

The Relation Between Students' Frequently in Watching English Content in Social Media and Students' Vocabulary Mastery

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the relation between students' frequency of watching English content on social media and their vocabulary mastery in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. Employing a qualitative descriptive design, this research involved 16 eleventh-grade students of SMA Negeri 2 Sidrap. Data were collected through a vocabulary test and structured interviews. The vocabulary test was used to provide a preliminary description of students' vocabulary levels, while interviews explored students' exposure to English content, viewing frequency, and learning experiences outside the classroom. The findings reveal that students who frequently engage with English content on social media platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram demonstrate higher levels of vocabulary mastery compared to those with lower exposure. The frequency of engagement ranged from daily to occasional viewing, with content types including both educational and entertainment materials. Repeated exposure to authentic and contextualized language input was found to contribute significantly to vocabulary acquisition. Furthermore, the study indicates that social media serves as an effective informal learning environment that supports autonomous learning and enhances students' vocabulary development. These findings suggest that integrating social media-based exposure into language learning strategies can be beneficial in improving students' vocabulary mastery.

Keywords: Social Media Exposure; English Content; Vocabulary Mastery; Informal Learning

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary era of globalization, English plays a crucial role as an international language used in communication, education, and professional contexts. In countries where English is learned as a Foreign Language (EFL), such as Indonesia, mastering English is essential for students to participate actively in the global community. Among the various components of language proficiency, vocabulary mastery is considered one of the most fundamental aspects, as it underpins learners' ability to understand and produce language effectively in both spoken and written forms. Vocabulary mastery is central to language acquisition because it directly influences learners' communicative competence. Without sufficient vocabulary knowledge, students may struggle to comprehend texts, express ideas, or engage in meaningful interaction. Scholars have emphasized that vocabulary is not merely a list of words, but includes knowledge of meaning, form, and usage in context. Therefore, developing students' vocabulary mastery requires not only formal instruction in the classroom but also exposure to language in authentic and meaningful contexts.

However, one of the main challenges faced by EFL learners in Indonesia is the limited exposure to English outside the classroom. Since English is not used in daily communication, students often rely heavily on classroom instruction, which may not provide sufficient opportunities for repeated and contextualized language input. As a result, students' vocabulary development tends to be slow and limited. This condition highlights the need for alternative learning sources that can provide rich and continuous exposure to English. The rapid advancement of digital technology has transformed the landscape of language learning. Social media platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram have become an integral part of students' daily lives, offering a vast amount of English-language content in the form of videos, captions, and interactive communication. These platforms provide authentic and engaging materials that expose learners to real-life language use, including vocabulary, expressions, and pronunciation in various contexts.

The use of social media in language learning aligns with the concept of informal and autonomous learning, where students take initiative in managing their own learning outside formal educational settings. Through frequent interaction with English content, students can acquire vocabulary incidentally while enjoying the content. This type of exposure is supported by theories of language acquisition, which suggest that repeated and meaningful input plays a significant role in developing vocabulary knowledge and long-term retention. Moreover, audiovisual content on social media combines visual and auditory elements, which enhances learners' comprehension and memory. When students watch English videos, they not only hear the words but also see how they are used in real-life situations, making it easier to understand and remember new vocabulary. The frequency of exposure becomes a critical factor, as learners who engage more often with English content are more likely to encounter and internalize new words.

Preliminary observations conducted at SMA Negeri 2 Sidrap indicate that students who frequently watch English content on social media tend to demonstrate better vocabulary mastery compared to those who rarely engage with such content. However, there are still variations in students' vocabulary levels, suggesting that the relationship between exposure frequency and vocabulary mastery requires further investigation. This phenomenon raises important questions regarding the role of social media as a learning tool in enhancing students' vocabulary. Based on the issues described above, this study aims to examine the relationship between students' frequency of watching English content on social media and their vocabulary mastery. By exploring students' learning experiences and exposure patterns, this research is expected to provide insights into how informal digital learning can support vocabulary development in EFL contexts and contribute to more effective language teaching strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Vocabulary is widely recognized as a fundamental component of language proficiency and plays a crucial role in communication. It enables learners to express ideas, understand messages, and engage in meaningful interaction. According to Nation (2001), vocabulary knowledge encompasses not only the meaning of words but also their form and use in various contexts. This multidimensional nature of vocabulary highlights its importance in supporting the development of the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), vocabulary mastery becomes even more essential due to the limited exposure to the target language in daily life. Learners often depend on formal classroom instruction to acquire vocabulary, which may not provide sufficient input for effective language acquisition. Schmitt (2000) argues that vocabulary learning is a gradual process that requires repeated exposure and meaningful engagement with words. Therefore, additional learning opportunities outside the classroom are necessary to support vocabulary development.

One of the key factors influencing vocabulary acquisition is the frequency of exposure to language input. Webb (2007) emphasizes that repeated encounters with words in different contexts enhance learners' ability to understand and retain vocabulary. Frequent exposure helps strengthen the connection between word form and meaning, leading to better recall and usage. In this regard, learners who are regularly exposed to English are more likely to develop a richer and more functional vocabulary. The advancement of technology has introduced new opportunities for language learning, particularly through digital media and online platforms. Social media has emerged as a powerful tool that facilitates access to authentic language input. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as internet-based applications that allow users to create and share content, as well as interact with others. In the context of language learning, social media provides a dynamic environment where learners can encounter real-life language use in various forms.

Social media platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram offer a wide range of English content that can support vocabulary acquisition. These platforms present language in audiovisual formats, combining images, sounds, and text, which enhances learners' comprehension. Mayer's (2001) Multimedia Learning Theory suggests that learners process information more effectively when it is presented through both visual and verbal channels. As a result, exposure to multimedia content can improve vocabulary retention and understanding.

In addition, social media supports incidental learning, where learners acquire knowledge unintentionally while engaging in enjoyable activities. Krashen's (1985) Input Hypothesis posits that language acquisition occurs when learners are exposed to comprehensible input in meaningful contexts. Watching English content on social media allows learners to experience this type of input naturally, without the pressure of formal instruction. This makes learning more engaging and less stressful, which can positively affect motivation. Previous studies have shown a positive relationship between exposure to English content and vocabulary mastery. For instance, research by Nugroho (2021) found that students who frequently watched English videos on YouTube demonstrated higher vocabulary achievement than those who did not. Similarly, Alghamdi (2020) reported that learners who regularly engaged with English-language audiovisual materials achieved better vocabulary outcomes. These findings indicate that digital media exposure plays a significant role in enhancing vocabulary acquisition.

Based on the theoretical perspectives and empirical findings discussed above, it can be concluded that frequent exposure to English content, particularly through social media, has the potential to improve students' vocabulary mastery. However, the extent to which this exposure contributes to vocabulary development may vary depending on learners' engagement and learning experiences. Therefore, further investigation is needed to explore the relationship between students' frequency of watching English content on social media and their vocabulary mastery in specific educational contexts.

METHOD

Design and Sample

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore the relationship between students' frequency of watching English content on social media and their vocabulary mastery. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate as it enables an in-depth understanding of students' learning experiences, perceptions, and behaviors in natural settings. This design focuses on describing phenomena as they occur without manipulating variables, allowing the researcher to capture authentic data related to students' exposure to English outside the classroom. The participants of this study were 16 eleventh-grade students of SMA Negeri 2 Sidrap. The participants were selected purposively based on their familiarity with and engagement in watching English content on social media

platforms. They represented varying levels of exposure, ranging from frequent to occasional viewers. This variation allowed the researcher to obtain diverse perspectives and examine how different levels of engagement relate to students' vocabulary mastery.

Instruments and Procedures

Data were collected using two main instruments: a vocabulary test and structured interviews. The vocabulary test was administered to obtain preliminary data on students' vocabulary mastery. In this test, students were given stimulus words and asked to produce related words and construct meaningful sentences. This approach was intended to explore students' lexical knowledge qualitatively rather than to measure it quantitatively. Structured interviews were conducted to gather information about students' frequency of watching English content, types of content accessed, and their learning experiences outside the classroom.

The data collection procedure was carried out in several stages. First, the vocabulary test was administered to identify students' initial vocabulary levels. Second, students were encouraged to engage with English content on social media platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram over a certain period. Finally, structured interviews were conducted to explore students' perceptions, frequency of exposure, and the role of social media in their vocabulary development. Supporting documentation, including test results and interview recordings, was also collected to strengthen data validity.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The researcher first transcribed and reviewed the interview data, then selected and categorized relevant information based on the research focus. The data were subsequently organized into themes to identify patterns and relationships between students' frequency of exposure to English content and their vocabulary mastery. To ensure the credibility of the findings, data triangulation was conducted by comparing results from the vocabulary test, interviews, and supporting documentation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study are presented based on two main data sources: the vocabulary test and structured interviews. The vocabulary test was used to describe students' vocabulary mastery, while the interviews explored students' frequency of watching English content on social media and their learning experiences outside the classroom. Based on the vocabulary test results, students were categorized into three levels of vocabulary mastery: high, medium, and low. The classification was determined based on the range of words produced and their ability to construct

meaningful sentences. The findings show variation in students' vocabulary mastery, indicating differences in language exposure and learning experiences. Out of 16 participants, 8 students were categorized into the high level, 1 student into the medium level, and 7 students into the low level. Students in the high category were able to produce a wide range of vocabulary and demonstrate contextual understanding, while those in the low category showed limited vocabulary knowledge and difficulty in constructing meaningful sentences. The following table summarizes the distribution of students' vocabulary mastery levels:

Table 1. Students' Vocabulary Mastery Levels

Category	Number of Students	Percentage
High	8	50%
Medium	1	6.25%
Low	7	43.75%
Total	16	100%

The interview findings reveal that students in the high category tend to watch English content more frequently compared to those in the medium and low categories. Most of them reported watching English videos daily, particularly on platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram. They also mentioned that they often replay videos and pay attention to subtitles to understand new vocabulary. In contrast, students in the low category reported less frequent exposure to English content, ranging from rarely to occasionally watching. Their engagement with English content was often limited to entertainment purposes without active effort to understand vocabulary. As a result, their vocabulary development was less significant compared to frequent viewers.

The types of content watched by students varied, including educational videos, movies, vlogs, and short-form videos. Students reported that both educational and entertainment content contributed to their vocabulary learning. However, those who actively engaged with the content such as taking notes or repeating words demonstrated better vocabulary mastery. The results indicate a clear tendency that higher frequency of watching English content is associated with better vocabulary mastery. Students who are more exposed to English through social media tend to acquire more vocabulary and demonstrate better understanding in context.

The findings of this study indicate that there is a meaningful relationship between students' frequency of watching English content on social media and their vocabulary mastery. Students who frequently engage with English content tend to demonstrate higher levels of vocabulary knowledge compared to those with limited exposure. This supports the idea that language exposure plays a crucial role in vocabulary acquisition. The result is consistent with Webb (2007), who emphasizes that repeated exposure to vocabulary in meaningful contexts enhances retention and understanding. Students who watch English content regularly are more likely to encounter the same words multiple times, which strengthens their memory and ability to use those words appropriately.

Furthermore, the findings align with Krashen's (1985) Input Hypothesis, which suggests that language acquisition occurs when learners are exposed to comprehensible input. Social media provides such input through authentic and engaging content, allowing students to learn vocabulary naturally without formal instruction. The use of audiovisual content also contributes significantly to vocabulary learning. As suggested by Mayer (2001), multimedia learning enhances comprehension by combining visual and auditory information. Students in this study reported that seeing and hearing words simultaneously helped them understand meaning more easily and remember vocabulary longer.

Another important finding is that not only frequency but also the quality of engagement influences vocabulary mastery. Students who actively interacted with the content such as replaying videos, using subtitles, and practicing new words showed better results than those who passively watched. This indicates that active learning strategies play an important role in maximizing the benefits of exposure. The variation in students' vocabulary levels can also be explained by differences in learning habits and motivation. Students who are more interested in English content tend to engage more frequently and deeply, leading to better vocabulary acquisition. This supports the idea that motivation is a key factor in language learning success. In addition, the findings highlight the role of social media as an effective informal learning environment. Unlike traditional classroom settings, social media offers flexible, accessible, and engaging learning opportunities. Students can learn anytime and anywhere, making it easier to integrate language learning into their daily lives. This study confirms that frequent exposure to English content on social media contributes positively to students' vocabulary mastery. However, it is important to note that exposure alone is not sufficient; active engagement and learning strategies are also essential. Therefore, educators should encourage students to utilize social media as a learning tool and guide them to engage with content more effectively.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that there is a meaningful relationship between students' frequency of watching English content on social media and their vocabulary mastery. Students who frequently engage with English-language content tend to demonstrate higher levels of vocabulary knowledge compared to those with limited exposure. The findings indicate that repeated interaction with authentic English input contributes significantly to students' ability to understand and use vocabulary in context. Furthermore, the study reveals that social media platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram function as effective informal learning environments. These platforms provide accessible, engaging, and context-rich language input that supports students' autonomous learning outside the classroom. However, the effectiveness of this exposure is influenced not only by frequency but also by the level of students' active engagement, such as paying attention to subtitles, repeating words, and interacting with the content. Integrating social

media-based learning into English language education can be a valuable strategy to enhance students' vocabulary mastery. Teachers are encouraged to guide students in utilizing digital platforms more effectively, while students should be motivated to engage actively with English content as part of their daily learning practices. Future research is recommended to explore this relationship using quantitative approaches to provide more generalizable findings.

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