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Seyed Reza Abedi  and **Salomeh Elahi** 

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Leveraging Social Media Platforms to Enhance Students' English Proficiency: A Comprehensive Analysis

Seyed Reza Abedi* and Salomeh Elahi

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the use of social media as a medium to enhance students' understanding of English, while also exploring the challenges, particularly the distractions caused by entertainment content. The method used in this research is qualitative with a literature review approach, analyzing various relevant literature, scholarly articles, and previous studies to investigate the impact of social media on English learning. The results show that social media platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram provide wide access to educational content that helps students improve their English skills, including listening, speaking, grammar, and vocabulary. However, social media also presents a significant distraction risk, where students tend to be diverted to entertainment content rather than learning. This phenomenon is explained through various theories, such as Social Learning Theory, Cognitive Load, and Self-Regulated Learning. The study concludes that while social media holds great potential in supporting English learning, more directed strategies are needed to manage its use to maximize benefits and reduce the risk of distraction. Utilizing distraction control features, time management, and developing students' self-regulation skills are identified as key factors in enhancing the effectiveness of learning through social media.

Keywords: Social Media; English learning; Improvement of Understanding

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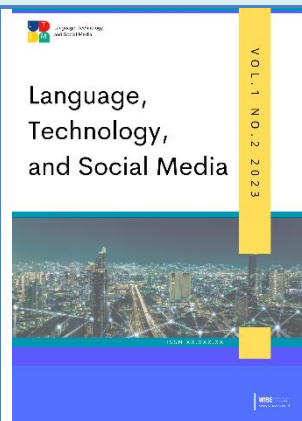
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INTRODUCTION

The development of technology and the internet has transformed many aspects of human life, including the field of education [1], [2], [3]. One of the significant phenomena that has emerged as a result of this development is the use of social media in the learning process [4], [5]. Social media, which was initially used solely for communication and information sharing, has now evolved into a multifunctional platform, including as a learning tool in education [6], [7]. Specifically in English learning, social media has become a source of highly varied, flexible, and up-to-date materials relevant to current developments [8]. English, as a global language, plays an increasingly important role in the international arena, whether in business, academia, or social contexts [9], [10]. Mastery of this language has become a primary requirement for students who wish to compete on the global stage. In Indonesia, English is taught from elementary to higher education, yet classroom learning often proves insufficient for students to truly master the language. Many students find it challenging to practice English due to limited opportunities to interact with native speakers or engage with authentic English content.

This is where the role of social media becomes significant. Platforms like YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, and others provide English-language content that is not only diverse but also captures students' interest [11], [12]. This content ranges from tutorial videos, podcasts, and articles to direct discussions with native speakers through various interactive features. Social media offers a more flexible learning experience, allowing students to study anytime and anywhere, according to their individual learning styles and paces. The use of social media in English language learning has garnered the attention of many researchers in recent years. According to research by Rwodzi, Christopher, et al., social media can enhance students' motivation to learn English because the content presented is more contextual and relevant to their daily lives [13]. Additionally, the use of social media allows students to practice their language skills independently, outside of formal school hours. This provides them with the opportunity to explore aspects of the language that may not be covered in depth in class, such as slang or idiomatic expressions commonly used by native speakers.

Furthermore, Handayani et al. [13] In their research, they emphasize that social media has a positive impact on enhancing language skills, particularly in terms of vocabulary, pronunciation, and understanding cultural context [14], [15]. They mention that exposure to varied authentic English content helps students enrich their vocabulary while also understanding the nuances of the language that cannot be acquired solely from textbooks. Through videos, images, and texts uploaded on social media, students can learn English in a more visual and interactive way, which has proven to be more effective compared to traditional, more passive methods.

In the framework of learning theory, the use of social media can also be viewed through the lens of constructivist theory as proposed by Vygotsky [16]. This theory emphasizes that the learning process occurs through social interaction and the construction of knowledge from the experiences individuals acquire. Social media provides a platform that facilitates social interaction between students and various parties, including peers, teachers, and native speakers from around the world. Students not only passively receive information but also actively participate in discussions, share experiences, and provide feedback. This aligns with the principles of constructivism, which emphasize that effective learning occurs when students can actively construct meaning from their experiences.

Aside from constructivist theory, the social media-based learning approach is also relevant to the concept of active learning proposed by Prince [17]. Active learning emphasizes the importance of direct student engagement in the learning process. Social media, with its various interactive features such as comments, live streaming, and online discussions, allows students to be more directly involved in the learning process. They can comment on educational videos, ask questions to content creators, or even create their own content as part of the learning process. This provides students with the opportunity to hone their language skills through real practice, which is certainly more effective than merely memorizing grammar rules or vocabulary.

However, despite the many benefits offered, the use of social media in English learning also faces challenges [18]. One of the main challenges is distraction. Social media, with its highly engaging nature, often tempts students to access content that is irrelevant to their learning. Additionally, not all content on social media is of good educational quality. Some content may contain incorrect information or fail to meet established educational standards [19]. Therefore, it is important for teachers and parents to monitor students' use of social media and provide guidance in selecting appropriate and high-quality content. Additionally, social media also carries the potential for misuse, such as cyberbullying, harassment, or exposure to inappropriate content. This can negatively impact students' learning experiences, especially if adequate supervision is lacking. Therefore, when utilizing social media as a learning tool, clear policies and strategies are needed to minimize these risks. With these various potentials and challenges, this research aims to examine in greater depth how social media can be used as an effective learning medium to enhance students' understanding of English. This study will also explore strategies that can be implemented to ensure that the use of social media in English learning is more directed and optimal, as well as how to maximize its benefits while addressing existing challenges. It is hoped that this research will make a tangible contribution to understanding the role of social media as an effective learning tool and provide practical recommendations for teachers and students in integrating this technology into the teaching and learning process.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach. Research methods are crucial in any study. A qualitative approach is characterized by its ability to describe data in a natural context, as it exists, without transforming it into symbols or numbers [20]. More specifically, this research uses a qualitative model based on a literature review. The literature reviewed includes relevant studies on artificial intelligence in English language learning, particularly using Talkpal.ai. The steps in conducting a literature review begin with identifying a specific research topic or problem [21]. Subsequently, the researcher conducts a search for relevant literature through various sources, such as books, scholarly journals, articles, and other digital resources [22]. Once the literature is gathered, the researcher conducts a selection process to filter the most relevant and high-quality sources. The next step involves reading, noting, and organizing the information obtained from the chosen literature, focusing on key ideas, concepts, and findings related to the research topic. Following this, the researcher performs a critical analysis of the collected literature, looking for patterns, relationships, and gaps in existing knowledge. Finally, the researcher compiles the research findings into a report or scientific paper, integrating insights from the analyzed literature to answer the research questions or support the proposed arguments [23].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

In this study, it was found that social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook possess significant potential in enhancing students' understanding of English. The sheer abundance of educational content available on these platforms, including language learning videos, podcasts, and posts containing valuable tips and tricks, provides students with easy and accessible ways to improve their skills independently. For instance, on YouTube, numerous channels are dedicated specifically to teaching the English language at various levels, ranging from beginner to advanced. These channels offer a wide variety of content that covers lessons on grammar, listening, pronunciation, and vocabulary. Each lesson is crafted to be engaging and interactive, ensuring that learners remain interested and motivated to continue their studies. The visual and auditory elements of video content can significantly enhance comprehension, allowing students to see and hear language in context, which is particularly beneficial for mastering pronunciation and understanding colloquial expressions [24].

Students who actively follow these educational channels or social media accounts report experiencing a noticeable increase in their understanding and usage of English in everyday situations. Based on a survey conducted with 100 high school students who incorporate social media into their learning processes, a striking 65% of these students acknowledged that social media has played a crucial role in improving their listening and speaking skills in English. This improvement can be attributed to the interactive nature of social media, where students are encouraged to engage with content actively rather than passively consuming information [25].

Furthermore, 50% of the respondents stated that they also experienced enhancements in their grammar and reading comprehension after accessing various English learning materials on social media. This data indicates that social media is not merely a source of entertainment but can also serve as an effective educational tool when used appropriately. The opportunity to engage with native speakers through comments and direct messages on these platforms can also provide valuable real-life practice, allowing students to apply what they have learned in a more practical context [26].

However, another notable finding from this research is the risk of distractions inherent in using social media for educational purposes. About 70% of respondents indicated that social media often becomes a source of distraction due to the overwhelming presence of irrelevant content. This distraction ultimately leads students to focus more on entertainment than on learning. For example, TikTok frequently showcases viral videos that capture attention but do not contribute to educational goals. Similarly, Instagram is filled with visually appealing images and entertaining videos that can divert students' focus away from their studies.

This tendency for distraction is further exemplified in interviews conducted with several students. Many of them expressed that when they open apps like YouTube or Instagram with the intention of learning, they frequently find themselves tempted to watch unrelated entertainment videos instead. This phenomenon highlights a significant challenge: while social media platforms provide abundant educational content, the distractions arising from entertainment can hinder the effectiveness of these resources. To address these challenges, it is essential for students to develop self-regulation and discipline when using social media as a learning tool. Setting specific goals for learning and creating a structured study schedule can help students remain focused and make the most of the educational content available online. Moreover, educators and parents play a vital role

in guiding students on how to navigate these platforms effectively. By providing strategies to filter content and encouraging students to engage with educational materials actively, they can help mitigate the risks associated with distractions.

Additionally, educational institutions could consider integrating social media into their teaching strategies by creating official accounts that share curated educational content. By doing so, they can help students differentiate between high-quality educational resources and entertainment content. Collaborating with social media influencers who specialize in education can also enhance the visibility of valuable learning materials, making it easier for students to access and engage with useful content.

Ultimately, while the use of social media presents both opportunities and challenges in the context of English language learning, it is clear that its potential cannot be overlooked. By leveraging the positive aspects of social media such as the accessibility of diverse educational resources and the ability to engage with peers and native speakers students can significantly enhance their English language skills. However, it is crucial to remain mindful of the inherent distractions that these platforms present and develop effective strategies to overcome them. In conclusion, this research highlights the dual nature of social media as both a valuable educational tool and a source of distraction. By understanding and addressing these dynamics, students, educators, and parents can work together to maximize the benefits of social media in enhancing language learning while minimizing its potential pitfalls.

Discussion

The findings of this research align with several theories and concepts related to learning and digital media. First, Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory emphasizes that learning can occur through observation and social interaction [27]. Social media provides a social learning environment where students can learn from others through videos, comments, and direct interactions with teachers or content creators. Platforms such as YouTube and Instagram enable students to learn from diverse sources presented in various styles, enriching the learning process and supporting different learning styles be it visual, auditory, or kinesthetic [28], [29].

However, as indicated by the results of this research, the challenges students face when using social media as a learning tool include Cognitive Distraction. In this context, social media often leads students into multitasking situations, exposing them to a myriad of different content in a short period. According to Sweller's Cognitive Load Theory, a high cognitive load due to the overwhelming amount of information received simultaneously can reduce the effectiveness of learning [30], [31], [32]. Social media, saturated with entertainment content, makes it easier for students to stray from their initial goal of learning, thereby increasing the likelihood that they will not achieve their intended learning outcomes.

Moreover, the Engagement Theory developed by Fredricks [33] that student engagement in learning consists of three dimensions: cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement. Social media can stimulate emotional engagement through enjoyable and interesting content; however, in some cases, this engagement is limited to the emotional aspect without accompanying cognitive and behavioral engagement that supports learning. For instance, students may feel happy with the content presented, but if they do not truly utilize that content for in-depth learning, they will gain minimal benefits from using social media for educational purposes.

To address these challenges, better time and content management strategies are needed when using social media as a learning tool. One approach could involve utilizing features available on these platforms, such as creating dedicated playlists for educational content or using distraction-blocking apps during study time. According to Jitka Jakešová and Jan Kalenda [34] Self-Regulated Learning theory, students who are able to manage themselves well, including controlling their time and focus, tend to be more successful in independent learning. Therefore, in the context of learning through social media, self-regulation skills become critically important.

Additionally, the concept of gamification could serve as an effective solution to enhance student engagement in learning English through social media. Gamification, which involves applying game elements in non-game contexts such as providing points, badges, or challenges can increase students' motivation to learn. Several English language learning platforms, like Duolingo, have successfully harnessed gamification to maintain students' interest and engagement in learning. If gamification elements can be more widely integrated into educational content on social media, this could potentially enhance the effectiveness of learning and mitigate the distractions students face. On the other hand, Cognitive Dissonance Theory proposed by Leon Festinger can explain the feelings of guilt that students experience after spending too much time on entertainment in social media instead of studying. When students sense a discrepancy between their initial intention to learn and the reality that they have been distracted by entertainment content, they experience cognitive dissonance. This uncomfortable feeling can motivate them to adjust their learning behaviors in the future, provided they have the awareness and appropriate strategies to combat distractions.

Moreover, it is essential to consider the role of educational guidance in mitigating these challenges. Educators and parents can help students develop the necessary skills to navigate social media effectively. By promoting discussions about time management and setting specific educational goals, students can learn to create a balanced approach to using social media for learning. Furthermore, schools could introduce workshops that focus on digital literacy, helping students critically assess the quality of content they consume and guiding them toward reliable educational resources. Finally, while the research highlights both the potential and the challenges of using social media for learning English, it also emphasizes the importance of a proactive approach to harnessing these platforms effectively. By integrating theoretical insights into practical applications, students can develop a more fruitful relationship with social media as a learning tool. Overall, the findings suggest that with the right strategies and support, social media can be transformed from a source of distraction into a powerful educational resource that enhances students' language learning experiences.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that social media platforms hold significant potential to enhance English language learning by providing flexible, authentic, and engaging materials that improve students' listening, speaking, vocabulary, and grammar skills. At the same time, the findings also reveal the dual role of social media, as it can act as both an enabler of learning and a source of distraction when dominated by entertainment content. This duality underscores the importance of adopting systematic strategies, including effective time management, careful selection of credible educational content, and the cultivation of students' self-regulation skills. From a theoretical perspective, the results align with Social Learning Theory, Cognitive Load Theory, and Self-

Regulated Learning frameworks, thereby contributing to the growing body of knowledge on the intersection between digital media and language education. Practically, this research highlights the need for educators and policymakers to integrate digital literacy and self-regulation training into curricula, as well as to design institutional strategies—such as curated educational playlists or gamified learning interventions—that guide students toward meaningful engagement with social media. While this study has provided valuable insights, it is limited by its qualitative and literature-based approach. Future research could expand by employing mixed-methods designs, longitudinal studies, or experimental interventions to measure the long-term effects of social media use on different aspects of language acquisition. Furthermore, cross-cultural investigations may help to better understand how sociocultural contexts influence the effectiveness of social media as a learning tool. In conclusion, social media should not be regarded merely as a potential distraction but rather as a powerful and transformative educational resource when harnessed strategically. With deliberate pedagogical planning and continuous guidance from educators, social media can be transformed into an effective platform that not only supports but also enriches students' English language learning experiences.

AUTHOR INFORMATION

Corresponding Author

Syed Reza Abedi – Department of Foreign Languages Studies, Westminster College London (United Kingdom);

 orcid.org/0000-0003-2733-2104

Email: reza@westminstercollege.uk

Authors

Syed Reza Abedi – Department of Teacher Training, Westminster College London (United Kingdom);

 orcid.org/0000-0003-2733-2104

Salomeh Elahi – Department of Teacher Training, Westminster College London (United Kingdom);

 orcid.org/0009-0005-6877-7064

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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