THE PERCEPTIONS OF SMK PEREMPUAN LIKAS STUDENTS ON THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON LANGUAGE LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

The study investigates the perceptions of SMK Perempuan Likas students on the impact of social media on their language learning and the challenges they encounter when using social media as a tool for language learning. This study employed a mixed-methods approach, where 100 Form 4 students were involved in completing the questionnaires and a total of 5 students participated in focus group discussion. The quantitative data were analysed using SPSS to provide descriptive statistics, while the qualitative data were subjected to thematic analysis. Quantitative results indicated majority of students (56%) have a positive perception of the impact of social media on their English language skills, with another 42% acknowledging some beneficial effects, and only 1% reporting a negative impact. Students reported the most enhanced skills through social media as speaking (25%) and reading (20%), followed by pronunciation and communication (15% each), listening and spelling (9% each), and writing (7%). Qualitative findings reveal several challenges, including difficulties understanding abbreviations, pronunciation, and complex phrases. Participants also highlighted negative aspects of social media such as distractions, exposure to inappropriate content, and the potential for bullying. The findings suggest that educators should develop strategies to leverage social media's benefits and mitigate its challenges. Policymakers are encouraged to implement digital literacy programs to help students navigate social media effectively. This balanced approach aims to maximise the positive impacts of social media on language learning while minimising its challenges. The study contributes to the growing body of literature on digital learning tools and provides practical recommendations for educators and policymakers.

INTRODUCTION

Digital tools and platforms are constantly incorporated in today's educational environment to enhance and sometimes replace traditional teaching methods. Yarychev and Mentsiev (2020) acknowledge the advancement of modern educational practices and the changing role of communication and other data advances. Thus, students are not entirely reliant on traditional textbooks; rather, they can readily integrate Innovation and Communication Technology (ICT) tools into their academic pursuits, ushering in a new era of learning.

During the global pandemic, the emergence of technology in education became evident. The education sector are being revamped completely especially after the sudden closure of educational institution around the world, including in Malaysia. This leads to the technological learning environments, with teachers and students having to adapt to the sudden changes in order to enable remote learning. A significant effect on educational systems around the world can be seen as educators and students having to adjust with the demands of the new norms. This was supported by Kamarudin et al. (2023) in their research that the Movement Control Order (MCO) required immediate closure of all facilities. As a result, the educational system must respond quickly to emerging trends. Teachers and students are unprepared for these rapid changes, so teaching and learning must be done in new and different ways. These sudden changes led to surprising benefits, especially for students and teachers' technology skills.

Furthermore, the expansion of social media as a language-learning tool has taken place in the learning dynamics. Students nowadays are equipped with modern learning experiences that are integrated mainly with social media platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, Twitter, YouTube, and more. This means that these platforms not only open up to communicating and information sharing, but also provide an effective way to learn the language. With the existence of social media's diverse structure, it leads to providing the students with numerous opportunities to interact with the language, resulting in a new environment that goes beyond traditional classroom boundaries that create a space for them to gain more confidence and motivation. This statement is supported by Haque (2023), where the researcher stated the use of social media in language learning has been shown to boost students' confidence and motivation. Therefore, this study is aiming to address two research questions.

i.   How do students at SMK Perempuan Likas perceive the impact of social media on their language skills?
ii.   What challenges do these students encounter when using social media for language learning?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Students' Perception of Social Media's Impact on Language Skills
Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and language learning apps offer various opportunities for practice, including real-time communication, exposure to diverse linguistic inputs, and interactive exercises. These features help students engage with the language in a meaningful way, facilitating a more dynamic and practical learning experience compared to traditional methods. Their language learning process is enhanced by the opportunity to communicate with native speakers, take part in conversations, and access a wide range of multimedia resources.

Studies by Al Jahromi (2020), Md Yunus et al. (2019), Sathiyaseelan (2021), and Safitri et al. (2022) consistently demonstrate that students' perceptions of social media's impact on language skills—particularly when learning English—are positive. Students' positive perceptions are evident in the numerous studies, acknowledging the improvement of several language skills, including writing, vocabulary, communication, reading, speaking, listening, and grammar. Social media is valued by them because it provides access to information and ideas, enhances writing abilities, boosts motivation and engagement, and promotes group learning. Students also see social media as a tool that helps them feel less anxious and more confident about learning the English language. These findings highlight the perceived educational benefit of social media, supporting the idea that it might help improve language skills.

## Challenges of Social Media in Language Learning

There are numerous advantages to using social media for language learning, including exposure to a variety of linguistic contexts and increased opportunities to improve proficiency through language practice. However, the drawbacks and limitations of using social media to learn a language should be considered.

Poor grammar on social media can negatively impact language ability (Sha & Pathan, 2018). What is more surprising is that how social media users are normalising grammatical errors and thinking that it should be the norm on social media. Their language is heavily populated with slang terms and abbreviations that other learners may be confusing to other language learners. Sha & Pathan (2018) also stated that people might spend too much time on social media, which can lead to an unhealthy lifestyle due to the addictive nature of social media. As a result of this, people are still doubting whether social media have the potential to become a medium for language learning as people continue to struggle and to keep focus, and it can even affect their well-being.

Other than that, Safitri et al. (2022) highlighted the challenges students face when using social media to learn the language. The findings revealed that students are exposed to inappropriate materials and content on social media. The effectiveness of language learning could be hindered as students may come across irrelevant, deceptive, or offensive content, leading to a negative influence on the quality of language exposure.

Social media can still be a helpful tool for language learning when used properly, despite these challenges. By offering direction and encouragement throughout the language-learning process, teachers and language instructors can also assist students in overcoming these obstacles.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework
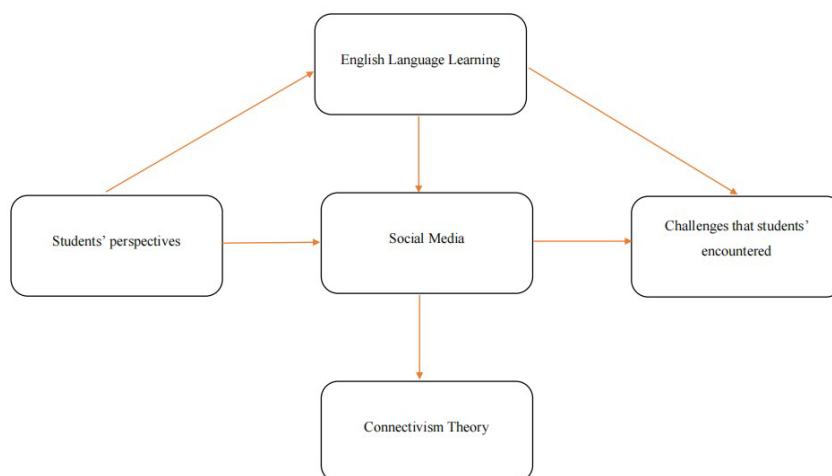
Connectivism in Education

Connectivism has some common ground with traditional learning theories like cognitivism, but it brings fresh ideas and approaches suited for the digital age. It reinforces how group learning and working together is important for education. In this model, students take charge of their own learning journey, with teachers stepping in as guides and supporters. Additionally, it recognises the essential role of digital tools in facilitating education and widening new opportunities through learning, across a diverse range of settings.

To understand the link between Connectivism and traditional learning theories, it is important to recognise that Connectivism does not entirely dismiss older educational approaches. Instead, it builds on and adapts them for today's digital world. This perspective values personal learning experiences and cognitive processes while highlighting the significance of social connections, teamwork, and digital tools in education. Combining Connectivism with the traditional theories helps educator design learning spaces that are more adaptable and responsive in meeting students' diverse needs in a world driven by technology.

Connectivism stresses the importance of connecting with our peers and online communities, and digital tools when acquiring a language through social media platforms. As explored by Zheng et al. (2023), Connectivism Theory suggests that social media can strengthen relationship among users, enrich online learning activities, encourage cooperation, and increase academic motivation. The ever-evolving nature of social media aligns perfectly with Connectivism because it underscores the skill of navigating and understanding a dynamic information landscape.

METHODS AND SAMPLING

This is a mixed-method research approach. The present study were conducted at SMK Perempuan Likas, with a total of 100 Form 4 as the participants for the survey and 5 students for focus group discussion were chosen using a convenience sampling. The questionnaire items were adopted from Al Jahromi (2020). It consist of three sections - Section A: Demographic, Section B: Type and Frequency of social media use, and Section C: Relationship between social media and English language learning.

The questionnaire link was shared to the participants through Whatsapp. The questionnaire contains 26 5-Likert scale items in total and two items, respectively Item 27 and 28 are just standard closed-ended questions. Focus group discussion was conducted when the researcher and the selected students were available. It was done at the school library to ensure a comfortable and noise-free environment.

Data collected from the survey were analysed by using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS), specifically using the descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics include percentage, frequency, mean, and standard deviation. As for the focus group discussion, thematic analysis was involved to interpret the data. The discussion was recorded, then transcribed, and analysed using thematic analysis.

FINDINGS

Participants Demographic
Age, Gender, Race, Level of interest in the English subject, and most frequently used social media networks are the considered demographical variables of the study. Participants demographic information is presented below.

Table 1: Participants' demographic characteristics

Demographic Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
16 years old	100	100%
Gender		
Female	100	100%

Table 1 shows the demographic information of the participants who are involved with the survey for the study. The study included 100 Form 4 students from SMK Perempuan Likas, which is an all-girls secondary school. All of the participants were females and aged 16 years old.

Table 2: Demographic Information of Respondents based on Race Groups

Race	Frequency	Percentage
Malay	37	37%
Chinese	5	5%
Indian	0	0%
Bumiputera	36	36%
Others	22	22%

Table 2 shows most of the participants are Malay (37%), followed by *Bumiputera* (36%), others (22%), and Chinese (5%).

Table 3: Level of Interest in the English subject

Level of interest in the English subject	Frequency	Percentage
Very Interested	26	26%
Interested	46	46%
Moderate	23	23%
Less Interested	3	3%
Not Interested	0	0%

Table 3 shows 26% of the participants classified as "Very Interested" and 46% as "Interested." Only 3% of the participants are "Less Interested," and none are "Not Interested." A smaller proportion, 23%, demonstrates a "Moderate" level of interest.

Table 4: Most Frequently Used Social Media Networks

Social Media Networks	Frequency	Percentage
Facebook	1	1%
Instagram	15	15%
Telegram	1	1%
TikTok	50	50%
Twitter	1	1%
Whatsapp	22	22%
YouTube	10	10%

Table 4 reveals that TikTok (50%) is the social media site most commonly used by students.Then, followed by WhatsApp with 22%, while Instagram is used by 15% of participants. YouTube has 10%, and Facebook, Twitter, and Telegram are each used by only 1%.

How do students at SMK Perempuan Likas perceive the impact of social media on their language skills?

The quantitative data that were examined with SPSS are shown in this section. In order to specifically address RQ1, descriptive statistics were employed and the data were displayed in tables below.

Table 5: Number of hours spent on social media networks

Number of hours spent on social media	Frequency	Percentage
2 to 3	31	31%
3 to 4	30	30%
5 hours and more	29	29%
Doesn't use social media	1	1%
Less than an hour	9	9%

Table 5 reveals that 31% of students spend two to three hours, while 30% spend three to four hours daily to social media usage. A substantial proportion of students, specifically 29%, spend five hours or more on social media. Furthermore, only 9% spend less than an hour, and a mere 1% do not use social media at all, highlighting its significant role in their daily routines.

Table 6: Social Media Impact on Writing

Descriptive Statistics			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
6. Social media influences my style of writing.	100	3.56	.925
7. Social media introduces to modern writing patterns.	100	3.84	.788
14. Social media helps me write better in English.	100	3.99	.674
20. I learn English through extensive writing on social media networking platforms.	100	3.61	.803
Valid N (listwise)	100		

Table 6 shows the impact of social media on writing based on responses from 100 participants. hey somewhat agree that social media affects their writing style (mean = 3.56, SD = 0.925) and helps them learn English through writing a lot (mean = 3.61, SD = 0.803). They agree more strongly that social media introduces modern writing patterns (mean = 3.84, SD = 0.788) and improves their English writing skills (mean = 3.99, SD = 0.674). This indicates that participants generally agree that social media positively impacts their writing skills. They agree most strongly that it has a positive impact on their English writing skills.

Table 7: Social Media Impact on Vocabulary Learning

Descriptive Statistics			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
4. Social media improves my knowledge about new terminologies in English.	100	4.37	.614
5. Social media helps vocabulary development.	100	4.05	.730
15. I derive most of the terms I use from social media.	100	3.89	.737
Valid N (listwise)	100		

Based on the table above, it indicates that the respondents generally believe social media has a significant positive impact on their vocabulary learning. This is because the statements about social media's impact on learning have high mean scores, with Statement 4 having a mean of 4.37 and a standard deviation of 0.614, Statement 5 having a mean of 4.05 and a standard deviation of 0.730, and Statement 15 having a mean of 3.89 and a standard deviation of 0.737. These high mean scores suggest that respondents agree with the positive effects of social media on learning new vocabulary, despite some variability indicated by the standard deviations.

Table 8: Social Media Impact on Communication Skills

Descriptive Statistics			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
2. Social media changes the way people communicate and share information.	100	4.37	.820
3. Social media improves the way people interact globally.	100	4.05	.936
13. Social media improves English language communication skills.	100	4.13	.761
Valid N (listwise)	100		

The table above indicates that respondents perceive social media to have a positive impact on communication skills, particularly in English. Statement 13 has the highest mean score of 4.13 with a standard deviation of 0.761. This suggests that most respondents agree that social media plays a significant role in enhancing their English communication abilities. In contrast, the mean scores for statements about social media changing how people communicate and share information (3.79) and improving global interaction (3.65) are lower, indicating a weaker but still positive consensus. These findings suggest that, while social media is perceived to be beneficial for communication in general, it is particularly effective in improving English language skills.

Table 9: Interactive communication on social media

Descriptive Statistics			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
19. I try to enhance the language ability by communicating with foreign people via social media networks.	100	3.82	.914
21. I use the live chat rooms on social media networks to improve my English language media networking platforms.	100	3.32	.851
22. I force myself to learn language by writing sentences on social media networking discussion groups.	100	3.21	.902
Valid N (listwise)	100		

Table 9 shows respondents believe that interactive communication on social media is beneficial for improving language skills. Statement 18 has the highest mean score of 3.82 and standard deviation of 0.914, indicating that many respondents actively communicate with foreign users to improve their language skills. Meanwhile, Statement 21 has a mean score of 3.32 and a standard deviation of 0.851, while Statement 22 has a mean of 3.21 and a standard deviation of 0.902. These scores indicate a moderate level of agreement, indicating that, while respondents are somewhat involved in these activities, direct communication with foreign users is the most commonly used strategy for language enhancement on social media.

Table 10: The Use of Translation Tools on Social Media

Descriptive Statistics			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. I often use translation websites.	100	3.26	.860
23. I use applications through social networks related to language learning.	100	3.65	.833

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
24. I use translation features on social media networks.	100	3.58	.819
Valid N (listwise)	100		

Table 10 illustrates that respondents frequently use translation tools on social media and other platforms to help them learn languages. The mean score of Item 1 is 3.26, Item 23 is 3.65, and Item 24 is 3.58. This indicates these tools are helping students to learn the English language.

Table 11: English Learning Platforms and Links

Descriptive Statistics			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
16. I follow English language teachers through social media to improve the target language.	100	3.47	.881
17. I follow online platforms on social media networks to learn the English language.	100	3.56	.743
19. I take tests in English to evaluate my level in the target language.	100	3.56	.891
23. I use applications through social networks related to language learning.	100	3.65	.833

Table 11 found that students use social media networks and online platforms to improve their English language skills. Item 26 has the highest mean score, with 3.88, indicating that online platforms are beneficial for English learning.

Table 12: Negative Impacts of Social Media on English

Descriptive Statistics			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
8. Social media exposes students to abbreviations and inaccurate spellings which later have negative impacts on them during examinations.	100	3.46	1.058
9. Social media contributes to mass failure of students in English language and other English related courses or subjects.	100	2.61	.963
10. Social media encourages examination malpractices in schools.	100	2.74	1.041
11. Social media is a wastage of students' time that should be wisely invested in academic and profitable ways.	100	3.64	.969
12. Social media encourages the use of foul language and cyberbullying.	100	3.00	1.279
Valid N (listwise)	100		

Table 12 shows that students have mixed feelings about the negative impacts of social media on their language skills and school performance. They somewhat agree that social media exposes them to bad spellings and abbreviations, which can hurt their exam performance, with a mean score of 3.46 out of 5. They are less sure that social media causes many students to fail English, with a lower mean score of 2.61. They also think social media moderately encourages cheating in exams (mean score 2.74). The strongest agreement is that social media wastes time that could be used for studying, with a mean score of 3.64. Lastly, they are neutral about social media

promoting foul language and cyberbullying, with a mean score of 3.00. Overall, students see some negative effects of social media, especially on time management and exposure to bad language.

Table 13: English Language Skills Enhanced on Social Media

English language skills enhanced on Social Media	Frequency	Percentage
Reading	20	20%
Writing	7	7%
Listening	9	9%
Speaking	25	25%
Spelling	9	9%
Pronunciation	15	15%
Communication skill	15	15%

Table 13 indicates that SMK Perempuan Likas students perceive speaking (25%) and reading (20%) as the most enhanced English language skills through social media, highlighting the significance of interactive features and written content on these platforms. Pronunciation and communication skills are also notably improved, each at 15%, suggesting the value of audio-visual and real-time interaction. Listening and spelling are enhanced to a lesser extent, each at 9%, while writing is the least impacted skill at 7%. Overall, this reflects the diverse ways in which social media supports language development, with a strong emphasis on interactive and communicative aspects.

Table 14: Overall Perception of the Effects of Social Media on English

Overall Perception of the Effects of Social Media on English	Frequency	Percentage
Positive	56	56%
Some effects	42	42%
No effect	1	1%
Negative	1	1%

The data on overall perceptions of the impact of social media on English language learning among SMK Perempuan Likas students reveals a predominantly positive outlook. A majority of students (56%) view the impact as positive, indicating that more than half believe social media significantly benefits their language skills. Another substantial portion (42%) acknowledges some effects, suggesting that they recognize certain benefits, though perhaps not as extensively. A very small fraction of students (1%) perceive no effect, implying minimal influence on their language learning. Similarly, only 1% have a negative perception, indicating that virtually no students feel social media detracts from their language acquisition. This overwhelmingly positive and somewhat positive perception underscores the valuable role social media plays in enhancing language skills among the students.

What challenges do these students encounter when utilising social media as a tool for language learning?

The second research instrument, the focus group discussion, serves to provide detailed insights and contribute to answering the research questions regarding the perception of SMK Perempuan Likas students on the impact of social media on language learning. By using the Thematic

Analysis, there were 5 themes identified, namely, Impact of Social Media on Language Learning, Challenges in Language Learning through Social Media, Negative Aspects of Social Media, Coping Strategies and Solutions, and Recommendations for Effective Use.

Theme 1: Impact of Social Media on Language Learning
Participants highlighted how social media has positively influenced their English language skills. Early exposure to English through cartoons, social media community, and educational influencers helped expand their vocabulary and improve their speaking, reading, and listening skills. Participant 1 stated, "It started when I was 6 years old. I actually learned most of English from watching cartoons from my mom's phone." Participant 2 stated, "Social media has helped me improve my English in many aspects such as speaking, reading, and listening. I interacted with people from all over the world to get to know how they pronounce some English words." Participant 4 stated, "Using social media has helped me to improve my English language skills, such as speaking and writing. Many educational influencers have inspired me to learn English more."

Theme 2: Challenges in Language Learning through Social Media
Despite the benefits, participants encountered several challenges, including difficulties with understanding abbreviations and short forms, and comprehending complex phrases, and pronunciation. Participant 1 stated, "The abbreviations and short forms that are used come across as confusing." Participant 2, "I find it difficult to understand some phrases" and Participant 4, "The main challenge I face was having a hard time pronouncing certain words."

Theme 3: Negative Aspects of Social Media
Participants also discussed how social media can be distracting and expose them to negative experiences such as bullying and inappropriate content, which can hinder their learning process. Participant 1 stated, "Social media is designed to distract you with notifications." Participant 4 stated, "I receive a lot of mockery and judgement from different people." While Participant 5 stated, "I will come across some videos of people speaking English, and sometimes they would use some bad words."

Theme 4: Coping Strategies and Solutions
To overcome these challenges, participants used strategies like limiting social media usage and verifying information through Google or ChatGPT. Participant 1 stated, "I definitely try to limit my time on social media." Participants 2, "I deal with inaccurate information by double checking the information or phrases through Google or ChatGPT."

Theme 5: Recommendations for Effective Use
Based on the focus group discussion, the participants have a few suggestion for social media effective use. The suggestions include using language learning apps, following teachers and educational influencers, and using social media platforms creatively for self-learning. Participant 1 suggested, "Find language learning apps such as Duolingo and also find teachers through YouTube or TikTok." Participant 4 suggested, "Find educational influencers.", while Participant 5 suggested, "Look more to learning videos than just a website or some image."

DISCUSSION

Perceptions of SMK Perempuan Likas' Students of the impact of social media on their language skills

Based on the results of a survey given to Form 4 students, it is clear that most of them believe social media can help them improve their English language proficiency, especially in speaking, reading, pronouncing words correctly, and communicating. The survey results revealed a generally positive perception of social media's impact on language skills.

In addition, these findings were also validated by qualitative data, specifically focus group discussions, in which participants emphasised the positive influence of social media on their English skills. Participant 2 reported, "Social media has helped me improve my English in many aspects such as speaking, reading, and listening". When asked whether they find it difficult to stay motivated or focused on English language learning when using social media, most of the participants stated they did not find it difficult to stay motivated or focused. Participant 4 shared that she used to struggle with staying focused but has now overcome this issue. "I found it difficult to stay motivated because English is a very hard language to learn since there are so many grammars and different meaning to learn. But now, I overcome English language and it's my biggest achievements".

A total of 42% of students identified some positive effects by social media on improving language from quantitative data. Overall, more students (56%) said it had a positive impact on them. These results consistent with other research discussed in the literature review section, which indicates that students generally have positive perceptions on how learning languages can be helped by social media. Al Jahromi (2020), Md Yunus et al. (2019), Sathiyaseelan (2021) and Safitri et al.(2022) all agree that using social media can enhance certain aspects of linguistic skills such as writing skills, vocabulary acquisition, communication techniques, reading comprehension abilities spoken interactions capacity together with grammar refinement.

To summarise, the results provide a detailed response to this research question indicating that students perceive language skills in general and particular aspects of language skills has been strengthened by social media. These perceptions are more credible and relevant because they are consistent with similar research.

Challenges encountered when using social media as a tool for language learning.

Despite the positive perceptions, students are also experiencing challenges when using social media as a tool for language learning. The theory of Connectivism acknowledges that learning surroundings are multifaceted and ever-changing, thus requiring students to navigate through complex information landscapes constantly (Young, 2024). Quantitative and qualitative data were produced from focus group discussions and surveys, revealing challenges such as spelling inaccuracies, improper pronunciation, difficulties in decoding abbreviations, and struggling with complicated phrases.

The survey results reported that students also believe that they can be negatively influenced by social media, with mean = 3.46, and waste time that could be spent for studying, with mean = 3.64. In line to this, the focus group discussion participants also expressed their frustration with the use of accents that is different from the one that they usually use and hear and also the use of abbreviations on social media platforms. This has become as one of their primary concerns as they felt like it prevents the progression of their language learning. This sentiment is supported by research conducted by Sha & Pathan (2018), which found that poor

grammar standardisation and shortened words contributed to social media usage's negative effects on language proficiency levels.

The researcher also identified some challenges that were mentioned by the participants during the discussion. The noted challenges included the likelihood of being bullied, influenced and encountering inappropriate content. Based on the literature, Safitri et al. (2022) emphasised the difficulty in engaging language learners because of inappropriate content and interruptions. Furthermore, social media can lead students in getting addicted due to the excessive use of social media (Sha & Pathan, 2018). The participants said that these challenges can be distracting and damaging to the learning progress, preventing them from being able to focus on keeping up with their language goals.

Overall, results of the study supported students' favourable perception that social media can be an instrument in learning language as indicated by Al Jahromi (2020) investigation. Besides, the outcomes of this study also showed that social media is used by students as a tool to learn English because they have been facilitated with engaging and interesting materials.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings of this study revealed that SMK Perempuan Likas students, specifically the Form 4 students, perceive social media as beneficial for their language learning even though some of them are facing some challenges, such as easily distracted and having a hard time in pronouncing some words. Both of the research objectives are successfully achieved with the help of appropriate research instruments. The findings emphasise the incorporation of social media in the classroom settings, especially for language learning. In the meantime, the researcher acknowledged the limitations of the use of social media, where educators have to structure a focused guidelines that can minimise the challenges that may be encountered. Future research is recommend to extend the duration of study period and increase the sampling population to gain more comprehensive data.

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