

Integrating Social Media into English Language Learning: A Systematic Literature Review

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: 8 September 2025 Revised: 2 April 2026 Accepted: 17 May 2026	This paper presents a systematic review of how social media has been integrated into English language learning between 2019 and 2025. The aim is to identify the main benefits, challenges, and best practices reported in recent studies. A review of pertinent research articles reveals the ways in which educational platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok have facilitated the enhancement of vocabulary, motivation, and interaction among learners in both formal and informal educational settings. The review also identifies several challenges, including distractions, privacy concerns, and disparities in device and internet access. Nevertheless, numerous studies have demonstrated that, when utilized in conjunction with adequate guidance, social media has the potential to enhance the engagement and significance of the learning process for English language acquisition. This paper offers a comprehensive overview of the key findings and provides recommendations for teachers, learners, and future researchers to enhance the utilization of social media in language education.
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1. INTRODUCTION

In the changing world of English language education, digital technologies have quickly changed how students learn, use, and practice the target language. Social media is one of the most influential and accessible tools for language learners. Platforms like YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook are now commonly used by students to interact with real-life English content, practice their skills, and communicate with others outside the classroom. Traditional language learning methods usually focus on grammar. Social media lets learners experience English in more natural, exciting, and social ways (Manca & Ranieri, 2016).

Studies have shown that using social media in language learning can make students more motivated, help them learn more words, and give them more control over their learning (Kabilan, Ahmad, & Abidin, 2010; Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016). These platforms are interactive, which means there are more opportunities to practice speaking, listening, and writing. For example, watching English-language content on YouTube or creating videos for TikTok helps learners engage with real language input and express themselves more freely. These platforms also encourage students to work together, share resources, and get feedback from a wider online community (Blattner & Lomicka, 2012).

But there are also some problems to think about. One big worry is that social media, while fun, can easily become a source of distraction and may reduce students' focus on schoolwork (Al-Shehri, 2011). Privacy and data security are also important, especially for younger learners. Also, access to devices and stable internet connections is still unequal across different regions and social groups. This may limit how well social media works in certain learning environments (Warschauer

& Matuchniak, 2010). Teachers may also lack training or confidence in using social media tools to improve teaching, leading to inconsistent or superficial use in the classroom (Greenhow & Lewin, 2016).

Although many individual studies have examined specific social media platforms or language skills, there is still a need for a broader understanding of how social media is being used in different learning situations. Since the start of the pandemic, there has been a lot more interest in online learning tools. But there is still not a lot of research on how well they work. By studying recent academic research, we can better understand the role that social media plays in supporting English language learners today.

This review looks at how social media has been used in English language learning from 2019 to 2025. The review looks at the most common benefits, challenges, and best practices reported in the literature. This study tries to share ideas with teachers, students, and researchers who want to use social media as an effective tool in language education.

Research Question: What are the benefits, challenges, and best practices associated with integrating social media into English language learning based on studies published between 2019 and 2025?

2. METHODS

This systematic literature review was designed to explore how social media has been integrated into English language learning, focusing on its benefits, challenges, and best practices, as reflected in studies published between 2019 and 2025. The review was conducted in accordance with the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework to ensure transparency and accuracy in the selection and screening of relevant sources (Moher et al., 2009). The PRISMA statement is a widely utilized tool within the academic research community for the purpose of illustrating the progression of information across the various phases of a review, encompassing identification, screening, eligibility, and final inclusion.

The search process was initiated with the establishment of a set of clear criteria and keywords. A comprehensive selection of databases was made for the purpose of this study, including Google Scholar, ERIC, and ResearchGate, due to their extensive accessibility to educational studies that have undergone the peerreview process. A comprehensive search strategy was employed, incorporating keywords and Boolean operators such as "social media," "English language learning," "EFL," "ESL", and the names of prominent platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok. This approach was utilized to refine the search results and identify relevant articles for further analysis. The search was constrained to studies published between 2019 and 2025, as this period reflects the most recent developments in digital education, especially after the global shift to online learning caused by the pandemic.

Figure 1 representing the flow of information through the decision process (i.e., the number of studies identified, rejected, and accepted). The initial search across databases such as Google Scholar, ERIC, and ResearchGate yielded 200 articles. An additional 20 articles were identified manually through reference lists and suggested works. After removing duplicates, 160 unique records remained. Titles and abstracts were screened, and 30 articles were selected for fulltext review. Following this, 13 articles were assessed for eligibility, with 8 excluded due to not meeting the inclusion criteria. Finally, 5 studies were included in the systematic review.

Table 1. Keyword Search

No	Keyword Search	Articles Found
1.	"Social Media" AND "English Language Learning"	200
2.	Limit to 2019-2025 AND peer-reviewed journals	110
3.	Filter for platforms: "YouTube" OR "Instagram" OR "TikTok" AND "Language Use"	48
4.	Screened for EFL/ESL focus only	30
5.	Final selected articles for review	5

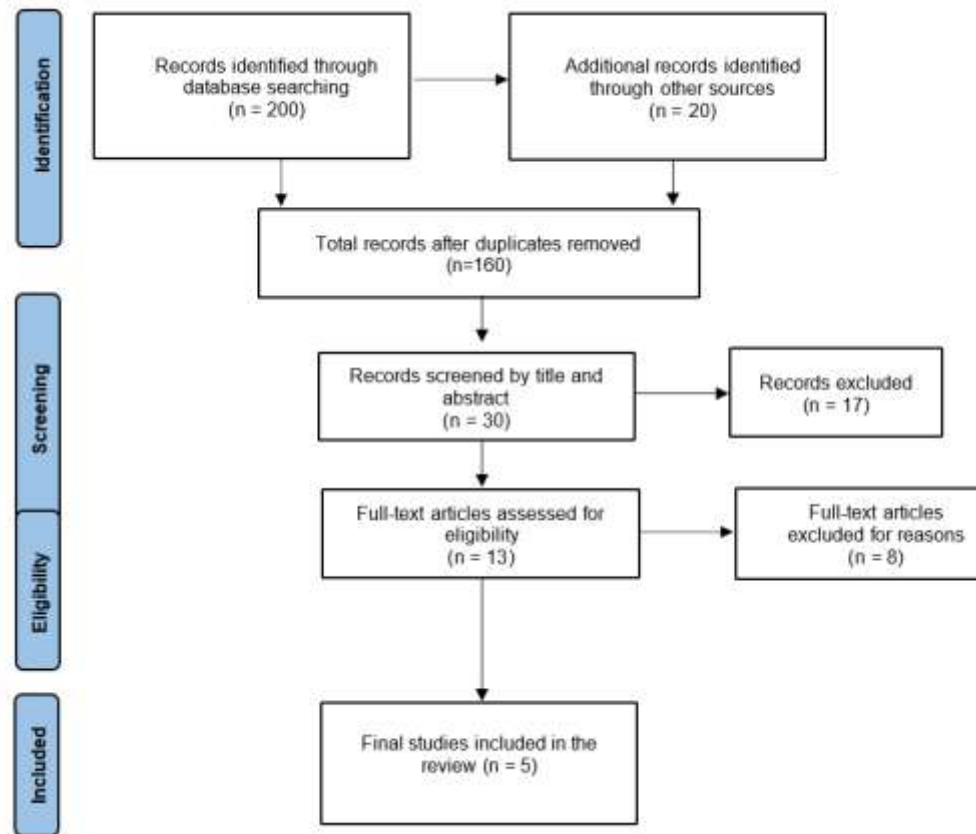


Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram

Table 2. Inclusion & Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion	Exclusion
- Articles written in English - Published between 2019 and 2025 - Focus on social media platforms used for English language learning - Include empirical data, case studies, or practical applications Published in peer-reviewed academic journals	- Articles not focused on English language learning - Opinion pieces, blogs, or non-peer-reviewed sources - Studies not involving social media platforms - Articles published before 2019 Non-English articles

The final five articles were chosen because they directly addressed the use of social media as a tool to improve English language learning and provided real-world findings or detailed classroom-based observations. These studies included people at different educational levels (from secondary to tertiary), as well as various platforms and learning contexts (both formal and informal). By following a step-by-step and clear review process, this study tries to provide a reliable and focused understanding of how social media has changed English language education in the time after 2019 and the digital era.

3. RESULTS

This section presents the results of five research studies that were reviewed by other scientists. These studies were chosen after a careful process that followed a set of rules. These studies were chosen because they are relevant to the topic of using social media in English language learning between the years 2019 and 2025.

Table 3. Reviewed Articles

Author(s) (Year)	Title	Methodology	Findings	Challenges
Ali Z, 2023	<i>The Influence of Social Media on English Language Learning and Academic Performance at Undergraduate Level</i>	Mixed-method: questionnaires and semistructured interviews	YouTube improved vocabulary retention and learning autonomy. Facebook groups enhanced writing through peer feedback. Learners were more motivated when engaging with video-based content.	Limited digital literacy among some students. Risk of distractions and lack of focused use of social media.
Nugroho & Triana, 2021	EFL Learners' Beliefs and Practices on Informal Digital Learning of English beyond Classroom	Qualitative interviews	Instagram and WhatsApp supported casual daily engagement with English. Students reported increased speaking confidence and enjoyment in learning through voice notes and captions.	Informal use lacked teacher monitoring. Some students relied too much on translation tools.
Asyrofi, S, 2022	<i>A Comprehensive Analysis of Integrating TikTok for Enhancing EFL Students' Speaking Skills</i>	Quantitative: survey with Likert-scale questionnaires	TikTok's short-form video content enhanced pronunciation and listening. Interactive elements increased engagement.	Platform design encouraged distraction. Difficult to measure long-term learning gains.
Hoque, M. E, 2020	<i>The Power of YouTube Videos in Teaching EFL Listening Skills at the Secondary Level in Bangladesh</i>	Experimental study: control vs. experimental group	The experimental group using YouTube outperformed the control group in vocabulary and listening. Authentic content improved contextual understanding.	Some students struggled with accents and informal language in authentic videos.
Abbas, A., Gulzar, R., & Hussain, Z, 2019	<i>The Impact of Social Media (Facebook and YouTube) on Vocabulary Acquisition of ESL Learners</i>	Descriptive Survey	Facebook encouraged collaborative learning and vocabulary sharing. Peer corrections and comments improved writing awareness.	Off-topic discussions were common. Students lacked training in how to use these tools for learning purposes.

The selected articles come from different schools and places around the world. Each study looked at how platforms like YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp, and Facebook have been used to help people learn English in different ways. Each study used different methods and focused on different groups of learners, but all of them provide important information about how social media can be used as a tool for learning languages in both formal and informal settings.

All of these studies help us understand how social media is changing the way people learn English as a foreign or second language. Social media is now a key part of language learning. It's not just for extra practice anymore. Students use it every day in class and on their own. These platforms give immediate access to real English content and offer interactive features that allow learners to actively engage with the language. For example, learners can watch tutorial videos, participate in comment discussions, upload language-based content, or communicate in real time with speakers from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

As these studies demonstrate, several key themes consistently emerged across different contexts. The most prominent of these are increased learner motivation, improvement in vocabulary knowledge, and more frequent opportunities for authentic language interaction. These outcomes were especially visible when students used platforms in ways that aligned with their personal interests and communicative needs. The dynamic, visual, and socially interactive nature of platforms like TikTok and Instagram seemed to contribute to higher levels of engagement, especially among younger learners.

However, while the overall findings are promising, the integration of social media into language learning is not without its limitations. Common challenges reported include the potential for distraction due to the entertainment-driven design of most platforms, privacy concerns regarding data sharing and student exposure, and unequal access to digital tools such as smartphones, stable internet connections, or digital literacy support. These issues raise important questions about how educators and institutions can provide equitable and safe learning environments when incorporating social media into pedagogy. In the following sections, the reviewed studies are summarized in greater detail, followed by an in-depth discussion of the recurring patterns, benefits, barriers, and best practices found across the literature.

3.1. Benefits of Social Media in Language Learning

All five studies reported positive results related to the use of social media in English language learning, particularly in terms of increased motivation, vocabulary development, and authentic communication. These benefits were seen across different groups, levels of education, and cultures.

One of the most important things that came up was how to make students more interested in learning. In Ali's (2023) study, university students showed more interest and effort when using YouTube videos to learn vocabulary and idioms. Nugroho & Triana (2021) also found that Instagram stories let high school students interact with English content outside of class. This helped them feel less anxious and made them want to learn more.

Another big benefit was the improvement of specific language skills, especially vocabulary and listening. Hoque, M. E (2020) study showed that students who watched YouTube videos scored higher on listening comprehension and vocabulary tests than students who used traditional materials. This supports the idea that learning real-life English helps people remember and understand the language better.

People also talked about how important it is to interact with others and work together. Platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook let students work together, correct each other's mistakes, and express themselves more freely. Abbas, A., Gulzar, R., & Hussain, Z. (2019) found that students in Facebook groups were more likely to engage in peer review and discussion, creating a learning environment that extended beyond the classroom. These findings support Vygotsky's idea that interaction with others is key to learning to speak.

3.2. Challenges Identified in the Use of Social Media

All studies on this topic reported several challenges and limitations related to using social media in language learning. One common concern was that people were distracted. Asyrofi, S, (2022) found that although TikTok videos were interesting, many students got distracted by videos that weren't educational. This risk was made worse by the way social media platforms are designed. These platforms are focused on entertainment and getting users to spend a lot of time on them.

Another important issue was that some people don't have equal access to digital tools and the internet, especially in developing countries. Abbas, A., Gulzar, R., & Hussain, Z. (2019) reported that while many university students had smartphones, they still had trouble with internet connections and using digital tools. Some students had a hard time using online platforms, which reduced the benefits of learning through social media.

Teacher preparation and institutional support were also lacking in several cases. While students were often eager to use new tools, many teachers lacked the training or confidence to use social media in their lessons in a planned way. Sometimes, like in Nugroho & Triana's (2021) study, teachers weren't involved at all. In these cases, students used social media informally and without any guidance.

3.3. Best Practices and Pedagogical Recommendations

Across the five studies, a number of best practices were suggested to maximize the effectiveness of social media in English language learning:

- Blending social media with structured tasks: YouTube videos or Instagram posts should be paired with specific assignments or reflection activities, structured previewing and post-viewing tasks helped students gain more from video content.
- Moderated social spaces: Facebook groups and WhatsApp chats should be moderated by teachers or group leaders to avoid off-topic content and maintain academic focus.
- Encouraging self-expression and peer interaction: TikTok and Instagram were effective platforms for promoting speaking and pronunciation practice, especially when learners created their own content.
- Providing training and digital support: Institutions should offer technical guidance and tutorials to ensure that both students and teachers can use social media confidently and effectively.

Overall, the studies emphasized that social media works best when integrated thoughtfully into the learning process, enhancing engagement, not replacing core instruction. The findings suggest that the success of social media integration largely depends on how it is guided, supported, and aligned with learning objectives.

4. DISCUSSIONS

Studies show that using social media in English language learning can be beneficial. However, it's important to remember that how and when you use social media can greatly affect its success. Social media is not a one-size-fits-all solution. Its impact depends on how it is used, who uses it, and under what conditions. For example, in situations where students already use digital media outside of school, platforms like YouTube and Instagram can become a natural part of classroom learning. On the other hand, when students don't have access to devices or a steady internet connection, social media can make the learning gap bigger instead of smaller.

This review also shows how learning that takes place outside of school can help students learn. Students in several studies were found to voluntarily engage with English content, driven by curiosity, interest, or social interaction. This idea matches with constructivist learning theories. Constructivist theories say that learners create knowledge through active involvement and real-

world interaction (Piaget, 1970; Vygotsky, 1978). For example, using TikTok or Instagram to make language content gets learners involved in production-based activities, which is often missing in traditional classrooms.

Another important point from this review is the role of learner autonomy. Social media platforms give students more control over their learning process. Social media as popular platform also conveys various possibility in language learning because they can be connected to people overseas (Hidayat, 2024). This includes what they engage with, when, and how. In studies like that of Ali (2023), students said they used YouTube videos to study on their own. They chose content based on what they were interested in and what they wanted to achieve. This gives students more control over their learning and encourages them to set their own language goals. But without the right guidance, this freedom can also lead to learning that is not deep or focused. So, finding the right mix of freedom and structure is key to using social media in the classroom.

The findings also show how things like confidence, anxiety, and enjoyment are strongly affected by the social environment of online platforms. In a 2021 study, Sari & Nugroho found that students felt less anxious when doing language activities on Instagram or WhatsApp than when doing them in class. This suggests that social media may be a good way to learn for shy or anxious learners. These findings support the Affective Filter Hypothesis, which was proposed by Krashen in 1982. According to this hypothesis, language input is most effective when learners are emotionally relaxed and motivated.

But we have to admit that social media isn't always educational. Its design often encourages entertainment, fast-paced consumption, and content driven by algorithms. This may not align with the deeper cognitive processes needed for language development. It's important to be aware of the potential risks, such as cyberbullying or misinformation, that come with online interactions. This highlights the importance of teacher mediation and teaching methods. Teachers should introduce social media tools and show students how to use them effectively and critically. They should use them in meaningful learning tasks, not just let students use them freely without direction.

5. CONCLUSION

This review looks at how social media has been used in English language learning from 2019 to 2025. It especially looks at the good and bad parts of this, and what the best ways to use it are. Five articles were studied, and the results show that social media like YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp, and Facebook can help people learn English, especially when learning is done in a way called "English as a Foreign Language."

The review shows that social media can be a useful tool for learning vocabulary, improving listening and speaking skills, increasing learner motivation, and helping people communicate in a natural way. When used effectively, these platforms allow learners to use English in meaningful, real-life situations both inside and outside the classroom. Platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook are social and collaborative, which means people can interact with each other, give feedback, and express themselves. This is all important for developing communication skills.

However, the review also talks about some of the problems. Problems like distractions from non-school stuff, privacy worries, and different levels of access to technology can make it hard to use social media in the classroom. Also, when teachers don't receive training and use these tools without learning how to teach with them, students may miss out on learning or use the tools the wrong way.

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