

From Scroll to Skill: A Multidisciplinary Exploration of English Language Learning through Social Media Content

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Abstract

The emergence of social media platforms is transforming how EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners engage directly with real content, creating new opportunities for second language acquisition beyond the classroom. TikTok and similar platforms have emerged as major venues for socially engaged, entertaining-educative short content that directly links language with technology and communication. The current research explored how students from different backgrounds use social media for English learning and which types of content they find most influential. A descriptive survey design was employed to collect data from 109 EFL learners using an online questionnaire distributed to a mixed population in the research context, including students, staff, and community members. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis of open-ended responses. The findings indicate that 78.9% of participants use social media for English learning, with TikTok as the most frequently used platform. Learners preferred entertaining-educational videos, interactive language advice, and culturally focused content the most. This research confirms the significance of social media as a multifaceted learning environment since it integrates education, communication, and digital skills. This study contributes to scholarship by offering insights for educators, content creators, and policymakers to create more effective, readily available, and contextually appropriate resources for learning English.

Keywords:

Social Media,
English Learning,
Second Language
Acquisition,
Learner Preferences,
Multidisciplinary Study

1. Introduction

The evolution of digital technologies over the last two decades has changed the manner in which people engage, communicate, and learn worldwide. Among the technologies that have had the biggest impact and effect are news feed services and social media sites. Social media sites were originally intended for networking and fun, but currently, they have diversified into various domains of informal learning and knowledge-building activities. Millions of people from all walks of life are brought together by sharing sites such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube Shorts, which involve interactive and video postings. Social media sites, in particular, are increasingly being used as complementary space for language acquisition. This trend is even more observable among EFL learners who now have the benefit of real-life input, language use, and sociocultural contexts, which were previously available only in textbooks or actual classroom settings or, occasionally, actual interaction with native English-speaking persons.

Social media provides EFL students with the advantage of real-life exposure to English. Theories about SLA maintain that learners internalize language structures and gradually develop their own communicative competence through repeated exposure to language in contextualized and meaningful ways (Krashen, 1982). Social media allows students to engage in real-life discourse through memes,

stories, challenges, vlogs, commentary, and other user-generated content. This exposure, through songs, movies, humor, and depictions of everyday life in English, advances cultural awareness and simultaneously supports the development of linguistic elements, such as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation (Harishma, 2024). To this end, social media functions as both a linguistic and cultural bridge in supporting language learning holistically.

There is considerable educational potential of utilizing social media in EFL learning, which is evident through various studies. As revealed through research carried out in Indonesia, it is clear that university students tend to use social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok as supplementary learning tools for English learning (Iswahyuni, 2021; Mahmud et al., 2022). The results of various studies have revealed that there is an increased usage of social media platforms. However, the results of studies carried out in other conditions reveal that there is consistency. For instance, Zhai and Razali (2021) established that social media sites, particularly TikTok, are an important resource in honing the speaking, vocabulary, and pronunciation abilities of Chinese EFL students. In addition to that, social media sites not only enhance one's skills in learning but also boost motivation levels in understanding inter-cultural communication norms within a low-anxiety educational environment (Jin, 2023).

The concept of Extramural English, referring to the acquisition of language beyond classroom contexts, provides an additional significant perspective (Calafato & Clausen, 2024). The concept of Extramural English can be exemplified by the usage of social media platforms, where the students autonomously explore English content beyond the teaching curriculum. The usage of platforms, which include TikTok and YouTube, fosters vocabulary mastery and listening comprehension, allowing students to work autonomously. The observation falls in line with current research studies about the correlation of learner autonomy with digital-based learning (Amaliyah et al., 2021; Habibi et al., 2024).

Despite this, there are advantages associated with learning languages through social media platforms. Malik and Qureshi (2024) perceive that diversions may be caused by blending learning and entertainment content while learning something in an intensive manner. Also, age, profession, and level of education can create differences in social media use for language content. For example, working adults may want to focus on speaking for business settings, whereas learners in school may want practice on a certain type of grammar or materials that are aligned to a certain exam. The discrepancies in these examples illustrate the complexity of social media as a learning context, and also suggests that more research needs to be conducted to understand how learners interact with the content and what they prefer.

Interest in social media as a tool for teaching and learning languages has increased in the last years, but some gaps still exist. Most of the previous studies focused on university students. Therefore, little is known about social media use for English language learning among other social and educational strata, like university employees or community members (Araujo, 2024; Wilson & Anam, 2024). In addition, though a large number of studies focus on learning outcomes or benefits, learners' specific content preferences (e.g. grammar, culture, or entertaining educational content) have been understudied. Closing these gaps will support the development of more focused and inclusive English learning resources in digital environments.

In an attempt to make the best of these challenges, the current research investigates the social media practices of English language development of learners of different backgrounds such as students, workers, and members of the community, as well as what types of content are most valuable to them. This research, using descriptive survey design, analyzed the social media use, the content and its perceived benefits, the preferences of different learner groups and empirically documented the findings. This research is expected to make theoretical as well as practical contributions by embedding social media as non-formal language learning environments and providing directions to educators, content developers, and social media education optimizers.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Social Media for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Learning

An increasing amount of evidence has confirmed the potential of utilizing social media for learning, especially for English as a Foreign Language. Students have actively employed the use of social multimedia like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok as a means of supporting them to improve their English language capabilities. Studies that were undertaken within Indonesian universities

established that students embrace the use of a variety of social multimedia platforms for improving their vocabulary, listening, as well as speaking capabilities (Iswahyuni, 2021; Mahmud et al., 2022).

These findings are replicated in other areas. As stated by Zhai and Razali (2021) that TikTok phenomenon has shown to increase its popularity among Chinese ESL learners as an educational platform to cultivate pronunciation, vocabulary, and speaking skills especially when there is limited opportunity to engage in physical learning. Other than the learning implications, using social media can enhance intercultural understanding and motivation among learners and is associated with a reduced anxiety learning environment (Jin, 2023). These implications mean that the fusion of entertainment and learning or what is known as edutainment can present an engaging and motivating learning context that triggers students to engage more with the English language.

2.2 Second Language Acquisition and Extramural English Perspectives

Language learning through social media can be understood using theories of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Although there are various theories that explain SLA, it is important to highlight that these theories recognize meaningful learning as a very significant phenomenon for acquiring linguistic structures (Krashen, 1982). There are several ways available through social media that can create meaningful learning of any language. This could be done through videos, captions, comments, memes, stories, challenges, vlogs, etc.

Moreover, the notion of extramural English is a helpful perspective in the context of studying language acquisition beyond the conventional classroom environment. Extramural English is a type of language learning that occurs outside formal teaching situations and is usually driven by learners' interests (Calafato & Clausen, 2024). A typical example of such learning is social media, where students explore English-language content on their own, independent of any lesson plans. Video-sharing services like YouTube and TikTok provide opportunities for informal learning that enhance vocabulary acquisition and listening skills while encouraging student independence. This supports studies that highlight the relationship between digital learning spaces and learner independence (Amaliyah et al., 2021; Habibi et al., 2024).

2.3 Motivation, Digital Literacy, and Content Engagement

Besides language exposure through social media, motivation on the part of the students also plays an important role in language learning through social media. Social media sites are often linked to increased enjoyment, and this could be an important means of increasing intrinsic and extrinsic types of motivation, like curiosity and enjoyment, and academic or work-related objectives (Trang, 2023). The engaging and multimodal nature associated with social media could serve to encourage students to interact with English even if language learning isn't their aim.

However, digital literacy is also important for grasping how students engage with information on social media. According to Ng (2012), digital literacy can be defined as the capability of learners to critically evaluate, analyze, and generate information in digital contexts. Social media allows learners to quickly access English language input, but learners can also be exposed to false or misleading information. Therefore, the effectiveness of social media in language learning depends not only on accessibility, but also on the learners' capability to determine the quality and relevance of the information.

However, there are several challenges faced when social media is employed as a learning platform for English. According to (Malik & Qureshi, 2024), learning may be hampered due to potential distractions that could arise as a result of being exposed to learning as well as entertaining platforms that are found online. Learners' age, occupation, as well as academic background, could affect intensity of interaction as well as preferred genres of content. This includes students who could focus more on grammar learning as well as learning that revolves around exams as compared to professionals whose focus could be more on learning to communicate. This variation shows that social media learning platforms are multidimensional.

3. Method

3.1 Research Design

This research used a descriptive survey design to investigate the ways in which English learners as a Foreign Language (EFL) use social media platforms to enhance their language learning, as well as the types of content they consider most useful. A survey design was considered appropriate because it allows researchers to gather

quantitative data systematically, that provides description of trends, opinions, and patterns within a population, as well as qualitative data that provides meaningful contextualization (Creswell, 2018). While the key focus was on quantitative approaches, open-ended questions were included in the instrument to elicit respondents' views in their own words and to enhance some of the descriptive data.

3.2 Participants and Sampling

This survey included participants learning English as a foreign language (EFL), with participation coming from diverse backgrounds including community members, workers, and students. The rationale for including diverse backgrounds in the survey was primarily for obtaining insight into the broader utilization of social media for purposes that are external to formal learning structures or environments. Because the questionnaire was distributed online via messaging apps and social media sites, a non-probability convenience sampling technique was used. Participants for this survey required prerequisites that included (1) previous experience in utilizing social networks and (2) experience in viewing English posts on online platforms for social interaction. A total of 109 persons responded to this survey. Information regarding age, gender, and furtherance of study or work in the particular subject does not relate directly in relation to the survey but provides further insight or context when considering the acquisition of future survey information.

3.3 Research Instrument

Data were collected by a structured questionnaire, which was prepared especially for this study. The total number of 25 items was divided into five major sections. In the first section, some demographic data (like age, sex, or educational/professional background) were collected. The second section covered the general social media usage trends, particularly platform preference and frequency of use. In the third section, participants' frequency, duration, and selected platforms to use social media for learning English were investigated.

Items in the fourth section of the questionnaire were the Likert-scale questions assessing participants' perceptions of effectiveness for social media as a tool and a motivator for English learning. The Likert items used employed a five-point scale, ranging from 1 to 5, reflecting strongly disagree to strongly agree, respectively. Open-ended questions in the final portion of the instrument provided opportunities for participants to comment on what they perceived to be helpful and unhelpful types of social media resources to learn English.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

The data collection process was carried out via the online platform to maximize access and convenience for respondents. The questionnaire had been developed and distributed using Google Forms, accessible to any respondent with access to the internet. Before distributing the complete survey, the instrument was piloted with a small number of respondents to make sure wording was clear, items were appropriate, and survey completion was being done without a hassle. We made minor adjustments to the instrument based on pilot data to improve validity and reliability. All cases of participation were voluntary, and informed consent was obtained before the survey commenced. Respondents were assured that their responses would be kept confidential, and responses were used for academic purposes only.

3.5 Data Analysis

The data analysis incorporates both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data was analyzed through descriptive statistics: frequency counts, percentages, and cross-tabulations were explored to look for generalizable trends and to allow for comparisons across the three groups of learners. In this fashion, analyses painted a detailed portrait about the levels of use of the several social media applications, how often, and what content learners valued the most. Qualitative data derived from the open-ended responses were analyzed using thematic analysis, which is a popular form of analysis that is both flexible and systematic for examining patterns in qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These coding and synthesis of patterns and representative quotes were developed to provide deeper understanding of learners' reasons, beliefs and experiences. Quantitative and qualitative findings were juxtaposed with the aim of capturing a complete understanding of how different learners across backgrounds use social media as a tool for learning English.

3.6 Ethical Consideration

The whole research process has considered ethical aspects. Before administering the research questionnaire, all the respondents provided their consent. The respondents needed to be informed about the research objectives. The research participants had the freedom to withdraw any time they needed. The research did not need any information that would qualify them in order to maintain their confidentiality. The research did not subject the respondents to any identifiable information. The responses remained confidential.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

The aim of this study is to investigate the ways in which English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students utilise social media to support their learning, as well as what content they find most useful. Data were collected through a structured, online questionnaire that was designed on Google Forms, and

completed by 109 respondents representing different backgrounds. The results are presented descriptively and divided into five main sections: (1) demographics of respondents; (2) use of social media; (3) social media to learn English; (4) content and designs; and (5) perceptions, barriers, and open-ended responses. Table 1 shows the summary of the questionnaire result.

Table 1

The Summary of the Questionnaire Result

Demographic Data						
Age	<17	18-23	23-30	31-40		
	73.4	16.5	6.4	1.8		
Gender	Female		Male			
	67.9		32.1			
Educational Background	SHS	JHS	Undergraduates	Others		
	77.1	5.5	5.5	1		
Patterns of Social Media Use						
Social Media Use	TikTok	Youtube	Instagram	Facebook		
	79.8	2.8	13.8	3.7		
Purposes of Social Media Use	Entertainment	Information Access	Learning	Communication		
	41.3	33.9	11.9	4.6		
Social Media for English Learning						
Using Social Media for English Learning	Yes		No			
	78.9		21.1			
English Learning Platform	TikTok	YouTube	Instagram	Facebook		
	53.8	39.6	29.2	2.8		
Learning Frequency	Everyday	Several times a day	Once a week	Rarely		
	13.8	44	7.3	34.9		
Learning Duration	<15 minutes	15 – 30 minutes	30 – 60 minutes	>60 minutes		
	46.8	35.8	11	6.4		
Activities and Content Preferences						
The Most Engaging Activities	Watching Video	Reading Captions/ Posts	Commenting	Watching Live Session	Creating Their Own Content	
	80.7	46.8	4.6	4.6	1.8	
Content Preferences	Pronunciation Practice	Cultural Contents	Grammar	Educational - entertaining content	Vocabulary	Storytelling
	58.7	48.6	41.3	40.4	40.4	40.4

*the data is in percentage (%)

4.1.1 The Overview of the Respondents

The demographic profile of respondents shows that the participants were predominantly teenagers and young adult. A large majority, 73.4%, were aged 17 years or younger, while 16.5% were in the 18–22 age group. Only small proportions were older: 6.4% aged 23–30, 1.8% aged 31–40, and just 0.9% aged 41 or above, with one respondent not reporting age. This distribution highlights that the survey sample was strongly dominated by adolescents.

In terms of gender, the sample was composed mostly of female respondents (67.9%), compared to male respondents (32.1%). This suggests that female learners were more actively represented in the study than their male counterparts. The educational background further supports the young profile of the participants. The great majority, 77.1%, were students from senior high school (SMA), while only smaller subsets were undergraduates (5.5%) and junior high school students (5.5%). Very few of the

respondents indicated having pursued Diploma, Master's, or vocational (SMK) education, reporting each at less than 1% of the sample. The words "still in SMA" were also cited by some participants, again supporting the dominant senior high school category noted. In short, the data suggest that the respondent pool was predominantly comprised of adolescents at the upper-secondary level and very little higher education or other educational categories were represented.

4.1.2 Patterns of Social Media Use

Almost all individuals who were surveyed stated that they utilize social media on a regular basis. When asked to identify which social media they frequently engage with, most respondents selected TikTok (79.8%), followed by Instagram (13.8%), Facebook (3.7. %), and YouTube (2.8%). TikTok clearly dominated as the most utilized social media among respondents, while Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube had a small percentage of respondents voting for this soft of media.

In terms of general functions, respondents indicated that social media serves multiple purposes in their daily lives. The largest percentage indicated 41.3% utilize social media primarily for entertainment, while 33.9% use it for information. Eleven point niner percent stated they utilize social media for learning purposes other than English, while 4.6% indicated communication was the primary reason they utilize social media. The remaining responses comprised (together as less than 10%) the other categories such as combinations of the aforementioned categories; indicating social media serves multiple functions in their everyday routines.

4.1.3 Use of Social Media for English Learning

The majority of respondents stated that they use social media not just for entertainment or communication, but also as a means of learning English. Of 109 participants, 86 (78.9%) responded that they used social media to assist them in learning English, while 23 (21.1%) responded that they did not. This indicates that for most learners in this sample, social media is seen as an important learning tool.

When asked what social media platform is used the most for English learning, TikTok was mentioned as the most popular at 22.0% of respondents. Following TikTok, YouTube was mentioned by 18.3% of respondents, and Instagram was mentioned by 7.3%. Some respondents reported using combinations of these platforms, such as TikTok and Instagram (8.3%) or TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube together (7.3%). This distribution demonstrates that short-form and video-based platforms are strongly preferred for English learning.

In terms of frequency, nearly half of the respondents (44.0%) indicated that they utilized social media for learning English several times per week, while 34.9% stated this was an uncommon occurrence. The remaining individual reports included 13.8% stating they engaged daily, and 7.3% indicating that engagement occurred once a week. For the variables of time spent daily on social media for learning English, there was variability again based on the individual reports from respondents. Based on these reports, the largest allocation of response (46.8%) estimated using social media less than 15 minutes per day. Comparison reports indicate that 35.8% indicated 15-30 minutes daily, 11.0% reported 30-60 minutes spent, and 6.4% stated they spent more than one hour each day.

Queries regarding time of day were also constant with responses being varied. The majority, (77.1%) of participants indicated they used social media for learning English at erratic times of the day, depending on opportunity. However, there were reports of actual times they would use social media: with regards to time a minority of 18.3% would engage in the evening, 3.7% in the morning, and 0.9% in afternoon.

4.1.4 Activities and Content Preferences

Participants were asked what they most often do to learn English on social media. The overwhelming majority (80.7%) indicated that they watch video content, by far the most common activity. More than two times fewer indicated reading captions or posts (46.8%), with very few indicating commenting (4.6%), watching live sessions (4.6%), or creating their own content (1.8%). Some of the respondents also indicated behaviors outside the given options, such as engaging with posts related to poetry or animated films, however, this was noted by less than 1% of respondents.

Regarding content preference, participants mostly stated an interest in content that...included pronunciation practice (58.7%) or cultural content such as music, movies, or everyday life scenarios (48.6%). Other highly selected categories included grammar explanation (41.3%), educational-entertaining content (e.g. memes, challenges) (40.4%), vocabulary tips (40.4%), or storytelling (40.4%).

Meanwhile, short dialogues or conversations were chosen by 27.5% of respondents. These figures show that learners are drawn to a balance of technical, cultural, and entertaining content.

When asked about the most helpful content formats, short videos under one minute dominated with 41.3%, followed by medium-length videos of 1–5 minutes (24.8%). Fewer learners reported finding infographic posters (10.1%), text or articles (9.2%), longer videos of more than 5 minutes (8.3%), or audio/podcasts (6.4%) to be effective. For language preference, the majority of learners, 79.8%, preferred mixed-language content combining English and Indonesian. A smaller group, 15.6%, opted for full English, while only 4.6% preferred full Indonesian.

4.1.5 Perceived Effectiveness and Motivation

Table 2 indicates that learners overall see social media in a positive light toward learning English, but to varying degrees depending on the specific aspect. In particular, most of the participants agree about vocabulary enhancement with 67.0% (scores 4-5) indicating they agree social media has the potential to expand their vocabulary, while around 10% (scores 1-2) scored low on their beliefs that social media lowers their ability to master vocabulary. In terms of enhancing grammar understanding, 62.4% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, while 9.2% indicated they disagreed that social media was helpful in understanding grammar. When you look closely at the motivation construct, 64.2% of the full sample indicated watching short videos increases their motivation to learn English (active engagement), while a small percentage of the sample (12.0%) indicated they felt less motivated. Enjoyment was even more strongly endorsed, as 69.8% of respondents rated social media as making learning fun (score 4–5), with very few (6.4%) giving low ratings.

Opinions on confidence were more divided. A total of 44.1% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that social media contributes to their confidence when using the English language; an almost equal number, 43.1% indicated neutrality, and 12.9% disagreed. Respondents expressed a larger degree of neutrality regarding effectiveness as compared to traditional forms of education, where the plurality of 47.7% indicated neutrality, 33.9% agreed, and 18.3% disagreed. This reflects a lesser degree of given the uncertainty of replacing formal forms of education. Finally, responses to peer motivation appear to be substantial, with 64.2% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that they feel motivated when they see other people using English language on social media; only around 10% disagreed.

Table 2

The Summary of the Likert-scale questionnaire of Perceived Effectiveness and Motivation

No.	Statement	Score (%)				
		1	2	3	4	5
1	Social media content helps me improve my English vocabulary.	5.5	4.6	22.9	32.1	34.9
2	Social media helps me understand grammar better.	4.6	4.6	28.4	24.8	37.6
3	Watching short videos motivates me to learn English more actively.	3.7	8.3	23.9	30.3	33.9
4	Social media makes learning English more fun.	1.8	4.6	23.9	23.9	45.9
5	I feel more confident using English after learning through social media.	3.7	9.2	43.1	23.9	20.2
6	Learning English through social media is more effective than traditional methods (classes/tutoring).	7.3	11.0	47.7	18.3	15.6
7	I feel motivated when I see other people using English on social media.	4.6	5.5	25.7	22.0	42.2

4.1.6 Obstacles and Perceived Inaccuracy

Respondents also noted barriers to using social media as a tool for English language learning. The most prevalent barrier was consistency (31.2%), followed by difficulty with the language (26.6%), too many distractions (22.0%), and a limited internet connection (17.4%). A few reported additional barriers such as lack of focus, lack of interest, or unclear audio content, but these were infrequent.

In the terms of perceived accuracy, a majority of the learners (78.9%) reported that sometimes, but not always, the information they encountered on social media was not accurate, 14.7% believed they had encountered inaccurate content, and only 6.4% said it was always accurate content. To conclude, the open-ended questions generated qualitative insights regarding learner's perspectives on content that is engaging and useful. Respondents cited that content is useful when it is short, clear, participatory, and practical for daily life. Unhelpful content was said to be long, distracting or unclear. Ideas for improvements included creating more opportunities for participation, simplifying, and working on

audio-visual quality. Some participants also made note of varying content and incorporating cultural components as being particularly engaging.

4.2 Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate how English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners engage with social media for English learning, the kinds of content they find most beneficial, and their perceptions of effectiveness. The findings can be thematically discussed under five dimensions: (1) learner demographics and social media access, (2) patterns of platform use, (3) the role of social media in English learning, (4) content preferences and learning activities, and (5) learners' perceptions of effectiveness, obstacles, and accuracy concerns.

4.2.1 Learner Demographics and Access

The demographic profile indicated that the overwhelming majority of subjects were adolescents and young adults, especially upper secondary school students. This focus on younger students is consistent with the idea of digital natives (Prensky, 2001), who have been surrounded by technology at a young age and used it throughout their lives. The high percentage of females is representative of trends seen in some social media research, where females tend to be the higher user on platforms such as TikTok and Instagram (AlAfnan, 2024).

From an extramural English perspective (Calafato & Clausen, 2024), these demographics matter. The fact that youth are heavily immersed in digital contexts creates many opportunities for incidental language learning beyond designated classrooms. In environments such as Indonesia, where access to native English-speaking environments are often absent, experiencing social media, provides an alternative avenue for authentic language input and interaction. The findings thus support Calafato & Clausen's (2024) claim that learners' age and digital habits can strongly shape their engagement with extramural English.

4.2.2 Patterns of Platform Use

The results showed that TikTok was by far the most dominant platform, both for general use and specifically for English learning, followed by Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook. This aligns with the worldwide trend where short-form video platforms are regarded as the most significant platforms for youth engagement. Research by Habibi et al. (2024) indicates that pre-service teachers see both YouTube and TikTok as very useful for learning, while Zhai and Razali (2021) emphasize TikTok's value for enhancing speaking and vocabulary skills for Chinese learners.

In terms of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), the rise of short form video platforms is interesting. Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1982) suggests that learners will acquire language if they get comprehensible input, plus some input a little above their level of proficiency. Social media platforms, such as TikTok or Instagram reels, are often giving learners this level of input: they can give learners short, repeated, and rich contextualized input that is easier to process and stream than longer input. They also have the advantage of being rich multimodal texts - sound, visual, and text caption multimodal input - which supports multimodality theories of language learning (Kress, 2010).

The reasons for using social media further support this point of view. The largest amount of engagement was for entertainment (41.3%), while 33.9% was for accessing information. Information accessing and learning had a much smaller percentage. This supports Malik and Qureshi's (2024) claim that social media is an entertainment space, with considerable opportunities for learning when the user approaches the content purposefully. When considering the second-language acquisition (SLA) perspective, incidental learning is the premise that exposure occurs through entertainment or leisure (Schmitt, 2010). Therefore, while not the initial reason for using social media, learning is an important by-product of the digital experience.

4.2.3 Social Media for English Learning

One finding that is notable, was that 78.9% of respondents claim to use social media to learn English which shows that for a number of learning situations, social media is not just for fun and leisure but has characterized and become part of their learning system. This finding corroborates the research of Araujo (2024) and Juliana et al. (2024) which found that Indonesian students typically used YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram to practice skills and students showed substantial enhancement in their reading and writing and vocabulary skills. Additionnal to investigating the platforms used for studying English, the example is provided to validate the data from the study, as retrieved TikTok (53.9%), YouTube

(39.6%), and Instagram (29.2%) are the prominent platforms students use for their study. These findings add supports to the very positive example of learning in video-based learning contexts.

The popularity of YouTube can be associated with its longer, more structured tutorials, which are seen to provide more useful opportunities for skill-oriented practice (Amaliyah et al., 2021), whereas TikTok offers more quickly-digestible, entertaining lessons. Instagram, while not the dominant platform, has presented appealing content based on culture and lifestyle, which purportedly supports sociocultural lenses of SLA (Vygotsky, 1978).

In learning frequency, nearly half of the respondents (44.0%) indicated that they engaged several times each week, and a smaller number (13.8%) engaged each day. Time spent learning virtually every day was modest, with nearly half the respondents (46.8%) spending less than 15 minutes total learning daily. Overall, this data indicates that although learners use and incorporate EFL into their routines, it is still relatively light-touch and supplemental to formal learning contexts. This reinforces the understanding that learning on social media is best understood as extramural practice rather than a substitute for formal learning.

4.2.4 Activities and Content Preferences

The activity most consistently observed was watching videos (80.7%), while reading captions came in second (46.8%). This suggests a pattern of approachable yet passive consumption, which falls in line with the notion of digital literacy, where learners prefer content that is easier to process and multimodal (Ng, 2012). There were fewer instances of commenting, participating in the live event, or writing content themselves. This indicates that learners accepted and benefitted from passive consumption but were not demonstrating productive use of English on social media. This parallels the findings of Wilson and Anam (2024), where the students felt that social media was valuable for input, but less for output practice.

From the preferences for content they indicated, we could see participants were most interested in learning about the pronunciation of language (58.7%), cultural content (48.6%), and grammar information (41.3%) as well as entertainment-based content such as memes, stories, and challenges (40.4%). Remember, learners often wish to develop both their technical language skills and their socio-cultural knowledge and understanding these findings are quite similar to the findings by Jin (2023) who found that social media may motivate learners in non-educational ways through the combination of extrinsic goals (e.g., academic, job related) with intrinsic enjoyment.

The preference pattern, in a theoretical sense, points to the multi-faceted position that social media can have for second language learners in terms of social media being a context for learning, in addition to motivation. For example, content focused on pronunciation can help learners develop phonological awareness and oral fluency (Derwing & Munro, 2015). Cultural content exposes learners to sociolinguistic input which helps learners develop pragmatic competence and develop an understanding of how language works in real life contexts. In addition, entertainment-based content such as memes, challenges, or stories serve to sustain motivation of the learners, combined with the idea of Self-Determination Theory outlined by Deci and Ryan (2000) when enjoyment and interest facilitate intrinsic motivation. Overall, the interaction and perspectives of effort and support through social media, help to illustrate how social media can not only have linguistic supports but motivational supports and cultural supports which can all enhance the learning process.

The clear preference for short videos (41.3%) allows us to understand the learning process and the strong desire for more short, digestible pieces of input. Mayer's (2009) cognitive theory of multimedia learning supports the results of this study in that short and well-segmented input reduces cognitive load, and may promote retention. Finally, the mixed language preference (79.8%) indicates the value of scaffolding. Bilingual explanations seemed to be valuable for learners, and align well with translanguaging in language education (Garcia & Wei, 2014) because they provide comprehensible input and promote lower anxiety for the learner while confirming Krashen's (1982) emphasis on low-affective filters in SLA.

4.2.5 Perceived Effectiveness, Motivation, and Challenges

The results from the Likert-scale indicated that learners perceived benefits in vocabulary, grammar, motivation, and enjoyment, all of which were rated positively. More than two-thirds rated their benefit in vocabulary and grammar as optimal, which aligns with Mahmud's (2022) findings. They found that using Facebook and Instagram supported Indonesian learning in vocabulary and grammar

awareness. Zhai and Razali (2021) also documented a sizable increase in speaking and vocabulary via TikTok, confirming that video-based platforms provide valuable, authentic, and meaningful input.

Motivational themes were unambiguously outlined in the findings: 69.8% of learners agreed that social media makes learning more enjoyable, and 64.2% agreed that seeing other students use English made them feel motivated to learn. This ties back to Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1971), which states that learners will observe and be influenced by peers and role models. They can be motivated and have legitimate examples to mimic by just watching others like their peers or powerful people using English on the internet.

Confidence themes were less clear, as only 44.1% of learners agreed they felt more confident and many learners were neutral to the question. This suggests that while learners are exposed to input, they may need more interaction or output-based activities in order to build productive self-efficacy when speaking and writing in English than what is typically provided by social media platforms. This affirms the findings of Malik and Qureshi's (2024), who warns that during the consumption of social media content, when entertainment is co-located with learning, the student may decrease their engagement and concentration on learning and instead, focus solely on entertainment.

The challenges identified, lack of consistency, comprehension difficulties, distractions, and internet issues, mirror earlier findings. Raj and Renumol (2021) contended that attributes of the individual learner including age, occupation, and formal schooling shape consistency and content preference. Simultaneously, Malik and Qureshi (2024) also identified distractions as a key limitation when pairing entertainment with education in the same digital environment. These distractions support the duality of social media: it improves accessibility and motivation but can detract from a sustained, focused, learning experience.

Concerns over accuracy was another major concern: 78.9% of participants believed the social media content was inaccurate at times. This finding connects directly to digital literacy (Ng, 2012). In addition to language abilities, learners need to think critically about what they read and watch online, evaluate reliable and unreliable sources, and produce their own reliable content. Lacking digital literacy puts learners at risk of absorbing faulty input which may inhibit language development.

4.2.6 Implications of the Study

The research has some significant implications for theory, pedagogy, and policy. This study contributes to second language acquisition (SLA) research from a theoretical perspective by illustrating the ways in which social media operates as a multidimensional educational context producing language input (comprehensible input), learner engagement, and sociocultural context in informal learning contexts. By linking Krashen's (1982) notion on comprehensible input, Calafato's (2024) notion on extramural English, and Ng's (2012) notion on digital literacies, the study elucidates how informal online contexts can serve as supplements or additions to formal language learning or classrooms.

From a pedagogical perspective, the findings suggest that teacher and learner integration of social media into curricular space as an instructional tool could become more intentional. Teachers can engage students' interest in platforms such as TikTok and YouTube, which can be used as a current menu item, by creating instructional activities that extend beyond passive consumption. Activities that stimulate critical engagement, productive use of English, and learning that affectively supports reflection can convert social media into an interactive learning space. Consistent with students' preferences, the materials that emphasize pronunciation, exposure to cultural content, and short video form can be prioritized for student enjoyment alongside effectiveness.

From a policy perspective, this research highlights the need for policy that includes digital literacy into the national language curriculum. Students should be instilled with value of using online resources, but challenged to assess the trustworthiness and quality of any content they find. In contexts like Indonesia when youth are using social media, policymakers might want to consider information on blended approaches that combined formal teaching with supported engagement with online spaces.

Finally, the findings also indicate future research directions. The mixed response of confidence and apprehension about the accuracy of online sources require further attention. Future research should consider how productive skills can be developed, specifically speaking and writing, through interactive processes via social media. Additional research could also investigate how fact-checking and critical digital literacy instruction can help alleviate the threat of misinformation, and develop learners' ability to navigate a complicated online landscape.

5. Conclusion

This study shows that social media, especially TikTok, followed by Instagram and YouTube, has become a common extramural space where Indonesian EFL learners access English input alongside entertainment. Most respondents reported using social media for English learning, but engagement was typically light and supplemental (often several times a week and for short durations). Learning activities were dominated by receptive practices (watching videos and reading captions), while productive engagement (commenting, participating in live sessions, creating content) remained limited. Learners preferred short, multimodal content and valued bilingual scaffolding, suggesting that comprehensible input, reduced cognitive load, and translanguaging support are central to their informal learning experience. Overall perceptions were positive: learners reported gains in vocabulary and grammar and increased enjoyment and motivation, although confidence development was less consistent. A key concern was content credibility, with many learners perceiving accuracy problems and reporting distractions and inconsistent routines as barriers.

These findings imply that social media can complement formal EFL instruction by providing frequent, contextualized input and motivational support, but it requires pedagogical mediation. Teachers and institutions can leverage students' preferred platforms through guided tasks that shift learners from passive consumption to interactive practice and explicitly build critical digital literacy to address misinformation and accuracy concerns. This study is limited by reliance on self-reported questionnaire data, a single research context, and the predominance of younger participants, which may restrict generalizability. Future research should employ mixed methods (e.g., interviews, learning analytics, content analysis) to capture actual practices, examine causal links between specific platform activities and language outcomes, and test interventions that promote productive skills (speaking/writing) and fact-checking strategies in informal digital environments.

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