Exploring Students' Media Choices for English Learning Outside of School

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the types of digital media selected by high-achieving students to support English learning beyond formal classroom settings. Employing a qualitative research design with purposive sampling, the study involved five eleventh-grade students from SMA IT Wahdah Islamiyah Makassar. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews and supporting documentation, then analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The results reveal that students predominantly utilize platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, Apple Music, and Komiku as supplementary learning resources. These media contribute significantly to the development of vocabulary, pronunciation, listening, and reading skills by providing authentic, engaging, and easily accessible English content. Students favor these platforms due to their flexibility, allowing self-paced learning that aligns with individual interests and learning preferences. Additionally, interactive features such as comment sections, duets, and content sharing foster greater motivation, confidence, and willingness to use English in real-life contexts. Nevertheless, the study also identifies several challenges, including potential distractions, unstable internet connectivity, limited application features, and difficulties in maintaining learning discipline. Despite these constraints, the findings suggest that digital media plays a meaningful role in facilitating enjoyable, autonomous, and effective English learning outside school environments.

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INTRODUCTION

The media plays a crucial role in enhancing students' English language learning. According to De la Cruz (2025), multimedia tools such as interactive applications, videos, and audio resources can improve English language skills by supporting vocabulary, listening, and speaking. Similarly, Teng (2023) highlights that combining visual and auditory elements strengthens students' ability to remember vocabulary and understand content more effectively. These studies indicate that the media provides meaningful multimodal experiences that make English learning more engaging and effective.

In Indonesia, students increasingly use online platforms such as YouTube, Duolingo, and Ruangguru to support independent learning. Winarno and Fitriawati (2023) explain that these platforms allow students to personalize their learning environments and improve understanding at their own pace. Johnson and Majewska (2022) further define informal learning as learning activities that occur naturally in students' free time beyond school instruction.

Previous studies have examined the use of media in English learning. Safitri (2021) found that students frequently use YouTube and Instagram to support their English learning, while Winarno and Fitriawati (2023) reported that teachers rely on platforms such as Google Classroom. However, most existing studies focus on teachers or general students, with limited attention to high-achieving students and how they independently choose and utilize media for learning English outside of school.

Based on these gaps, this study was conducted to understand how the media supports high-achieving students' independent English learning. Specifically, this study aims to identify the media chosen by high-achieving students for learning English outside of school and describe how they use these media, including the challenges they encounter. Therefore, this research is entitled "Exploring Students' Media Choices for English Learning Outside of School."

Cited Literature

Multimedia applications play an important role in English learning because they provide flexible, authentic, and engaging learning experiences (Farida et al., 2020). Online platforms give learners access to varied materials and support independent study, allowing them to manage their own learning according to personal preferences (Lai & Zheng, 2018). CALL also improves English proficiency through interactive activities, automated feedback, and technology-based simulations that enable repeated practice in realistic contexts (Al-Maroof et al., 2020). Music enhances listening ability, strengthens vocabulary, and reduces anxiety by exposing learners to natural rhythm and pronunciation (Millington, 2011). Digital comics combine visuals and text, helping learners understand context and vocabulary more easily while increasing motivation through narrative-based

learning (Setiawan et al., 2025). Films further support learning by providing authentic expressions, cultural context, and natural language use that make learning more meaningful (Damanik, 2025). These media show that students have diverse resources available, and this study explores which ones they choose.

Students' media preferences are generally influenced by effectiveness, efficiency, and time-saving value (Rahmi, 2017). Digital media are considered effective because they provide authentic and meaningful input that keeps learners motivated beyond classroom instruction (Dizon, 2023). Efficiency is supported when platforms are well-designed and easy to navigate, giving students greater control and reducing confusion (Zhang, 2022). Media are also time-saving because they allow learners to study anytime, helping them integrate English learning into daily routines (Zhang et al., 2021).

Motivation to use specific media is shaped by interest, flexibility, and interactivity. Learners are more engaged when content matches their personal interests, such as films, games, influencers, or music, which strengthens informal language development (Han, 2022; Lee & Lee, 2021). Flexible access also supports motivation by allowing students to learn at their own pace, especially through mobile learning during free moments (Al-Kathiri, 2015; De Vega et al., 2024). Interactive features such as quizzes, peer feedback, and gamified elements turn learners into active participants, improving engagement and commitment (Alhadhrami, 2016; Liu & Moeller, 2019).

However, media-based learning also presents challenges. Distractions from social media and entertainment often reduce focus (Ramadanty, 2019). Technical problems, such as unstable internet or app issues, may interrupt learning (Alisoy & Sadiqzade, 2024). Without teacher guidance, learners may also struggle with discipline and feedback (Rintaningrum, 2023). Understanding these factors helps explain students' choices and how digital media function in learning English outside the classroom.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive research design to explore how high-achieving students use multimedia applications for learning English outside the classroom. A purposive sampling technique was used to select five 11th-grade students from SMA IT Wahdah Islamiyah Makassar, targeting participants with characteristics relevant to the focus of the study. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews guided by Seidman's (2006) framework, supported by documentation such as interview transcripts. The data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman (as cited in Sugiyono, 2012) model, which involves data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Ethical procedures were followed,

including obtaining participants' informed consent and ensuring the confidentiality of their identities and responses. This approach provides a comprehensive understanding of how high-achieving students engage with multimedia tools to support their English learning outside of the school environment.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Media Choices for English Learning Outside School

High-achieving students used several types of digital media to support English learning outside school, most frequently mentioning YouTube, TikTok, Apple Music, and Komiku. Many preferred these platforms because they were free and easy to access. One student shared, *"I often use YouTube to study outside of school… I choose YouTube because many of the videos are free and available for all levels…"* (Extract 1), while another said, *"I use TikTok the most to learn English… there are lots of short videos that teach vocabulary, pronunciation, and slang."* (Extract 2). These responses suggest that students enjoy learning through short, simple content that feels relaxed.

Music was another preferred media, mainly using Apple Music. One student explained, *"I usually prefer listening to music… the apps I use are Apple Music… Music often contains slang, which makes me more interested in searching for new vocabulary, and it also helps me better understand different accents and it also helps me better understand different accents."* (Extract 3), which helped them become familiar with slang, accents, and new vocabulary.

Digital comics like Komiku also supported learning, as one student mentioned, *"I usually read comics in English… I prefer Komiku because it's easy to use."* (Extract 4). Comics provided new vocabulary and made reading enjoyable.

How Students Use Learning Media and the Challenges They Face

a. Indicators of students' media choices in learning English outside of school

Students described media as helpful in different ways, and one of the main strengths frequently mentioned was its effectiveness in improving key English skills such as vocabulary, pronunciation, listening, and reading. Some high-achieving students highlighted platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Komiku. One student shared, *"I often use YouTube… many of the videos are free and available for all levels… YouTube also helps increase my vocabulary."* (Extract 5), while another added, *"I usually prefer listening to music… a lot of slang is used, so I get more vocabulary and understand*

the accent better." (Extract 6). These responses indicate that the media provided authentic, enjoyable exposure supporting multiple English skills.

Furthermore, students appreciated the efficiency and convenience of these media in their daily lives. Platforms were valued for ease of access, simple interfaces, and short content formats that fit smoothly into routines. One student explained, *"I most often use TikTok… there are many short videos that teach vocabulary, pronunciation, and slang." (Extract 7),* and another noted, *"I usually watch Let's Play… from YouTube, I can build my listening and pronunciation skills." (Extract 8).* Overall, media were seen as efficient because they were quick to open, easy to navigate, and naturally incorporated into students' daily habits.

In addition, media were considered time-saving, allowing learning in short, flexible periods without disrupting other activities. One student shared, *"I usually listen to music while doing assignments or when I'm bored, and I also use Apple Music sometimes at school or at home." (Extract 9).* These findings indicate that students are able to integrate English learning into their free time while relaxing or while working on other tasks, thus highlighting the practicality of digital media for sustainable language development.

b. Motivation behind using specific media for learning English

Students also highlighted how the media provided a more relaxed and enjoyable learning atmosphere compared to formal classroom settings. One student explained, *"Learning on TikTok is more relaxed and not stressful… at school, it's more focused on grammar and books… lessons from TikTok I can try to practice at school…" (Extract 15).* This shows that informal media-based learning feels lighter and more engaging, while still helping students follow school lessons.

Media were also appreciated for their accessibility and convenience, allowing students to learn whenever they had time. One student mentioned, *"I often use YouTube to study outside of school… many videos are free and available for all levels… YouTube also helps increase my vocabulary…" (Extract 16).* This demonstrates how media supports consistent learning through flexible and ready-to-access content.

Some students used media for interaction and active language practice. One student noted, *"TikTok makes learning feel like it's not really studying… I can also comment or duet with the creators, which makes me more motivated to try speaking English." (Extract 17).* This demonstrates that media not only support content consumption but also facilitate practical application, interaction, and speaking practice.

Furthermore, media were motivating because they were flexible and easy to fit into daily routines. One student explained, *"I usually listen to music while doing assignments or when I'm bored… sometimes at school or at home." (Extract 12),* and another noted, *"I live in a dormitory, so I rarely use my phone… I only open comics at certain times, like on Saturdays and Sundays or at school when I have free time." (Extract*

13). This shows that flexibility allowed students to integrate English learning into their daily lives.

In addition, interactive features encouraged engagement and practice. TikTok, for example, allowed active participation: *"TikTok makes learning feel like it's not really studying… I can also comment or duet with the creators, which makes me more motivated to try speaking English." (Extract 14).* This demonstrates that interactivity helped students practise, stay confident, and enjoy learning more.

c. Comparison between school and self-learning through media

Students also highlighted how the media provided a more relaxed and enjoyable learning atmosphere compared to formal classroom settings. One student explained, *"Learning on TikTok is more relaxed and not stressful… at school, it's more focused on grammar and books… lessons from TikTok I can try to practice at school…" (Extract 15).* This shows that informal media-based learning feels lighter and more engaging, while still helping students follow school lessons.

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d. Challenges in using media for learning English outside of school

Students described several challenges that affected their ability to learn through media. One common issue was distraction. Some students struggled to stay disciplined or were easily pulled into entertainment content. One student shared, *"The first issue is discipline… after watching just a little, I already feel satisfied… other issues are like ads or network problems when suddenly the connection goes out…" (Extract 18).* This shows that distractions, unstable networks, and a lack of self-control can reduce the effectiveness of media-based learning.

Technical problems also made learning less smooth. Issues such as slow internet, app errors, ads, and paywalls frequently interrupted activities. One student said, *"Sometimes the application bugs… the image disappears, or the chapter is skipped." (Extract 19).* This indicates that even motivated students face difficulties when technology is unreliable.

Students also mentioned limitations related to paid features, content difficulty, and filtering useful material. One student expressed, *"Sometimes it's hard to find truly useful content… many are just for entertainment… I often get carried away scrolling funny videos, so I forget to study." (Extract 20).* These limitations show that technical challenges and content quality can reduce the productivity of media-based learning, meaning students must be selective and intentional.

Discussion

Media Choices for English Learning Outside School

High-achieving students increasingly rely on digital media to support their English learning beyond formal classroom environments. Outside school, they actively select media platforms that align with their interests, learning preferences, and daily routines, allowing them to engage with English in more flexible and meaningful ways. Among the most frequently used platforms are YouTube and TikTok, which provide abundant audiovisual content that supports language exposure in authentic and enjoyable contexts. These platforms enable students to develop vocabulary, pronunciation, and listening skills through short videos, vlogs, tutorials, and entertainment-based content. The informal nature of these media reduces learning pressure and allows students to interact with English naturally, making learning feel less like an obligation and more like a personal activity.

Students tend to choose content that matches their hobbies, such as lifestyle videos, educational clips, storytelling, or entertainment-related materials. This freedom of choice increases engagement and helps learners sustain attention for longer periods. When students learn through topics they genuinely enjoy, they are more likely to notice language features, repeat expressions, and imitate pronunciation. This practice gradually strengthens their listening comprehension and oral awareness. Such learning behavior reflects principles of learner autonomy, where students take control of their learning process by selecting resources that meet their individual needs. This finding aligns with Lai and Zheng (2018), who argue that mobile-assisted language learning supports flexible, self-directed learning by giving learners access to authentic and personalized content anytime and anywhere. Through YouTube and TikTok, students are exposed to real-life English use, which supports their understanding of how the language functions beyond textbook examples.

In addition to video-based platforms, music plays a significant role in students' English learning outside school. Applications such as Apple Music allow students to listen to English songs during daily activities, including commuting, relaxing, or doing household tasks. Through repeated exposure to songs, students acquire new vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and slang while becoming familiar with natural pronunciation and intonation patterns. Music-based learning is

perceived as enjoyable and effortless, as students do not feel pressured to memorize or analyze language explicitly. Instead, learning occurs subconsciously through repetition and emotional engagement with the songs.

Music also contributes to pronunciation development, as rhythm and melody help learners remember sounds and word stress patterns more effectively. Students often imitate song lyrics, which enhances their phonological awareness and speaking confidence. Moreover, music creates a positive emotional atmosphere that supports motivation and reduces anxiety associated with language learning. This supports Millington's (2011) argument that songs are effective tools for developing vocabulary and pronunciation, as they combine repetition, rhythm, and meaningful language input. By integrating music into their daily routines, students experience continuous language exposure without disrupting their schedules, making English learning more sustainable and enjoyable.

Another important medium utilized by high-achieving students is digital comics. Platforms such as Komiku provide access to English-language comics and illustrated stories that support reading development in a relaxed and engaging manner. Digital comics combine visual elements with written text, allowing students to infer meaning through images while expanding their vocabulary and understanding sentence structures. This multimodal input helps learners comprehend texts more easily, especially when encountering unfamiliar words or expressions. As a result, students feel more confident reading English materials without relying heavily on dictionaries or translations.

Digital comics also encourage extensive reading, as the story-based format motivates students to continue reading out of curiosity rather than obligation. Enjoyable narratives help maintain focus and reduce boredom, which is often a challenge in traditional reading activities. Through repeated exposure to contextualized language, students gradually improve their reading fluency and comprehension skills. This learning approach aligns with Setiawan et al. (2025), who emphasize that digital comics support vocabulary development through contextual and visual cues while maintaining learner motivation through engaging storytelling. By reading comics, students learn English incidentally while enjoying the narrative, which enhances long-term retention of vocabulary and structures.

How Students Use Learning Media and the Challenges They Face

Indicators of students' media choices in learning English outside of school

The findings show that high-achieving students consider a medium effective when it directly supports the improvement of specific English skills such as vocabulary, pronunciation, and listening. They use platforms like YouTube, TikTok, music applications, and digital comics because these tools expose them to real and familiar language in ways that feel enjoyable and easy to follow. Through this kind

of exposure, they can learn new words in everyday contexts, which makes learning more practical and personally meaningful. This aligns with Dizon (2023), who explains that digital platforms offer authentic and useful language input that helps students stay motivated and manage their learning independently.

Students perceive a medium as effective when it exposes them to English in a natural and understandable form, allowing them to learn language features that are commonly used in real-life communication. Platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, music applications, and digital comics are favored because they present English in familiar contexts through videos, songs, and stories that are engaging and easy to follow. Through continuous exposure to such content, students encounter new vocabulary and expressions in everyday situations, which makes learning more practical and personally meaningful.

This type of authentic exposure enables students to understand how English is used beyond formal classroom materials. Rather than memorizing isolated words or grammar rules, students learn language through context, repetition, and real usage. As a result, vocabulary acquisition becomes more meaningful because words are connected to situations, emotions, and visual cues. This finding is consistent with Dizon (2023), who emphasizes that digital platforms provide authentic and relevant language input that supports learner motivation and encourages independent learning.

Another key indicator influencing students' media choices is efficiency, particularly in terms of accessibility and ease of use. High-achieving students tend to select media that are simple to access, user-friendly, and suitable for frequent use in daily life. Platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Komiku are considered efficient because they do not require complicated procedures to operate and can be accessed anytime using personal devices. Students appreciate media that allow them to start learning immediately without technical difficulties or strict learning instructions. This simplicity reduces cognitive load and allows students to focus more on the content rather than the technology itself.

Several platforms features further enhance efficiency from the students' perspectives. Subtitles help learners understand spoken language more clearly, especially when encountering unfamiliar accents or fast speech. Short video formats, commonly found on TikTok and YouTube Shorts, enable students to consume content quickly and repeatedly, which supports comprehension and retention. Scrolling and replay options also allow students to revisit specific parts of the content whenever necessary. These features support self-paced learning, where students can control the speed, repetition, and depth of their learning experience. This aligns with Zhang (2022), who argues that user-friendly digital tools reduce confusion and provide learners with greater autonomy and control over their language learning processes.

Time efficiency is another important indicator that shapes students' media choices. The findings reveal that high-achieving students rely on digital media

because it helps them save time and integrate English learning into their daily routines. Instead of allocating a fixed study schedule, students use small moments throughout the day to engage with English content. They may watch short videos before going to sleep, listen to English songs while eating or relaxing, or check unfamiliar expressions during breaks between school activities. This flexible approach allows learning to occur naturally without disrupting other responsibilities. Learning becomes less demanding and more enjoyable, as it does not feel like an additional task. This learning habit reflects strong self-regulation skills, as students are able to manage their time and learning goals independently. Zhang et al. (2021) also highlight that digital tools enable learners to choose when and how they want to study, allowing learning to take place in short, manageable segments throughout the day. This approach makes language learning more practical, efficient, and sustainable over time.

Motivation behind using specific media for learning English

Many students choose certain media because the content fits their personal interests, such as hobbies, trending topics, favourite comic genres, or short videos that explain idioms and everyday expressions. The findings of this study reveal that students' motivation to use specific media for learning English outside of school is strongly influenced by personal interest, flexibility, and interactivity. One of the main motivational factors is the relevance of the content to students' individual preferences and everyday experiences. Many students are more inclined to choose media that align with their hobbies, trending topics, favorite comic genres, or short videos that explain idioms and commonly used expressions. When the content feels enjoyable and familiar, students demonstrate higher levels of engagement and are able to maintain their focus for longer periods. This indicates that motivation increases when English learning is naturally connected to what students already like and encounter in their daily lives.

Interest-based content plays a crucial role in sustaining learners' attention and curiosity. Rather than perceiving English as a school subject that requires formal study, students view it as a tool for understanding content they enjoy. This perspective shifts learning from an obligation to a voluntary activity, which enhances intrinsic motivation. Through repeated exposure to interesting digital content, students gradually improve their language skills without feeling pressured. This finding is supported by Han (2022) and Lee and Lee (2021), who argue that digital materials reflecting learners' personal interests are more effective in maintaining engagement and supporting informal language development. When students feel emotionally connected to the content, they are more willing to explore new vocabulary, imitate expressions, and experiment with language use.

Flexibility is another key factor that motivates students to use digital media for English learning. The media allows students to access English content at any time

and in various situations, such as while doing homework, relaxing at home, or spending time during weekends. Students are not restricted to a specific location or schedule, as they can learn both at school and at home depending on what feels convenient. This flexible learning environment enables students to practice English without the pressure of fixed study hours or rigid learning plans. As a result, learning becomes more manageable and less stressful, encouraging consistent engagement over time.

The ability to learn at one's own pace further strengthens motivation. Students can pause, replay, or skip content according to their level of understanding and interest. This self-paced approach helps them feel more in control of their learning process, which contributes to a sense of autonomy and confidence. Such flexibility aligns with the findings of Al-Kathiri (2015) and De Vega et al. (2024), who emphasize that mobile and media-based learning environments allow learners to take advantage of spare moments and study at their own speed. By making use of short breaks throughout the day, students can maintain continuous exposure to English, which supports long-term language development.

In addition to interest and flexibility, interactive features on digital platforms play a significant role in motivating students to actively use English. Platforms such as TikTok provide tools like comment sections, duet features, and content responses that encourage learners to interact with others and with the material itself. Through these features, students can practice expressing opinions, responding to questions, or imitating spoken language, making the learning experience more practical and engaging. This interaction transforms students from passive consumers of content into active participants in the learning process.

Interactive engagement also contributes to increased confidence in using English. When students comment or participate in duets, they practice using English in low-risk environments where mistakes are acceptable. Feedback from peers or content creators further reinforces learning and motivation. This finding is supported by Alhadhrami (2016) and Liu and Moeller (2019), who highlight that interactive tools and peer feedback enhance learner motivation by promoting meaningful participation and collaboration. By engaging actively with content and other users, students develop both linguistic competence and communicative confidence.

Overall, the motivation behind using specific media for learning English outside school is shaped by the combination of personal relevance, flexibility, and interactivity. Students are motivated when media connects English learning with their interests, allows them to learn at their own pace, and provides opportunities for active participation. These factors create a positive learning environment that encourages sustained engagement and learner autonomy. The findings suggest that understanding students' motivational reasons for media use can help educators design more relevant and engaging learning experiences that bridge formal classroom instruction and informal digital learning practices.

Comparison between school and self-learning through

Many students report experiencing a more relaxed and comfortable learning environment when studying English through platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, or digital comics compared to traditional classroom settings. Media-based learning is often perceived as lighter and more enjoyable, while classroom learning may feel demanding due to academic expectations, formal assessments, and time constraints. As a result, students tend to feel less anxious and more engaged when learning independently through digital media.

The enjoyable nature of digital content plays a crucial role in shaping students' learning experiences. Short videos, entertaining explanations, and visually appealing comics make English learning feel less intimidating. Students can engage with the content without fear of making mistakes or being evaluated, which creates a safe learning space. This relaxed atmosphere encourages students to explore new vocabulary, expressions, and ideas more freely. These findings support the views of Kyeyune (2003) and Resnik and Dewaele (2021), who argue that digital learning environments allow learners to work at their own pace and reduce emotional pressure, leading to a more flexible and enjoyable learning experience. In contrast, classroom learning often follows a structured curriculum that may not always accommodate individual learning speeds or preferences.

Another significant difference between school-based learning and self-learning through media lies in accessibility and convenience. Digital platforms provide constant access to English learning materials, enabling students to learn anytime and anywhere. Students frequently use platforms such as YouTube and TikTok during short breaks, before going to sleep, or whenever they have spare time. The ability to replay videos or reread digital content allows them to review materials as often as needed, which is not always possible in classroom settings due to limited time and fixed lesson plans. This flexibility makes learning more manageable and sustainable, especially for students with busy schedules.

In contrast, school-based learning typically requires students to follow a fixed timetable and participate in scheduled lessons. While structured instruction offers guidance and systematic learning, it may limit opportunities for spontaneous or repeated exposure to English. Media-based self-learning, on the other hand, allows students to take advantage of small moments throughout the day, integrating English learning naturally into their daily routines. This finding aligns with Henry (2014) and Vidhiasi et al. (2021), who emphasize that media-based learning enables learners to study at their preferred time and place, supporting better time management and reducing learning stress.

Interaction is another important aspect that distinguishes digital media learning from traditional classroom instruction. In media-based learning, students are not limited to passive consumption of content. Instead, they actively participate by writing comments, engaging in TikTok duets, or experimenting with new

expressions during informal conversations with classmates. These interactive features encourage students to apply what they learn in real-life contexts, making learning more practical and meaningful. Interaction through digital platforms also allows students to express opinions, ask questions, and respond to others without the pressure often associated with speaking in front of a classroom.

Classroom interaction, while valuable, can sometimes be constrained by limited time, teacher-centered instruction, or students' fear of making mistakes in front of peers. In contrast, digital platforms provide more opportunities for student-driven interaction, where learners can choose when and how to participate. This supports confidence-building, as students can practice English in low-risk environments. These findings are consistent with Warni et al. (2018) and Eliyahu-Levi (2020), who argue that digital platforms promote learner autonomy and encourage meaningful interaction by giving students greater freedom to express themselves.

Challenges in using media for learning English outside of school

Despite the numerous benefits of media-based learning, the findings of this study reveal that students also face several challenges when using digital media to learn English outside of school. One of the most frequently reported difficulties relates to distractions. Digital platforms are designed to capture users' attention through advertisements, entertainment-based content, and personalized recommendations. While students may initially access these platforms with the intention of learning, their focus is often diverted by unrelated videos, trending content, or pop-up advertisements. As a result, learning sessions may be shortened, interrupted, or abandoned altogether. This situation illustrates how the design of digital media can undermine learning effectiveness when students struggle to control their attention or when the platform prioritizes engagement over educational value.

The issue of distraction is closely linked to self-regulation skills. Although high-achieving students demonstrate strong motivation, they still experience difficulty maintaining concentration in environments filled with competing stimuli. The constant availability of entertaining content makes it challenging to remain focused on educational materials for extended periods. Over time, this can reduce the depth of learning, as students may engage superficially with content rather than critically processing it. These findings are consistent with Ramadanty (2020), who reports that advertisements and non-educational content frequently interrupt students' concentration when social media is used for English learning outside the classroom. This suggests that without clear strategies for managing distractions, media-based learning may become less effective than intended.

In addition to distractions, technical problems represent another significant challenge in media-based English learning. Students often encounter issues such as slow or unstable internet connections, application errors, locked or premium content, and unexpected system glitches. These technical disruptions interrupt learning activities and make it difficult for students to maintain continuity, even when they are highly motivated to learn. For instance, buffering videos, sudden application crashes, or restricted access to learning materials can cause frustration and reduce students' willingness to continue. Over time, repeated technical issues may negatively affect students' attitudes toward media-based learning, making the experience feel unreliable and inconvenient.

Technical limitations also highlight issues of digital inequality. Not all students have access to high-speed internet or premium versions of learning applications, which can restrict their learning opportunities. When essential content is placed behind paywalls, students may be unable to access high-quality materials, forcing them to rely on less suitable alternatives. These conditions demonstrate that the effectiveness of media-based learning depends not only on students' motivation but also on the availability and reliability of technological infrastructure. This finding aligns with Alisoy and Sadiqzade (2024), who emphasize that unstable connections, application crashes, and poorly designed digital features can disrupt learning processes and reduce learner engagement.

Another challenge identified in this study relates to the limitations of the content itself. Although digital media offers a vast range of learning resources, students often struggle to identify materials that truly support their language development. The abundance of content can be overwhelming, making it difficult for students to distinguish between educational and purely entertaining materials. Some students report encountering unfamiliar vocabulary without sufficient explanation, which can hinder comprehension rather than support learning. Others express frustration with content that is either too simple or too advanced for their proficiency level. Without proper guidance, students may spend excessive time searching for suitable content instead of engaging in meaningful learning.

Paid features further complicate content access. Many platforms restrict advanced learning tools, subtitles, or high-quality explanations to premium users. This limitation reduces students' ability to fully benefit from the platform, especially when free content does not adequately meet their learning needs. Additionally, the dominance of entertainment-oriented content can overshadow educational materials, making it harder for students to stay focused on learning goals. These challenges suggest that media alone cannot fully address students' learning needs, particularly when learners are required to independently evaluate and filter content.

This situation reflects Rintaningrum's (2023) argument that learners using digital tools require guidance to remain disciplined, monitor their progress, and receive meaningful feedback. Without external support, students may struggle to

evaluate their learning outcomes or identify areas for improvement. Unlike classroom learning, where teachers provide structured feedback and clear objectives, media-based learning often lacks systematic evaluation. As a result, students may not be fully aware of their progress or weaknesses, which can limit long-term development.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study show that high-achieving students choose media such as YouTube, TikTok, Apple Music, and Komiku because these platforms provide easy access, engaging content, and flexibility that fits their daily routines. Through these media, students naturally improve their vocabulary, listening, pronunciation, and reading skills while learning in enjoyable and self-directed ways. Their choices are strongly influenced by personal interests, convenience, and the interactive features offered by the platforms. However, students also face challenges such as distractions, unstable internet connections, app limitations, and difficulties in maintaining discipline. These issues can affect the effectiveness of their learning, showing that successful media-based English learning depends not only on the tools available but also on students' ability to manage their focus and select meaningful content.

Based on the conclusions above, several suggestions can be offered to improve the use of media in English learning outside of school. English teachers are encouraged to apply these findings by guiding high-achieving students toward effective and engaging media such as YouTube and TikTok, while also helping them manage distractions and supporting their independent learning needs so they can stay motivated. For future researchers, this study may serve as a useful reference for exploring students' media choices in informal learning contexts. Since this research only involved male high-achieving students, future studies are encouraged to include female participants to provide a more complete understanding of gender-related media preferences. Further research may also investigate other types of media, such as printed books or traditional audio materials, to offer a broader and clearer picture of how students engage with different learning resources outside of school.

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