Social Media Platform Preferences for Enhancing English Language Skills: A Study of Secondary School and University Students in Selangor

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Abstract

The impact of technological advancements, specifically social media, on the enhancement of English language proficiency has garnered mixed responses from individuals, despite the limitations of conventional learning materials in this regard. This study focused on assessing the English language skills of secondary school and university students, revealing positive outcomes. Employing a quantitative approach through the distribution of questionnaires which include objective and subjective questions among students in Selangor, it was observed that both groups favoured YouTube as their preferred platform for language improvement, while Facebook was rated the least favoured by both categories. Regarding the disparities in social media platform preferences and their effects on students' English language skills, the research found no significant differences. This research also aims to highlight the potential of social media platforms in effectively enhancing students' English language skills, and it is hoped that both educators and students can tap into this resource to their advantage.

Keywords: social media, English language skills, secondary school, university

INTRODUCTION

The Fourth Industrial Revolution, often referred to as IR 4.0, underscores the significance of automation, interconnectivity, machine learning, and real-time data. These advancements have had a profound impact on various aspects of human life, particularly within the education sector. IR 4.0 has revolutionized the efficiency of education systems worldwide, ushering in a new era of learning. As highlighted by Yunus et al. (2019), the integration of mobile technology and interactive Web 2.0 internet-based applications, commonly known as online social media, has become increasingly indispensable in our daily lives.

However, the perception of social media's role in learning took a hit when the global shift towards online education was necessitated by the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. This transition was met with significant resistance, with many expressing concerns about the potential negative impact of social media on the learning process. Despite these criticisms, social media can be a valuable tool for students looking to enhance their English language skills, given that English is widely used as the primary language of communication on these platforms. As noted by Arulchelvan et al. (2019), English serves as the lingua franca of the Internet, making social media an ideal environment for language learning, especially for ESL learners. However, mastering the intricacies of the English language,

including writing, listening, speaking, and reading, can be challenging for students, particularly ESL learners.

Nevertheless, social media platforms offer significant advantages in facilitating the language learning process (Al-Jarrah et al., 2019). They play a crucial role in addressing challenges associated with online learning, despite some educators and learners initially expressing reservations about their utility in education.

In light of these considerations, this research aims to achieve two primary objectives. Firstly, it seeks to investigate the preferences of secondary school students and university students from a faculty in a public university in Selangor regarding social media platforms for improving their English language skills. Secondly, it aims to compare the choices made by students from these two educational levels regarding the social media platforms they utilize for language skill enhancement.

Literature Review

In this section, we will explore the relevant literature that underpins this study, encompassing key theoretical frameworks such as the Social Learning Theory, as well as topics including English language proficiency, social media platforms and preferences in utilizing these platforms.

Social Learning Theory

Albert Bandura (1977) introduced the Social Learning Theory, emphasizing the role of observation and modeling in shaping behaviors and attitudes. When applied to social media, Cilliers (2021) noted that this theory underscores learning through platforms where individuals observe and imitate behaviors, focusing on social media as the model. The theory comprises four key principles: attention, retention, production, and motivation (Bandura & Walters, 1977).

In this context, learners can observe and emulate content posted on social media platforms. Integrating social learning tools, as highlighted by Liu (2010), fosters interactive learning experiences, motivating learners to engage with English language learning through these platforms. However, exposure to various aspects of social media entails both positive and negative outcomes. While platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook serve as effective social learning tools, facilitating collaborative learning (Cilliers, 2021), learners may also encounter inappropriate content, leading to the acquisition of slang and curse words. It is crucial for learners to discern between beneficial and detrimental content on social media to avoid negatively impacting their English language proficiency.

English Language Skills

Proficiency in all four essential English language skills—writing, speaking, listening, and reading—is vital for effective language acquisition and communication. Mastery in these areas is interconnected, with deficiencies in any skill hindering overall language comprehension and expression.

Reading skills play a pivotal role in expanding vocabulary and enhancing comprehension abilities, laying the foundation for effective writing and critical thinking. Improved writing skills enable individuals to express themselves coherently, facilitating better communication and integration into various conversations. Additionally, speaking skills are crucial for effective communication, particularly in diverse and global contexts where English serves as the lingua franca (Rao, 2019). The ability to articulate thoughts and ideas is closely tied to listening skills, which allow individuals to understand context and respond appropriately in conversations. In essence, proficiency in all four language skills is essential for navigating language and cultural barriers, enabling individuals to communicate effectively and participate confidently in various interactions.

Social Media Platforms

Manning (2014) defines social media platforms as innovative forms of media characterized by interactive participation. Users utilize these platforms to exchange information on various topics with individuals worldwide. Social media encompasses five main types: social networks, media sharing networks, social blogging networks, discussion networks, and review networks. Popular platforms

include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, among others, which will be frequently referenced in this paper.

Past studies, such as Ariantini et al. (2021), have underscored the benefits of social media in enhancing English language learning. These benefits span across multiple skills, including speaking, writing, listening, and reading, along with improvements in vocabulary, spelling, pronunciation, and motivation, as well as fostering creative and critical thinking skills. Implementing social media in teaching and learning has proven effective in achieving these enhancements. Similarly, findings from Desta et al. (2021) indicate that social media contributes to learners' improvement in English language skills and their ability to apply these skills both inside and outside the classroom.

Preferences on The Use of Social Media Platforms

The rise of social media platforms has significantly impacted English language learning skills. Past studies consistently identify Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, and YouTube as the most commonly utilized platforms by learners. Anwas et al. (2020) found that students often choose Line, WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter to enhance their language proficiency, leveraging social media content to improve their English skills. Similar findings were echoed by Hamat and Hassan (2019), Sari et al. (2019), and Wahyunengsih (2021).

However, while some studies highlight the preference for using social media for educational purposes, others reveal that many learners primarily utilize these platforms for entertainment rather than language learning. Ahmed and Hassan (2017) observed frequent usage of WhatsApp, Twitter, and YouTube among participants, yet only a small percentage were members of English language learning pages. Moreover, Kircaburun et al. (2018) noted that Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, and YouTube were commonly used for socializing and entertainment, with Facebook and Twitter occasionally associated with informational and educational content.

Overall, while social media platforms offer opportunities for English language learning, their usage varies among learners, with some utilizing them extensively for educational purposes and others primarily for entertainment and socializing.

METHODOLOGY

The research employed a quantitative approach, utilizing a questionnaire created via Google Forms to collect data from respondents. Drawing from insights gleaned from previous studies, questions were adapted from research by A Baniyassen, Sameer O (2020) and Diana Al Jahromi (2020), alongside questions developed by the researcher. There are objective and subjective items in the questionnaire.

The target population comprised secondary school students and university students born in the peninsular, Sabah, and Sarawak, who use English as their second language dominated by their first language. Participants included first to eighth semester tertiary students from the Faculty of Education, UiTM Puncak Alam and Form One to Form Five secondary students from Methodist Girls' School (MGS), Klang.

Convenience sampling was utilized for practicality and efficiency purposes, especially when time and resources are limited. The samples were selected from readily available and willing participants, making it accessible and cost-effective (Creswell, 2009). While it may not fully represent the broader population, convenience sampling can still provide valuable insights and serve as a useful preliminary step in exploratory studies. The sample size for MGS students was determined by the total responses received, while for UiTM students, a sample size of 306 was determined using Krejcie & Morgan's (1970) sample size table. However, only 102 responses were obtained from UiTM students. A pilot test was conducted to refine the questionnaire, followed by Cronbach's Alpha analysis to assess internal consistency. The resulting Cronbach's Alpha value of .839 indicated high internal consistency.

Table 1: Reliability Statistics for Social Media Preferences for
English Language Skills Improvement

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.839	.846	11

Prior to distribution, forms from the UiTM Research Ethics Committee (REC) were completed to ensure participant confidentiality. During data collection, participant identities remained confidential to protect privacy rights. For MGS students, physical copies of the questionnaire and an REC approval letter were provided to the principal. For UiTM students, the questionnaire was distributed online via student email and WhatsApp EDU group chat, with data collection spanning two weeks.

The study collected quantitative data through a questionnaire distributed to participants. Subsequently, the data were transferred to an Excel spreadsheet for organization. To extract meaningful insights, the researcher utilized Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software to process the raw data. Descriptive statistics and independent samples T-tests were conducted to analyse the questionnaire data, facilitating the extraction of pertinent information for the research.

FINDINGS

This section delves into the research findings, emphasizing three pivotal components.

Social Media Preferences for English Language Skills Improvement

To address the first research question, preferences regarding the use of social media platforms for enhancing English language skills were identified among students from Methodist Girls' School (MGS) and the Faculty of Education at UiTM Puncak Alam. A descriptive analysis was conducted on students' ratings across three items, measured on a five-point Likert scale, and seven items, assessed on a five-point Rating scale.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of MGS and UiTM Students' Social Media Preferences for English Language Skills Improvement

Descriptive Statistics	MGS			UiTM		
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
I am aware that social media use helps me to improve my English language proficiency.	119	4.32	.736	102	4.32	.647
I am aware of my English language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) level.	119	4.01	.808	102	4.10	.802
I use social media for educational purposes.	119	3.94	.857	102	3.75	.875
I use Whatsapp to improve my English language skills.	119	3.34	1.036	102	3.19	1.069
I use Telegram to improve my English language skills.	119	3.14	1.099	102	3.13	1.078
I use Facebook to improve my English language skills.	119	1.72	1.057	102	2.16	1.158
I use Twitter to improve my English language skills.	119	2.63	1.501	102	2.58	1.445
I use YouTube to improve my English language skills.	119	4.38	.873	102	4.10	.850
I use TikTok to improve my English language skills.	119	3.61	1.468	102	3.38	1.415
I use Instagram to improve my English language skills.	119	3.80	1.273	102	3.29	1.207
Valid N (listwise)	119			102		

For MGS students, a keen awareness of English language skill improvement through social media aid was evident (mean= 4.32, SD= .736). Additionally, they exhibited awareness of their English language proficiency (mean= 4.01, SD= .808) and frequently utilized social media for educational purposes (mean= 3.94, SD= .857). Notably, YouTube emerged as the preferred platform for honing language skills (mean= 4.38, SD= .873), while Facebook was least favored (mean= 1.72, SD= 1.057).

Similarly, students from the Faculty of Education at UiTM Puncak Alam demonstrated awareness of language skill enhancement through social media (mean= 4.32, SD= .647), alongside recognition of their English language proficiency (mean= 4.10, SD= .802) and usage of social media for educational purposes (mean= 3.75, SD= .875). Moreover, YouTube was prominently utilized for language skills development (mean= 4.10, SD= .850), while Facebook was least preferred (mean= 2.16, SD= 1.158).

In summary, findings indicate that both groups of students favored YouTube as the preferred platform for enhancing their English language skills, while Facebook ranked lowest in preference for language skill improvement.

Table 3: Frequency of Social Media Platform Usage for English Language Improvement
Among MGS and UiTM Students

On average, I spend _____ per day on social media platforms for English language skills improvement.				
	MGS		UiTM	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Less than an hour	9	7.6	11	10.8
One to two hours	13	10.9	12	11.8
Two to three hours	17	14.3	33	32.4
Three to four hours	34	28.6	28	27.5
More than five hours	46	38.7	18	17.6
Total	119	100.0	102	100.0

In addition, participants' daily social media usage for improving English language skills was examined. Among Methodist Girls' School (MGS) students, 38.7% (n= 46) spent over five hours daily on this endeavor, while 7.6% (n= 9) devoted less than an hour. Conversely, at the Faculty of Education, UiTM Puncak Alam, 32.4% (n= 33) allocated two to three hours daily, with 10.8% (n= 11) spending less than an hour. These findings illustrate varying levels of commitment to utilizing social media for English language skill enhancement among students from both institutions.

Differences Between the Students' Preferences of Social Media for The English Language Skills Improvement

Table 4: Independent Sample T-Test on Social Media Preferences

Group Statistics							
	Group	N	Mean	SD	T-value	df	sig
1. I am aware that social media use helps me to improve my English language proficiency.	MGS	119	4.32	.736	-.045	219	.964
	UiTM	102	4.32	.647			
2. I am aware of my English language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) level.	MGS	119	4.01	.808	-.825	219	.410
	UiTM	102	4.10	.802			
3. I use social media for educational purposes.	MGS	119	3.94	.857	1.679	219	.094
	UiTM	102	3.75	.875			
4. I use Whatsapp to improve my English language skills.	MGS	119	3.34	1.036	1.056	219	.292
	UiTM	102	3.19	1.069			
5. I use Telegram to improve my English language skills.	MGS	119	3.14	1.099	.105	219	.917

		UiTM	102	3.13	1.078			
6. I use Facebook to improve my English language skills.		MGS	119	1.72	1.057	-2.912	219	.004
		UiTM	102	2.16	1.158			
7. I use Twitter to improve my English language skills.		MGS	119	2.63	1.501	.260	219	.795
		UiTM	102	2.58	1.445			
8. I use YouTube to improve my English language skills.		MGS	119	4.38	.873	2.406	219	.017
		UiTM	102	4.10	.850			
9. I use TikTok to improve my English language skills.		MGS	119	3.61	1.468	1.143	219	.254
		UiTM	102	3.38	1.415			
10. I use Instagram to improve my English language skills.		MGS	119	3.80	1.273	3.006	219	.003
		UiTM	102	3.29	1.207			
11. On average, I spend _____ per day on social media platforms for English language skills improvement.		MGS	119	2.87	1.218	1.209	219	.228
		UiTM	102	2.67	1.330			

Table 4 compares social media platform usage for English language skill enhancement between MGS and UiTM students. Questions 1 to 5 examined differences in English language proficiency awareness and social media usage between MGS and UiTM students, summarised as follows: Question 1 on awareness of English language proficiency improvement through social media. The independent samples t-test yielded a non-significant result (t = -.045, df = 219, sig. = .964), indicating no significant disparity between MGS students (mean = 4.32, SD = .736) and UiTM students. Question 2 on awareness of English language skills level shows a non-significant result (t = -.825, df = 219, sig. = .410), indicating no significant difference between MGS students (mean = 4.01, SD = .808) and UiTM students. Question 3 on variations in the usage of social media for educational purposes. The independent samples t-test revealed a non-significant result (t = 1.679, df = 219, sig. = .094), indicating no significant difference between MGS students (mean = 3.94, SD = .857) and UiTM students. Question examined differences in the usage of WhatsApp for English language skill improvement. The independent samples t-test showed a non-significant result (t = 1.056, df = 219, sig. = .292), indicating no significant disparity between MGS students (mean = 3.34, SD = 1.036) and UiTM students. Question 5 explored variations in the usage of Telegram for English language skill enhancement. The independent samples t-test yielded a non-significant result (t = .105, df = 219, sig. = .917), indicating no significant difference between MGS students (mean = 3.14, SD = 1.099) and UiTM students.

Question 6 (the disparity in Facebook usage for English language skill improvement) and 10 (the duration spent on social media platforms for English language skill improvement) show a significant difference. MGS students used Facebook less (mean = 1.72, SD = 1.057) than UiTM students (mean = 2.16, SD = 1.158) for Question 6 while for Question 10: MGS students (mean = 3.80, SD = 1.273) used Instagram more than UiTM students (mean = 3.29, SD = 1.207) for language enhancement. Question 7, 8,9 and 11, on the other hand show a no significant difference as follows: Question 7: similar Twitter usage levels were observed between MGS (mean = 2.63, SD = 1.501) and UiTM students (mean = 2.58, SD = 1.445). Question 8: Both MGS (mean = 4.38, SD = .873) and UiTM students (mean = 4.10, SD = .850) showed comparable YouTube usage. Question 9: TikTok usage was similar between MGS (mean = 3.61, SD = 1.468) and UiTM students (mean = 3.38, SD = 1.415). Question 11: Both groups spent similar durations on social media platforms for language improvement (MGS: mean = 2.87, SD = 1.218; UiTM: mean = 2.67, SD = 1.330).

In sum, the independent samples t-tests for questions 1 to 5, 7 to 9 and 11 indicated no significant disparities between the groups across all aspects analysed, suggesting similar levels of awareness and usage patterns for enhancing English language skills through social media platforms like WhatsApp and Telegram. Only two questions (6 and 10) showed a significant difference which suggest a slight disparities between the two groups.

Suggestions for English Language Improvement

Table 5: Thematic Table Analysis for MGS' Suggestions

PARTICIPANTS	EXCERPTS	THEME
24	*"…use a better platform to improve their English, communicate with people in English in real life. They can use a better or informative platform or social media."*	Proper Source Selection
86	*"Find more educational related materials and get more exposure to English language on social media wisely. With the privilege of having social media and more sources, they should use the opportunity in a good way."*	
23	*"Use social media to a minimal time and spend more time on reading physical English materials such as newspapers, book, and magazines."*	Self-restraint
14	*"Watch English movies and animated series cartoon."*	Hobbies
21	*Watch the movie that can help us improve our listening skills and have better English pronunciation."*	
23	*They could also talk English durind their daily routine with their family and friends to improve their communicative and speaking skills."*	Practice
47	*"Learn English at school better before they write anything on the social media."*	Others
69	*"Seek a tutoring class face to face and read more books. Communicating with people also helps."*	

Figure 2 illustrated the suggestions given by the respondents from Methodist Girls' School.
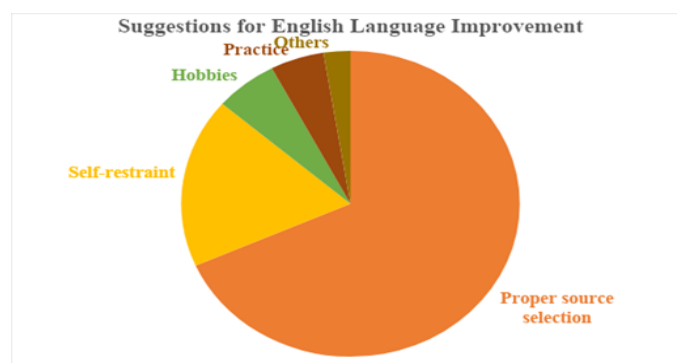

Figure 1: MGS' Suggestions on English Language Skills Improvement

According to Figure 1, the graph illustrates respondents' suggestions for enhancing their English language skills. Notably, 67.22% of respondents emphasized the importance of proper source selection, comprising over 80 recommendations. Additionally, 17.65% (n= 21) advocated for self-restraint, while 5.88% (n= 7) recommended hobbies. Practice was suggested by 5.04% (n= 6) of respondents. The remaining 2.52% (n= 3) provided suggestions outside the major categories.

Table 6: Thematic Table Analysis for UiTM's Suggestions

PARTICIPANTS	EXCERPTS	THEME
46	*"Be more selective on spending time on the right social media platform so that the English skills won't worsen."*	Proper Source Selection
56	*"Avoid social media for a while before using them within the time limit."*	Self-restraint
70	*"Limit the time they spend on social media and use other beneficial apps which can further enhance their skills in English."*	
65	*"Do not use abbreviated forms while texting or using the language."*	Practice
3	*"Watch English movie. Find a movie that you obsess with and naturally, you will try to mimic them"*	Hobbies
29	*"Always watching English movies with subtitles on it so they can know how to use the English pronunciation in communication."*	
26	*"Find a better circle to socialise with instead of searching new platform."*	Others

The pie chart in Figure 3 displayed the suggestions given by the respondents from the Faculty of Education, UiTM Puncak Alam.
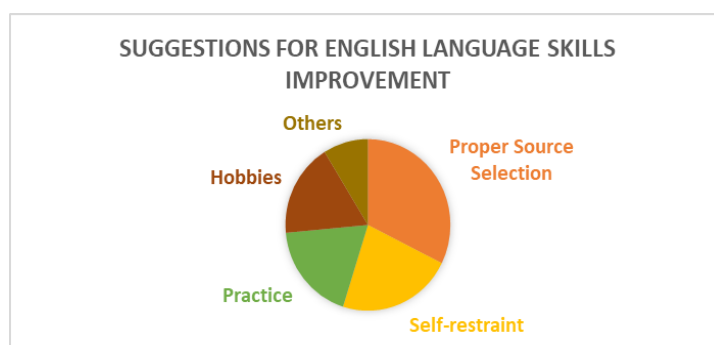

Figure 2: UiTM's Suggestions on English Language Skills Improvement

Figure 2 depicts respondents' recommendations for enhancing their English language skills. Proper source selection was the most common suggestion, comprising 32.35% of the chart and endorsed by 33 out of 102 respondents. Self-restraint was recommended by 22.55% (n= 23) of respondents, while practice was proposed by 18.63% (n= 19). Additionally, hobbies were suggested by 17.65% (n= 18) of respondents. The remaining 8.82% (n= 9) provided suggestions outside the major categories. In summary, proper source selection, self-restraint, hobbies, and practice were the primary recommendations shared by respondents from both MGS and UiTM. Despite variations in frequency and percentage, most suggestions could be categorized into these four main themes.

DISCUSSION

In this section, we delve into the findings, examining their interpretations and substantiating them with insights from the literature review.

Social Media Preference for English Language Skills Improvement

MGS and UiTM students favour YouTube as their primary social media platform for improving English language skills. YouTube's accessibility offers a vast array of educational content beneficial for language enhancement. According to a 2022 survey by the Pew Research Centre, YouTube dominates

the online landscape, with 95% of teens using the platform (Vogels et al., 2022). Sakkir et al. (2020) attribute this preference to students' digital literacy, enabling them to navigate the platform effectively and discover relevant content creators. Additionally, studies by Chen & Chen (2019) and Chien et al. (2020) underscore YouTube's role in capturing students' attention and motivating them to learn English.

In contrast, Facebook ranks lowest among students for English language skill enhancement. Vogels et al. (2022) note a declining trend in Facebook usage, particularly among younger demographics. Kemp (2023) reports that only 22% of Malaysian Facebook users are aged eighteen to twenty-four, suggesting a shift in user preferences towards platforms like YouTube and TikTok. This aligns with findings by Elfiza et al. (2021), indicating no significant improvement in student writing skills through Facebook use. Thus, the preference for YouTube over Facebook among MGS and UiTM students likely stems from YouTube's richer educational content and its appeal to younger audiences.

Comparison of Social Media Preference on English Language Skills Improvement

The findings reveal no significant difference in social media preference among both MGS and UiTM students for improving English language skills, contrary to expectations based on their educational backgrounds. However, this alignment in preference can be attributed to several factors.

YouTube emerges as the preferred platform due to its diverse range of content, catering to various learning styles and proficiency levels. Content creators offer a plethora of educational materials, including grammar lessons, tutorials, and interactive exercises, enhancing accessibility for language learners. Incorporating visual aids, relatable examples, and entertainment elements like jokes in vlogs further engage learners and facilitate comprehension. Suggestions from questionnaire respondents, such as watching educational channels focusing on grammar and native speakers' pronunciation, align with Bakeer's (2018) recommendation to utilize social media for language skill development.

The versatility of YouTube allows individuals to explore content according to their interests, contributing to its popularity among both MGS and UiTM students. The lack of significant difference underscores YouTube's effectiveness as a language learning tool, supported by Morat et al. (2017), who emphasize its vast database and popularity in ESL teaching and learning. Therefore, YouTube serves as a valuable resource for English language skill improvement among students from diverse educational backgrounds.

CONCLUSION

In summary, this research addressed two key inquiries: the preferred social media platforms for enhancing English language skills and a comparative analysis of students' selections for this purpose. The findings underscored the effectiveness of YouTube in improving students' English proficiency. Additionally, the study identified four recurring themes from students' suggestions on mitigating the negative impact of social media on language skills. Given the quantitative nature of this research, there is a possibility of participants fabricating responses. Therefore, it is essential that educators remain vigilant in interpreting the findings and for future researchers to consider using or combining with qualitative methods. Finally, to foster dynamic learning environments, educators are encouraged to integrate social media platforms, facilitating exposure to authentic language usage across diverse content. This approach can significantly enhance students' English language proficiency.

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