Social Media as a Tool for English Language Learning Among Junior High School Students

Ate Gueen Simanungkalit[1*], Elvi Rianti Bane[2]

[1,2] Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan, Universitas Klabat, Manado, Indonesia
e-mail: *[1]agsimanungkalit@unklab.ac.id, [2]s11920077@student.unklab.ac.id

Abstract

This study explores the use of social media in learning English among junior high school students. The research was conducted at a private junior high school, involving 81 respondents from grades 7A, 7C, and 7D. A quantitative research method was employed, utilizing a questionnaire as the primary data collection instrument. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical analysis. The results indicated a very high level of social media usage for learning English among the students, with a mean score of 4.27. This suggests that respondents frequently utilize social media platforms for English language acquisition. Based on the findings, it is recommended to leverage social media in English instruction, as students are highly engaged with these platforms, which can attract their interest and motivation. However, the study also identified challenges, such as potential distractions, exposure to inaccurate language content, and a lack of guidance from teachers.

Keywords—social media, learning English, Technology Acceptance Model, junior high school, digital learning

Abstrak

Penelitian ini menelusuri penggunaan media sosial dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris di kalangan siswa SMP. Penelitian ini dilakukan di SMP swasta, melibatkan 81 responden dari kelas 7A, 7C, dan 7D. Metode penelitian kuantitatif digunakan, dengan kuesioner sebagai instrumen pengumpulan data utama. Data yang terkumpul dianalisis menggunakan analisis statistik deskriptif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan tingkat penggunaan media sosial yang sangat tinggi untuk pembelajaran bahasa Inggris di kalangan siswa, dengan skor rata-rata 4,27. Hal ini menunjukkan bahwa responden sering menggunakan platform media sosial untuk pemerolehan bahasa Inggris. Berdasarkan temuan ini, disarankan untuk memanfaatkan media sosial dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris, karena siswa sangat terlibat dengan platform ini, yang dapat menarik minat dan motivasi mereka. Namun, studi ini juga mengidentifikasi tantangan, seperti potensi gangguan, paparan konten bahasa yang tidak akurat, dan kurangnya bimbingan dari guru.

Kata Kunci—media sosial, pembelajaran bahasa Inggris, Model Penerimaan Teknologi, SMP, pembelajaran digital

INTRODUCTION

In today's digital age, social media has transformed how people communicate, connect, and learn. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and TikTok have emerged as innovative resources for English language learners (Zainal & Rahmat, 2020). These platforms provide exposure to authentic language use and foster interactive, engaging environments for practice. By facilitating real-time conversation, sharing multimedia content, and connecting learners from diverse backgrounds, social media offers unique opportunities to enhance vocabulary, improve pronunciation, and develop cultural understanding. This highlights its potential to create dynamic and collaborative learning experiences beyond traditional classroom settings.

Al Arif (2019) found that students in the English Study Program at Jambi University actively use social media for language learning. Among these platforms, TikTok has captivated millions with its short, engaging videos. While often viewed as entertainment, applications like TikTok, Facebook, and Twitter are increasingly recognized for their educational potential. Ibrahim (2023) states that these platforms contribute to vocabulary acquisition and pronunciation improvement by exposing learners to authentic language use. Furthermore, Blattner and Fiori (2011) highlight how social media fosters learner interaction and builds a sense of community, significantly enhancing engagement and motivation. Integrating these tools into classroom instruction offers dynamic, student-centered approaches to improving English proficiency.

As an Indonesian student, the researcher experienced difficulties learning English through traditional methods, particularly in developing speaking skills and communication. Social media, however, presents a valuable resource for enhancing vocabulary, reading, and listening skills. Sutanti and Suparmi (2024) found that social media can aid vocabulary expansion and contextual understanding of grammar. Based on the researcher's experience and observations of the population, the respondents faced similar challenges. Before using social media, their knowledge of English was very limited in vocabulary, reading, and listening. After engaging with these platforms, the researcher noted significant improvements in vocabulary and comprehension skills, though areas for improvement remain.

Social Media

Social media refers to web-based technologies that enable people to create, share, and exchange ideas and information via online communities and networks. Carr and Hayes (2015) define social media as "Internet-based channels that allow users to opportunistically interact and selectively self-present, either in real-time or asynchronously, with both broad and narrow audiences who derive value from user-generated content and the perception of interaction with others."

Current platforms like TikTok, YouTube Shorts, and Instagram Reels offer brief, interactive video content that is used and viewed by individuals worldwide. Beyond entertainment, these apps possess significant educational potential, particularly for language acquisition. Anderson (2020) notes that navigating the ever-changing landscape of social media requires an ability to adapt knowledge from one platform to another. Monitoring trends is essential for determining which new platforms to implement.

TikTok, as described by Roshdi and Rahmat (2023), is a network that enables users to produce and distribute short videos with interactive elements like text, music, and visual effects. Its algorithm, which tailors content to user interests, makes it popular and increasingly useful in education for providing contextual and engaging learning experiences. These features can aid students in comprehending and remembering new words through repetition and varied scenarios.

Rajendran et al. (2024) note that short-form videos have grown popular due to their brevity and compelling nature, fitting the fast-paced lifestyle of modern audiences.

Rakhmasari and Pratiwi (2024) point out that daily use of such content can lead to inadvertent language learning. Social media, particularly, can help students learn English if they select specific channels or techniques, providing access to diverse global content that deepens language and cultural knowledge.

Instagram Reels offers similar functionality, allowing users to create and share short videos. Menon (2022) states that Reels allows video exploration by swiping and provides various audio and video editing tools. Malik and Nurhadi (2023) add that its algorithm effectively displays content aligned with user preferences, boosting motivation for language learning. This helps students relate to, adapt, and pick up new words in authentic contexts, leading to more efficient learning and retention.

Overall, short-video social media platforms are valuable resources for language acquisition. Bouhami (2016) found that social media use can enhance language proficiency through repeated exposure to linguistic activities and constant interaction. Teachers can leverage these technologies to create dynamic, imaginative, and engaging learning environments that improve vocabulary acquisition and overall language proficiency.

Advantages of Social Media

A major advantage of platforms like TikTok, YouTube Shorts, and Instagram Reels is their engaging and motivating content. The short-form video format encourages frequent interaction, helping learners maintain consistent practice, which is beneficial for improving listening and speaking skills casually and enjoyably. González-Padilla and Leonardo (2020) note that social media are among the world's most popular information sources, providing easy and affordable internet access. They are also among the simplest and most effective ways to disseminate information. Wang et al. (2024) contend that short-form videos create new learning opportunities by encouraging student participation; their research examines how perceived utility, interaction, immersion, and fun affect the desire to engage in active learning. These platforms provide authentic content that improves learner motivation and fluency, making practice enjoyable and effective.

Another benefit is the blending of entertainment and instruction, enabling learning in a fun and relaxed setting. Sarangapani and Hashim (2022) state that social media has transformed education, learning, and communication worldwide. Particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, developing nations supported online learning and academic collaboration through social media and new technology. Platforms like TikTok offer diverse content that balances enjoyment and education, making language learning less daunting and more accessible. Rini and La (2023) noted that social media enhances learning enjoyment, serving not only for entertainment and information but also for self-expression, learning, and communication. This blend makes language learning engaging and accessible outside traditional classrooms.

Disadvantages of Social Media

Despite these advantages, using social media for language learning presents challenges, particularly regarding content diversity and depth. The short video length limits comprehensive learning, as learners are often exposed to superficial topics rather than complex language rules or structures. Vidani (2024) emphasized that while social media provides learning opportunities, it can also lead to distractions. Multitasking may hinder educational outcomes. The entertainment-focused design of platforms like TikTok can divert learners' attention from educational goals, especially with abundant entertainment content competing for attention. Rini and La (2023) also highlighted difficulties in filtering information and high data consumption. In short, while social media offers accessible language learning opportunities, its entertainment focus, limited content depth, and potential for distraction present significant challenges.

Additionally, the uneven quality of user-generated content may expose learners to erroneous or non-standard terminology, causing confusion. Since emotions are difficult to express accurately through symbols and words, misconceptions can occur. Thus, while social media facilitates language acquisition, its reliance on short, superficial content limits the capacity to develop complete language proficiency. Overall, limitations in content depth, potential distractions, and misinformation risks pose significant challenges.

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), introduced by Fred Davis in 1989, is a theoretical framework explaining how and why individuals embrace new technologies. Based on the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), TAM encapsulates the mental processes involved in technology adoption. Davis (1986) stated that the model is useful for organizations looking to adopt new systems, as it sheds light on how external factors influence attitudes and behavior toward innovations. Davis also noted the interdependence of key factors, stating that "Perceived ease of use has a causal effect on perceived usefulness" (Davis, 1986, p. 24). This means that a system perceived as easy to use is likely to improve performance, thereby increasing its perceived usefulness.

TAM can help understand how students interact with and retain vocabulary on platforms like YouTube Shorts, Instagram Reels, and TikTok. Gen Z tends to trust and engage more with content from reliable sources. The type of content viewed greatly influences learning experiences. Rakhmasari and Pratiwi (2024) noted that short-form videos significantly impact language learning and are useful for vocabulary growth, aligning with TAM. Duan (2023) added that short-term videos offer an endless source of English content, enabling continuous improvement, especially in vocabulary. This aligns with TAM, as consistent exposure to diverse language contexts underscores the beneficial role of Attitudes Towards Use (ATT). By incorporating newly learned vocabulary into ordinary interactions, students improve language competency and memorization. TAM offers insightful information on how the perceived advantages and usability of these platforms influence successful vocabulary learning.

Four Main TAM Factors

Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) significantly influences students' acceptance and use of social media for language learning. Davis (1986) defines PEOU as the degree to which a person believes using a system would be free of effort. It majorly influences perceived usefulness; a user will perform better and value a system more if they find it easier to use. In language learning, PEOU assesses how readily students embrace social media as a learning tool without extra adjustment effort.

Perceived Usefulness (PU) is another key determinant, referring to the degree to which a person believes that using a system would enhance their performance. Davis (1986) defines it as the conviction that using a particular system will improve job performance. This study examines how social media can enhance students' language proficiency. Perceived usefulness gauges this impact.

Attitudes Towards Use (ATT) is the degree of an individual's favorable or unfavorable feelings about performing a behavior (Davis, 1986). It reveals whether users have positive or negative thoughts about the technology, shaping their likelihood of adoption. In this study, ATT is directly impacted by how beneficial and simple students find the technology for language learning. Attitudes are generally favorable when the technology is perceived as easy and advantageous.

Behavioural Intention to Use (BI) is the perceived likelihood that a person will perform a behavior (Davis, 1986). It indicates users' commitment to and desire to continue using social media. According to TAM, this intention is influenced by learners' perceptions

of the platform's utility and usability. A strong BI suggests that users are likely to integrate social media into their daily routines and long-term learning strategies.

Learning English

Learning English involves activities students undertake during teaching to gain knowledge. Langit (2015) describes teaching and learning as a process between teachers and students to achieve educational goals. Brown (2010) defines learning as acquiring knowledge about a subject or skill through study, experience, or instruction. He outlines components of learning: it is acquisition or getting, retention of knowledge or skills, involves memory and cognitive organization, involves activity, involves practice, and results in changed behavior.

Related Studies

This study investigates social media usage and English learning through survey analysis, aiming to determine if social media enhances vocabulary, grammar, reading, and writing skills. Findings will inform recommendations for incorporating social media into English language programs. James Cook University (2022) states that "social media offers solutions to a diverse set of instructional challenges... Some examples include large lecture courses managing hundreds of students... introductory courses providing access to basic materials... courses shifting quizzes online to allow more discussion time... or courses using the Internet to reach a non-resident, national, or international audience" (p. 2). Murywantobroto (2017) found that "Technology social media in education is very helpful in the teaching and learning process so that learners can obtain all the skills they need to master" (p. 23).

Kabilan and Abidin (2016) examined the role of social media in English language learning among Chinese students, discussing its potential for providing engaging, bite-sized educational content and creative language use opportunities. Ahmad (2019) researched social media's impact on vocabulary acquisition among high school students, highlighting how instant messaging allows for constant communication and collaborative learning outside the classroom. Li and Zang (2022) studied social media in English language learning among Chinese students, discussing the platform's potential for providing engaging, bite-sized educational content. Kumar (2013) stated, "Now the concept of educational technology social media is being used for methods, techniques, compositions, and mechanical equipment to improve learning and teaching effectiveness. Educational technology is a systematic and scientific endeavor to schedule, organize, forward, and control the effects of technical and educational processes" (p. 4). Chappelle (2003) noted, "The study of every level of the linguistic system has changed because of technology social media. At the discourse level, the language of electronic communication creates the impetus for robust theory to help make sense of new registers with their own conventions" (p. 20).

The body of related studies reveals a clear and evolving consensus on the significant role of social media as a transformative tool in English language learning (ELL). A fundamental theme shows that the recognition of social media's functional shift. Initially viewed primarily as channels for entertainment and social connection, platforms are now widely acknowledged for their pedagogical potential. The collective findings from these related studies paint a coherent picture: social media is no longer a peripheral element in language education but a central, multifaceted resource. It effectively supports vocabulary building, enhances grammatical understanding, improves communicative competence, and—crucially—boosts student motivation and engagement. The evolution in research reflects a journey from exploring if these platforms can be useful to understanding how they function most effectively within the ecosystem of language acquisition, thus providing a strong scholarly foundation for studies like the present one that seek to measure their specific usage and impact.

"Despite a growing body of research affirming the positive impact of social media on vocabulary acquisition and language skills (Ahmad, 2019; Kabilan & Abidin, 2016; Li & Zang, 2022), a distinct gap remains in the literature. Existing studies often focus on university students or general potential, leaving the specific behaviors and perceptions of younger learners, particularly in the junior high school demographic, underexplored. Furthermore, while many studies highlight pedagogical applications initiated by teachers, there is limited empirical evidence quantifying the level of self-directed, informal use of these platforms by students themselves for language learning. This study seeks to fill this gap by investigating the actual level of social media usage for English learning among junior high school students in Indonesia.

Crucially, this research moves beyond mere usage metrics by employing Davis's (1986) Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) to understand the underlying factors— Perceived Ease of Use, Perceived Usefulness, Attitude, and Behavioral Intention—that drive this adoption. Therefore, this study provides a crucial, scientifically-validated snapshot of how students are organically using technology to learn, offering insights that can bridge informal learning practices with formal educational strategies."

This study aims to scientifically validate these observational assumptions regarding the role of social media in English language learning. This research focuses on how social media can enhance English learning among 7th-grade students (classes A, C, and D) at a private junior high school in Airmadidi during the second semester of the 2024-2025 academic year. The researcher posits that social media can improve students' English learning. Therefore, this study aims to determine the level of social media usage for learning English among junior high school students. The research question guiding this study is: What is the students' level of social media usage in learning English at school?

RESEARCH METHODS
Research Design

This study used a descriptive quantitative approach to investigate the use of social media in learning English. Descriptive research provides an accurate, systematic description of a specific population, situation, or phenomenon (McCombes, 2023).

Respondents

The researcher employed convenience sampling to collect samples. Ramadani (2025) describes this as collecting data from a population easily accessible to the researcher. The criteria focused on individuals who are active social media users and proficient in English, ensuring diverse representation of usage habits and language proficiency. The study involved 81 7th-grade students at a private junior high school in Airmadidi during the 2024/2025 school year: 25 from grade A, 29 from grade C, and 27 from grade D.

Research Instrument

A questionnaire was used to collect data, adapted from Alambaigi and Ahangari (2016). It consisted of 17 questions based on Davis's (1986) Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) theory, covering four main factors: (1) perceived ease of use, (2) perceived usefulness, (3) attitudes towards use, and (4) behavioral intention, which lead to actual usage.

Table 1. Questionnaire Items based on Four TAM Main Factors

TAM Factor	Item Number	Total Item
1. Perceived Ease of Use	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	5
2. Perceived Usefulness	6, 7, 8, 9, 10	5
3. Attitudes Towards Use	11, 12, 13, 14, 15	5
4. Behavioral Intention	16, 17	2
TOTAL		**17**

Validity and Reliability

The research employed a content validity questionnaire for social media in English learning. Blattner and Anderson (2012) note that validity relies on the platform's role in improving language skills, particularly how students engage with content supporting listening and reading. The questionnaire had good face validity and was validated by three validators. After content validity, the questionnaire was distributed to 30 students in grade 7B to assess the statistical validity and reliability of the questionnaire items. Reliability is critical for ensuring consistent and dependable measurements (Heale &Twycross, 2015). For statistical validity with 30 participants, the mean score of each item was correlated with mean score of the total of the 17 items. Three items (1, 8, and 13) were found to be invalid and thus there were 14 valid items. Furthermore, a reliability scale analysis of the 14 valid items was employed to find the Cronbach Alpha value which was found to be 0.80, indicating a high reliability or acceptable. Thus, the 14 items were used for descriptive statistical analysis of the data.

Table 2. Valid Questionnaire Items based on Four TAM Main Factors

TAM Factor	Item Number	Total Item
1. Perceived Ease of Use	2, 3, 4, 5	4
2. Perceived Usefulness	6, 7, 9, 10	4
3. Attitudes Towards Use	11, 12, 14, 15	4
4. Behavioral Intention	16, 17	2
TOTAL		14

Data Analysis Techniques

Descriptive statistics, specifically the mean, were used to calculate participants' responses on social media usage for learning English. A 5-point Likert Scale was used. To answer the research question, the five-point Likert interpretation was based on Frestephani and Pratiwi (2021) as follows:

Table 3. Classification of Student Social Media Use in English Learning

Mean Score Range	Interpretation
4.01 – 5.00	Very High
3.25 – 4.00	High
2.50 – 3.24	Moderate
1.75 – 2.49	Low
1.00 – 1.74	Very Low

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The descriptive statistics analyses came up with some results. These show that there were 42 students posited in very high level, 30 students in high level, 7 students in moderate level, 2 students in low level and none in very low level (See Table 3). The frequency distribution shows that the majority of respondents reported a high level of social media use. More than half of the participants (51.9%) indicated a very high level of usage, while an additional 37.0% reported a high level. Only a small proportion of respondents reported lower levels of usage, with 8.6% falling into the moderate category and 2.5% selecting low. No respondents reported very low usage. These results suggest that social media is used extensively by the participants, with most individuals engaging at high or very high levels. The overall pattern indicates that social media plays a significant and consistent role in the daily activities of the respondents.

Table 4. Frequency of Social Media Usage in Learning English

Score	Category	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
1	Very Low	0	0
2	Low	2	2.5
3	Moderate	7	8.6
4	High	30	37
5	Very High	42	51
Total		81	100

The descriptive statistics further support the findings from the frequency distribution. The output from 81 respondents showed a mean score of 4.27 with standard deviation of 0.50 (See Table 4), indicating a very high level of social media usage for learning English. The minimum value of 2 and maximum value of 5 show that all responses fall within the low-to-very-high range, without extreme outliers. The relatively small standard deviation suggests that the responses are fairly homogeneous, meaning that most participants reported similarly high levels of social media use. Overall, the descriptive data reinforce the conclusion that social media usage is both high and relatively consistent among the respondents. This suggests respondents actively and eagerly use social media for this purpose. Rakhmasari and Pratiwi (2024) and Mauriza and Siregar (2022) note that social media is prevalent in students' daily lives, leading to consistent engagement, which may explain the high usage levels as a whole.

Table 5. Mean Score of Social Media Usage in Learning English

Variable	N	Mean	StDev	Minimum	Maximum
Social Media Usage	81	4.27	0.50	2.00	5.00

The results demonstrate a high overall level of social media usage (M=4.27). Furthermore, the data indicate that this high adoption is fundamentally supported by the students' strong belief in the platforms' ease of use (PEOU) and perceived usefulness (PU), which in turn fosters a highly positive attitude (ATT) and a strong behavioral intention (BI) to sustain this learning practice in the future. The findings are organized according to the four core constructs of the Technology Acceptance Model as follows:

1. Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU). The results show that students find social media platforms easy to navigate and use for learning English (Items 2-5). They believe these platforms provide a user-friendly interface for accessing educational content simply and efficiently and feel they possess the necessary skills to use them effectively.
2. Perceived Usefulness (PU). Students strongly believe that social media enhances their English vocabulary acquisition (Items 6, 7, 9, 10). The high usage levels imply they see these platforms as effective tools. This aligns with Rahman (2021), who found social media positively impacts vocabulary, supporting TAM's claim that perceived usefulness drives adoption. Students likely associate features like short-form content with accessible and engaging vocabulary practice.
3. Attitude Towards Use (ATT). Students showed overall positivity toward using social media for learning (Items 11, 12, 14, 15). The high mean scores and references to social media as a "part of daily life" (Rakhmasari & Pratiwi, 2024) indicate favorable attitudes. Their willingness to spend significant time on these platforms suggests they view them as legitimate learning tools, not just entertainment. TAM posits that positive attitudes stem from PEOU and PU, which is proven here.
4. Behavioral Intention (BI). Students showed a strong intention to continue using social media for learning (Items 16, 17). The high usage patterns and low deviation (0.50) indicate strong behavioral intention. TAM links BI to sustained technology use, corresponding to Mauriza and Siregar (2022), who noted that integration into daily routines fosters long-term engagement. Students' intention to recommend social media for learning further validates BI's role in perpetuating usage.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the findings indicate that social media usage among the respondents is predominantly high, with the vast majority reporting either high or very high levels of engagement. The mean score of 4.27, supported by a relatively small standard deviation, demonstrates a consistent pattern of intensive use across the sample. Only a minimal portion of respondents reported moderate or low usage, and none indicated very low engagement. These results collectively suggest that social media plays a central and routine role in the participants' daily lives, reflecting its strong presence and influence within the group studied. This high level of usage may have implications that students frequently use social media as a tool for this purpose, particularly for improving vocabulary, listening, and pronunciation skills. The study supports the idea that social media positively impacts English learning. However, challenges include distractions from non-educational content and exposure to inaccurate language usage. Therefore, while social media is a valuable supplementary tool, it should be integrated into education with proper guidance from teachers and parents.

The high mean scores of 4.27 indicates that platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and WhatsApp are widely used to enhance English skills. Most respondents found learning through social media enjoyable, confidence-building, and conducive to independent learning. They reported a relaxed, stress-free environment that makes learning more accessible and motivating. Despite challenges like distractions and inaccurate content, overall student perception is highly positive.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Although the present study provides valuable insights into the level of social media usage among respondents, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the data were collected using a self-report Likert scale, which may be subject to response bias or social desirability, potentially influencing the accuracy of the reported usage levels. Future research is recommended to incorporate additional methods of data collection—such as digital activity logs, time-tracking applications, or observational measures—to obtain more objective and detailed information about social media behavior.

Second, the sample size was limited to 81 participants from a specific population, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Researchers are encouraged to use larger and more diverse samples in future studies to enhance representativeness and allow for broader comparisons across demographic groups.

Third, the study focused solely on the *frequency* of social media use and did not examine *qualitative aspects* such as purposes, motivations, or the psychological effects associated with usage. Subsequent research should explore these dimensions to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how and why users engage with social media, as well as the potential outcomes of such engagement.

Fourth, the cross-sectional design limits the ability to draw conclusions about causal relationships. Longitudinal or experimental studies are recommended to investigate changes in social media usage over time and to identify factors that may influence or be influenced by usage patterns.

Fifth, teachers incorporate social media-based activities into English lessons to enhance engagement and motivation. Provide guidance on selecting reliable, educational content and encourage participation in interactive learning communities to improve communication skills.

Sixth, students use social media wisely by following educational English content, engaging with interactive exercises (e.g., quizzes, pronunciation challenges, storytelling), and balancing social media with traditional learning methods for a well-rounded understanding. Those are the recommendations.

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