

CHAPTER I

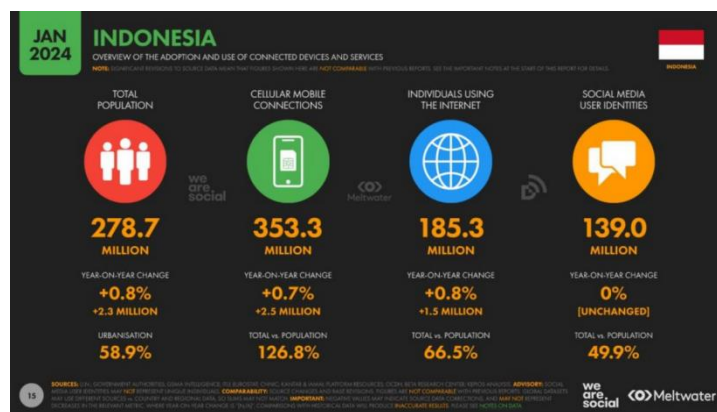
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

As a fundamental element of human life, social media's role in modern society has strengthened significantly due to the growing need for communication. Communication enables individuals to connect with each other and foster continuity in daily interactions (Marchellia, 2022). Social media enhances this need by creating new opportunities for individuals to interact with others, regardless of distance, through a single touch on their screen (Ikhsan *et al.*, 2024).

This phenomenon is evident worldwide, including in Indonesia. In early 2024, Hootsuite (We Are Social) published official data showing trends in internet and social media usage in Indonesia (Figure 1.1). The data indicates that, of Indonesia's 276.4 million population, there are 353.8 million mobile devices connected (128%). Active internet users make up 77% of the population (212.9 million), and 60.4% (167 million) are active social media users, illustrating that social media has reached nearly all demographic groups, regardless of status, age, or social class.

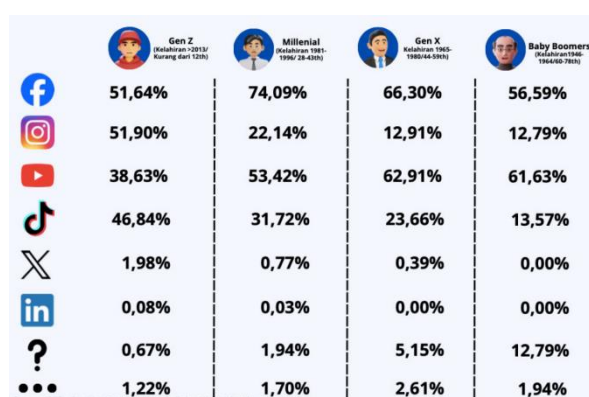
Figure 1.1 Trends in Internet and Social Media Usage in Indonesia



Source: Hootsuite (We are Social, 2024)

Social media usage is primarily driven by users aged 12 to 34. According to a 2024 survey by the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII), this demographic utilizes a wide array of platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, Twitter, and LinkedIn (Figure 1.2).

Figure 1. 2 Distribution of Social Media Users in Indonesia by Age and Platform



Source: APJII, 2024

The APJII data indicates that social media usage now spans all age groups, including children. Beyond concerns about potential drawbacks, social media is also seen as a significant educational tool for fostering collaborative learning. Ansari and Khan (2020) suggest that social media is often utilized as a learning resource at both secondary and higher education levels, enabling students to access information anytime and anywhere. With its interactive features, social media offers students not only formal learning opportunities but also informal skill enhancement. This contributes to youth learning, particularly in building English language skills.

English language skills include four essential skills, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing which are interrelated and essential for effective communication. (Rita, 2022). Social media has significantly influenced English language learning, both formally and informally. For example, many Indonesian teenagers use English terms like "followers" instead of the Indonesian equivalent

In this case, "followers" are the widespread use of English on social media, highlighting its role in supporting language acquisition among young people. (Nafisah & Budiarto, 2020). This phenomenon can be observed through platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, which are widely used by the younger generation and serve as valuable supplementary tools for developing English language skills.

Instagram, a photography-focused mobile application, serves as a significant platform for fostering creativity due to its emphasis on visual aesthetics. It provides features for sharing photos and videos with captions, making it a powerful tool for visual and contextual expression. Since its introduction in 2010, Instagram has grown to become the second most popular social media platform in Indonesia, particularly among Generation Z (APJII, 2024). Its interactive features facilitate user connections, offering students opportunities to enhance

their creative and contextual writing skills through caption creation. Additionally, these features aid in vocabulary development, as students engage with captions from others and receive feedback through comments, fostering language growth (Atmoko, 2012).

YouTube, established in February 2005 by Jawed Karim, Steve Chen, and Chad Hurley, ranks as the third most popular platform. With its slogan "YouTube Broadcast Yourself," it functions as a repository for user-generated experiences and daily activities. Similar to Instagram, YouTube includes interactive comment sections that encourage communication among users. However, YouTube distinguishes itself by providing English-language video content, which helps students expand their vocabulary and improve sentence structure comprehension through exposure to native speakers. In some cases, students gain not only writing skills but also speaking skills by recording and uploading videos (Nursobah, 2021).

In the meantime, TikTok has emerged as one of the leading social media platforms, frequently surpassing Instagram in popularity. According to APJII (2024), TikTok ranks as the fourth most-used app in Indonesia by active users. Launched in 2016 by Zhang Yiming, TikTok quickly became viral due to its interactive features that enable users to create and share short videos with musical backdrops (Frizka and Listyaningrum, 2023). Compared to YouTube, TikTok offers shorter, more engaging video content, providing a unique advantage for students to develop their vocabulary through concise, impactful content. The platform also includes features such as text overlays, hashtags, and captions, which encourage students to write and engage with English in creative and dynamic ways.

WR Supratman 1 Junior High School in Medan, a private institution founded in 1960, is widely regarded as one of the leading junior high schools in the region. It has maintained an A accreditation status since 2016. Renowned for its innovative teaching strategies, the school emphasizes student-centered learning, creating a supportive and engaging atmosphere for both academic and non-academic pursuits. This study focuses on eighth-grade students from WR Supratman 1 Junior High School, specifically those aged 12 to 13, to explore the influence of social media on young users. The research investigates how platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok can serve as effective informal learning tools, particularly for enhancing writing skills and vocabulary during the 2024/2025 academic year.

Based on previous research conducted by Sinaga *et al.* (2023); Tampubolon *et al.* (2023); Syachsalsabillah & Hamid (2024); and Rahmanova *et al.* (2025) this research aims to fill gaps in the existing literature by analyzing the educational potential of these popular platforms commonly used by students. The study examines the unique contributions of each

social media platform in improving students' writing and vocabulary skills. The findings are expected to not only provide new insights into the use of social media for informal language education but also demonstrate a significant impact on students' language proficiency.

1.2 The Assumptions

Referring to connectivism theory, it is understood that knowledge is distributed across a network where connections facilitate the dissemination of information (Siemens, 2004). In this context, students are seen as actively engaged in creating their own networks, leading to the development of new, beneficial understanding. Connectivism outlines four core principles, offering not only a novel learning model but also insights into the knowledge, skills, and tasks necessary for students to keep up with technological advancements in education (Tschofen dan Markness, 2012).

Firstly, connectivism embraces autonomy, emphasizing individual self-regulation. This assumes that eighth-grade students at WR Supratman 1 Junior High School in Medan possess independent learning skills, managing their digital learning activities and behaviors. In this case, students are expected to be capable of selecting relevant connections and information sources without direct guidance from teachers.

Secondly, connectivism emphasizes connectivity, linking students and teachers through collaboration among peers and between students and teachers, who share opinions, knowledge, ideas, and information. Students in this setting are assumed to be able to share and distribute content from social media as a source of information and knowledge, both among themselves and with their teachers.

Thirdly, diversity within connectivism represents unique perspectives and overall creativity. Students are encouraged to express opinions, suggestions, and ideas with others, moving beyond relying solely on the teacher as the primary source of knowledge. This leads to the *fourth* principle is openness, which enables students to exchange views, ideas, and insights to gain knowledge and information as needed. Students in this case are assumed to engage in sharing information and receiving feedback from both peers and educators.

This analysis assumes that eighth-grade students at WR Supratman 1 Junior High School in Medan independently build connections via social media. These connections create opportunities to enhance English proficiency, such as listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills through exposure to information on social media and feedback from peers and teachers.

1.3 Problem Identification

Based on the background presented, this research addresses the following questions:

1. How does the use of Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok in improving English writing skills among 8th-grade students at SMP WR Supratman 1 Medan?
2. How does the use of Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok in improving English vocabulary mastery among 8th-grade students at SMP WR Supratman 1 Medan?
3. What factors influence the effectiveness of using social media as a tool for improving writing skills and vocabulary mastery in English among 8th-grade students?

1.4 Objective of the Research

Aligned with the identified problems, this study aims to:

1. To examine how Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok contribute in improving English writing skills among 8th-grade students at SMP WR Supratman 1 Medan.
2. To assess the role of Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok contribute in improving English vocabulary mastery among 8th-grade students at SMP WR Supratman 1 Medan.
3. To identify the factors affecting the effectiveness of using social media as a learning tool for improving writing skills and vocabulary mastery in English among 8th-grade students.

1.5 Scope of the Research

This study centers on analyzing the role of social media in students' daily activities, specifically targeting eighth-grade students at WR Supratman 1 Junior High School, Medan, during the 2024/2025 academic year. The participants are identified as active social media users, specifically on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. The research aims to assess how social media usage contributes to enhancing students' English language skills, with a focus on both receptive skills (listening and reading) and productive skills (speaking and writing). These language skills are expected to develop through students' engagement with English-language content on social media. Additionally, the study will explore challenges that students encounter during this interaction, which may hinder their English proficiency improvement. To capture students' perceptions and experiences, a qualitative approach will be employed, incorporating in-depth interviews and participant observation. By examining social media use in students' everyday lives, this research seeks to reveal the potential role of social media in advancing English language skills among young learners in an educational context.