

Vocational Students' Perception towards Learning English through Social Media

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Abstract

This study investigates vocational students' perceptions of using social media as a tool for learning English. With the increasing prevalence of social media platforms in students' daily lives, their potential in supporting language acquisition has become a relevant subject of inquiry. This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach, using a structured questionnaire with a 4-point Likert scale to gather data from 114 vocational high school students. The results show that students view social media positively in terms of its contribution to improving their English learning. Respondents reported that social media platforms make learning more enjoyable, reduce anxiety, boost confidence, and foster independent learning. Students also perceived improvements in core language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—as well as vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. However, the study also identified challenges, including exposure to inappropriate content, privacy concerns, and limited internet access. These findings emphasize the need for digital literacy and proper guidance to fully leverage the educational advantages of social media. The study concludes that, with suitable teaching approaches and awareness of possible drawbacks, social media serves as an effective supplementary resource for vocational students learning English.

Keywords: English learning, Social Media, Student Perception.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menginvestigasi siswa SMK mengenai penggunaan media sosial sebagai alat pembelajaran bahasa Inggris. Dengan semakin maraknya platform media sosial dalam kehidupan sehari-hari siswa, potensinya dalam mendukung akuisisi bahasa telah menjadi subjek penelitian yang relevan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif, dengan kuesioner terstruktur berskala Likert 4 poin untuk mengumpulkan data dari 114 siswa SMK. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa siswa memandang media sosial secara positif dalam kontribusinya terhadap peningkatan pembelajaran bahasa Inggris mereka. Responden melaporkan bahwa platform media sosial membuat belajar lebih menyenangkan, mengurangi kecemasan, meningkatkan kepercayaan diri, dan mendorong pembelajaran mandiri. Siswa juga merasakan peningkatan dalam keterampilan bahasa yaitu—mendengarkan, berbicara, membaca, dan menulis—serta kosakata, pelafalan, dan tata bahasa. Namun, studi ini juga mengidentifikasi tantangan, termasuk paparan konten yang tidak pantas, masalah privasi, dan akses internet yang terbatas. Temuan ini menekankan perlunya literasi digital dan bimbingan yang tepat untuk sepenuhnya memanfaatkan keuntungan edukasi dari media sosial. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa, dengan pendekatan pengajaran yang sesuai dan kesadaran akan kemungkinan kerugian,

media sosial berfungsi sebagai sumber daya tambahan yang efektif bagi siswa SMK dalam belajar bahasa Inggris.

Kata kunci: *Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris, Media Sosial, Persepsi Mahasiswa*

1. Introduction

English language proficiency is an essential skill for vocational students, as it enhances both academic success and future employability. In many vocational sectors such as hospitality, engineering, tourism, and information technology, English serves as the primary medium for technical instructions, international communication, and access to global resources. As industries increasingly require workers who can communicate effectively across borders, vocational students are expected to master English to remain competitive in the job market (Harmer, 2015). In parallel with these demands, the rise of digital technology has significantly transformed the learning landscape. Social media, in particular, has become an integral part of students' everyday lives, shaping how they interact, gather information, and express themselves. Platforms like YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, and WhatsApp are no longer used solely for entertainment but have emerged as informal educational spaces. These platforms offer authentic, interactive, and engaging environments where learners can practice English in real-life contexts (Mistar & Embi, 2016; Zhou, 2019).

The use of social media in language learning provides several advantages. It fosters learner autonomy, supports self-directed learning, and facilitates peer collaboration. Students are able to access content that aligns with their personal interests, develop their speaking and listening skills through multimedia resources, and enhance their writing abilities by interacting through comments and posts. As a result, many learners perceive social media as a motivating and enjoyable alternative to traditional classroom-based learning (Al Arif, 2019; Alshammari, 2020). However, despite these benefits, challenges such as digital distractions, exposure to inappropriate content, and concerns over data privacy remain pressing issues (Rahimi & Yadollahi, 2017; Twenge et al., 2019).

Given the increasing integration of social media into students' learning habits, it is important to understand their perceptions of its use in an educational context. Perceptions can significantly influence learners' engagement, motivation, and willingness to adopt new learning tools (Yunus et al., 2013). Therefore, this study aims to explore vocational students' perceptions towards learning English through social media. The findings are expected to give insights for English instructors and policymakers to design effective strategies that integrate social media into English instruction, while addressing the potential limitations that may hinder its effectiveness.

2. Literature Review

English language proficiency is an essential skill for vocational students, as it enhances both academic success and future employability. In many vocational sectors such as hospitality, engineering, tourism, and information technology, English serves as the primary medium for technical instructions, international communication, and access to global resources. As industries increasingly require workers who can communicate effectively across borders, vocational students are expected to master English to remain competitive in the job market (Harmer, 2015). In parallel with these demands, the rise of digital technology has significantly transformed the learning landscape. Social media, in particular, has become an integral part of students' everyday lives, shaping how they interact, gather information, and express themselves. Platforms like YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, and WhatsApp are no longer used solely for entertainment but have emerged as informal educational spaces. These platforms offer authentic, interactive, and engaging environments where learners can practice English in real-life contexts (Mistar & Embi, 2016; Zhou, 2019). The use of social media in language learning provides several advantages. It fosters learner autonomy, supports self-directed learning, and facilitates peer collaboration. Students are able to access content that aligns with their personal interests, develop their speaking and listening skills through multimedia resources, and enhance their writing abilities by interacting through comments and posts. As a result, many learners perceive social media as a motivating and enjoyable alternative to traditional classroom-based learning (Al Arif, 2019; Alshammari, 2020). However, despite these benefits, challenges such as digital distractions, exposure to inappropriate content, and concerns over data privacy remain pressing issues (Rahimi & Yadollahi, 2017; Twenge et al., 2019).

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insights for English instructors and policymakers to design effective strategies that integrate social media into English instruction, while addressing the potential limitations that may hinder its effectiveness. English is essential for vocational students as it supports their success in both education and the workforce. Being the most commonly used language worldwide, English is found in technical manuals, operating systems, safety guidelines, and communication tools across many vocational areas like tourism, IT, hospitality, and engineering. It also helps them stay informed about new technologies and methods through resources such as books, videos, and articles that are mostly written in English. In addition, English proficiency is important to meet industry demands and engage with global markets (Harmer, 2015). Many employers prefer candidates who can communicate in English, especially for positions that involve interacting with clients or working in international environments. By learning English, vocational students not only enhance their career chances but also gain the skills needed to thrive in a globalized job market.

Nowadays, social media has become an integral part of students' daily life, including those enrolling in vocational education. Social media like Instagram, TikTok and YouTube are used by students as a form of communication, source of information, as well as a mean of expressing themselves. Because of this tight connection with social media, students are encouraged to utilize social media for learning purposes, including learning English. Social media offers authentic, engaging, and informal learning environments that traditional classroom settings may lack. Through interactive features like videos, comments, live chats, and memes, students are exposed to real-life English usage, which helps enhance their vocabulary, listening skills, and confidence in using the language. Research has shown that students often perceive social media as a more enjoyable and motivating platform for learning English compared to conventional methods (Mistar & Embi, 2016). Additionally, it enables peer collaboration, self-directed learning, and access to native speaker content, which are critical for developing communicative competence (Zhou, 2019). One major use of social media is improving listening and speaking skills through video and audio content. Learners can watch English-language videos or participate in voice and video chats, which help in understanding pronunciation, intonation, and real-world conversation (Zhou, 2019). Social media also supports reading and writing practice through posts, captions, messages, and comments, allowing students to engage in meaningful written communication. Al Arif (2019) found that many students claimed that social media platforms gave them chances to practice English language skills as it enabled them to discuss and communicate both orally and in writing. Additionally, social media encourages informal and self-directed learning. Learners can follow English learning pages, join study groups, or use hashtags to discover educational content tailored to their interests (Alshammari, 2020). It also fosters collaboration and peer learning, as students can ask questions, share resources, and practice English together in a supportive environment.

It is clear that social media has a potential to be an effective tool for learning English. However, its educational value depends on how students perceive and use it. Yunus et al. (2013) found that students' attitudes toward technology-enhanced learning environments can significantly affect their willingness to use such platforms for academic purposes. Therefore, the current study aims to find out vocational students' perception towards the use of social media for learning English.

3. Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to explore vocational students' perceptions of learning English through social media. A qualitative descriptive approach was chosen to provide a clear and structured understanding of students' attitudes and experiences without heavy theoretical interpretation (Sandelowski, 2000). This method is suitable for studies that aim to describe phenomena based on participants' viewpoints in a straightforward and accessible way.

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire using a 4-point Likert scale, which is a common method for measuring attitudes and eliminating neutral responses. The scale ranged from *strongly disagree* (1), *disagree* (2), *agree* (3), to *strongly agree* (4). This forced-choice format was intended to encourage students to express a clearer stance regarding their perceptions. The questionnaire included statements related to the use of social media platforms—such as YouTube, Instagram, WhatsApp, and TikTok—for English learning. The items focused on perceived usefulness, motivation, ease of use, frequency of access, and the role of social media in supporting vocabulary, listening, and speaking practice.

Although the instrument produced numeric data, the study maintained a qualitative descriptive orientation. The results were analyzed thematically by identifying patterns and trends in the students' responses. Grouped responses were then described in narrative form to reflect overall perceptions and insights. This approach allowed the researcher to present a rich, contextualized description of how social media is perceived in the context of English language learning by vocational students (Bradshaw et al., 2017).

Participants were 114 vocational high school students enrolled in English classes. The questionnaire was distributed in online form during class sessions, and students completed it anonymously. Prior to data collection,

the questionnaire was reviewed and validated by two English education experts to ensure clarity, content relevance, and alignment with the study's objectives.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1 Result

Overall, the survey results revealed that students have a positive perception towards the use of social media for learning English. Almost all students agree and strongly agree that social media can be a positive environment for learning English. More detailed results about the students feeling towards social media can be seen in the table below.

Table 1. Students' Perception towards Learning English through Social Media

No	Description	Results			
		SD	D	A	SA
1	Learning English on social media is enjoyable.	0	5.3%	35.1%	59.6%
2	Using social media enhances my confidence in learning English.	0	8.8%	50.9%	40.4%
3	Social media helps lower my anxiety when learning English.	3.5%	17.5%	54.4%	24.6%
4	Social media supports the development of my ability to learn English independently.	1.8%	10.5%	42.1%	45.6%
5	Social media offers a calm and pressure-free atmosphere for acquiring language skill.	0	8.8%	42.1%	49.1%
6	A wide range of English learning materials is available through social media platforms.	0	0	36.8%	63.2%
7	Social media platforms are easy to use to learn English.	0	0	45.6%	54.4%
8	Social media gives me flexible access to English learning whenever and wherever I need it.	0	1.8%	24.6%	73.7%
9	Interacting with others for language practice is simple through social media channels.	1.8%	1.8%	21.1%	75.4%

The data in Table 1 reveals that the majority of students hold a positive perception of using social media as a medium for learning English. Most notably, 59.6% of the students strongly agree and 35.1% agree that learning English through social media is enjoyable, indicating high levels of engagement and enjoyment. Furthermore, 91.3% (a combination of "Agree" and "Strongly Agree") believe that their confidence is improved through using social media, highlighting its role in supporting students' self-assurance. In addition, 79% of the respondents believe that social media reduces their anxiety towards learning English, which suggests that the platform may help alleviate some of the psychological barriers often associated with language learning.

Moreover, 87.7% of students acknowledge that social media improves their ability to learn independently, which is essential for building learner autonomy. The responses also reflect a strong belief that social media creates a relaxed and stress-free environment, as 91.2% agree with this statement. Notably, all students (100%) recognize that social media provides a wide variety of resources and that it is easy to use. Accessibility is also a major advantage, with 98.3% of respondents confirming that they can use it anytime and anywhere. Additionally, 96.5% state that it is easy to interact with others using social media platforms, indicating its effectiveness as a platform for collaborative learning and interaction.

Table 2. Students' Perception on the Language Skills Used in Social Media

No	Description	Results			
		SD	D	A	SA
1	Social media enables me to enhance my English listening ability.	0	3.5%	49.1%	47.4%

2	It provides chances for me to practice and develop my English speaking ability.	0	8.8%	47.4%	43.9%
3	It helps me strengthen my English reading comprehension.	1.8%	0	45.6%	52.6%
4	It offers opportunities to refine and practice my English writing skills.	0	8.8%	56.1%	35.1%
5	It allows me to expand and enrich my English vocabulary.	0	3.5%	49.1%	47.4%
6	It helps increase my understanding of English grammar rules.	0	12.3%	49.1%	38.6%
7	It supports the improvement of my English pronunciation through exposure and practice.	0	5.3%	52.6%	42.1%

Table 2 focuses on students' perceptions regarding the impact of social media on various English language skills. The findings show that social media is viewed as a beneficial tool for developing all four language skills and supporting areas such as vocabulary and grammar. A total of 96.5% of students believe that social media enables them to improve their listening skills, while 91.3% see it as helpful in improving speaking abilities. This suggests that audio and video content shared on social media plays a key role in the development of students' oral and aural skills. In terms of reading, 98.2% of respondents agree that social media contributes positively to improving their reading comprehension, possibly due to the abundance of written content available online. Similarly, 91.2% of students agree or strongly agree that social media helps them to refine their writing skills. Vocabulary development is another area where students see benefit, with 96.5% acknowledging improvement through social media use. Meanwhile, grammar and pronunciation also receive favorable responses, with 87.7% and 94.7% of students, respectively, perceiving improvements. Overall, the data demonstrates that students find social media to be a versatile and effective platform for enhancing multiple aspects of their English language proficiency.

Table 3. Students' Perception on the Challenges in Learning English through Social Media

No	Description	Results			
		SD	D	A	SA
1	I sometimes encounter inappropriate content on social media.	19.3%	31.6%	35.1%	14%
2	Using social media for learning English can be distracting for me.	47.4%	40.4%	7%	5.3%
3	Social media use has an impact on both my physical and mental well-being.	19.3%	36.8%	33.3%	10.5%
4	I have problems with signal, gadgets and mobile data.	15.8%	47.4%	21.1%	15.8%
5	Personal data is vulnerable to misuse.	5.3%	15.8%	38.6%	40.4%

Although the benefits of social media for language learning are clearly recognized, Table 3 presents several challenges that students may face. One concern is exposure to inappropriate material, with 49.1% agreeing or strongly agreeing that they have encountered such content. This suggests a need for better content moderation or digital literacy training to help students navigate safely. On the other hand, the majority of students (87.8%) disagree that using social media for learning English can be distracting, implying that many can maintain focus and manage their usage effectively. Regarding health and mental health, 43.8% of students believe that social media negatively affects them, although a slightly larger portion, 56.1%, disagree. This divided response highlights the potential psychological risks that may be present for some learners. Technical issues such as poor signal, inadequate devices, or lack of mobile data are noted by 36.9% of the students, showing that while not widespread, access-related barriers still exist. Most strikingly, 79% of students express concern about the misuse of personal data, underscoring the importance of privacy and security awareness in educational contexts. In summary, while students appreciate the educational value of social media, these challenges point to areas where institutional support and guidance are necessary.

The findings of this study reveal that vocational students hold a highly favorable perception of learning English through social media. A significant number of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that social media enhances their learning experience by making it fun, accessible, and confidence-boosting. These results align with the study by Al-Kadi (2018), who found that social media platforms, particularly those with multimedia content,

can foster learner motivation and engagement in foreign language acquisition. Similarly, Wang and Chen (2020) argued that social media creates a supportive environment that reduces learning anxiety and promotes learner autonomy, which is reflected in the present study where 79% of respondents reported reduced anxiety and 87.7% recognized an improvement in independent learning. Furthermore, the results suggest that students perceive social media as a powerful tool for developing all four language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—as well as supporting aspects like vocabulary and grammar. This is in line with Manca and Ranieri (2016), who observed that the interactive and content-rich nature of social media provides meaningful input and opportunities for output in the target language. The finding that 98.2% of students reported improvement in reading skills supports Majid et al. (2021), who highlighted the value of written content on platforms like Facebook and Instagram in encouraging incidental reading practice. Additionally, the widespread agreement regarding vocabulary and pronunciation development supports Zarei and Gilaninia (2022), who emphasized the multimodal nature of social media as conducive to reinforcing language learning through visual and auditory channels.

However, despite the overwhelming positive responses, the study also uncovered several challenges associated with learning English through social media. About half of the respondents (49.1%) admitted to encountering inappropriate content, and 79% expressed concern about personal data vulnerability.

4.2 Discussion

These concerns are consistent with findings by Rahimi and Yadollahi (2017), who identified digital safety and content filtering as critical issues in the use of social media for educational purposes. While most students (87.8%) disagreed that social media distracts them, a small group acknowledged difficulties in maintaining focus—an issue that Krutka and Carpenter (2016) also noted as a potential downside to integrating social media into learning environments. Interestingly, technical challenges such as poor internet signal and limited data plans were noted by 36.9% of respondents, indicating that while social media is theoretically accessible anytime and anywhere, practical limitations still exist for a subset of students. This supports Mtebe and Raisamo (2014), who reported that infrastructure and access issues can affect the implementation of digital learning strategies in developing contexts. Additionally, 43.8% of students expressed concern about the impact of social media on their health or mental well-being, a topic gaining increased attention in digital learning literature. According to Twenge et al. (2019), high levels of screen time and online engagement can be linked to anxiety and fatigue, particularly among adolescents and young adults. Social media opens up the effective learning process since it eases the way teacher deliver the materials to the students (Lubis&Rahmadiyah, 2022)

Overall, the present study confirms that social media is viewed as a valuable tool in supporting English language learning, particularly in terms of motivation, skill development, and accessibility. At the same time, it underlines the need for structured digital literacy programs, privacy education, and appropriate content monitoring to ensure that the benefits of social media are fully realized in a safe and effective manner. Instructors and institutions must also consider ways to support students with limited access to stable internet or devices, so that no learner is left behind in a digitally enhanced learning environment.

5. Conclusion

This study explored vocational students' perceptions of learning English through social media and found that the majority of respondents held a highly positive view. Students acknowledged that social media enhances their learning experiences to be more enjoyable, enhances their confidence, reduces anxiety, and supports independent learning. They also perceived that social media contributes significantly to the development of core language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—as well as supporting vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Despite these advantages, the study also identified certain challenges. Concerns over inappropriate content, digital distractions, technical limitations, and privacy risks were all acknowledged by a portion of the participants. These findings emphasize the importance of integrating digital literacy and safety training into language education programs to mitigate the negative impacts of social media use. In conclusion, social media has strong potential as a complementary tool for English language learning. Its flexibility, accessibility, and multimedia features make it suitable for today's digitally-oriented learners. However, for its use to be most effective, both educators and learners must be equipped with strategies to navigate challenges and promote responsible and focused learning online.

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