

The Impact of Social Media Towards Students' English-Speaking Proficiency at English Department of UKI Toraja

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Abstract

The urgency of this study is to explore the impact of social media on students' speaking skills at Universitas Kristen Indonesia Toraja, as the use of digital platforms has become increasingly central to learning processes. In particular, social media offers opportunities for students to practice English in authentic and interactive contexts, which may enhance their language proficiency. This research employs a qualitative method to gain in-depth insights into students' experiences. A purposive sampling strategy was used to select seventh-semester students of the English education program as participants. Data were collected through interviews and observations, enabling the researcher to examine both self-reported experiences and observable language use. The findings indicate that Instagram positively influences speaking fluency, vocabulary development, grammar accuracy, and pronunciation. Students reported noticeable improvements in fluency and pronunciation, as well as a better understanding of informal language usage. Furthermore, Instagram enables personalized learning experiences, allowing students to practice speaking, writing, reading, and listening at their own pace while also increasing motivation and self-confidence. These results suggest that social media can serve as a valuable tool in language education by providing engaging, interactive, and supportive content. Both students and teachers can benefit from its application in the classroom. Therefore, integrating social media into English language learning programs deserves serious consideration, as it has the potential to enhance students' communicative competence and create a more dynamic and student-centered learning environment.

Keywords: *Social Media, English Learning, Impact, Speaking Proficiency, English Department*

Introduction

The advent of social media has profoundly influenced various dimensions of modern life, becoming an integral part of human interaction and daily routines. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and WhatsApp have revolutionized the ways in which individuals communicate, share ideas, and access information across borders. As a medium for global communication, social media fosters intercultural dialogue and knowledge exchange, offering users the ability to connect with diverse communities worldwide (Kamal et al., 2024). It allows people to engage with different perspectives, participate in discussions on social issues, and stay updated with real-time information, thereby shaping both social and cultural awareness. Beyond its role in personal communication, social media has also emerged as a powerful educational tool. It enables innovative forms of interaction, collaboration, and access to educational content that supports both formal and informal learning (Allo et al, 2023). Students can use these platforms to practice language skills, share academic resources, participate in virtual study groups, and receive immediate feedback from peers and instructors. Furthermore, social media can motivate learners by providing interactive and engaging learning experiences

<https://doi.org/10.54065/dieksis.5.2.2025.940>

that are flexible and personalized. Its potential to bridge geographical and temporal constraints makes it an effective medium for enhancing knowledge acquisition, fostering creativity, and developing critical thinking skills in educational settings.

In the context of education, particularly English language learning, social media holds great potential to enhance the learning process. Its dynamic and interactive features help learners develop communication skills, increase motivation, support academic achievement, and encourage active participation in social learning environments (Al Jarrah et al, 2019). By offering real-time interactions, multimedia content, and peer-to-peer engagement, social media allows learners to experience language use in authentic contexts, bridging the gap between classroom instruction and practical application. Among the core competencies in English language education, speaking remains one of the most essential skills, as it reflects the learner's ability to express ideas fluently and confidently in real-world contexts (Nilayon & Brahmakasikara, 2018). Social media, therefore, presents a valuable space for learners to practice and improve their speaking skills through authentic interactions and exposure to diverse language inputs (Khofifah et al, 2023). Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp enable students to engage in conversational exchanges, record and share spoken content, and receive feedback from peers or instructors, which fosters continuous improvement. Moreover, the informal and flexible nature of social media can reduce anxiety often associated with speaking in a foreign language, thereby boosting learners' confidence and willingness to communicate. Consequently, integrating social media into English language learning not only facilitates the development of speaking proficiency but also cultivates self-directed learning, digital literacy, and communicative competence, which are crucial skills in today's interconnected world.

Given the interconnected nature of the modern world, proficiency in spoken English has become increasingly essential. In particular, within English for Specific Purposes (ESP), professionals often need to communicate effectively with people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds while navigating a variety of professional contexts (Zhao et al, 2024). The ability to speak English fluently and accurately is therefore crucial for career development, networking, and participation in global knowledge exchange. Social media serves as an accessible and versatile online platform that enables users to engage, contribute, and generate content through blogs, social networking sites, forums, and virtual worlds (Desta et al, 2021). Its interactive and collaborative nature creates abundant opportunities for learners to practice speaking skills in authentic contexts. By participating in online discussions, sharing multimedia content, and interacting with peers or professionals across the globe, learners can enhance their fluency, pronunciation, and confidence in using English (Alam, 2022). Moreover, the flexibility and informal environment offered by social media can reduce anxiety and encourage more active participation, making it a valuable supplement to traditional language learning methods.

As the role of social media continues to expand, its capacity to promote interactivity, support personalized learning, provide diverse learning resources, and extend the learning environment presents numerous opportunities for innovation in education (Mardiyah, 2025). This is particularly relevant given that social media has become a central platform for online interaction and communication (Safitri et al, 2022). Features such as live chat, video calls, and interactive posts enable users to communicate in real time and in a natural, unfiltered manner, which closely simulates authentic language use. Moreover, social media provides learners with exposure to a variety of accents, slang, and cultural nuances, all of which are critical for developing effective speaking skills. By interacting with content and people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, learners can enhance their pronunciation, fluency, and understanding of informal language conventions. Beyond facilitating global communication, social media also introduces

new linguistic phenomena, offering learners additional avenues to expand their language competence and adaptability in diverse contexts (Poramathikul et al, 2020). Therefore, integrating social media into language education not only enriches learning experiences but also equips learners with the skills needed to navigate an increasingly interconnected and multilingual world.

In Indonesia, the application of social media for language learning has garnered significant attention in recent years. The integration of social media as a contemporary learning media can facilitate the enhancement of learning materials through the introduction of creativity and interest. As indicated by extant survey data, Indonesia is among the top ten countries with the highest rates of social media usage worldwide, with a multitude of social media platforms being utilized (Sun, 2017). While social media has played a role in students' information-seeking behaviors, it is unclear whether its use has contributed to the enhancement of their English language abilities within the context of campus life. A similar situation is observed at UKI Toraja, where the vast majority of students utilize social media. It is now a fundamental aspect of daily life to engage with social media as a means of social interaction and for entertainment. These factors have an effect on the manner in which students learn and the outcomes of their learning. Based on the explanation above, the researcher is interested in examining the type of social media used by students in the English department, with the aim of understanding the purpose of its use and whether it has an impact on English proficiency among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. Accordingly, the researcher has elected to undertake a study entitled "The Impact of Social Media on Students' English Speaking Proficiency".

Despite the growing body of research on social media and language learning, there remain several limitations that warrant further investigation. Previous studies have primarily focused on general language skills or written communication, with comparatively less attention given to the specific impact of social media on speaking proficiency in English, particularly within the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students in Indonesia. Additionally, while many studies examine social media usage broadly, few explore the specific types of platforms used, the purposes for which students engage with these platforms, and how these factors correlate with improvements in speaking skills. This study addresses these gaps by examining the types of social media utilized by English department students, the motivations behind their use, and the potential influence on their English speaking proficiency. By focusing on authentic student interactions within familiar social media environments, this research offers a novel perspective on integrating digital communication tools into language learning, providing insights that are both context-specific and relevant to contemporary educational practices.

Method

This qualitative research employed a case study approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon being studied. A case study was considered appropriate because it allows the researcher to explore complex issues within their real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly defined. In this case, the study focused on the influence of social media on students' English-speaking skills, an issue that is deeply rooted in the students' daily academic and social interactions. To collect the necessary data, the researchers used a combination of document analysis, observation, and interviews. Document analysis included reviewing students' social media posts, comments, and interactions conducted in English. Observations were carried out to identify the real-time language use and behavior of the students in both classroom and online environments.

Meanwhile, interviews served as the primary data collection tool to gather insights directly from the participants about their experiences, challenges, and perceptions regarding the use of social media for enhancing their speaking skills.

The study applied a qualitative descriptive method as its main research design. This methodological choice was made to ensure a detailed, rich, and accurate description of the experiences and behaviors of students. The descriptive nature of this method helps the researcher to portray the actual conditions without manipulating the context, which aligns well with the research's goal to explore how social media platforms contribute to or hinder students' abilities in speaking English. This research focused on providing deeper and more comprehensive insights related to the impact of social media on students' English-speaking skills. Social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp, and YouTube are widely used by students and have the potential to influence language acquisition. The study aimed to investigate whether these platforms support or interfere with students' development in speaking English, particularly in terms of vocabulary use, fluency, pronunciation, and confidence.

The participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique. This technique involves selecting individuals who are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with the phenomenon of interest. In this case, the respondents were chosen from 7th-semester students at UKI Toraja who have the ability to speak English. These students were considered suitable informants because they have sufficient exposure to both academic English learning and informal English communication via social media. To analyze the interview data, the researcher adopted the interactive model of Miles and Huberman. This model consists of four stages: data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. In the data collection stage, all relevant data from interviews, documents, and observations were gathered. The data reduction process involved selecting, focusing, simplifying, and transforming the raw data into more manageable forms. In the next stage, the reduced data were organized and displayed in tables or narrative descriptions to facilitate interpretation.

Conclusion drawing involved interpreting the meanings of the data and identifying recurring themes or patterns. The researcher continuously revisited the data and compared findings across participants to ensure consistency and accuracy. This process enabled the researcher to identify both positive and negative impacts of social media use on English-speaking skills, such as increased confidence in communication, exposure to authentic language use, as well as potential distractions and reliance on informal expressions. Semi-structured interviews were used as the main instrument for collecting in-depth data from participants. This type of interview allows for flexibility in probing individual responses while maintaining a structured guideline to ensure the consistency of the data collected. Through these interviews, the researcher could explore the participants' personal experiences, motivations, and perceptions in a detailed and nuanced manner, ultimately contributing to a holistic understanding of the influence of social media on students' speaking proficiency.

Results and Discussion

This study, conducted at the English Department of Toraja Christian Indonesia University, investigated the impact of social media on the English speaking skills of seventh semester students. Data collected through interviews revealed some key findings regarding students' use of social media and its perceived influence on their language skills. The most frequently used social media platforms among university students were Instagram and YouTube. Students reported using these platforms due to factors such as peer influence, ease of access, wide

reach, and availability of interesting content. Notably, the majority of participants indicated using social media as a tool for learning English, particularly by seeking out educational videos that focus on speaking skills. They found this content interesting and customizable to their individual learning needs. The type of content accessed on social media reportedly plays an important role in skill improvement. Engaging videos, movie clips and interactive content were cited as helpful in practicing and improving speaking. While entertainment content contributed to vocabulary expansion, students expressed a desire for more specific and structured material designed for purposeful speaking practice. Most students consider social media to sometimes facilitate their learning, with its effectiveness depending on the specific content they encounter. A common practice was to follow content creators and mimic their language.

Exposure to native English speakers through social media is consistently reported to have a positive impact on students' speaking skills and fluency. The language used by native speakers is often considered easier to understand and learn. In addition, interaction on social media, especially through comments on posts, was found to contribute to improved communication and writing skills. Students generally found the exposure to informal English on these platforms useful and easy to understand. In terms of motivation, the majority of students reported feeling more motivated to learn English through the flexible and relaxed environment offered by social media compared to the traditional classroom setting. However, one participant did not find social media to be a motivating factor for language learning. Regarding grammar, most students indicated that exposure to informal language on social media did not negatively impact their attention or understanding of correct grammatical structures, and some even learned grammar from educational content.

Despite the benefits, a significant challenge identified was the ease of being distracted when using social media for learning. The abundance of interesting content and notifications often distract students' focus. Regarding confidence, students generally did not experience a drop in confidence when speaking English online. However, a distinction was made regarding academic assignments; some students reported feeling less confident when asked to create and upload English videos for coursework. This study revealed a tendency among university students to engage more in online interactions, such as commenting, rather than participating in face-to-face conversations for English practice. Numerous students reported a paucity of opportunities for face-to-face interaction and frequently imitated native speakers' pronunciation due to an absence of interlocutors. This section presents a discussion based on the findings of this research in relation to previous studies. The findings of this research explain the various impacts of social media on the speaking abilities of 7th-semester students at UKI Toraja as a means for learning and practicing to improve their speaking skills.

Most frequently used social media and reason

This study uncovered the underlying motivations behind students' use of social media, particularly in the context of language learning. Although investigating these motivations was not the primary focus of the research, the data collected during in-depth interviews revealed patterns that align with findings from previous studies. Students' reasons for engaging with social media go beyond mere communication; they also view it as a practical and accessible platform for acquiring information, entertainment, and informal learning experiences. These findings reflect broader trends identified in earlier research, which highlight that students often gravitate toward platforms that are user-friendly and offer engaging content that can support language exposure (Khan et al., 2023).

Among various platforms, Instagram emerged as the most frequently and widely used social media tool among the participants. Its visual nature, interactive features, and widespread popularity among youth make it an appealing medium for both entertainment and language practice. The students reported that Instagram helps them encounter English in context through captions, stories, and videos which enhances their vocabulary and pronunciation subconsciously. Students cited ease of access, the entertainment value, and the ability to interact with content in English as key reasons for their frequent use of the platform (Khan et al., 2023).

Through the interviews, the researcher also identified several notable impacts of social media on students' English-speaking skills. Many participants used social media platforms as a casual space to practice speaking or writing in English, such as by recording videos, responding to comments, or participating in live discussions. While these habits positively contributed to increased confidence, fluency, and vocabulary acquisition, the study also noted some negative effects. These included the potential for adopting informal or incorrect language patterns and overdependence on simplified communication. Thus, while social media serves as a valuable supplementary tool for English language practice, its use must be balanced with proper guidance to ensure students develop accurate and context-appropriate speaking skills.

Impact of media sosial for learning: Positive impact

This study explores the dual impact of social media on students' overall English speaking skills, highlighting both its benefits and potential drawbacks. The research findings indicate that social media platforms offer a dynamic and interactive environment that facilitates language learning beyond the traditional classroom. Students are exposed to authentic language use in real-life contexts through various features such as videos, live streams, comment sections, and direct messaging. These platforms enable learners to observe and imitate native or proficient speakers, which contributes to improvements in pronunciation, vocabulary usage, and conversational fluency. Social media also allows students to practice speaking in a less formal and more comfortable setting, which increases their confidence and willingness to use English in daily communication.

Moreover, the study reveals that social media serves not only as a medium for entertainment but also as an effective educational tool that supports personalized and self-directed learning. Students reported that regular interaction with English content on platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok helped them become more familiar with common expressions, grammatical structures, and cultural references. This consistent exposure led to noticeable enhancements in their speaking skills, including better articulation, improved sentence construction, and increased spontaneity in speech. However, the study also acknowledges that without proper guidance, the informal nature of social media can sometimes lead to the reinforcement of incorrect language use. Therefore, while social media offers promising opportunities for improving English speaking skills, its use should be complemented by teacher support and reflective learning strategies to maximize its positive impact.

Increase exposure and direct interaction with foreign speakers

The present study indicated that Instagram serves as a valuable platform for facilitating interaction with native English speakers, offering students opportunities to engage in authentic communication. This informal yet meaningful interaction allows learners to practice language in real-life contexts, fostering greater confidence and fluency. The findings suggest that social media platforms, particularly those that support direct messaging and interactive content like

Instagram, significantly increase users' exposure to the English language. This is in line with research by researcher, which emphasizes that consistent engagement with English-language content on platforms such as YouTube and Instagram contributes positively to language acquisition and development (Gasani et al, 2025).

Furthermore, the study reinforces the notion that social media serves not only as a tool for passive knowledge consumption but also as a dynamic space for active language use. Interacting with native speakers and engaging with authentic materials allow learners to adapt their language use to diverse situations, enhancing their practical communication skills. This type of informal practice encourages students to become more comfortable using English in daily life, which is essential for developing functional language proficiency. By integrating language learning into their everyday digital routines, students are better able to internalize vocabulary, structures, and cultural nuances, thereby enriching their overall language learning experience.

Impact on motivation

Additionally, the researcher found that social media platforms offer a significantly higher level of motivation for self-directed English language learning compared to traditional face-to-face methods. Social media fosters an environment where students can take control of their own learning processes, selecting content that aligns with their interests and learning styles. This personalized approach leads to more active participation, as students are more inclined to practice their English skills in real-time interactions, such as writing captions, commenting on posts, or participating in live discussions. The flexibility and accessibility of social media make language learning feel less rigid and more integrated into students' daily lives, which boosts their willingness to engage regularly with the language (Ghafar et al, 2023).

This study also supports the idea that students experience greater confidence when they interact with individuals from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds through social media. The opportunity to communicate with a global audience encourages learners to use English more frequently, helping them overcome anxiety often associated with speaking in traditional classroom settings. The comment section, in particular, serves as a valuable tool for fostering interaction and discussion, where students can express opinions, ask questions, and receive feedback. Such informal interactions not only promote communication but also reinforce language structures and vocabulary in context, creating a more engaging and meaningful learning experience.

Impact on grammar

Furthermore, the study revealed that frequent exposure to informal language on social media platforms has an unexpected yet positive effect on students' grammar usage. Although social media is often associated with casual and unstructured language, participants in this study reported that they still pay attention to grammatical accuracy when communicating online. This attention may stem from a desire to be understood clearly by a wider audience, including non-native speakers, and to present themselves competently in digital interactions.

In addition, the research findings consistently indicate that social media contributes significantly to the improvement of students' vocabulary, speaking fluency, and grammatical structures. Through daily interaction with English-language content such as captions, video dialogues, comment sections, and educational reels, students are exposed to varied and context-rich language use. This consistent exposure not only strengthens their language input

but also encourages them to practice more frequently in informal but meaningful ways, ultimately improving their spoken English abilities (Wootton et al., 2024).

Moreover, the study highlights the role of interactive and educational video content in enhancing students' grammar and speaking proficiency. Participants actively engaged with content by providing feedback, asking questions, or joining discussions, which fostered their familiarity with correct grammar and effective communication strategies. The algorithmic nature of social media further supports this process by continuously recommending content that matches learners' interests and educational needs, thereby increasing their exposure to well-structured language use.

Impact of media sosial for learning: Negative impact

Instagram is just a waste of time and a distraction

The study further reveals the paradoxical role of social media in English language learning among students. On one hand, it provides rich linguistic exposure and diverse communication opportunities that can support speaking skill development. On the other hand, it also introduces significant distractions that hinder students' ability to focus on their learning tasks. The dual nature of social media use highlights the challenge of maintaining a balance between entertainment and education, especially when students are not guided or self-regulated in their usage (Setyaningsih et al, 2022).

The findings suggest that while students often begin with the intention of engaging in English-related activities such as watching educational videos or participating in English-speaking groups they frequently end up spending more time on entertainment content. This unintentional shift leads to reduced study time, weakened concentration, and slower improvement in speaking skills. These distractions not only impact cognitive focus but also diminish students' motivation and consistency in practicing English through meaningful interaction.

Moreover, the study provides cognitive evidence that frequent exposure to non-academic content through social media can result in fragmented attention spans. Students reported feeling mentally scattered and unable to maintain focus on English learning tasks for sustained periods. This suggests that without conscious effort and structured guidance, social media can do more harm than good in developing English speaking proficiency. Therefore, it is crucial for students to practice cognitive discipline by focusing on one learning task at a time before switching to another.

Impact on self-confidence

Moreover, excessive use of social media can negatively impact students' face-to-face interaction skills, particularly in spoken communication. While social media offers numerous opportunities for language exposure, it does not always provide adequate practice in real-time verbal exchanges. As a result, students may become overly reliant on asynchronous communication modes such as texting or commenting, which do not require spontaneous speaking. This can lead to a decline in their confidence when engaging in direct conversations, where immediate responses, eye contact, and body language play a crucial role in effective communication.

Interestingly, this finding contrasts with the research conducted by researcher, which suggests that interaction with individuals from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds via social media can actually enhance students' confidence in using English (Mufti et al, 2023).

According to that study, students became more motivated and less anxious about making mistakes when communicating with international peers outside the classroom setting. However, in the present study, while some students initially claimed to feel confident using English on social media, deeper probing during interviews revealed that approximately half of them felt self-conscious or hesitant when asked to post videos of themselves speaking English. This discrepancy suggests that passive interaction (e.g., liking, commenting, or chatting) might feel less intimidating than active content creation, which demands greater self-assurance.

This phenomenon underlines the importance of encouraging students to engage in both passive and active language practices on social media. While browsing and chatting may increase exposure to vocabulary and informal expressions, producing spoken content — such as voice recordings or video uploads — offers more direct opportunities to build fluency and self-confidence. Therefore, educators and language facilitators should support students in gradually stepping out of their comfort zones by designing structured tasks that involve creating and sharing spoken content online. With proper scaffolding, students can begin to view social media not only as a space for entertainment but also as a practical platform for real-world language development.

Impact on real time situation

Moreover, social media's inability to facilitate direct speaking practice is further compounded by students' lack of wise usage, ultimately hindering their ability to develop and refine their speaking skills. These findings are quite similar to the results of a study by Wati et al. (2024), which explores the use of social media for language learning. The study indicates that while positive aspects such as real-life practice, access to authentic content, and connections with native speakers are clearly evident, there are differing views regarding engagement. However, there are limitations for students, as practicing directly by merely mimicking the pronunciation of native speakers without having a conversation partner is less effective for utilizing social media as a learning medium. This highlights the importance of a targeted and tailored approach to ensure that the benefits of social media can be optimally leveraged in language education.

The novelty of this study lies in its specific examination of the impact of social media use on students' speaking skills at Universitas Kristen Indonesia Toraja. This study distinguishes itself from previous research by employing a self-reported approach, analyzing students' personal experiences and perceptions. The findings provide deeper insights into the effects of social media on language learning, shedding light on its potential to enhance cognitive and affective skills. Notably, this study reveals that social media use has a significant impact on English speaking skills development, offering more opportunities for practice and improvement compared to traditional face-to-face learning. The results of this study inform strategies for maximizing social media use in developing innovative, interactive, and effective language teaching practices across various educational settings.

Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the impact of social media use on students' English speaking skills at UKI Toraja. The findings indicate that social media has both positive and negative influences on students' cognitive development. Most students reported improvements in vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and motivation to speak English, as social media provides authentic exposure to English through real-life content and peer interactions, thereby supporting language acquisition and boosting learners' confidence. These results imply that integrating

social media into language learning can enhance speaking proficiency and foster more active and self-directed learning experiences. However, the study has several limitations: it involved a small sample of 7th-semester students from a single university, relied primarily on self-reported interviews and observations that may introduce subjective bias, and did not include quantitative measures to objectively assess speaking improvements. Therefore, future research should involve larger and more diverse samples, combine qualitative and quantitative methods, and examine the effects of specific social media platforms and content types. Additionally, effective integration of social media into language learning should be accompanied by guidance and monitoring from educators to maximize its benefits and minimize potential drawbacks.

Acknowledgment

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