



Digital Media Preferences and Motivational Dynamics in EFL Learning: A Case Study of English Education Students at STKIP Paracendekia NW Sumbawa

Al Ikhsan¹, Iwan Jazadi², Irfan Hamonangan Tarihoran³

^{1,2,3}STKIP Paracendekia NW Sumbawa, Indonesia

E-mail: ikhshan@pcn.ac.id, iwanjazadi@pcn.ac.id, irfanht@pcn.ac.id

Article Info	Abstract
Article History Received: 2025-12-08 Revised: 2026-01-15 Published: 2026-02-15	The integration of digital and social media has profoundly reshaped how English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners engage with language learning. This study investigates students' preferred media platforms, the underlying motivational factors, and the challenges they face when using digital tools to enhance English proficiency. Employing a qualitative descriptive case study design, ten English Education students at STKIP Paracendekia NW Sumbawa were interviewed and observed, with the data analyzed thematically using Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework. Findings reveal that YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram constitute the dominant learning ecosystem, offering multimodal exposure that promotes listening, pronunciation, and vocabulary development. Students' media choices were influenced by accessibility, enjoyment, and autonomy, reflecting principles of Self-Determination Theory and learner autonomy. However, participants also faced obstacles, including distractions, unreliable content, and limited internet access. The study proposes a Dynamic Model of Media-Motivated Autonomy that illustrates how intrinsic motivation, self-regulation, and cognitive engagement interact to sustain language learning. These findings underscore the pedagogical importance of integrating students' preferred media into EFL curricula while fostering digital literacy and critical awareness. Implications are offered for educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers to promote technology-enhanced, learner-centered English instruction.
Keywords: <i>Digital Media Preferences;</i> <i>Learner Autonomy;</i> <i>Motivation in EFL Learning;</i> <i>Social Media and Language Learning;</i> <i>Technology-Enhanced Pedagogy.</i>	

Artikel Info	Abstrak
Sejarah Artikel Diterima: 2025-12-08 Direvisi: 2026-01-15 Dipublikasi: 2026-02-15	Integrasi media digital dan media sosial telah secara mendalam mengubah cara pembelajar Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Asing (EFL) terlibat dalam pembelajaran bahasa. Studi ini menyelidiki platform media pilihan siswa, faktor motivasi yang mendasarinya, dan tantangan yang mereka hadapi ketika menggunakan alat digital untuk meningkatkan kemampuan berbahasa Inggris. Dengan menggunakan desain studi kasus deskriptif kualitatif, sepuluh mahasiswa Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris di STKIP Paracendekia NW Sumbawa diwawancarai dan diamati, dengan data dianalisis secara tematik menggunakan kerangka kerja Braun dan Clarke (2006). Temuan menunjukkan bahwa YouTube, TikTok, dan Instagram merupakan ekosistem pembelajaran yang dominan, menawarkan paparan multimodal yang mendorong pengembangan kemampuan mendengarkan, pengucapan, dan kosakata. Pilihan media siswa dipengaruhi oleh aksesibilitas, kesenangan, dan otonomi, yang mencerminkan prinsip-prinsip Teori Penentuan Diri dan otonomi pembelajar. Namun, peserta juga menghadapi hambatan, termasuk gangguan, konten yang tidak dapat diandalkan, dan akses internet yang terbatas. Studi ini mengusulkan Model Dinamis Otonomi yang Dimotivasi Media yang menggambarkan bagaimana motivasi intrinsik, pengaturan diri, dan keterlibatan kognitif berinteraksi untuk mempertahankan pembelajaran bahasa. Temuan ini menggarisbawahi pentingnya pedagogis dalam mengintegrasikan media pilihan siswa ke dalam kurikulum EFL sambil mendorong literasi digital dan kesadaran kritis. Implikasi ditawarkan bagi pendidik, perancang kurikulum, dan pembuat kebijakan untuk mempromosikan pengajaran bahasa Inggris yang berpusat pada siswa dan didukung teknologi.
Kata kunci: <i>Preferensi Media Digital;</i> <i>Otonomi Pembelajar;</i> <i>Motivasi dalam Pembelajaran EFL;</i> <i>Media Sosial dan Pembelajaran Bahasa;</i> <i>Pedagogi yang Didukung Teknologi.</i>	

I. INTRODUCTION

The rapid integration of digital technology and social media into education has transformed the way English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners access and engage with learning materials. Platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram have emerged not only as channels of entertainment but also as potential tools for authentic and contextualized English language learning (Anwas et al., 2020; Ari, 2021). The digital age allows learners to engage with multimodal input—visual, textual, and auditory—beyond the classroom, thereby providing meaningful exposure to natural

language use and promoting self-directed learning (Baföz, 2016; Tahmina, 2022).

However, despite the abundance of digital resources, students' media preferences—that is, which platforms they choose, why they choose them, and how these preferences affect their learning—remain underexplored in EFL contexts, particularly in developing countries such as Indonesia. Prior studies have predominantly focused on evaluating the *effectiveness* of specific media in enhancing specific language skills (e.g., listening, speaking, or writing), rather than on understanding learners' motivations and decision-making when selecting these tools (Deiniatur et al., 2024; Kasuma, 2017; Yunus et al., 2022). This limitation leaves a significant empirical gap: teachers may adopt technologies that do not align with students' interests, technological habits, or perceived usefulness, thereby affecting engagement and learning outcomes.

In higher education, social media has become an inseparable part of students' daily lives, offering opportunities for both formal and informal language learning (Muslimawati et al., 2025). Students frequently interact with English input through videos, short clips, memes, and chat-based platforms that provide instantaneous and multimodal feedback (Burston, 2015). These environments encourage *authentic communication, autonomous learning, and situated practice*—key conditions for language acquisition in contemporary EFL pedagogy (Lai, 2019; Reinders & Benson, 2017). However, the effectiveness of these tools depends not merely on their availability but also on their fit with learners' preferences, proficiency levels, and learning strategies (Zou et al., 2018).

Preliminary classroom observations at STKIP Paracendekia NW Sumbawa suggest that students demonstrate diverse preferences in using digital media for English learning. Some prefer audiovisual content, such as YouTube videos or English songs, while others favor interactive platforms, such as Instagram discussion groups or mobile applications. These differences are often shaped by motivational factors, perceived accessibility, ease of use, and relevance to academic or personal goals (Kasuma, 2017). High-achieving students tend to use digital tools strategically—for instance, combining YouTube tutorials for listening practice with TikTok videos for pronunciation improvement. In contrast, lower-achieving students tend to use them sporadically or solely for entertainment.

Recent studies have further emphasized that although the exposure to social media among EFL learners is high, its direct impact on linguistic competence (e.g., grammar accuracy or syntactic awareness) remains limited unless guided by explicit learning strategies and pedagogical scaffolding (Burston, 2015; Muslimawati et al., 2025). On the other hand, interactive mobile-based technologies that offer feedback loops and adaptive learning have been found to enhance learner autonomy and writing performance (Godwin-Jones, 2011; Nasri, 2025). These findings highlight the need to align media integration with learners' preferences and self-regulated learning behaviors—an alignment that remains insufficiently addressed in many Indonesian EFL classrooms.

Consequently, understanding students' media preferences is essential for designing learner-centered, relevant, and motivating English instruction. Research that explores not only *what* media students use but also *why* and *how* they engage with such media can inform more sustainable digital learning strategies. Moreover, incorporating students' preferred platforms into formal classroom instruction can bridge the gap between academic learning and students' digital practices, fostering more meaningful learning experiences (Alzubi et al., 2025; Hafner et al., 2022).

Therefore, this study aims to investigate (1) the types of learning media most preferred by EFL students at STKIP Paracendekia NW Sumbawa, (2) the reasons behind these preferences, and (3) the challenges encountered in using the selected media for English language learning. The findings are expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to English language pedagogy by (a) deepening the understanding of learner-media interaction, (b) providing evidence-based recommendations for integrating students' media preferences into EFL curricula, and (c) supporting educators in leveraging social and digital media to enhance language competence and motivation.

II. METHOD

1. Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative descriptive case study design, which is appropriate for exploring complex social phenomena within their real-life context (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2018). The primary objective was to explore students' preferences for digital learning media in enhancing their English language proficiency. The case study

approach enabled the researchers to capture participants' subjective experiences, perceptions, and learning behaviors in depth.

A qualitative design was particularly suitable for this investigation because it allows for a nuanced understanding of *how* and *why* learners select particular media, and how these preferences relate to their language-learning strategies (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The study was situated within the interpretivist paradigm, which assumes that reality is socially constructed and that knowledge emerges from participants' perspectives rather than from controlled experimental conditions.

2. Research Setting and Context

The research was conducted at STKIP Paracendekia NW Sumbawa, an Indonesian higher education institution specializing in teacher training. The *English Education Study Program* at this institution focuses on developing students' communicative competence through both classroom instruction and technology-supported independent learning. The setting was chosen because students there frequently use a variety of digital platforms—both formal learning management systems (LMS) and informal social media—for language practice.

At the time of data collection (academic year 2025/2026, odd semester), STKIP Paracendekia NW Sumbawa had recently implemented initiatives to promote digital literacy and independent learning in its English-language courses. These institutional efforts created a conducive environment for studying students' media use and preference patterns in authentic learning situations.

3. Participants and Sampling

Ten students from the English Education Study Program participated in the study. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, a commonly employed qualitative research strategy that ensures the inclusion of information-rich cases (Patton, 2015). The inclusion criteria were: (a) being an active undergraduate student in the English Education program, (b) having experience using digital media for English learning, and (c) willingness to participate in interviews and classroom observations.

Participants represented a range of English proficiency levels, determined by prior-semester grades and self-assessment results.

Five students were categorized as high-proficiency learners, while the other five represented lower proficiency levels. This stratification allowed for comparison of media use patterns across differing linguistic competencies.

Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to maintain confidentiality (e.g., *S1-S10*). Gender balance and diversity in digital media use were also considered to capture a holistic picture of the student cohort.

4. Data Collection Techniques

Three primary instruments were employed to collect data: semi-structured interviews, non-participant classroom observations, and field notes. Triangulating these sources enhanced the validity and credibility of findings (Denzin, 2012).

a) Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviews were conducted individually and lasted approximately 30–45 minutes each. The semi-structured format allowed flexibility for follow-up questions and deeper exploration of participants' reasoning (Merriam, 2009). The interview guide included open-ended questions on: preferred learning media and frequency of use, perceived benefits and challenges of each platform, strategies for integrating digital media into English learning, and reflections on learning outcomes. All interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia to facilitate comfort and natural expression. Transcripts were later translated into English for analysis, ensuring semantic fidelity.

b) Classroom Observations

Two classroom sessions per participant were observed to identify patterns of media use and engagement during learning tasks. Observations focused on how students interacted with media—such as video-based materials, online applications, and AI-supported tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Duolingo)—both within and beyond class activities.

c) Field Notes and Document Review

Field notes were maintained throughout the research to record contextual details, non-verbal cues, and environmental factors. Supplementary data, including course syllabi and institutional guidelines on digital learning, were also reviewed to

contextualize findings within the broader pedagogical framework.

5. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using Thematic Analysis as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The analysis proceeded through six systematic steps: (1) Familiarization – Transcribed interviews and observation notes were read repeatedly to gain a holistic understanding; (2) Initial Coding – Descriptive and interpretive codes were generated to capture recurring ideas (e.g., *accessibility, motivation, distraction*); (3) Theme Identification – Codes were clustered into potential themes such as *dominant media platforms, motivational drivers, and learning challenges*; (4) Theme Review – Themes were refined for coherence and internal consistency; (5) Theme Definition and Naming – Each theme was defined to reflect its conceptual essence; and (6) Report Writing – Representative quotations were selected to illustrate the themes and ensure credibility and authenticity (Braun & Clarke, 2021). NVivo 14 software was used to support coding consistency and manage qualitative data. The process was iterative, allowing continuous comparison between data segments and emerging interpretations.

6. Trustworthiness and Triangulation

The trustworthiness of this qualitative study was ensured through Lincoln and Guba's (1985) four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was achieved through data triangulation (interviews, observations, field notes) and member checking, in which participants verified the accuracy of interpretations. Transferability was supported by providing detailed contextual descriptions, enabling readers to assess applicability to similar settings. Dependability was established via an audit trail documenting all stages of data collection and analysis. Confirmability was maintained through reflexive journaling and peer debriefing between the two researchers. This combination of strategies minimized researcher bias and enhanced methodological rigor.

7. Ethical Considerations

The study followed ethical standards for social science research. Permission was obtained from the institutional research board

of STKIP Paracendekia NW Sumbawa prior to data collection. Participants provided informed consent, were briefed about the study's purpose, and were assured that their participation was voluntary. All data were anonymized and stored securely. Pseudonyms replaced students' real names, and transcripts were shared only between the two researchers. Ethical procedure (Jazadi, 2014) was observed throughout the research process.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Research Results

Data analysis through thematic coding yielded three major themes reflecting students' patterns of media use for English learning: (1) Dominant Media Platforms for English Learning, (2) Motivational Factors Influencing Media Preferences, and (3) Challenges and Limitations in Media Use. Each theme encapsulates students' perceptions, behaviors, and contextual factors shaping their digital learning practices at STKIP Paracendekia NW Sumbawa. Representative quotations are integrated to provide authentic voices of participants.

1. Theme 1: Dominant Media Platforms for English Learning

Analysis of interview and observation data revealed that students frequently used YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram as their primary sources of English learning. Other platforms—such as *Duolingo, U-Dictionary, ChatGPT, and Lerna AI*—were used occasionally or for specific purposes (e.g., translation, grammar checking, or pronunciation). Table 1 summarizes the frequency and purpose of media use among participants.

Table 1. Frequency and Purpose of Media Use among Participants

No	Platform	Frequency of Use	Primary Learning Purpose	Example Activities
1.	YouTube	Daily	Listening, pronunciation, vocabulary	Watching tutorial channels, movie clips, and pronunciation videos
2.	TikTok	Daily	Vocabulary, speaking, pronunciation	Short educational videos, mimicry challenges, and language trends
3.	Instagram	Frequent (4–5 times/week)	Grammar, vocabulary, cultural input	Following English tutors, caption-based quizzes

4. ChatGPT	Moderate (2-3 times/week)	Writing assistance, grammar correction	Asking AI to generate sentences or translations
5. Duolingo	Occasional (1-2 times/week)	Grammar and vocabulary drills	Completing gamified exercises
6. U-Dictionary / Lerna AI	Rare	Translation and quick reference	Word meaning lookup and pronunciation tools

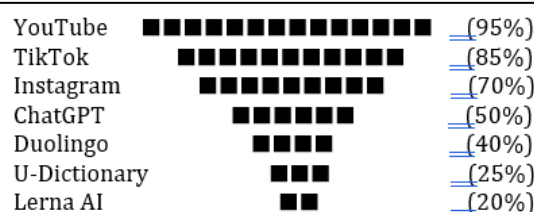


Figure 1. Students' Perceived Usefulness of Learning Media

Students described YouTube as their most reliable and flexible platform for language input. As *S2* stated:

"YouTube gives me everything — listening, grammar, even pronunciation. I can watch any topic I like and repeat it many times."

Similarly, *S5* emphasized its accessibility and rich audio-visual context:

"It is easier to understand because I see and hear at the same time. I don't feel like studying; it's just fun to watch."

TikTok emerged as a popular complementary platform, particularly valued for its brevity and entertainment-driven microlearning content. Students found short videos less intimidating than formal lessons. As *S8* expressed:

"TikTok helps me learn small things quickly — one word, one idiom, or simple expressions."

Instagram was valued for its interactive and social dimension. Participants followed accounts of English educators or influencers and often engaged through comments or story-based quizzes. *S6* noted:

"Sometimes I learn new vocabulary from captions or memes on Instagram. It feels natural, not like classroom learning."

Overall, these three platforms form the digital triad of students' English learning ecosystem: *YouTube* for in-depth exposure, *TikTok* for quick reinforcement, and *Instagram* for interaction and engagement. Figure 1 illustrates the relative frequency and perceived usefulness of these platforms. Each bar represents the percentage of students who rated the platform as "useful" for English learning ($N = 10$).

This figure shows the overwhelming preference for media that combine visual, auditory, and interactive elements, confirming that multimodal exposure drives engagement and comprehension among learners.

2. Theme 2: Motivational Factors Influencing Media Preferences

Motivation emerged as a pivotal factor in shaping students' media choices. Three sub-patterns dominated participants' responses: (1) convenience and accessibility, (2) enjoyment and personal interest, and (3) autonomy and self-regulated learning.

a) Convenience and Accessibility

Students highlighted how social media platforms provide 24/7 access to English materials. *S4* explained:

"I can learn anytime I have my phone. I don't need to open a laptop or wait for class."

Most participants emphasized mobile compatibility and data efficiency as key reasons for preferring these platforms. Unlike institutional LMS, social media apps are already embedded in their daily routines, making learning spontaneous and continuous.

b) Enjoyment and Personal Interest

Enjoyment strongly influenced sustained engagement. TikTok and YouTube, in particular, transformed English learning into an entertaining activity. *S1* commented:

"Learning English through TikTok is not boring. I follow English creators who make jokes and teach at the same time."

Several students reported that the entertainment-driven design of these platforms helped reduce anxiety and increased their willingness to experiment with speaking or pronunciation.

c) Autonomy and Self-Regulated Learning

Autonomy surfaced as a defining characteristic of students' learning habits. They valued the ability to choose content, control pace, and monitor progress without institutional constraints. *S9* reflected:

"I decide what to learn and when. If I don't understand, I replay or find another video. It's my own pace."

This sense of control fostered intrinsic motivation and encouraged repeated exposure to English input. Many students integrated these media into personal study routines, using them during commutes, leisure time, or before sleeping.

Overall, the data suggest that media preferences are closely tied to personal agency and emotional engagement rather than to external academic requirements.

3. Theme 3: Challenges and Limitations in Media Use

Despite their enthusiasm for digital platforms, students also faced several barriers that limited effective learning. These were grouped into three key categories: distraction, content quality, and resource constraints.

a) Digital Distraction

Almost all participants admitted that social media's entertainment features often diverted their attention. As *S7* noted:

"When I open TikTok to learn English, I end up watching funny videos instead."

This blurring of boundaries between learning and leisure posed a major challenge to maintaining focus and discipline. Some students attempted self-regulation strategies, such as setting timers or separating "study accounts" from personal ones, though these were inconsistently applied.

b) Content Credibility and Quality

Students expressed concern about the accuracy of language input on social media. *S3* observed:

"Sometimes the English from influencers is not correct or mixed with slang, and I get confused."

Unlike structured textbooks or teacher-led lessons, social media

content often lacks verification or pedagogical scaffolding, making it difficult for students to discern authentic usage from erroneous examples.

c) Resource Constraints and Technical Issues

A few participants mentioned unstable internet connections or limited mobile data as obstacles. *S10* stated:

"Sometimes I cannot watch videos because the signal is weak or my quota runs out."

Additionally, some platforms, such as Duolingo Premium or ChatGPT Plus, require paid subscriptions for full functionality, which discourages frequent use.

These challenges reflect the dual-edged nature of digital learning media: while they enhance flexibility and enjoyment, they also demand self-regulation, critical awareness, and adequate technological access.

4. Summary of Emergent Themes

Table 2 summarizes the three major themes and corresponding subthemes identified through thematic analysis.

Table 2. Summary of Major Themes and Subthemes

No	Major Theme	Subthemes	Illustrative Quotes
1	Dominant Media Platforms	YouTube as a comprehensive source; TikTok for microlearning; Instagram for interaction	"YouTube gives me everything — listening, grammar, pronunciation." (<i>S2</i>)
2	Motivational Factors	Convenience, enjoyment, autonomy	"I can learn anytime I have my phone." (<i>S4</i>); "Learning English through TikTok is not boring." (<i>S1</i>)
3	Challenges and Limitations	Distraction, credibility, and access issues	"I end up watching funny videos instead of studying." (<i>S7</i>); "Sometimes the English from influencers is not correct." (<i>S3</i>)

5. Visual Model: The “Preferred Media Engagement Framework”

Figure 2 presents a conceptual visualization of the interaction between media choice, motivational factors, and challenges as revealed in this study.

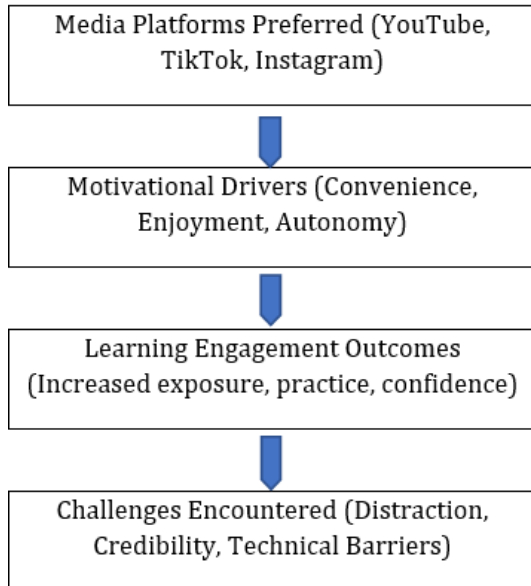


Figure 2. Preferred Media Engagement Framework (Derived from Thematic Analysis)

This model captures the dynamic learning ecosystem students create through social media use — where motivation fuels engagement, yet challenges mediate the extent of learning outcomes.

6. Summary Narrative

In summary, the results reveal that students at STKIP Paracendekia NW Sumbawa strategically engage with a blend of social and technological media to support their English learning. Their preferences are largely shaped by the ease of access, personal enjoyment, and autonomy these platforms provide. However, effective use remains contingent on their ability to manage distractions, evaluate content critically, and sustain digital discipline.

These findings illustrate a learning environment in which formal instruction and informal digital practices coexist, demonstrating that students are active agents in curating their own language-learning experiences.

B. Discussion

The results of this study demonstrate that English Education students at STKIP Paracendekia NW Sumbawa are active, self-directed users of digital media who strategically combine multiple platforms—particularly YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram—to support their English learning. These findings reveal a shifting landscape of EFL learning in which digital technologies are not peripheral tools but central components of the students’ language-learning ecology. The discussion below interprets these results in light of four major theoretical frameworks: learner autonomy, motivation theory, connectivism, and multimedia learning theory.

1. Learner Autonomy and Self-Regulated Learning

Students’ strong preference for self-selected digital media underscores the growing importance of learner autonomy in EFL contexts. Autonomy, as defined by Benson (2013), involves learners taking charge of their own learning by setting goals, selecting resources, and evaluating outcomes. In this study, participants consistently emphasized freedom, flexibility, and self-paced engagement as the main reasons for choosing particular media. For example, several students described replaying YouTube videos or switching between TikTok lessons based on personal interests and comprehension levels.

This behavior aligns with Nasri’s (2025) assertion that technology enhances autonomy when it allows learners to control the *time, pace, and content* of learning. Likewise, Lai (2019) observed that autonomous technology-mediated learning thrives when students perceive digital tools as empowering rather than directive. The participants’ agency in curating their learning content indicates an evolving shift from teacher-led instruction toward learner-managed learning environments.

Moreover, the study’s findings confirm that autonomy is not merely about independence but about interactional control—the ability to navigate, personalize, and integrate multiple learning experiences (Reinders & Benson, 2017). This supports the notion that digital autonomy is both cognitive and social: students rely on individual initiative while

engaging collaboratively with online communities and influencers.

2. Motivation through Self-Determination and Engagement

The motivational dimension of students' media preferences aligns closely with Self-Determination Theory (SDT), proposed by Ryan and Deci (2017), which posits that intrinsic motivation arises when learners' needs for *autonomy*, *competence*, and *relatedness* are fulfilled.

In this study, students experienced autonomy through the ability to choose when and how to learn; competence through immediate feedback from digital tools such as Duolingo and ChatGPT; and relatedness through social interaction on Instagram or TikTok. The enjoyment-driven engagement observed—especially with short, humorous content—reflects intrinsic motivation fueled by pleasure and self-expression rather than obligation.

Similar patterns were identified by Kasuma (2017) and Anwas et al. (2020), who found that social media learning enhances motivation by blending entertainment and instruction. However, while motivation encouraged sustained use, it did not always translate into strategic learning behavior. Some students reported distractions and inconsistent focus—evidence of what Lai (2019) calls the “double-edged nature” of digital engagement, in which enjoyment can either sustain or hinder meaningful learning.

Ultimately, the findings suggest that motivation in this context operates as a dynamic continuum—fluctuating between curiosity-driven exploration and task-oriented learning. Teachers and institutions must therefore cultivate *guided autonomy* to help students transform spontaneous digital engagement into structured learning.

3. Connectivism and Networked Learning

The variety of platforms students used illustrates a learning ecology consistent with Connectivism (Siemens, 2005), which views learning as the ability to connect information across distributed networks. Students' use of YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram demonstrates how English learning extends beyond the classroom

into personal digital spaces—where knowledge is socially constructed and constantly evolving.

In this networked context, students act as knowledge navigators rather than passive recipients. They evaluate the usefulness of content, follow influential English educators, and share or remix language materials with peers. This reflects what Hafner et al. (2022) describe as *new literacy practices*—where learners engage in creative, participatory, and multimodal interactions that blend learning with social identity formation.

However, connectivism also exposes learners to information fragmentation and variable content credibility, both of which were evident in participants' concerns about inaccurate or mixed-language usage online. This challenge reinforces the need for developing critical digital literacy, ensuring that learners can discern trustworthy sources and validate linguistic input.

Thus, connectivism offers a valuable interpretive lens for understanding how learners form meaning within fluid, decentralized digital environments. It highlights the pedagogical shift from content delivery to network navigation and critical participation.

4. Multimedia Learning and Cognitive Processing

The predominance of YouTube as the preferred platform underscores the relevance of the Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning (CTML) (Mayer & Fiorella, 2021). According to CTML, learning is enhanced when information is presented through both visual and auditory channels, allowing dual coding (Paivio, 2014). Students' remarks about “seeing and hearing at the same time” exemplify how multimodal input reduces cognitive effort and increases comprehension.

The success of short-form videos on TikTok further supports the principle of *segmenting*—breaking complex information into manageable cognitive units. By processing short clips, learners can focus on specific vocabulary or expressions without overload. Additionally, the interactive affordances of social media (e.g., liking, commenting, or mimicking)

transform passive watching into active cognitive engagement, consistent with Mayer's (2021) "generative learning" framework.

Nevertheless, students also reported instances of cognitive overload and distraction, reflecting CTML's caution that excessive stimuli (music, pop-up texts, irrelevant visuals) can hinder retention. This underscores the importance of curating content that maintains an optimal balance between entertainment and educational focus.

In summary, multimedia environments facilitate effective learning when learners can filter, process, and apply input purposefully—skills that educators can nurture through explicit digital literacy instruction.

5. Integrating Findings: The Dynamic Model of Media-Motivated Autonomy

By synthesizing these frameworks, the study proposes the Dynamic Model of Media-Motivated Autonomy (Figure 3), which conceptualizes the cyclical relationship among media use, motivation, and learning outcomes.

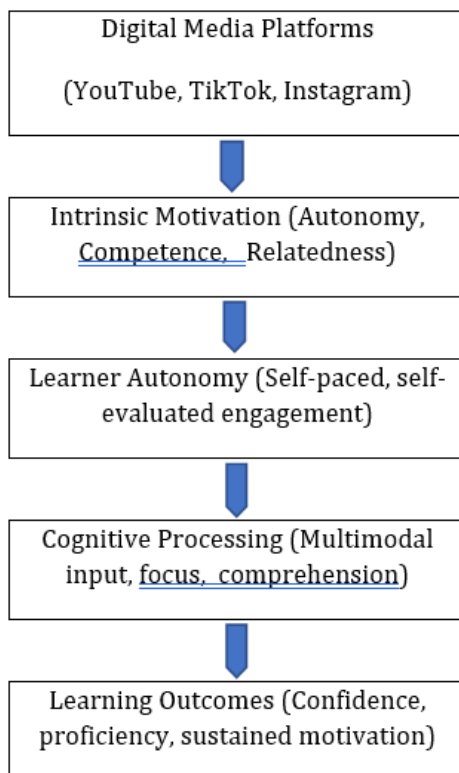


Figure 3. Dynamic Model of Media-Motivated Autonomy

This framework posits that digital media foster a self-reinforcing cycle: students' intrinsic motivation leads to autonomous engagement, which, when paired with effective cognitive processing, enhances linguistic competence and confidence. However, without adequate critical awareness or instructional scaffolding, this cycle risks disruption through distraction or misdirected learning.

6. Pedagogical Implications

The findings emphasize that student-centered digital literacy must be integrated into EFL pedagogy. Teachers should acknowledge learners' existing media habits and design activities that channel informal engagement into structured practice—for instance, creating *YouTube reflection logs*, *TikTok-based speaking tasks*, or *Instagram grammar challenges*.

Additionally, educators can adopt the role of curators and facilitators, guiding students to identify credible sources and encouraging reflection on language use across different media. This approach aligns with the current paradigm of *blended learning 2.0*, where the boundaries between classroom and digital spaces are fluid but pedagogically purposeful.

Finally, institutional strategies should focus on building critical awareness, self-regulation skills, and media literacy so that learners can navigate complex online environments responsibly. Doing so not only enhances language outcomes but also cultivates lifelong learning competencies essential in the digital age.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

A. Conclusion

This study explored the learning media preferences of English Education students at STKIP Paracendekia NW Sumbawa. It revealed that social and digital platforms—particularly YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram—play a pivotal role in shaping contemporary EFL learning experiences. Students' engagement with these platforms reflects a complex interplay between motivation, autonomy, and technology use. They are not passive recipients of online materials; rather, they are self-directed agents who curate, personalize, and adapt their digital environments to meet individual learning needs. The evidence shows that informal digital spaces have become

legitimate extensions of the language classroom, offering authentic exposure and opportunities for practice that complement institutional instruction.

Theoretically, this research contributes to a growing body of scholarship linking learner autonomy, Self-Determination Theory, connectivism, and multimedia learning within the EFL domain. The findings reinforce the idea that autonomy is enacted not merely through independence from teachers but through active participation in digital networks where learners exercise control over time, content, and modality. The study demonstrates that when technological affordances align with students' psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, motivation becomes self-sustaining and transformative. At the same time, it affirms the principles of the Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning: combining audio and visual channels enhances comprehension and retention, provided learners manage cognitive load and maintain focused engagement. The proposed Dynamic Model of Media-Motivated Autonomy encapsulates this theoretical integration by illustrating how digital media, motivation, and cognitive processing operate as a cyclical system driving language development.

In practice, the study underscores the need for English language educators to recognize and integrate students' existing digital practices into formal pedagogy. Rather than dismissing social media as purely recreational, instructors can harness its motivational and multimodal potential through structured tasks such as reflective video journals, TikTok-based pronunciation challenges, or Instagram vocabulary projects. Such tasks bridge the gap between formal and informal learning, encourage authentic language use, and sustain engagement beyond the classroom. Institutions should also invest in programs that cultivate digital and media literacy, enabling learners to evaluate online content critically and to manage distractions that accompany entertainment-oriented platforms. This approach positions teachers as facilitators and curators of credible digital content, guiding learners toward responsible, goal-oriented technology use.

From a policy and curriculum perspective, the findings advocate for blended and hybrid learning frameworks that acknowledge students' preference for flexible, on-demand

media consumption. Universities can design learning management systems that embed social media links, AI-assisted writing tools, and open educational resources to create coherent ecosystems supporting autonomy and creativity. Furthermore, teacher-training institutions like STKIP Paracendekia NW Sumbawa are encouraged to model pedagogical innovation by equipping preservice teachers with the competencies to integrate emerging technologies ethically and effectively in their future classrooms.

Despite its strengths, this study's qualitative scope and small sample size limit generalizability. Future research should expand the participant pool across institutions and include quantitative or mixed-methods designs to measure correlations between media usage patterns and specific proficiency gains. Longitudinal studies could also trace how students' preferences evolve as new technologies, such as generative AI and virtual reality, become more prevalent in language education. Additionally, comparative research across cultural or institutional contexts would illuminate how sociocultural factors mediate technology acceptance and learner motivation.

In conclusion, this study affirms that students' engagement with digital media represents a paradigm shift in EFL learning—from structured, teacher-dominated instruction toward dynamic, learner-driven ecosystems. Recognizing and leveraging this shift requires educators to balance freedom with guidance, enjoyment with discipline, and accessibility with critical literacy. When effectively integrated, students' preferred media can transform not only how English is learned but also how autonomy, creativity, and lifelong learning are cultivated in the digital era.

B. Suggestion

The discussion related to this research is still very limited and requires a lot of input, suggestions for future authors are to study it more deeply and comprehensively about Digital Media Preferences and Motivational Dynamics in EFL Learning: A Case Study of English Education Students at STKIP Paracendekia NW Sumbawa.

REFERENCES

- Alzubi, A. A. F., Nazim, M., & Ahmad, J. (2025). Identifying English as a foreign language students' attitude to improving speaking skills through collaboration. *Journal of Education and Learning (EduLearn)*, 19(1), 180–190.
<https://doi.org/10.11591/edulearn.v19i1.21333>
- Anwas, E. O. M., Sugiarti, Y., Permatasari, A. D., Warsihna, J., Anas, Z., Alhapip, L., Siswanto, H. W., & Rivalina, R. (2020). Social Media Usage for Enhancing English Language Skill. *International Journal of Interactive Mobile Technologies (ijIM)*, 14(07), 41.
<https://doi.org/10.3991/ijim.v14i07.11552>
- Ari, N. P. J. (2021). Students' Perception of Google Classroom in Teaching and Learning during Pandemic of Covid-19. *Journal of Educational Study*, 1(3), 127–133.
<https://doi.org/10.36663/joes.v1i3.178>
- Baföz, T. (2016). Pre-service EFL Teachers' Attitudes towards Language Learning through Social Media. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 232, 430–438.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2016.10.059>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.
<https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp0630a>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). *Thematic Analysis: A Practical Guide*. SAGE.
- Burston, J. (2015). Twenty years of MALL project implementation: A meta-analysis of learning outcomes. *ReCALL*, 27(1), 4–20.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0958344014000159>
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications Inc.
- Deiniatur, M., Cahyono, B. Y., Ivone, F. M., & Prayogo, J. A. (2024). English teachers' beliefs and practices in integrating digital literacy in the language classroom. *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education (IJERE)*, 13(2), 1242.
<https://doi.org/10.11591/ijere.v13i2.25733>
- Denzin, N. K. (2012). Triangulation 2.0. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 6(2), 80–88.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1558689812437186>
- Godwin-Jones, R. (2011). Mobile apps for language learning. *Language Learning & Technology*, 15(2), 2–11.
<https://doi.org/10.64152/10125/44244>
- Hafner, C. A., Chik, A., & Jones, C. A. (2022). Digital literacies and language learning. In E. Hinkel, *Handbook of Practical Second Language Teaching and Learning* (1st ed., pp. 184–194). Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003106609-15>
- Jazadi, I. (2014). Understanding and Reflection of Issues in Language Education Research. *IJEE (Indonesian Journal of English Education)*, 1(1), 41–64.
<https://doi.org/10.15408/ijee.v1i1.1194>
- Kasuma, S. A. A. (2017). Using Facebook for English Language Learning: The Differences Among Gender and Ethnicity. *Journal of Nusantara Studies (JONUS)*, 2(1), 177.
<https://doi.org/10.24200/jonus.vol2iss1p177-193>
- Lai, C. (2019). Technology and Learner Autonomy: An Argument in Favor of the Nexus of Formal and Informal Language Learning. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 39, 52–58.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190519000035>
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage Publications.
- Mayer, R. E., & Fiorella, L. (Eds.). (2021). *The Cambridge Handbook of Multimedia Learning* (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108894333>
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*. John Wiley & Sons.
<https://books.google.co.id/books?id=tvFICrgcuSIC>

- Muslimawati, A. O. S., Dirgantini, A. D., Humaira, N. P., Novayana, R., & Wahyuni. (2025). A Systematic Review of Digital Media in Enhancing English Language Learning in Indonesian Schools. *Journal in Teaching and Education Area*, 2(3), 375–390. <https://doi.org/10.69673/x2nt5k16>
- Nasri, F. Z. (2025). The Role of Digital Technology in Enhancing the Students' Learning Autonomy. *Transformative Pedagogies*, 1(3), 14–19. <https://doi.org/10.64229/wezvba11>
- Paivio, A. (2014). *Mind and Its Evolution* (0 ed.). Psychology Press. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315785233>
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). Sampling, Qualitative (Purposeful). In G. Ritzer (Ed.), *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology* (1st ed.). Wiley. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405165518.wbeoss012.pub2>
- Reinders, H., & Benson, P. (2017). Research agenda: Language learning beyond the classroom. *Language Teaching*, 50(4), 561–578. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444817000192>
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2017). *Self-determination theory. Basic psychological needs in motivation, development and wellness*. Guilford Press. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1041847ar>
- Septiawan, H., Setiyadi, B., Mahpul, M., Sukirlan, M., & Nisa, K. (2025). The anxiety in English for foreign language speaking class: The case of university students in Lampung context. *Journal of Education and Learning (EduLearn)*, 19(1), 362–370. <https://doi.org/10.11591/edulearn.v19i1.21755>
- Siemens, G. (2005). Connectivism: A learning theory for the digital age. *International Journal of Instructional Technology and Distance Learning*, 2(1), 3–10.
- Tahmina, T. (2022). Enhancing Motivation of the EFL Learners by Integrating Technology. *Language Literacy: Journal of Linguistics, Literature, and Language Teaching*, 6(2), 262–268. <https://doi.org/10.30743/ll.v6i2.6196>
- Venkatesh, V., Morris, M. G., Davis, G. B., & Davis, F. D. (2003). User Acceptance of Information Technology: Toward A Unified View1. *MIS Quarterly*, 27(3), 425–478. <https://doi.org/10.2307/30036540>
- Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods* (6th ed.). SAGE. <https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/case-study-research-and-applications/book250150>
- Yunus, M., Rahmawati, S., & Muliadi. (2022). Digital-Based Learning in English Folklore Lectures for Islamic Higher Education. *ELT Worldwide Journal of English Language Teaching*, 9(1), 233–242.
- Zou, D., Xie, H., & Wang, F. L. (2018). Future trends and research issues of technology-enhanced language learning: A technological perspective. *Knowledge Management & E-Learning: An International Journal*, 10(4), 426–440. <https://doi.org/10.34105/j.kmel.2018.10.026>