the intersection of two significant trends in contemporary education: the growing importance of digital technology, including social media, in the learning process, and the evolving landscape of language education. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, proficiency in the English language holds tremendous value. At the same time, the integration of technology and social media into education has the potential to engage students, foster collaboration, and provide access to authentic language resources (Abe & Jordan, 2013). Previous research has indicated the transformative potential of technology-enhanced language learning, highlighting advantages such as increased motivation and opportunities for meaningful language use (Rezaul Karim et al., 2022). However, while the use of social media in language learning is gaining traction, there remains a dearth of research focusing specifically on English education students' perspectives and experiences within this context. Understanding their perceptions and challenges is crucial for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers seeking to optimize language instruction in the digital age.

The integration of social media in language learning settings has also been explored. For instance, (Hasan et al., 2020) examined the impact of social media tools on language learners' motivation and engagement. Their findings suggest that incorporating social media into language instruction can enhance students' enthusiasm for learning and encourage interaction in the target language. Learning English has become increasingly important in our globalized society, with individuals seeking to acquire proficiency in the language for various reasons such as pursuing higher education abroad, expanding job opportunities, or simply for personal enrichment. To cater to the growing demand for English language learning, educators and researchers have explored various approaches and tools to support language acquisition and proficiency. Social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and WhatsApp have become an integral part of our daily lives, providing a platform for communication, information sharing, and interaction. Several studies have investigated the use of social media in the context of learning English and have identified several benefits and advantages associated with this approach (Lutviana & Mafulah, 2021).

Numerous studies have highlighted the potential impact of using social media for learning English including enhancing language proficiency, fostering authentic communication, reducing anxiety, improving students' motivation and facilitating collaborative learning (Aljameel, 2022; Amin & Sundari, 2020; Mubarak, 2016; Lutviana & Mafulah, 2021; Paliath & Evangeline, 2022; Richards, 2015; Tufail, 2021). While these studies offer valuable insights, they do not specifically address the unique context of English education students. This research aims to bridge that gap by focusing on the perceptions and experiences of English education students, shedding light on their specific needs, challenges, and expectations regarding the incorporation of social media in English language learning.

The study can influence the development of policies and guidelines for integrating technology, including social media, into language education. This can have a broader impact on educational systems. The research adds to the body of knowledge regarding the use of social media in language learning, particularly within the context of English education. It can serve as a foundation for future research and academic discourse. Understanding the challenges English education students face when using social media for learning can lead to the creation of student-centered strategies that address their specific needs and concerns. Enhanced English language skills, facilitated by effective use of social media, can increase the global competitiveness of individuals and nations in fields such as business, science, and diplomacy.

The primary purpose of this research is to explore the perceptions of English education students regarding the potential benefits of integrating social media into English classes and to identify and describe the challenges English education students encounter when using social media as a tool for learning the English language.

## METHOD

This study employs a mixed-methods research design, as recommended by several prominent scholars in the field (Ary et al., 2010; Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017; Mertens, 2010; Mills, Geoffrey; Gay, 2019). The objective is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the research topic. Data collection for this study involved both questionnaires and interviews with the English Education program at STKIP YDB Lubuk Alung.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### *Benefit of Using Social Media in Learning English*

There are several findings to answer the first question related to the benefits of social media in learning English. This can be seen in the table below that presents an analysis of the perceptions of English education students regarding the potential benefits of using social media in the process of learning English. The table illustrates students' responses to specific Likert-scale items, shedding light on their perceptions of various aspects of learning English through social media. High and low perception percentages, mean scores, and decision categories are provided to offer a comprehensive overview of their viewpoints."

**Table 1.** Perceptions of English Education Students Regarding the Benefits of Using Social Media in Learning English

Items	Decision
1. Using social media platforms for learning English allows me to practice English in real-life contexts.	High Perception
2. Social media provides access to a wide variety of authentic English language content (videos, articles, conversations) that can enhance my language skills.	High Perception
3. Learning English through social media is more engaging and interactive compared to traditional classroom methods.	Low Perception
4. Social media allows me to connect with native English speakers and language enthusiasts, providing opportunities for language exchange and cultural exchange.	High Perception
5. I can easily access language learning communities and groups on social media platforms, where I can ask questions, seek advice, and collaborate with fellow learners.	Low Perception
6. Social media platforms offer a flexible and convenient way for me to learn English at my own pace and schedule.	Low Perception
7. The use of social media in English learning helps improve my digital literacy and technology skills.	High Perception
8. Learning English through social media is cost-effective compared to traditional language courses or textbooks.	Low Perception

9. Social media allows me to explore and learn about different English accents and dialects, improving my overall comprehension skills.	High Perception
10. The use of social media in English learning enhances my overall motivation and enthusiasm for language learning.	Low Perception

An overwhelming 95% of students recognize the value of social media in providing a platform for practicing English in real-life contexts. This high percentage underscores the belief that social media is not just a theoretical or isolated learning environment but a dynamic space where learners can apply language skills in practical, everyday scenarios. The immediacy and relevancy of social media interactions mimic real-life conversations and exchanges, offering a practical application beyond the traditional classroom setting. Contrastingly, only a small fraction (10%) of students find learning English through social media more engaging and interactive than traditional methods. This suggests a critical viewpoint that, despite the advantages of social media, it may not universally surpass the engagement levels of in-person or classroom-based learning. The interactive potential of social media, while notable, may not fully replace the interactive dynamics found in traditional educational settings for the majority of students. All students surveyed (100%) appreciate the opportunity social media provides to connect with native English speakers and enthusiasts. These connections offer invaluable language exchange and cultural learning opportunities, allowing learners to immerse themselves in the language as it is naturally used. This aspect of social media learning emphasizes the platform's strength in facilitating genuine, organic language learning experiences.

A quarter of the respondents (25%) see social media as a flexible and convenient tool for learning English, suggesting that the majority do not perceive it as significantly enhancing learning flexibility. This viewpoint highlights a gap between the potential for anytime, anywhere learning offered by social media and the actual experience of students, who may face challenges in using social media effectively within their learning routines. A vast majority (85%) agree that using social media for English learning also enhances their digital literacy and technology skills. This dual benefit is a significant positive, suggesting that the educational value of social media extends beyond language learning to include vital skills in navigating and utilizing digital platforms effectively. Only 30% of students view social media as a cost-effective alternative to traditional language courses or textbooks. While social media offers free access to vast resources, this perception indicates that not all students consider it a complete or sufficient replacement for structured learning materials and experiences. Eighty percent of students value social media for the opportunity to explore various English accents and dialects. This exposure is crucial for developing a well-rounded understanding of the language, recognizing its diversity, and preparing for comprehension and communication in a global context.

Lastly, 35% of students feel that learning English via social media boosts their motivation and enthusiasm. While this shows that social media can be an inspiring tool for some, it also reflects a broader sentiment that it may not universally ignite or sustain interest in language learning. In summary, social media presents a complex but valuable landscape for English education. Its strengths lie in offering real-life practice, authentic content, and cultural exchange opportunities. However, challenges in engagement, community access, and perceived educational value suggest there is room for improvement or complementary strategies to maximize its potential as a language learning tool.

English education students have generally positive perceptions of using social media in learning English, particularly in terms of real-life practice, access to authentic content, connecting with native speakers, and improving digital literacy. However, they may not universally perceive it as more engaging than traditional methods, convenient, or cost-effective. Additionally, there is a mixed perception regarding its impact on motivation for



language learning. These varied perceptions suggest that while social media offers several benefits for language education, students' views may differ, and a tailored approach may be necessary to leverage these benefits effectively.

The benefits of using social media in learning English are multifaceted and significant. Social media platforms provide learners with access to authentic language use in real-time contexts, allowing them to observe and engage with native speakers, which enhances their understanding of colloquial expressions and cultural nuances. Additionally, the interactive nature of social media fosters active participation and communication practice, which are crucial for developing speaking and writing skills. Social media also offers diverse content, from educational videos and articles to interactive exercises and language learning communities, catering to various learning preferences and needs. Furthermore, the convenience and accessibility of social media make it an ideal tool for continuous learning, as students can practice their language skills anytime and anywhere. This constant exposure and practice contribute to increased confidence and motivation, as learners see tangible progress in their language abilities. Overall, social media enriches the language learning experience by providing dynamic, real-world contexts for practice and engagement, making it an invaluable resource for English learners.

### ***Challenges In Using Social Media For Learning English***

To answer the second question related to the challenges faced by the students in using social media to learn English can be seen in the table below that delves into the challenges described by English education students when it comes to using social media as a tool for learning English. This table highlights key areas where students face difficulties or concerns. It provides insights into students' perceptions related to engagement, accessibility, flexibility, cost-effectiveness, and motivation. The analysis allows us to identify the challenges that students encounter when utilizing social media in their language learning journey."

**Table 2.** Challenges Described by English Education Students in Using Social Media for Learning English

<b>Items</b>	<b>Decision</b>
1. Finding reliable and high-quality English language content on social media platforms is challenging.	Low Perception
2. Distractions on social media, such as unrelated content or notifications, negatively impact my English learning experience.	High Perception
3. Maintaining focus and self-discipline while using social media for learning English can be difficult.	Low Perception
4. Language barriers, including unfamiliar accents and idiomatic expressions, can be a challenge when interacting with native speakers on social media.	High Perception
5. Limited opportunities for face-to-face interaction with teachers or language partners on social media can hinder my learning progress.	High Perception
6. Privacy and security concerns on social media platforms can be a barrier to active participation in English language learning communities.	Low Perception
7. Technical issues or poor internet connectivity can disrupt my online English learning sessions on social media.	Low Perception
8. Evaluating the credibility and reliability of language learning materials and resources shared on social media is a challenge.	High Perception
9. Balancing the time spent on social media for learning English with other academic or personal responsibilities can be challenging.	Low Perception
10. The lack of a structured curriculum and guidance on social media platforms can make it difficult to track my language learning progress.	High Perception

In summary, the data suggests that while some challenges are perceived more negatively (e.g., distractions, language barriers, and material credibility), others are seen in a

more positive light (e.g., maintaining focus and self-discipline and balancing time). The perception varies across different aspects of learning English on social media, highlighting the complexity of the experience and the individual preferences and challenges of the respondents. It is essential to consider these perceptions when designing educational strategies and support systems for learners on social media platforms.

English education students have identified several challenges when using social media for learning English, alongside potential solutions to these issues. One of the primary challenges is the distraction caused by non-educational content. Social media platforms are designed to capture attention, and the presence of entertaining or irrelevant material can easily divert students from their learning goals. To mitigate this, students suggest the use of specialized educational platforms or apps that incorporate social media features but maintain a strict focus on language learning. Another challenge is the language barrier, especially for beginners who may find it difficult to navigate and comprehend content in English. Solutions proposed include the use of integrated translation tools and beginner-friendly content to gradually build proficiency. Additionally, the variability in the quality of available resources can be a concern. Students recommend curating a list of reliable sources and following educators or institutions known for providing high-quality content. To address the issue of motivation and engagement, students highlight the importance of setting clear, achievable goals and using interactive features like quizzes, discussions, and collaborations to maintain interest and participation. These insights underscore the need for a structured and supportive approach to leveraging social media for language education, ensuring that the benefits can be maximized while minimizing potential drawbacks.

## CONCLUSION

The insights derived from English education students' perceptions of utilizing social media for language learning underscore a nuanced landscape of both positive and challenging facets. While the positive aspects, such as real-life practice, access to authentic content, and connections with native speakers, are evident, there exists a divergence in views regarding engagement, convenience, and cost-effectiveness. The mixed perception regarding its impact on motivation further emphasizes the intricate nature of this educational medium.

The identified challenges, ranging from distractions and language barriers to concerns about material credibility, illuminate the multifaceted nature of the experience. Notably, the positive perceptions, including maintaining focus, self-discipline, and effective time management, contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics involved in learning English on social media. This diversity in perspectives underscores the necessity for a tailored approach in leveraging the benefits of social media for language education effectively. In light of these findings, it is imperative for educational strategies and support systems to be crafted with a nuanced understanding of students' varying perceptions and preferences on social media. By acknowledging and integrating these insights, educators can foster an environment that maximizes the benefits of social media while addressing the unique challenges faced by English language learners, thereby contributing to the continual refinement and optimization of language education in contemporary digital landscapes.

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