

## Guided vs. Unguided social media-assisted language learning: An in-depth analysis of speaking performance, willingness to communicate, and social emotional learning

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### Abstract

Previous studies have indicated that social media has been used by students to develop speaking skills. Nevertheless, precisely how guided social media (GSM) (usage determined by the instructor) and unguided social media (USM) (freely chosen by students) activities in speaking courses affect their speaking skills and willingness to communicate (WTC) remain unclear. It also remains uncertain what social and emotional learning (SEL) factors during the adoption of social media-assisted language learning (SMALL) help to facilitate student learning. Therefore, this study purposed to investigate (1) the effects of GSM and USM on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students' speaking performance and WTC and (2) the SEL factors that enable students to thrive during SMALL activities. This study employed a mixed-methods experimental approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data. This study used intact group sampling to recruit Indonesian EFL students who were studying at a state university and formed three groups based on existing classes, as designated by university. The classes included two experimental groups, namely USM (20 students) and GSM (23 students), as well as a control group (26 students). The quantitative data were analyzed using *Kruskal-Wallis* and *Mann-Whitney U* tests while the qualitative data were analyzed

using inductive thematic analysis. The results indicated that USM and GSM significantly improved EFL students' speaking performance. However, only USM significantly improved WTC. In addition, students' SEL in SMALL was influenced by factors such as learning engagement, motivation, learning environment, and support.

*Keywords:* Mobile-assisted language learning, social media-assisted language learning, teaching speaking, willingness to communicate

## Introduction

The advent of social media has brought significant shifts in English language teaching. Research indicates that social media has been used by EFL students worldwide, particularly for the development of speaking skills (e.g., Amiryousefi, 2019; Kusuma & Waluyo, 2023; Lee et al., 2021; Lee & Dressman, 2018; Namaziandost et al., 2019; Rahmawati et al., 2019; Saed et al., 2021; Sockett, 2014; Geoffrey Sockett & Toffoli, 2012; Wongsu & Son, 2022; Zheng & Barrot, 2022). For example, social media is often implemented in informal learning situations without being guided by teachers (Lee et al., 2021; Lee & Dressman, 2018). On the other hand, social media is also utilized to facilitate speaking skills in formal learning situations through guided activities (e.g., Amiryousefi, 2019; Kusuma & Waluyo, 2023). This leads to the implementation of USM activities, where students have the freedom to choose activities that suit their English learning preferences, and GSM activities, where teachers decide the tasks students must complete. Moreover, due to its adaptability (Lumby et al., 2014) and positive effects on language learning (e.g., Amiryousefi, 2019; Kusuma & Waluyo, 2023; Sun & Yang, 2015; Zheng & Barrot, 2022), social media has gained recognition for its role in facilitating SMALL while fostering meaningful learning. Meanwhile, meaningful learning is the core of English language learning (Bui, 2019).

One of the current discussion topics associated with speaking is WTC as it has increasingly received attention among second language researchers (see Clément et al., 2003; Edwards, 2006; Henry et al., 2021; MacIntyre, 2007; McCroskey & Baer, 1985). Willingness to communicate is the situation where an individual is willing to communicate with others and is part of an individual's learning trait (McCroskey & Baer, 1985). Understanding its benefits for speaking development, research has indicated that technology helps improve WTC (e.g., Ebadi & Ebadijalal, 2022; Tai & Chen, 2020). Regarding the use of social media, research has found that individuals were willing to communicate in English and enjoyed online communication with their friends (Lee, 2019). Moreover, the familiarity with the contexts and online interlocutors tend to make the individuals to be more active in the communication (Soyoo, 2022).

On the other hand, students' success in learning is influenced by their positive attitude toward learning socially and emotionally, known as social emotional learning (SEL) (Cho et al., 2019; Li, 2020; Mihai et al., 2022; Rafidi & Wagner, 2023). Individuals who effectively manage their emotions are more likely to reduce anxiety, enhance motivation, and increase learning engagement (Mihai et al., 2022). In addition, positive attitudes that derive from positive activities can represent a significant source of SEL development (Zins & Elias, 2007). In SMALL context, research indicates students who joined in SMALL activities with good attendance and attitudes successfully enhanced their learning engagement cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally (Kusuma, Mahayanti, Gunawan, et al., 2021). Thus, effective SEL may significantly contribute to students' success in SMALL.

However, social media could represent a threatening and unsafe space that might inhibit students' speaking performances by increasing stress, and anxiety (Kusuma, Mahayanti, Gunawan, et al., 2021; Sun & Yang, 2015; Zheng & Barrot, 2022). Meanwhile, anxiety, motivation, and enjoyment are some factors that influence WTC (Khajavy et al., 2018; Kruk, 2021). Therefore, understanding how guided and unguided SMALL activities positively impact speaking performance and WTC is crucial for enriching the literature. This is particularly important as SMALL has gained significant attention among educators in the past decade, especially during and after the pandemic, when social media became a key tool for facilitating emergency remote teaching. Additionally, it is crucial to understand SEL in online settings to determine the factors that trigger students' SEL in SMALL, as interpreting SEL in virtual contexts can be challenging (Rafidi & Wagner, 2023).

## Literature Review

### *Social Media-assisted Language Learning*

Social media represents internet-based platforms that facilitate communication and information sharing (Barrot, 2021). Social media has been adapted for educational purposes and is widely recognized in English language teaching (Barrot, 2021; John & Yunus, 2021). Social media has evolved from a means for communication between students and teachers (Froment et al., 2017; Noori et al., 2022) to educational content sharing (e.g., Albahiri & Alhaj, 2020; Amiryousefi, 2019; Ferdiansyah et al., 2020; Kusuma, Mahayanti, Adnyani, et al., 2021). Social media is also utilized for facilitating content creation, such as speaking videos (e.g., Cepik & Yastibas, 2013; Kusuma & Waluyo, 2023; Sun & Yang, 2015; Zheng & Barrot, 2022).

A growing body of research has been conducted on SMALL in speaking courses, revealing various guided SMALL activities and their positive effects on speaking skills. Social media, due to its adaptability (Lumby et al., 2014), can be employed in regular classroom instruction (e.g., Albahiri & Alhaj, 2020; Xodabande, 2017). Social media can also be utilized in a flipped classroom approach to share materials, facilitate linguistic practice, and guide speaking activities, such as writing language expressions and posting speaking videos (e.g., Amiryousefi, 2019; Kusuma, 2020). Social media can also be implemented to facilitate e-portfolios where the students can regularly upload their recoded guided speaking performances, read comments from peers and teachers, and do self-evaluations (e.g., Cepik & Yastibas, 2013; Kusuma & Waluyo, 2023; Sun & Yang, 2015; Zheng & Barrot, 2022). Moreover, SMALL activities frequently bring positive effects on speaking skill development. SMALL activities can improve English pronunciation mastery (Xodabande, 2017) and oral communication (e.g., Cepik & Yastibas, 2013; Kusuma & Waluyo, 2023; Lin & Hwang, 2018; Saed et al., 2021; Sun & Yang, 2015; Wongsu & Son, 2022; Zheng & Barrot, 2022). It can be concluded that GSM represents activities guided by teachers, determining what students must do in SMALL.

Regarding unguided social media activities, research shows that free forms of SMALL activities are often conducted through extra-curricular digital context, also known as informal digital learning of English, which does not receive guidance from teachers (Lee, 2019; Lee & Dressman, 2018; Soyoof, 2022). For example, EFL students communicated via various social media platforms, such as *KakaoTalk*, *Facebook*, *Skype* and posted in English (e.g., Lee, 2019; Lee & Dressman, 2018). These free forms were without teachers' guidance because they were conducted in outside the classroom, but these activities apparently contributed to student speaking development. It can be concluded that USM refers to activities where students have the autonomy to choose English learning tasks on social media that best facilitate their language development. However, precisely how GSM and USM activities impacts speaking performance

as well as which media is better for speaking skill development remains unclear. Thus, more studies are necessary to enhance the literature.

### ***Willingness to Communicate***

Willingness to communicate is the term initially proposed by McCroskey and Baer (1985) that depicts the probability of being engaged in a communication when individuals have opportunity to do so. However, this term was initially linked to the first language before it later became associated with the second language (Clément et al., 2003; Henry et al., 2021; MacIntyre, 2007; Macintyre et al., 1998). WTC is a manifestation of a consistent inclination to engage in conversation across various situations and is mostly regarded as a characteristic of one's personality (McCroskey & Baer, 1985). Even though the original WTC was associated with speaking (Edwards, 2006; McCroskey & Baer, 1985), other researchers then took it further and associated it with spoken and written skills (MacIntyre, 2007; Macintyre et al., 1998).

Some factors are believed to be the ones that influence WTC. Communication context and receiver types were among those factors (Edwards, 2006; McCroskey & Baer, 1985). Later, other factors were also found to have influences on WTC, such as emotions, enjoyment (Khajavy et al., 2018; Kruk, 2021), perceived communication competence (Clément et al., 2003), multilingual contexts (Henry et al., 2021), background knowledge, ages (Cheng & Xu, 2022), interests (Kruk, 2022), and so forth. However, Edwards (2006) and Macintyre et al., (1998) have argued although researchers often treat WTC with personality traits, it is also situation-based due to settings, audience, speakers, and other related contextual factors that might change individual's WTC.

As technology develops, many platforms are now being used to communicate with others, and researchers have taken this opportunity to further explore EFL students' WTC. For example, Virtual Reality can be used to enhance EFL students' oral performance and willingness to communicate (Ebadi & Ebadijalal, 2022) while Artificial Intelligence can improve EFL students' WTC and communicative confidence, as well as reduce speaking anxiety (Tai & Chen, 2020). Thus, WTC is not only found in offline settings but also in the online ones.

Unfortunately, very little research discussed how EFL students' WTC becomes impacted when using social media. This issue is important because social media contexts are different from offline situations, and WTC is known to be influenced by the settings of where the communication is delivered (Edwards, 2006; Macintyre et al., 1998). Even though studies found that SMALL activities could improve EFL students' self-efficacy (Cepik & Yastibas, 2013), self-esteem (Su & Fatmawati, 2019), and motivation to speak English outside of the classroom (Devi, 2020), speaking on social media could be stressful as found by some researchers (Kusuma, Mahayanti, Gunawan, et al., 2021; Sun & Yang, 2015; Zheng & Barrot, 2022). Few researchers (Lee, 2019; Lee et al., 2021; Soyoof, 2022) have investigated WTC in extra-curricular digital contexts where social media was used and found that individuals enjoyed online communication in English with their friends, which positively impacted their willingness to communicate. However, how social media influences EFL students' WTC in formal settings remains unclear.

### ***Social Emotional Learning***

Emotion is often linked to human beings' development of thinking and behavior (Cong-LEM, 2022). Moreover, SEL is the process of managing emotions, making positive relationships, and solving problems effectively (Zins & Elias, 2007). SEL encourages students to actively engage socially and emotionally in their learning (Jaber Rafidi & Wagner, 2024; Mihai et al., 2022), and it shapes their ownership and autonomy as SEL helps them to understand and take responsibility for what they learn (Jaber Rafidi & Wagner, 2024). SEL is therefore necessary

and influences students' success in learning (Cho et al., 2019; Jaber Rafidi & Wagner, 2024; Li, 2020; Mihai et al., 2022).

As psychological and emotional factors affect learning engagement, reducing anxiety and increasing enjoyment remains pivotal in students' SEL development (Mihai et al., 2022). Interesting teaching methods may help reduce anxiety as well as enable students to feel more comfortable and eventually empower students to successfully complete the tasks (Mihai et al., 2022). Relating learning materials with what students have known previously will also help to improve their positive learning emotions (Cho et al., 2019). In addition, positive learning environments, such as care shown by teachers or peers, can also be a strategy to help students to have positive SEL (Jaber Rafidi & Wagner, 2024). Thus, SEL may develop during students' learning experience (Li, 2020) because of the positive support mentioned above.

Pertaining to SMALL, research has identified that speaking activities using social media bring some benefits and drawbacks to students' attitudes that might influence students' SEL development. Interesting SMALL activities improve students' participation (Lin & Hwang, 2018) and learning engagement cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally (Kusuma, Mahayanti, Gunawan, et al., 2021). On the other hand, SMALL activities, including both USM and GSM, also influence students' hesitancy of using English on social media (Lee, 2019) and can raise anxiety when creating and uploading speaking videos due to the fear of public scrutiny (Kusuma, Mahayanti, Gunawan, et al., 2021; Sun & Yang, 2015; Zheng & Barrot, 2022), and social interactions when working in groups (Ferdiansyah et al., 2020). Therefore, it is essential to maintain positive experiences of using social media for learning in order to develop EFL students' SEL, as key factors for effective SEL include low anxiety and high enjoyment (Mihai et al., 2022). Unfortunately, very little research reveals how EFL students maintain their SEL during accomplishing speaking tasks using social media that might bring them hesitancy, anxiety, and depressions.

This study considered the aforementioned issues and formulated the following overarching questions to guide the inquiry:

1. Are there any significant differences in speaking performance between control and guided and unguided experimental social media groups?
2. Are there any significant differences in willingness to communicate between control and guided and unguided experimental social media groups?
3. What social and emotional learning factors enable students to thrive during the speaking activities in social media-assisted language learning?

## Research Methods

### *Design, Setting, and Context*

This study employed a mixed-methods experimental approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data to obtain a more complete picture with mutually validated findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Due to an inability to randomize samples, we employed a quasi-experimental design, which consisted of two experimental groups and a control group. The quasi-experimental approach incorporated the administration of pre- and post-treatment tests to compare the outcomes of the groups (Ary et al., 2019). The design was employed to investigate the effects of SMALL activities on EFL students' speaking performance and WTC. Moreover, qualitative explorations were employed to find in-depth data to support the quantitative results as well as examine students' SEL. We conducted this study at a state university that had an English Language Education Department. This university was chosen because it had required speaking



courses for first-year students. In addition, the university allowed the use of technology in their speaking courses, including the use of digital teaching approaches and social media platforms or other technology tools. This study focused on the effects of three different treatments in three distinct groups, namely USM, GSM, and control group, on the students' speaking performance, WTC, and SEL.

### **Participants**

Prior to conducting this study, we applied for a research review to a Research Ethics Committee (similar to institutional review board). Once we had obtained the approval, we approached the head of the department to explain the study. We were given access to recruit first-year EFL students from three classes who enrolled in Speaking for Social Interaction courses. Then, we contacted the students to inform them about the study, including the risks and benefits of joining the study. All students agreed to participate and gave their consent to collect the data. All participants were between 18-19 years old and were non-native English speakers with an average of six years of English study in junior and high schools. Due to the inability to randomize students, we employed an intact group sampling and formed three groups, USM (20 students), GSM (23 students), and control group (26 students). The preliminary assessment revealed a language proficiency level of B1. As per The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for Languages, this level signifies that the individuals are capable of doing basic tasks and participating in social interactions. Moreover, we invited all participants in USM and GSM groups after the treatments to join the group interviews to gather some data related to speaking performance, WTC, and SEL.

### **Methods of Data Collection and Instruments**

In conducting the experiment, we administered pre- and post-speaking tests and WTC questionnaires. We adopted IELTS speaking tests as the pre and post-tests to measure students' speaking performance, which required students to do a five-minute online monologue on a randomly chosen topic. The performance was evaluated by two lecturers specializing in English language teaching (ELT) who had more than five years of experience teaching speaking skills at the university level. We utilized a scoring rubric developed by Dashti and Razmjoo (2020) to evaluate fluency, coherence, lexical resources, grammatical range and accuracy, and pronunciation. The *Cronbach Alpha* values for the inter-rater reliability of the speaking pre-test and post-test in the USM group were 0.891 and 0.725 respectively; speaking pre-test and post-test in the GSM treatment group were 0.806 and 0.904 respectively; speaking pre-test and post-test in the control group were 0.861 and 0.882 respectively. Meanwhile, we adopted a WTC questionnaire developed by Lee et al. (2021) that contained 14 items that measured WTC in and outside the classrooms. The *Cronbach Alpha* values of the questionnaire reliability was 0.946. We designed two interview protocols, each consisting of four questions tailored to the USM and GSM groups, to answer the third research question. All students (20 from the USM group and 23 from the GSM group) participated in the group interview sessions to explore about their SEL during the treatments. The USM interviews were conducted in two groups (Group 1 = 10 students; Group 2 = 10 students), while the GSM interviews were also divided into two groups (Group 1 = 11 students; Group 2 = 12 students). Each interview session was conducted once and lasted for 30 minutes.

### **Procedure and Treatments**

This 12-week experimental study assessed the speaking performance and WTC of participants using pre- and post-tests. The experimental groups acquired knowledge on six topics over a

span of 12 weeks by utilizing social media platforms (YouTube, WhatsApp, Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram) to facilitate SMALL activities. Each topic spanned two weeks, with the first week dedicated to speaking practices, including linguistic and communication exercises. The second week focused on completing speaking tasks on social media, which were also conducted in the classroom. Both groups, USM and GSM, were taught oral communication concepts, such as language expressions and how to use them in communication, but they received different treatments on the speaking activities on social media (Figure 1). In the USM group, the activities comprised posting language expressions where students were free to choose written or verbal posts on WhatsApp as linguistic practice a day before the course started. In the next meeting, the students were free to choose which speaking activities they would perform, either creating audio only, recorded speaking videos, videos using pictures with audios, or live speaking performances posted on any social media they wanted to use (Figure 2). The students received no guidance from the lecturer while accomplishing the speaking tasks.

Conversely, the students had to follow the lecturer’s guidance in the GSM group. They had to post language expressions (written or verbal as instructed by the lecturer) on WhatsApp as linguistic

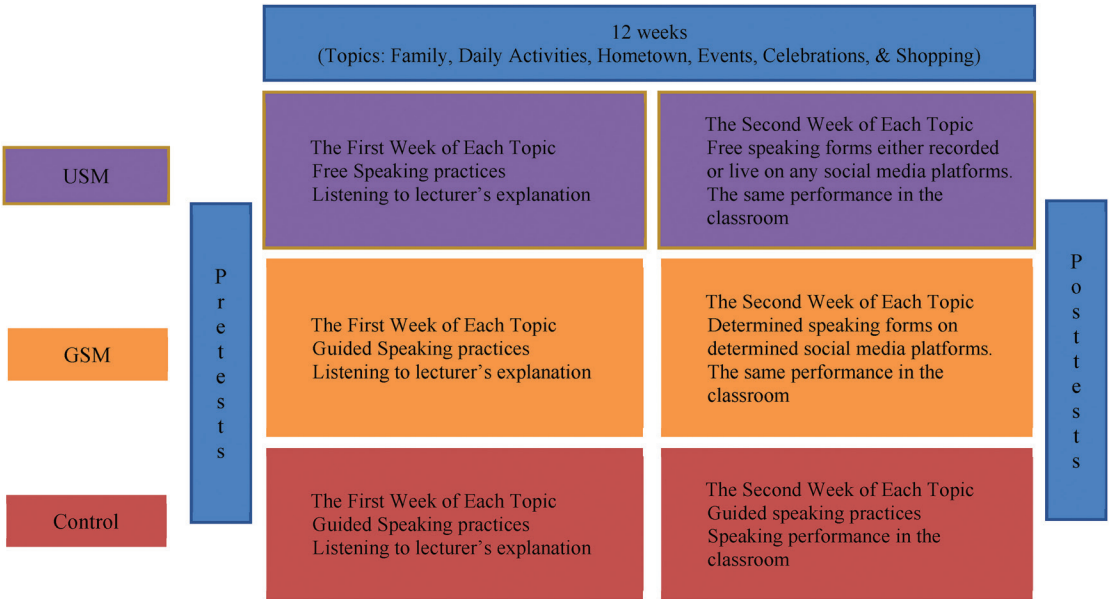
USM’s instruction on e-learning	GSM’s instruction on e-learning
<div><div><div><div><div></div><div>Family</div><div></div></div><div></div></div><div><div>At Home</div><div><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Watch YouTube video at <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDZA54Bj8sg">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDZA54Bj8sg</a></li><li>Write 3 sentences or record 3 sentences verbally that describe your family on WhatsApp group</li></ul></div></div><div><div>Classroom</div><div><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Complete the worksheets</li><li>Write a monolog about your family by using worksheet</li><li>Create a poster about your family</li></ul></div></div><div><div>Add an activity or resource</div></div><div><div>Add topic</div></div></div><div><div><div><div></div><div>Family</div><div></div></div><div></div></div><div><div>At Home</div><div><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Create a poster about your family</li><li>Practice your monolog</li><li>Do one of the following: (1) Post the poster including your audio describing the poster on TikTok/Instagram/Facebook (2) Record a video describing your family and post it to TikTok/Instagram/Facebook, (3) Do live monolog on TikTok/Instagram/Facebook.</li></ul></div></div></div></div>	<div><div><div><div><div></div><div>Family</div><div></div></div><div></div></div><div><div>At Home</div><div><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Watch YouTube video at <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDZA54Bj8sg">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDZA54Bj8sg</a></li><li>Post 3 sentences that describe your family on WhatsApp group</li></ul></div></div><div><div>Classroom</div><div><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Complete the worksheets</li><li>Write a monolog about your family by using worksheet</li><li>Create a poster about your family</li></ul></div></div></div><div><div><div><div></div><div>Family</div><div></div></div><div></div></div><div><div>At Home</div><div><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Practice your monolog</li><li>Create a poster about your family and post the poster including your audio describing the poster on TikTok.</li></ul></div></div></div></div>
Control group’s instruction on e-learning	
<div><div><div><div><div></div><div>Family</div><div></div></div><div></div></div><div><div>At Home</div><div><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Watch YouTube video at <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDZA54Bj8sg">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDZA54Bj8sg</a></li></ul></div></div><div><div>Classroom</div><div><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Complete the worksheets for week 4.</li><li>Write a monolog about your family by using worksheet week 4 (2)</li><li>Create a poster about your family</li></ul></div></div><div><div>Add an activi</div></div><div><div>Add topic</div></div></div><div><div><div><div></div><div>Family</div><div></div></div><div></div></div><div><div>At Home</div><div><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Practice your monolog</li><li>Create a poster about your family</li></ul></div></div><div><div>Classroom</div><div><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Present your poster in front of the class</li></ul></div></div></div></div>	

Figure 1. USM and GSM instructions on eLearning



**Figure 2.** *Students’ speaking performance on social media*

practices a day before the course started. In the next meeting, the students accomplished the speaking tasks as instructed by the lecturer. The activities could be creating audio only, recorded speaking videos, videos using pictures with audios, or live speaking performances, posted on social media, as requested by the lecturer. Meanwhile, the students in the control group did all activities in the classroom with less social media use. The only social media platforms they used were YouTube and WhatsApp for information/material sharing only. At the start of the study, we instructed all students, including those in the control group, to refrain from engaging in any additional practice sessions. Thus, to monitor students’ activities in all groups, including social media use outside the classroom, we asked participants to maintain self-reported diaries, logging their social media activity and interactions with learning materials. The control group speaking practices consisted of language expression practices, speaking practices, and speaking performances that were done only in the classroom. Figure 3 summarizes all treatments from three groups.



**Figure 3.** *Treatments in USM, GSM, and control groups*



Data Analysis

The quantitative data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential methods, whereas the interview data were analyzed using an inductive approach. The analysis of data from the speaking and WTC pre-tests revealed no significant differences among the three groups. Moreover, the data from speaking and WTC post-tests were analyzed on the normality and homogeneity and found that those tests were violated. Therefore, the initial plan to conduct *One-way MANOVA* could not be performed. We therefore employed *Kruskal-Wallis* tests and *Mann-Whitney U* tests for comparing the three groups’ speaking performance and WTC to answer the first and second research questions. In addition, the qualitative data were analyzed using content analysis employing an inductive approach where we did not have any predetermined hypotheses underlying our analysis. Instead, we looked for emerging themes as we analyzed the data. We found two themes and six-subthemes to answer the third research question.

Findings

Quantitative Analysis

The statistical analysis in Table 1 reveals that for speaking performance, the GSM group had a mean score of 83.48 (*SD* = 1.78, *N* = 23) with a mean rank of 40.28, while the USM group had a higher mean score of 86.55 (*SD* = 3.93, *N* = 20) with a mean rank of 51.80. The control group had a mean score of 78.81 (*SD* = 3.49, *N* = 26) with a lower mean rank of 17.40. For WTC, the GSM group had a mean score of 52.00 (*SD* = 10.71, *N* = 23) with a mean rank of 27.26, and the USM group scored 63.30 (*SD* = 5.49, *N* = 20) with a mean rank of 52.78. The control group had a mean score of 54.62 (*SD* = 6.21, *N* = 26) with a mean rank of 28.17. Due to violations of normality and homogeneity tests, the analysis could not use parametric *One-way MANOVA* and instead employed a non-parametric *Kruskal-Wallis* test.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics among groups

Variables	Groups	Mean	Mean Rank	SD	N
Speaking	GSM	83.4783	40.28	1.78044	23
	USM	86.5500	51.80	3.92663	20
	Control	78.8077	17.40	3.48734	26
WTC	GSM	52.0000	27.26	10.71108	23
	USM	63.3000	52.78	5.48779	20
	Control	54.6154	28.17	6.21017	26

The *Kruskal-Wallis* test was performed, and Table 2 indicates a significant difference in speaking performance among the three groups (test statistic = 35.988, *df* = 2, *p* < 0.001). Pairwise comparisons in Table 3 reveal significant differences between the control group and the GSM group (*p* < 0.001). As shown in Table 1, the GSM group had higher mean scores and mean ranks than the control group. Additionally, there was a significant difference between the control group and the USM group (*p* < 0.001), with the USM group also displaying higher mean scores and mean ranks. Conversely, Table 3 indicates no significant difference in speaking performance between the GSM and USM groups (*p* > 0.001). These quantitative findings are

supported by student testimonies stating that they engaged earnestly in the SMALL activities, believing these activities improved their speaking performance. The following excerpts illustrate the aforementioned description:

“What I feel is that I am more actively involved in doing assignments on social media because it is more free and comfortable to upload the assignment. Encouraging me to be more confident in speaking on social media and also training myself in speaking on social media” (S14USM)

“I did the video assignment to the best of my ability. I sometimes get confused if there are new things that I don’t know, but I try to find out about it. By making video assignments, writing sentences I get a lot of new things that I can get. This makes me get a lot of knowledge” (S6GSM)

**Table 2.** Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis test summary

Variables	Total	Test Statistic	Degree of Freedom	Asymptotic Sig. (2-sided test)
Speaking	69	35.988	2	0.001
WTC	69	22.239	2	0.001

**Table 3.** Pairwise comparisons of groups

Variables	Sample 1-Sample 2	Test Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Test Statistic	Sig.	Adj. Sig.
Speaking	Control-GSM	22.879	5.713	4.004	0.001	0.001
	Control-USM	34.396	5.936	5.794	0.001	0.001
	GSM-USM	-11.517	6.102	-1.887	0.059	0.177
WTC	GSM-Control	-.912	5.729	-.159	0.873	1.000
	GSM-USM	-25.514	6.119	-4.170	0.001	0.001
	Control-USM	24.602	5.953	4.133	0.001	0.001

Pertaining to WTC, Table 2 indicates a significant difference among the three groups (test statistic = 22.239,  $df = 2$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Pairwise comparisons in Table 3 reveal a significant difference in WTC between the GSM and USM groups ( $p < 0.001$ ), with Table 1 showing that the USM group had higher mean scores and mean ranks. Additionally, Table 3 shows a significant difference in WTC between the control and USM groups ( $p < 0.001$ ), with the USM group again displaying higher mean scores and mean ranks, as shown in Table 1. The students’ testimonies from USM group revealed that they had freedom to choose whatever they wanted to do as their SMALL activities which then influenced their willingness to communicate as illustrated by the following excerpt:

“I took it seriously and added elements that I liked in my assignment submissions due to the freedom of speaking assignments on social media” (S8USM)

On the contrary, Table 3 shows that there is no significant difference between the control group and GSM group where  $p > 0.001$ . Perhaps it was caused by perceptions that assignments are only busy work to accomplish, and they did SMALL activities because they pursued good scores as illustrated by the following excerpt:

“As I said before, I consider assignments as an obligation that I have to do. Because I consider it a must, like it or not, I must be willing to do the speaking assignments requested by the lecturer. Also [I did the tasks] to get a good grade” S18GSM

**Table 4.** Mann-Whitney U test results

Variables	Mann-Whitney U	Std. Error	Std. Test Statistic	Asymptotic Sig.(2-sided test)	Mean Rank (Pre)	Mean Rank (Post)
Guided_Speaking	360.000	36.852	4.342	0.001	12.50	28.50
Guided_WTC	261.000	36.916	1.652	0.098	17.45	23.55
Unguided_Speaking	399.500	36.897	5.407	0.001	10.53	30.48
Unguided_WTC	339.500	36.835	3.787	0.001	13.53	27.48

*Mann-Whitney U* tests were conducted to examine the pretest and posttest scores in speaking and WTC for both the GSM and USM groups. These non-parametric tests were used due to violations of normality and homogeneity prerequisites. Table 4 shows a significant improvement in the speaking performance of the GSM group after treatments, with *Mann-Whitney U* = 360.000 and  $p < 0.001$ . The mean ranks analysis indicates an enhancement in students’ speaking performance post-treatment compared to their initial performance. However, there is no statistically significant difference in the WTC scores for the GSM group before and after treatments, as shown by *Mann-Whitney U* = 261.000 and  $p > 0.098$ .

However, Table 4 indicates a notable disparity in the speaking performance of students in the USM group before and after the treatments. This is evidenced by *Mann-Whitney U* = 399.500, and  $p < 0.001$ . The analysis of mean ranks indicates that students’ speaking proficiency has improved following the treatments compared to their initial performance. Contrary to the results observed in supervised social media, there is a notable disparity in the students’ WTC in the USM group before and after the treatments, with *Mann-Whitney U* = 339.500 and  $p < 0.001$ . The mean ranks indicate that students’ WTC after the treatments is higher than their WTC prior to the treatments.

## Social Emotional Learning

### Learning Engagement and Students’ Motivation

The interview results, as presented in Table 5, indicate that learning engagement and students’ motivation were significant factors that determined their consistency throughout the SMALL

activities. The students from both treatment groups concurred that engagement and enjoyment derived from SMALL activities emerged as crucial factors for their successful completion of the semester. According to their testimony, students prefer SMALL activities, particularly involving the creation of speaking videos in both the USM and GSM groups. For instance, S6USM included her preferences for creating videos, taking advantage of the projects' flexibility, as long as they remained relevant to the given topics. Furthermore, S15GSM demonstrated a keen interest in the subjects covered in the speaking course. Despite acknowledging his poor performance, he found satisfaction in completing the projects due to the engaging topics. This allowed him to share his personal experiences with his friends, fostering a deeper understanding of his character.

Remarkably, students from both groups indicated that they completed the tasks in a diligent manner due to their belief that it was their duty to do them. As an illustration, S18USM acknowledged her obligation to complete all her tasks, understanding that she would comply with any instructions given by her lecturer due to the potential repercussions. Due to their sense of ownership, students approached the assignments with rigor, as S2GSM indicated that she made every effort to accomplish the tasks, as it was her responsibility to do so. Thus, she was driven to diligently complete SMALL activities in her speaking course.

The interviews also revealed that the students engaged in SMALL activities due to their dedication and devotion. They stated that they completed SMALL activities in a sequential manner. If they felt confused by the topics, they would seek internet explanations. For instance, S10USM showed exceptional self-reliance by successfully completing the assignments without the guidance of her lecturer. She exhibited unwavering dedication and was willing to go to great lengths to accomplish the assigned tasks. Similarly, S4GSM demonstrated her dedication by diligently completing required assignments. She would conduct thorough research to gather relevant resources to enhance her performance and consistently deliver her work within the designated deadlines.

Remarkably, students from both experimental groups reported that their hard work and dedication were driven by their achievement motivation as they aimed to get high scores in this course. For instance, S19USM emphasized the need of diligently engaging in speaking activities on social media to achieve high speaking scores. Additionally, she recognized that this practice would also enhance her speaking skills. Similarly, S19GSM actively participated in all SMALL activities throughout the course in order to achieve excellent speaking scores and a high GPA.

### ***Learning Environment and Support***

The data presented in Table 5 indicates that the students expressed consensus regarding the positive impact of the learning environment and the support received from both the lecturer and their peers in successfully navigating SMALL activities. Specifically, the students acknowledged that explicit instructions aided them in successfully executing SMALL activities. For instance, despite the freedom given to students in the USM group to choose their speaking assignments, S22USM reported that she frequently engaged in listening to the lecturer's explanations and reading the e-learning instructions prior to completing the weekly SMALL exercises. Consequently, she encountered no obstacles despite having the freedom to select her preferred SMALL activities. Regarding this case, S12GSM stated that she diligently read the instructions in order to avoid failure and low grades due to her lack of caution.

Furthermore, Table 5 demonstrates that the students experienced contentment due to the presence of a positive and supportive environment, which not only contributed to their overall well-being but also served as a source of motivation for engaging in SMALL activities in their

**Table 5.** *Thematic analysis on students’ social emotional learning*

Themes	Sub-themes	Sample Excerpts
Learning Engagement and Motivation	Engagement and Enjoyment	“The things that have influenced me in doing the assignment so far are adding elements that I like, such as my fondness for pop music and so on to the SMALL activities” S6USM
		“The thing that makes me active in doing the assignment is the topic, when the topic given is interesting, I feel more enthusiastic in making the assignment” S15GSM
	Task Ownership	“The thing that affected me was my thoughts, where I thought that it was my obligation as a student” S18USM
		“... but I always try to make sure that my assignments are not just assignments, but also that I can improve my language quality in English” S2GSM
	Diligence and Commitment	“I do it carefully and seriously because I think it is more important to better understand a material when there is no supervision from a lecturer” S10USM
		“I do the tasks asked by my lecturers well and wholeheartedly. For example, if the lecturer gives an assignment to post a video on social media, I will do my assignment well and on time” S4GSM
Learning Environment and Support	Achievement Motivation	“In addition, as a student I also want to get good grades, this also encourages me to actively do assignments using social media. And by doing this task, I will get benefits such as improving my ability to speak English” S19USM
		“I want to get good grades and extra scores, so I have to be actively involved in doing assignments and actively use social media for speaking assignments according to the guidelines from my lecturer” S19GSM
	Clear Instructions	“What I do to carry out these tasks is to remember the message that the lecturer has conveyed at the beginning of the semester then I do the task based on the instructions in e-learning.... S22USM
		“With detailed and thorough guidance, I am no longer confused about the tasks assigned. I always do the assignments given to me seriously, so that I get results that are worth the effort I put in” S12GSM

(Continued)



Themes	Sub-themes	Sample Excerpts
	Positive Supportive Environment	<p>“I do my assignments seriously, if I feel confused about the assignments given, I will ask my friends or the class coordinator” S1USM</p> <p>“To be honest, I was confused and anxious at first, because this was my first time learning to use social media such as posting videos or sentences in WhatsApp groups. But after I saw my friend’s work, how they made the effort to make the task, so I also followed how they made the task” S16GSM</p>

speaking course. For instance, S1USM would ask her friends in case she lacked comprehension regarding the task at hand. Her friends would gladly assist her in comprehending the tasks. That was why she derived pleasure from the classroom atmosphere, which eventually helped her to thrive during the semester. Similarly, S16GSM expressed his initial confusion when performing the assignments due to his lack of prior experience in engaging in speaking activities on social media. However, when observing his friend’s endeavors, especially during collaborative assignments, he felt compelled to exhibit his utmost abilities in order to successfully complete the speaking tasks.

Discussion

To answer the first research question, the data showed that there are significant differences among the three groups, USM, GSM, and the control group. The post-hoc analysis indicated that the use of social media in the USM and GSM treatment conditions exerted better speaking performance compared to their counterparts in the control group. These findings therefore echoed previous research findings (Cepik & Yastibas, 2013; Kusuma & Waluyo, 2023; Lin & Hwang, 2018; Sun & Yang, 2015; Wongsu & Son, 2022; Xodabande, 2017; Zheng & Barrot, 2022) that highlighted the benefits of social media to improve language learning and communication skills. We anticipated that the regular speaking practices and performances through social media in both the USM and GSM groups would enhance their linguistic mastery, self-confidence, and self-efficacy. This mastery ultimately contributed to improving their speaking performances, as also supported by previous researchers (Cepik & Yastibas, 2013; Kusuma & Waluyo, 2023; Sun & Yang, 2015). Interestingly, students’ speaking performances in the USM and GSM treatment conditions had no significant difference between them even though they had different treatments. In addition, the *Mann-Whitney U* findings showed that either the GSM or USM treatments will help students improve their speaking performances because both groups could improve their speaking performances significantly through doing SMALL activities.

The data, in regard to the second research question, showed that there are significant differences in students’ WTC between the USM and GSM treatments as well as between the USM and the control group. Surprisingly, there is no significant difference between the GSM and the control group. These results align with the previous research findings that technology could help improve students’ WTC (Ebadi & Ebadijalal, 2022; Tai & Chen, 2020). We further argued that while both the USM and GSM groups engaged in SMALL activities, only the unguided

approach was likely to enhance WTC as predicted. This was due to the freedom it provided for students to express themselves through speaking on social media, while the GSM activities limited such opportunities by requiring students to adhere strictly to the given instructions. Such freedom fostered positive emotions and enjoyment, which ultimately contributed to the improvement in WTC (Khajavy et al., 2018; Kruk, 2021). The interview results also showed that the students in the USM group had no confusion since they were free to do what they wanted. Conversely, the GSM students were often confused on what they had to do when given speaking tasks, and this confusion might have reduced their excitement and eventually made them less motivated to engage in SMALL activities. Moreover, the WTC results of the USM activities found in this study supported the ones claimed by previous research that free forms without lecturers' guidance could enhance WTC (Lee, 2019; Lee et al., 2021; Soyooof, 2022). Thus, the freedom found in free forms of SMALL activities made the students not to feel burdened, which eventually helped them to be more willing to communicate, as we predicted.

To address the third research question, the interview results revealed two key factors that influenced students' SEL during SMALL activities: learning engagement and motivation (including engagement and enjoyment, task ownership, diligence and commitment, and achievement motivation) and learning environment and support (such as clear instructions and a positive, supportive environment). These themes highlight how various elements contributed to shaping students' SEL. Specifically, engagement and enjoyment fostered a sense of enthusiasm and active participation in learning as also claimed by Mihai et al. (2022). Meanwhile, task ownership encouraged students to take responsibility for their learning process, enhancing their self-awareness and decision-making.

Additionally, diligence and commitment, combined with achievement motivation, fostered perseverance and a strong sense of purpose, further enhancing their social and emotional skills. The presence of clear instructions and a positive, supportive environment ensured that students felt guided, valued, and emotionally secure, creating an atmosphere conducive to collaborative learning and emotional growth as supported by some researchers (Cho et al., 2019; Jaber Rafidi & Wagner, 2024). We surmised because the students in this study were young adults, they had more sense of responsibility, which possibly made them understand the importance of their learning, which eventually helped them to manage their emotions, particularly developing the positive and reducing the negative ones. Thus, even though they had some issues, they could still cope with them effectively (Zins & Elias, 2007) and become more engaged in their learning (Mihai et al., 2022; Rafidi & Wagner, 2023) to gain success (Cho et al., 2019; Li, 2020; Mihai et al., 2022; Rafidi & Wagner, 2023).

Three implications are drawn from the aforementioned results and discussion. First, the significant improvement in students' speaking performance through the USM and GSM activities underscores their effectiveness and contributes theoretically to the SMALL literature, reinforcing the value of interactive and engaging learning experiences in language development. Secondly, the study reveals that not all SMALL activities equally enhance students' WTC, with guided activities potentially limiting flexibility and creativity, thereby impacting WTC less effectively. This calls for a balanced approach in activity design that supports both structure and freedom to foster communicative confidence. Lastly, the study emphasizes the need to maximize factors such as learning engagement, motivation, learning environment, and support to ensure student success in SMALL activities. Enhancing these elements can create a supportive and stimulating learning environment, foster intrinsic motivation, and provide the necessary resources and encouragement, ultimately leading to better language proficiency and communicative competence.

## Conclusion

This study investigated the effects of guided and unguided social media on EFL students' speaking performance and WTC as well as exploring the students' SEL. Based on the results, it can be inferred that utilizing social media platforms, such as USM or GSM to improve speaking skills is an effective approach. However, an unexpected finding revealed that only GSM failed to significantly enhance students' WTC. Furthermore, it appears that students' social-emotional learning (SEL) during speaking courses in SMALL is influenced by aspects such as learning engagement, motivation, learning environment, and support.

This study also has a few limitations that should be addressed in future research. The statistical results used in this study cannot be extrapolated to the population because non-parametric statistics were applied. This study also did not perform more intricate statistical analysis using larger samples, which could have resulted in novel statistical findings. Thus, we suggest the future research to cover these limitations. In addition, while this study mentioned the use of various social media platforms, the specific activities and interactions on these platforms were not detailed, making it difficult to understand how these tools were used. Future studies should explore how different platforms influence students' Willingness to Speak (WTS), as each platform offers specific leverages.

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