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Student Engagement with Arabic Language on Social Media: A Media Exposure Approach to Language Learning

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to determine the type and level of engagement in Arabic-language social media among students of the Arabic Language Education Department at Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University, Malang. This research was quantitative descriptive. The research population consisted of students from the Arabic Language Teaching Department, with a sample selected through purposive sampling, focusing on students who engaged in Arabic language learning using social media in class. Data were collected using questionnaires with a Likert scale and brief interview. Researchers used descriptive statistics analysis to summarize and present the collected data in terms of frequencies, percentages, and means, providing an overview of students' participation in Arabic-language social networking platforms. The results of the research were as follows: (1) the students actively engage with social media for learning Arabic, their interaction is predominantly limited to grammar content created by Indonesian speakers, with minimal exposure to native Arabic media and cultural resources, and (2) the students occasionally engage with Arabic-language social media, mainly on Instagram and YouTube, but overall participation and consistency remain low. The limited and irregular exposure of students to Arabic-language media—particularly from native sources—suggests a missed opportunity in Arabic language pedagogy, where consistent engagement with authentic media could significantly enhance linguistic competence, cultural understanding, and communicative skills.

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Keyword

Arabic Learning; Arabic Digital Literacy; Social Media Use; Student Engagement with Arabic Content; Language Acquisition via Social Media.

مستخلص البحث

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحديد أنواع ومستويات المشاركة في وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي باللغة العربية بين طلاب قسم تعليم اللغة العربية في جامعة مولانا مالك إبراهيم الإسلامية الحكومية، مالانج. تتبنى هذه الدراسة منهج البحث الكمي الوصفي. تكونت عينة البحث من طلاب قسم تعليم اللغة العربية، وتم اختيار العينة باستخدام أسلوب العينة القصدية، حيث تم التركيز على الطلاب الذين شاركوا في تعلم اللغة العربية باستخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي. تم جمع البيانات باستخدام استبيانات مقياس ليكرت والمقابلة القصيرة. واستخدم الباحثون التحليل الإحصائي الوصفي لتلخيص البيانات المجمعة وعرضها من حيث التكرارات والنسب المئوية والمتوسطات، مما يوفر نظرة عامة حول مشاركة الطلبة في منصات التواصل الاجتماعي باللغة العربية. وكانت نتائج الدراسة كما يلي: (١) يشارك الطلاب بنشاط في وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي لتعلم اللغة العربية، لكن تفاعلهم يقتصر في الغالب على محتوى النحو الذي يُنتجه متحدثون إندونيسيون، مع تعرض ضئيل لوسائل الإعلام الأصلية والمصادر الثقافية العربية. (٢) كما يشارك الطلاب أحياناً في وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي باللغة العربية، وخصوصاً عبر إنستغرام ويوتيوب، لكن مشاركتهم العامة واستمراريتهم تبقى منخفضة. إن التعرض المحدود وغير المنتظم للطلاب لوسائل الإعلام باللغة العربية – لا سيما من المصادر الأصلية – يشير إلى فرصة ضائعة في تدريس اللغة العربية، حيث إن التفاعل المنتظم مع وسائل الإعلام الأصلية يمكن أن يُعزز بشكل كبير الكفاءة اللغوية، والفهم الثقافي، والمهارات التواصلية.

تعلم اللغة العربية، مشاركة الطلاب في المحتوى العربي؛ اكتساب اللغة عبر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي؛ الإمام الرقي العربي.

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INTRODUCTION

The results of a survey conducted by the Indonesian Internet Service Provider Association stated that the growth of Internet users in Indonesia has been increasing year by year. In Indonesia, internet usage is widespread among students, with significantly high levels of internet access. This is attributed to the increasing role of social media in their daily lives, where platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Line, Telegram, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram are the main reasons driving Indonesians to use the internet. These platforms are essential for social interaction, education, entertainment, and community engagement, making them the top motivations for internet usage (APJII, 2022). Social media is one of the technologies widely used in this globalized era (Flew & Iosifidis, 2020). Social media provides various tools and platforms that encourage interaction and communication, allowing users to access content anytime and anywhere. The prevalence of smartphones and internet accessibility further amplifies the impact of social media on daily life, including in the education sector. Moreover, the increasing use of social media has fundamentally reshaped how people engage with learning materials and interact with educators and peers (Greenhow & Lewin, 2018).

Many previous studies have highlighted that the linguistic environment serves as a platform for various activities that support the improvement and promotion of Arabic language skills. Social media, as part of technological advancements, creates a rich linguistic environment, which enhances language learning by providing access to authentic materials and real-life communication scenarios (Blattner & Fiori, 2009). The use of social media in education also encourages the development of personalized learning experiences, allowing students to engage with content at their own pace and according to their own learning preferences (Lai, 2015).

Social media not only provides exposure to authentic Arabic content, but also allows learners to practice their skills in real-time with native speakers or through engaging online communities. Platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram have proven useful in delivering language learning resources, offering both formal and informal learning opportunities (Alm, 2015). Additionally, social media enhances learners' motivation by providing access to a global network of speakers and learners, further promoting engagement and self-directed learning (Zhao & Yang, 2023). Students can thus learn the Arabic language through social media in a more informal and flexible manner, which complements traditional classroom learning (Ilmiani & Muid, 2021). The features in Instagram become medium in the online learning process of creativity (Deviana & Mubaarokah, 2021).

Reinhardt (2019) identifies common findings, including that social media can facilitate the development of intercultural, sociopragmatic, and audience awareness, as well as language learner and user identities, and specific literacies (Reinhardt, 2019). Moreover, social media enables students to enhance their intercultural competence by interacting with speakers from diverse backgrounds, thereby improving their understanding of cultural nuances and communicative practices (Lee & Markey, 2014). With the rapid growth of digital learning environments especially digital literacy, incorporating social media into language education becomes increasingly crucial in supporting both formal and informal language learning contexts (Viberg & Grönlund, 2013). What the teacher provides is not only the transmission of learning materials, but also digital literacy to facilitate the needs of students according to conditions in the field (Aulia et al., 2022).

A majority of the students reported prolonged use of social networking sites for nonacademic purposes. These habitual behaviors can distract students from their academic work, adversely affect their academic performance, social interactions, and sleep duration, and lead to a sedentary lifestyle and physical inactivity, which in turn can render them vulnerable to non-communicable diseases and mental health problems (Kolhar et al., 2021). Unfortunately, the use of social media in teaching Arabic has been underutilized. As evidence, some students from the Arabic Language Teaching Division have mentioned that they do not engage with Arabic social media during their learning process (Interview with Faid and Dari, 2023). Many of them do not follow or watch Arabic language channels to enhance their skills, such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, or websites. The researcher has also encountered these challenges when teaching Arabic at the university level, whether in the areas of listening, speaking, reading, or writing skills. There is a noticeable lack of interest in using Arabic for communication through social media platforms. This contributes to a limited understanding of contemporary Arabic content available on the Internet and social media, as well as a lack of awareness of culture and current news in the Arab world. This is problematic, as teaching the Arabic language should ideally go hand in hand with teaching Arab culture (Al-Ghazali, 2018).

The following points explain the benefits of social media in the lives of individuals: (1) expanding the circle of relationships and acquaintances, (2) refining thought and personality, (3) discharging negative energy and increasing pleasure, (4) learning about other cultures and increasing knowledge, (5) exchanging experiences and skills, (6) obtaining new opportunities, and (7) community cohesion, renaissance and development (mawdoo3.com). It is important to follow Arabic language channels in order to (1) keep up with actual and current developments in the modern Arabic language, (2) keep up with the

latest Arabic cultural information, (3) improve language habits and skills to communicate and interact, (4) learn the Arabic language from native speakers without being hindered by time and space (Ilmiani & Muid, 2021).

According to Cole and Vanderplank (2016), learning a language in an informal setting has greater advantages because students organize their own language learning. Education through social media is a result of media exposure, which refers to the state of being exposed to media content and the effects it has on the audience. Media Exposure Perspective focuses on how individuals interact with media and the effects of their exposure to various types of media content. This perspective explores the frequency, duration, and nature of media consumption and how these factors influence individuals' behavior, attitudes, and knowledge. Media exposure is not merely passive; it involves active selection, attention, and interpretation of content based on personal motivations and social contexts (Biocca, F., 2010). Media exposure encompasses the behavior of individuals or audiences in consuming media. According to Rahma (2018), media exposure can be measured by how frequently an individual watches television or movies, reads magazines or newspapers, or listens to the radio. Similarly, Bandura's social cognitive theory suggests that individuals learn from media through observation, modeling, and imitation, further emphasizing the influence of media exposure on behavior (Bandura, 2008).

Additionally, media exposure seeks to gather data on audience interaction with media, which can help educators tailor content to support learning outcomes. Frank Biocca, as cited in Littlejohn, identified five dimensions of exposure to new media that can be measured: (1) selectivity, which refers to the audience's ability to make choices about the media and content they engage with; (2) intentionality, which measures the degree of the audience's intent in using media and their ability to articulate the reasons for its use; (3) utilitarianism, which is the audience's ability to derive benefits from media use; (4) involvement, which refers to the participation of the audience's thoughts and feelings in response to media content, often measured by frequency and intensity; and (5) imperviousness to influence, which is the audience's ability to resist the influence of media messages (Littlejohn & Foss, 2010). Moreover, research by Buckingham highlights that media literacy and critical thinking skills are essential in allowing individuals to navigate media effectively and make informed decisions regarding the content they consume. This underscores the importance of fostering media literacy as part of the educational process when integrating social media into learning environments (Buckingham, 2015). Research on media exposure also suggests that the more frequently individuals engage with media, the greater the potential for media effects, including the development of knowledge, cultural understanding, or behavioral shifts (Buckingham, 2015).

In the context of Arabic language learning, media exposure refers to the frequency, duration, and nature of learners' interaction with Arabic-language content across various digital platforms, emphasizing both passive consumption and active engagement (Biocca, 2010; Littlejohn & Foss, 2010). It involves not only the act of being exposed to media but also the learner's selectivity, intentionality, and depth of involvement in interpreting and utilizing that content. Closely related, engagement denotes the degree of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral investment learners make while interacting with Arabic-language materials on platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, or educational websites (Reinhardt, 2019). In this sense, engagement goes beyond mere exposure by encompassing actions such as commenting, sharing, producing content, or communicating with native speakers—behaviors that contribute directly to language development and intercultural competence (Alm, 2015; Zhao & Yang, 2023).

Several studies on the use of social media in Arabic language learning have been conducted, including: (1) WhatsApp is One of the Common Social Media Tools Used in Teaching the Arabic Language (Ilmiani & Miolo, 2021), (2) Students' Feedback towards Using Facebook in Learning Arabic Language (Rahimi et al., 2015), and (3) Investigating Instagram as an EFL Learning Tool (Aloraini & Nouf, 2018), (4) Study the design of Arabic Language Teaching Materials Based on The Indonesia Alyoum.com Website to Improve Reading (Maryam, 2019), and (5) Using Social Media as a Learning Media of Foreign Language Students in Higher Education (Malik & Asnur, 2019). However, there has not been any research that measures what types of content Arabic language students access on social media and the level of their engagement with Arabic-language social media.

This study differentiates itself by specifically investigating the use of Arabic-language social media platforms among students in the Arabic Language Education Department at Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University Malang. While previous research highlighted the effectiveness of social media in language learning, this study explores the extent to which students actively engage with Arabic-language social media channels and how these platforms contribute to their Arabic language skills. Furthermore, this research aimed to identify gaps in student engagement with Arabic content online using media exposure perspective. This study lay in its unique integration of communication theory into Arabic language education research, offering empirical evidence on how learners navigated Arabic content in social media environments. It is also one of the first to investigate which types of Arabic-language content were accessed, how often, and on which platforms, providing actionable insights for educators and curriculum designers. This approach enabled a deeper understanding of how

informal, out-of-class learning through social media complements or contrasts with formal classroom instruction.

This raised questions in the minds of researchers: (1) What types of Arabic-language social media platforms did students engage with? (2) To what extent did students engage with Arabic on social media? This study aimed to: (1) identify the types of Arabic-language social media platforms that students actively engaged with, and (2) determine the level of engagement with Arabic on social media.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative descriptive research design to examine the types of Arabic-language social media platforms utilized by students and to assess the extent of their engagement. The research was conducted among undergraduate students enrolled in the Arabic Language Education Department at Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University, Malang.

The target population comprised students actively involved in Arabic language learning through social media. A purposive sampling technique was applied to select a representative sample of 23 students who had demonstrated prior engagement with Arabic-language content on social media platforms during classroom activities. This sampling method was chosen to ensure that participants had relevant exposure and could provide meaningful insights into the study's focus.

Data collection was carried out using a structured questionnaire and a brief semi-structured interview. The questionnaire included items measured on a 5-point Likert scale to capture the frequency and intentionality of students' engagement across various dimensions of media exposure (Sugiyono, 2015). Supplementary interviews were conducted to validate and enrich the quantitative findings.

For data analysis, descriptive statistical methods were employed to summarize the responses in terms of frequencies, percentages, and mean values. This approach facilitated a clear depiction of students' patterns of interaction with Arabic-language content across different social media platforms (Vetter, 2017). The results provided a foundational understanding of student engagement behaviors and informed the subsequent interpretation within the framework of media exposure theory.

Table 1. Likert Scale

Response Categories	Numerical Value
Always	5
Often	4
Sometimes	3
Seldom	2
Never	1

While Likert-scale questionnaires were used in this study due to their simplicity, ease of analysis, and scalability, relying solely on this quantitative instrument introduced notable limitations such as lack of contextual depth, generalization without explanation, limited insight into behavioral motivation. After the completion of the questionnaire and the collection of its results, the researchers analyzed the data by calculating the percentage of student exposure to Arabic-language social media channels or accounts (Arikunto, 2010).

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Types of Arabic-Language Social Media Platforms with Which Students Engage

The Instagram accounts that students subscribed to and followed include: @hmps_pba, @nahwupedia, @kalamaraby, @markazarabiyyah, @santripedia, @baitularabiyyah, @gramatika_arab, @alazharcenterpare, @nahwu_story, and @kampung_arab. Most of these accounts focus on Arabic grammar and are run by Indonesian users, rather than native speakers or users from Arab countries. Only two students followed Instagram accounts featuring original Arabic content from native speakers, such as @lughoti_kw, @khldbd452, and @aljazeera. As for Twitter, the majority of students did not follow any Arabic-language accounts, with the exception of @gramatika_arab and @sastra_arab.

The YouTube channels that students subscribed to include: Hmps PBA, Dars Arabi, Arab Podcast, قناة سعود وسارة, Omar al-Odah, Maknawi Channel, Markaz Arabi, Rumah Bahasa Arab, Harakah Islamiyah, and Bahasa Arab Online. Ten of the student respondents did not participate in or subscribe to any Arabic-language YouTube channels. Most students did not follow channels hosted by native Arabic speakers, nor did they engage with channels aimed at understanding the Arab world. Instead, the majority of them subscribed to channels focused on learning the Arabic language from Indonesian speakers.

Regarding Arabic-language websites, some students subscribed to platforms such as markazarabiyyah, googlescholar.com, sahehly.com, Kamus Munawwir, arabiconline.com, mawdoo3.com, and the UIN Maliki language test site. However, many students did not actively follow any websites, did not respond when asked, or could not recall which Arabic-language websites they had previously joined or followed.

There was a noticeable exposure to social media in the Arabic language among the students. Most of them accessed social media content provided by Indonesian speakers, focusing on Arabic language learning in Indonesian. Only a limited number of students engaged with accounts or channels created by native Arabic speakers. None of the students followed any well-known Arab personalities. The majority of students participated in Arabic social networking to enhance their proficiency and skills in teaching the Arabic language, particularly in areas such as grammar and speaking. Unfortunately, there was limited exposure to cultural and news media related to the Arab world, despite the fact that understanding Arab culture is an integral part of teaching the Arabic language.

Level Engagement to Social Media in Arabic Language by Students of Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University, Malang

After the completion of the questionnaire and the collection of its results, the **researchers** analyzed the data by calculating the percentage of student exposure to Arabic-language social media channels or accounts (Arikunto, 2010). The researchers adopted and modified a questionnaire related to media exposure from Efendi (Efendi et al., 2017).

Table 2. Selectivity

Platform	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Facebook	0	2	9	2	10
Instagram	4	8	9	1	1
YouTube	3	9	8	2	1
Twitter	1	2	5	2	13
Arab Websites	2	4	10	2	5

In terms of selectivity in exposure to social media, table 2 illustrates how frequently users engage with Arabic content across various social media platforms. Selectivity is highest on Instagram and YouTube, where users often

or sometimes follow Arabic content. In contrast, Twitter and Facebook show lower engagement levels, with a significant number of users reporting they "never" follow Arabic content on these platforms.

Table 3. Intentionality

Platform	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Facebook	0	3	2	3	15
Instagram	2	8	8	2	3
YouTube	2	9	6	3	3
Twitter	1	1	3	2	16
Arab Websites	1	5	5	4	8

Table 3 highlights the intentionality behind subscribing to Arabic content. Users are most intentional about engaging with Arabic content on Instagram and YouTube, while Twitter shows the lowest intentionality, with a majority of respondents indicating they "never" intentionally subscribe to Arabic content on this platform.

Table 4. Utilitarianism

Skill	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Listening	4	11	8	0	1
Speaking	4	10	8	0	1
Reading	4	11	7	0	1
Writing Comprehension	4	9	8	0	2
Vocabulary Expansion	6	11	4	1	1

Table 4 demonstrates the perceived benefits of Arabic content on social media for improving language skills. Listening, speaking, and reading proficiencies are consistently reported as benefiting from such content, with vocabulary expansion being the most valued skill among users.

Table 5. Involvement

Activity	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Daily Access	1	3	10	5	4
Weekly Access (1–3 hours)	0	0	11	7	5
Access During Classes	1	6	12	2	2

Table 5 examines how frequently users access Arabic content. A majority of users engage with Arabic content "sometimes," particularly during classes or on a weekly basis. Daily access is less common, suggesting that engagement may not be a consistent habit for most users.

Table 6. Impervious to Influence

Aspect	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Satisfaction	3	8	7	3	2
Understanding	1	4	12	2	4

This table evaluates user satisfaction and understanding of Arabic content on social media. While many users report being satisfied "often" or "sometimes," understanding remains a challenge, with a significant portion of users indicating they only "sometimes" comprehend the content.

Table 7. Summary of Responses Across Dimensions

Category	Total	Percentage
Always	50	9.45%
Often	130	24.6%
Sometimes	173	32.7%
Seldom	61	11.5%
Never	115	21.7%

According to table 7, the levels of media exposure on Arabic language content in social media are as follows: 32% of students have "sometimes"

exposure to social media in the Arabic language, 24.6% are at the "often" level, 21.7% are at the "never" level, and 9.4% are at the "always" level regarding participation and reach on Arabic social media. This indicates that the majority of students in the Arabic Language Education Department at Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University Malang are not accustomed to subscribing to and accessing Arabic-language social media on a daily basis. Supporting this, the results from a follow-up interview revealed that student participation in Arabic-language social media was generally low. Most students accessed Arabic language resources and engaged with Arabic social media for one to three hours per week, or they did so as part of a specific class activity. Additionally, one student reported not following any Arabic-language social media at all. Table 7 summary table aggregates responses across all dimensions, revealing that users most frequently select "sometimes" when describing their engagement with Arabic content. The "never" category also accounts for a significant percentage, indicating areas where engagement could be improved.

Media exposure theory offers a valuable framework for understanding how learners interact with media content, emphasizing dimensions such as frequency, selectivity, intentionality, and perceived utility (Biocca, 2010; Littlejohn & Foss, 2010). When applied to Arabic language pedagogy, this perspective highlights how students' media consumption behaviors—especially on social platforms like YouTube and Instagram—can significantly influence their language development, intercultural competence, and learning autonomy.

The findings indicate that most of students have "sometimes" exposure to Arabic-language social media, while only few students report "always" engaging with it. This low level of daily interaction suggests that most students are not fully utilizing social media as a resource for improving their Arabic language skills. Research by Lai supports the idea that informal language learning, such as through social media, can significantly enhance linguistic proficiency, but only if used consistently (Lai, 2015). The fact that most students access Arabic content sporadically—about one to three hours per week or during specific class activities—implies that they are missing out on the full benefits of regular exposure to the language.

Table 2 reveals that Instagram and YouTube are the most frequently used platforms for accessing Arabic content, while engagement on Facebook and Twitter is minimal. This aligns with prior research indicating that visually rich platforms like Instagram and YouTube are more effective for language learning due to their multimodal nature (Kabilan et al., 2010; Wagner, 2021). However, the majority of accounts and channels followed by students are run by Indonesian users rather than native Arabic speakers. This preference for Indonesian-led content suggests that students prioritize comprehensible input over authentic

exposure, as supported by Krashen's Input Hypothesis (2006). While this approach may initially aid grammar and vocabulary acquisition, it limits exposure to real-world usage, diverse dialects, and cultural nuances, which are essential for fluency and intercultural competence (Alm, 2015).

Table 3 highlights that students are more intentional about engaging with Arabic content on Instagram and YouTube compared to other platforms. This reflects a strategic choice to access structured and visually engaging materials, such as grammar tutorials or short lessons. However, the low intentionality on platforms like Twitter and Arab websites points to a lack of motivation or awareness regarding the potential of these platforms for language learning. For instance, Twitter could provide real-time exposure to current events and colloquial Arabic, while Arab websites offer opportunities to explore authentic texts and news articles. The limited use of these resources suggests a gap in digital literacy skills and an underutilization of diverse Arabic content.

Table 4 demonstrates that students perceive significant benefits from Arabic content in improving listening, reading, and vocabulary skills. This finding underscores the utility of social media as a supplementary tool for language acquisition, particularly for receptive skills. However, there is a noticeable decline in perceived benefits for speaking and writing comprehension, likely due to the passive nature of most interactions. Platforms like WhatsApp or Facebook chat could be leveraged for interactive practice, yet the study shows minimal communication with native speakers. This highlights a missed opportunity to develop productive skills through real-time conversations (Kamal et al., 2024).

Table 5 indicates that most students engage with Arabic content only during specific learning sessions or for 1–3 hours per week. The lack of daily access suggests that social media is not integrated into their routine learning habits, limiting its potential impact. The inconsistency in engagement raises concerns about the sustainability of learning outcomes. Research by Lai (2015) emphasizes that frequent and prolonged exposure to target language content is crucial for meaningful progress. Without regular interaction, students may struggle to internalize new vocabulary or grammatical structures effectively.

Table 6 reveals a discrepancy between satisfaction and understanding of Arabic content. While many students report feeling satisfied with the content, their actual comprehension remains limited. This gap could stem from insufficient scaffolding strategies or a mismatch between content difficulty and student proficiency levels. Additionally, the low level of understanding highlights the need for educators to guide students in selecting appropriate materials and developing critical thinking skills to navigate complex content (Buckingham, 2015).

A significant limitation identified in the study is the minimal exposure to cultural and news media related to the Arab world. Language learning cannot be

divorced from cultural understanding, as emphasized by Byrnes (2012). Without engaging with authentic cultural content, students risk developing a fragmented view of the Arabic language, disconnected from its sociocultural context. The absence of subscriptions to well-known Arab personalities or news outlets further exacerbates this issue. Incorporating cultural elements into social media-based learning could enhance students' intercultural competence and deepen their appreciation for the language (Galloway & Rose, 2015).

Arabic learning through social media is facilitating access and reach of Arabic language learning for people who live in remote areas or are difficult to reach by formal learning institutions, providing flexible learning time, because learning can be done anytime and anywhere course, without having to be physically present in the classroom, reduces learning costs, because there is no need to pay for transportation costs or expensive tutoring fees, opens up opportunities to study together with people from different countries or cultures, thereby increasing the learning experience and also expanding social networks, increasing learning motivation, because the digitalization of Arabic language learning through social media can be tailored to individual interests and needs (Muhlis et al., 2024). The use of social media in the learning process is very likely may improve students' motivation and interest. In addition, Arabic teaching will of course not bordered by space since it can be conducted anywhere (Albantani, 2019).

In Arabic learning, where access to authentic input and real-world cultural contexts is critical, media exposure enables students to engage with native content beyond the classroom. This aligns with Krashen's (2006) input hypothesis, which suggests that frequent and meaningful exposure to comprehensible input is essential for language acquisition. Social media platforms facilitate such exposure by offering informal, learner-driven opportunities to listen, read, and even interact in Arabic (Alm, 2015). Moreover, media exposure connects to Bandura's (2008) social cognitive theory by demonstrating how students model linguistic behavior and cultural norms through observation and imitation of native speakers. Integrating this framework into Arabic language pedagogy allows educators to assess not only how often students access Arabic content, but also their motivation, comprehension, and the perceived benefits of that exposure (Zhao & Yang, 2023). Thus, media exposure theory offers both diagnostic and instructional value, helping educators design more relevant, engaging, and culturally grounded learning experiences.

While exposure to Arabic-language content on social media is foundational to language acquisition, its pedagogical impact extends well beyond passive consumption. Social media platforms offer a dynamic, interactive environment where learners can not only access input but also produce output, engage in real-

time communication, and develop higher-order language skills essential for functional proficiency in Arabic. Social media encourages learners to transition from passive viewers to active participants. Platforms like Instagram Stories, TikTok, and YouTube comments sections provide opportunities for learners to write, speak, and interact using Arabic in authentic contexts. For instance, posting captions, responding to comments, or creating short videos in Arabic enables learners to practice writing and speaking skills in low-stakes environments. Through direct messaging and commenting on Arabic-language content, students engage in real-time or near-real-time communication, which supports the development of pragmatic competence. Such interactions mirror real-life conversations and expose learners to politeness strategies, idiomatic expressions, and cultural norms in communication—essential components of communicative proficiency (Taguchi, 2011). Arabic, with its diglossic nature and script complexity, benefits from multimodal input. Social media offers a rich combination of text, audio, and video, which caters to diverse learning styles and reinforces comprehension through contextual cues. For example, YouTube videos featuring both Modern Standard Arabic and dialects—often with subtitles—help learners distinguish between formal and colloquial varieties, improving listening comprehension and sociolinguistic awareness (Alm, 2015). Social media supports learner motivation by making Arabic relevant and personally meaningful. Learners can follow influencers, content creators, and communities that align with their interests—be it religion, music, sports, or current events—all in Arabic. This personalization fosters sustained engagement and helps students integrate Arabic into their digital identities, enhancing their sense of ownership over the language learning process (Reinhardt, 2019). Social media empowers learners to take control of their learning, allowing them to set their pace, choose their content, and reflect on their progress. Social media fills the gap by offering practical language use in contemporary contexts (Cole & Vanderplank, 2016). Moreover, it fosters a sense of global connectivity, enabling learners to view themselves as part of a broader Arabic-speaking community. Engaging with Arabic content on social media also supports the development of digital literacy skills—such as evaluating sources, navigating platforms, and managing digital identities—as well as intercultural competence. As learners encounter diverse perspectives and cultural expressions across the Arab world, they gain insight into regional differences, social norms, and current events, which deepens their global understanding and cultural fluency (Galloway & Rose, 2015). For teachers and laymen alike, cultural competence, i.e., the knowledge of the customs, beliefs, and systems of another country, is indisputably an integral part of Arabic language learning, and many teachers have seen it as their goal to merge the teaching of culture into the Arabic language teaching classes (Eldin, 2015).

However, as learners progress, it is essential that they gradually transition to engaging with native Arabic media to enhance their fluency and cultural understanding. In this regard, scaffolding strategies could be employed to help students move from intermediate-level content to more challenging native-language materials (Lantolf, 2010).

CONCLUSIONS

This study reveals that while students of the Arabic Language Education Department at Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University have access to social media platforms, their engagement with Arabic-language content remains limited and inconsistent. The findings demonstrate that the majority of students follow content produced by Indonesian speakers, particularly on platforms like YouTube and Instagram, and rarely engage with authentic Arabic sources from native speakers. This trend suggests a comfort zone rooted in linguistic familiarity but simultaneously indicates a missed opportunity for deeper immersion in native linguistic and cultural contexts. Using the media exposure framework—comprising selectivity, intentionality, utilitarianism, involvement, and imperviousness to influence—the study identifies a generally low level of engagement. Although students recognize the educational benefits of Arabic content on social media, especially in enhancing vocabulary, listening, and reading skills, their actual usage patterns show sporadic exposure, low intentionality, and minimal interaction with native speakers. This behavior reflects a gap between perceived value and actual practice, often due to linguistic challenges, lack of confidence, or absence of structured guidance. From a theoretical perspective, this study supports prior assertions that informal learning through social media can significantly complement formal instruction when students engage with comprehensible and authentic input. However, the lack of exposure to Arab cultural content and limited use of interactive features such as communicating with native speakers underscores the importance of integrating intercultural competence and media literacy into language pedagogy.

To improve outcomes, future educational initiatives should focus on designing scaffolded learning models that guide students from familiar, Indonesian-produced content to more authentic Arabic sources. Additionally, strategies to increase students' motivation, confidence, and digital literacy are essential for enhancing both language proficiency and cultural understanding. The author acknowledges several limitations in this research. The study has not been extended to a wider population. Potential solutions, such as learning designs or models that could encourage students to be more active in accessing Arabic

content on social media, have not been fully elaborated due to the scope of this article. Additionally, this research did not focus on specific social media platforms. Further research is encouraged to develop and test these models across more diverse student populations and across various social media platforms to determine best practices in Arabic language education via digital media. Therefore, future research is recommended to explore learning designs or models that can increase student engagement with Arabic content on social media, enabling them to use these platforms more effectively for language learning.

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