Indonesian Research Journal on Education

e-ISSN: 2775 – 8672, p-ISSN: 2775 – 9482
Volume 4 Nomor 4 Tahun 2024
Halaman: 3135 – 3139

Web: https://irje.org/index.php/irje

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Exploring the Influence of Social Media on English Language Acquisition: Opportunities and Challenges

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Kata Kunci:
Media Sosial, Pemerolehan Bahasa Inggris, Pembelajaran Bahasa, Pembelajaran Digital, Paparan Bahasa Informal.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi pengaruh media sosial terhadap pemerolehan bahasa Inggris, dengan meneliti baik peluang maupun tantangan yang dihadirkannya bagi para pembelajar. Dengan platform seperti Instagram, Twitter, dan YouTube yang menyediakan paparan bahasa yang autentik dan beragam, media sosial berpotensi meningkatkan perolehan kosakata, pemahaman budaya, dan keterampilan komunikasi. Namun, sifat informal dan tidak teratur dari platform-platform ini juga menghadirkan tantangan, seperti risiko menginternalisasi bentuk bahasa yang tidak baku serta gangguan yang terkait dengan media digital. Melalui tinjauan literatur yang komprehensif, studi ini mensintesis penelitian yang ada untuk memberikan wawasan tentang peran media sosial sebagai alat tambahan dalam pembelajaran bahasa. Temuan penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa, meskipun media sosial dapat mendukung pemerolehan bahasa, dibutuhkan keterlibatan kritis dan panduan strategis dari pendidik untuk memaksimalkan manfaatnya dan meminimalkan keterbatasannya. Studi ini menyarankan bahwa, dengan integrasi yang bijaksana dalam kerangka pembelajaran, media sosial dapat berfungsi sebagai pelengkap efektif untuk metode pembelajaran bahasa tradisional, menciptakan lingkungan yang menarik dan dinamis bagi pembelajar bahasa Inggris.

***Key Word**:*
Social Media, English Language Acquisition, Language Learning, Digital Learning, Informal Language Exposure

Abstract

This research explores the influence of social media on English language acquisition, examining both the opportunities and challenges it presents for learners. With platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube offering authentic and diverse language exposure, social media has the potential to enhance vocabulary acquisition, cultural understanding, and communicative skills. However, the informal and unregulated nature of these platforms also introduces challenges, such as the risk of internalizing non-standard language forms and the distractions associated with digital media. Through a comprehensive literature review, this study synthesizes existing research to provide insights into the role of social media as a supplementary tool for language learning. The findings reveal that, while social media can support language acquisition, it requires critical engagement and strategic guidance from educators to maximize its benefits and minimize its limitations. This study suggests that, with thoughtful integration into learning frameworks, social media can serve as an effective complement to traditional language learning methods, fostering an engaging and dynamic environment for English language learners.

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INTRODUCTION

In the digital era, social media has emerged as a transformative force across various aspects of life, including language learning (Sari & Ningsih (2023A), Sari & Ningsih (2023A); Sitopu et al (2023); Fauziningrum et al (2023)). Platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube are no longer just avenues for social interaction; they have become rich resources for language acquisition, particularly in English (Pikhart, & Botezat (2021); Nowbattula, Florence, & Sridevi (2024); Muftah (2024)). With millions of native and non-native speakers actively engaging on these platforms, learners have the unprecedented opportunity to immerse themselves in authentic English communication, practice listening and reading skills, and engage in written and oral exchanges with users from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

e-ISSN: 2775 – 8672
p-ISSN: 2775 – 9482

This constant exposure to English across social media has made language acquisition more accessible and dynamic, facilitating both formal and informal learning experiences (Malik & Qureshi (2024); Wati et al (2024); Lazebna (2023)). Despite these promising opportunities, challenges exist in the use of social media as a tool for English language acquisition. The informal nature of language on social media, marked by abbreviations, slang, and colloquial expressions, may lead to misunderstandings or the internalization of non-standard language forms. Additionally, the vast amount of unverified content and varying degrees of language proficiency among users can impact the accuracy of language learning. Social media also presents distractions and, if not effectively managed, can detract from focused language study. Given these complexities, this research seeks to explore the multifaceted influence of social media on English language acquisition, examining both the opportunities it provides and the challenges it poses. Through this exploration, the study aims to provide insights for educators, learners, and developers on how to optimize social media as a supportive tool for English language learning while addressing its potential drawbacks.

The primary purpose of this research is to examine the influence of social media on English language acquisition, exploring how various platforms contribute to the development of English language skills among learners. By analyzing the nature of interactions and content on popular social media sites, this study aims to identify specific features that support vocabulary building, comprehension, and communicative competence. Through a detailed investigation, this research seeks to clarify the role that social media can play in both enhancing and supplementing traditional language learning methods. Another goal of this study is to evaluate the challenges that learners may encounter when using social media as a tool for language acquisition. While social media offers a wealth of authentic language exposure, it also presents potential pitfalls such as exposure to non-standard language forms, distracting content, and misinformation. By examining these obstacles, this research intends to offer strategies that can help learners and educators navigate the complexities of social media, ensuring that it serves as a constructive component of the language learning process.

Finally, this study aims to provide insights into best practices for integrating social media into English language learning frameworks. Understanding how learners can maximize social media for language practice, while avoiding its potential drawbacks, could help educators and curriculum developers design more effective, relevant, and engaging language learning experiences. In doing so, this research seeks to contribute to the broader understanding of how technology and digital platforms can be harnessed to meet the evolving needs of English language learners in a connected world.

METHOD

This research adopts a literature-based approach, systematically analyzing existing studies, theories, and data on the influence of social media in English language acquisition. Through a comprehensive review of academic articles, reports, and case studies, this research aims to synthesize current knowledge on how social media platforms impact language learning, focusing on both the opportunities and challenges that have been documented in the field. The sources will be carefully selected from reputable journals, books, and online databases, ensuring that the research draws on credible and relevant literature to address its objectives. The study will begin by identifying key themes in the literature, such as the role of social media in enhancing vocabulary, communicative skills, and cultural understanding, as well as the potential drawbacks like the risk of exposure to informal language or distractions. By categorizing findings according to these themes, the study will structure the data to present a balanced view of social media's potential benefits and limitations for English learners. This thematic categorization will also allow for a deeper exploration of specific aspects, such as how different platforms (e.g., YouTube, Instagram, Twitter) contribute uniquely to language acquisition.

Additionally, the research will conduct a comparative analysis of studies that have different methodological approaches, such as experimental studies, surveys, and case studies, to provide a robust understanding of social media's impact. By contrasting findings from these various sources, the study will identify any trends, gaps, or inconsistencies in the literature that warrant further investigation. This approach not only consolidates existing knowledge but also provides insights into areas that require more research, contributing to the broader academic discourse on digital learning in language acquisition. Finally, the findings from this literature review will be critically analyzed and synthesized to form a cohesive understanding of social media's influence on English language acquisition. The synthesis will include implications for language learners and educators, offering recommendations based on the literature on how to maximize the advantages and mitigate the challenges associated with social media for language learning purposes.

e-ISSN: 2775 – 8672
p-ISSN: 2775 – 9482

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

The literature review reveals that social media offers significant opportunities for English language acquisition by providing learners with authentic language exposure and diverse communication contexts. Studies consistently highlight that platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube allow users to engage with real-world English, which can enhance vocabulary acquisition, comprehension, and conversational skills (Larasati (2024); Sabri, Hasnan, & Sidek (2024); Hughes & Morrison (2014). Learners benefit from exposure to idiomatic expressions, slang, and current trends in language use, which often supplement what they learn in formal settings. Additionally, social media's interactive nature encourages active language use, where learners can practice writing comments, participating in discussions, and even creating their own content in English. This engagement helps build learners' confidence and fluency as they navigate various online communities and express themselves in English.

However, the literature also emphasizes challenges associated with using social media for language learning. A common issue noted across studies is the prevalence of informal language on these platforms, which may lead to the acquisition of non-standard grammar, spelling errors, and colloquialisms that are inappropriate for academic or professional contexts (Barrot (2022); Zulfikhar et al (2024); Sari & Ningsih, (2022)). Additionally, the constant stream of multimedia content can distract learners, reducing the effectiveness of focused language study. Furthermore, some research indicates that misinformation or low-quality language models on social media can negatively impact learners' understanding, as not all users produce grammatically accurate or culturally appropriate content. These challenges highlight the need for critical media literacy skills among learners, enabling them to distinguish between beneficial language input and potentially misleading information.

The review also identifies best practices for leveraging social media in language acquisition. One notable finding is that learners who approach social media with specific language goals, such as improving vocabulary or enhancing listening comprehension, tend to benefit more than those who use it passively. Additionally, several studies suggest that using structured guidance from language instructors, such as curated lists of educational accounts or interactive assignments, can maximize the benefits of social media while reducing its drawbacks. Such strategies, when applied thoughtfully, allow learners to harness the full potential of social media in developing their English skills. In summary, the literature indicates that while social media presents valuable opportunities for English language acquisition, learners and educators need to be mindful of its limitations. By adopting a strategic approach and focusing on high-quality content, learners can effectively use social media as a complementary tool in their language learning journey. These findings provide important insights for educators aiming to integrate social media into language curricula and for learners seeking to make the most of digital resources.

Discussions

The findings from this research underscore the dual role of social media as both a valuable tool and a potential challenge in English language acquisition (Wulantari et al, 2023). On one hand, social media platforms offer learners immersive exposure to English, facilitating the acquisition of authentic vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and cultural nuances often absent from traditional learning materials (Larasati, 2024). The literature highlights that social media enables informal learning through interactions with native speakers and communities, which can enhance learners' confidence, motivation, and fluency in a less structured environment. This aligns with second language acquisition theories that emphasize the importance of meaningful input and social interaction, as advocated by scholars like Krashen and Vygotsky, suggesting that social media can complement traditional classroom learning by extending language exposure beyond formal settings.

However, the informal and unregulated nature of social media introduces certain complexities for language learners. A recurring theme in the literature is the risk of learners internalizing non-standard grammar, slang, and colloquial language, which may conflict with the formal language requirements of academic or professional settings. This reflects the need for critical media literacy, as learners must differentiate between informal, casual language suited for social interaction and the standardized forms appropriate for formal communication. The findings also suggest that social media's immersive, yet often overwhelming environment can impede focused language study, highlighting the importance of intentional usage. These challenges illustrate that while social media offers unique advantages, it cannot entirely replace the structured, intentional learning provided in classroom environments.

The role of educators in guiding social media usage for language learning emerges as a critical consideration in this research (Franchisca et al, 2024); Kamaruddin et al (2024)). Studies indicate that students benefit significantly when teachers provide curated content, recommended accounts, or structured

e-ISSN: 2775 – 8672
p-ISSN: 2775 – 9482

tasks that align with specific language objectives. This structured guidance allows learners to engage with high-quality content that supports their language goals, while minimizing exposure to less reliable sources. Additionally, educators can help students develop strategies for critical engagement with content, encouraging selective attention to language models that reinforce proper usage and cultural appropriateness. This suggests that an integrated approach, one where social media complement rather than replaces traditional methods, may be most effective for language acquisition.

Ultimately, this study demonstrates that while social media is a powerful supplementary tool for English language learners, it requires thoughtful integration and guidance to be truly effective. Social media provides an unparalleled opportunity for real-world language exposure and interactive learning, yet its optimal use depends on awareness of both its advantages and limitations. By fostering digital literacy and strategic use, educators can help learners make informed choices in their social media engagement, ensuring that this dynamic platform serves as an effective complement to traditional language learning methods. These findings pave the way for future research into specific strategies and interventions that maximize the benefits of social media in language education.

CONCLUSIONS

This research concludes that social media presents both significant opportunities and notable challenges for English language acquisition. Social media platforms provide authentic exposure to the language, enabling learners to engage with native speakers and cultural content, which enhances vocabulary and communicative competence. However, the informal nature of social media also brings risks, such as exposure to non-standard language forms and potential distractions, which can hinder focused learning. Educators play a crucial role in guiding learners' use of social media by curating quality content and promoting critical engagement, ensuring that social media serves as a valuable complement to traditional learning methods. With strategic use and awareness of its limitations, social media can be a powerful tool in supporting language learners in a connected, digital world.

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