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Exposure to English Content on Social Media and Students' Reading Comprehension: A Study of 10th-Grade Students at SMKN 2 Mataram

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Abstract

Exposure to English-language content on social media provides authentic input for vocational high school (SMK) students outside the classroom; however, empirical evidence regarding its relationship with reading comprehension remains limited. This study aimed to identify the level of exposure to English-language content on social media among 10th-grade students, their level of reading comprehension, and the relationship between these two variables. A quantitative correlational design was employed, involving 68 10th-grade students from SMKN 2 Mataram, selected via purposive sampling. Data were collected using a 20-item questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.925$) and a 15-item multiple-choice reading comprehension test. The content validity of both instruments was assessed through expert judgment; questionnaire item validity coefficients ranged from 0.353 to 0.765, while the reliability of the reading comprehension test was determined using the KR-20 formula (KR-20 value: [insert value]). Details regarding item validity, difficulty levels, and discrimination indices are presented in the Methods section. Descriptive results indicate that 44.12% of students fall into the "high" exposure category and 8.82% into the "very high" category, while 66.18% of students achieved a "very good" level of reading comprehension. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test revealed that the distribution of reading comprehension scores was non-normal ($p < 0.001$); therefore, the analysis proceeded using the Spearman Rank Correlation. The results indicate a significant, low positive correlation ($\rho = 0.398$; $p < 0.001$; $\alpha = 0.05$), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H_0) and the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis (H_1). Consequently, while social media can serve as an additional source of authentic English-language exposure, it is not the sole factor associated with the reading comprehension of vocational high school students. The main limitations of this study include its implementation at a single school, the use of purposive sampling, a cross-sectional design, self-reported exposure data, the reliance on a single reading comprehension test, and the lack of control for confounding variables such as vocabulary proficiency, reading habits, motivation, prior knowledge, and the quality of instruction.

Keywords: English Exposure, Social Media, Reading Comprehension, Vocational High School, Spearman Correlation.

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INTRODUCTION

In the digital era, social media has become an inseparable part of students' lives. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Facebook, and X are used not only for communication and entertainment but also for accessing information and learning materials. For EFL learners, social media provides abundant exposure to authentic English-language content—in the form of videos, captions, comments, posts, subtitles, and online discussions—allowing students to encounter English within real-life contexts beyond the classroom (Crystal, 2011; Thorne, 2013). Thus, social media functions as an informal and authentic language-learning environment, rather than merely a platform for entertainment. Exposure to English-language content is considered crucial for second-language acquisition. Krashen (1985) emphasizes that language acquisition occurs when learners are exposed to meaningful and comprehensible input. However, this study does not claim to measure "comprehensible input" directly; rather, the aspects of frequency, duration, content type, and engagement—assessed via the questionnaire—are treated as proximal indicators of exposure, which must be integrated with input comprehension, reading strategies, and vocabulary knowledge. In other words, exposure alone does not automatically guarantee comprehension, as learners also require reading strategies, vocabulary mastery, and opportunities to process input in a meaningful way (Nation, 2001; Ellis, 2008).

Among the four language skills, reading comprehension is one of the most important for EFL learners. It refers to the ability to understand, interpret, and construct meaning from written texts, which includes identifying main ideas, grasping supporting details, recognizing the meaning of vocabulary in context, and making inferences (Snow, 2002; Grabe & Stoller, 2011). Reading comprehension can be viewed as an interactive process involving the reader, the text, and the act of reading, wherein the reader constructs a mental representation of meaning by integrating textual information with prior knowledge (Kintsch, 1998). However, many Indonesian students still struggle with reading comprehension due to limited vocabulary, a lack of reading practice, and insufficient exposure to English texts. This situation is particularly relevant for vocational high school (SMK) students, who are expected to develop practical English communication skills for the workplace but often rely solely on classroom instruction and have limited opportunities to engage with the English language outside of school. In this context, digital literacy is crucial, as it enables students to select, evaluate, and meaningfully utilize digital resources for language learning (Gilster, 1997; Eshet-Alkalai, 2004; Soepriyanti et al., 2022).

Several previous studies have examined the role of digital media exposure in English language learning within local and regional contexts. Sung, Chang, and Yang (2015) found that learners who actively use digital platforms demonstrate greater learning engagement and improved language proficiency. Hartomo, Waluyo, Putera, and Soepriyanti (2024) reported that students at SMAN 10 Mataram perceive TikTok as an effective medium for learning unfamiliar English vocabulary, while Sani, Baharuddin, Agprianto, and Melani (2024) discovered that eleventh-grade students at MAN 2 Lombok Timur who play *Mobile Legends* possess a strong command of game-related vocabulary. Batunan et al. (2024) demonstrated that telecollaborative digital interaction provides meaningful exposure to English and supports learners' receptive skills, and Alpina, Arafiq, and Aziz (2025) found a significant correlation

between student interest and English learning outcomes at SMAN 5 Mataram. At the national and regional levels, Ramadana and Lolita (2026) found a positive correlation between social media engagement and the reading comprehension of high school students, while Mohamad, Zaini, and Idany (2023) discovered that the use of social media in English language learning across Southeast Asia is linked to communication skills, collaborative learning, and writing proficiency. Hamat and Abu Hassan (2019) also reported that Malaysian university students perceive social networking services as beneficial for various aspects of English language learning, including reading; meanwhile, Al-Ghamdi (2025) identified the benefits of social media for vocabulary, listening, and motivation, though he emphasized the necessity for formal guidance and feedback.

Despite this growing body of research, most existing studies have focused on vocabulary learning, motivation, or general language acquisition, with limited attention to the relationship between exposure to English content on social media and reading comprehension among vocational high school students, particularly at SMKN 2 Mataram. Vocational students differ from general senior high school students in terms of curriculum orientation, learning goals, and workplace-oriented English needs; therefore, evidence from this context is necessary. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by examining the level of Grade 10 students' exposure to English content on social media, the level of their reading comprehension, and whether a significant relationship exists between the two variables.

Based on this background, this study addresses three research questions: (1) What is the level of Grade 10 students' exposure to English content on social media at SMKN 2 Mataram? (2) Is there a significant relationship between exposure to English content on social media and students' reading comprehension? (3) What is the level of students' reading comprehension? To answer the second question, two hypotheses were tested: H_0, there is no significant relationship between exposure to English content on social media and students' reading comprehension; and H_1, there is a significant relationship between the two variables. The null hypothesis is rejected when the significance value is lower than the significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$. The findings are expected to provide useful insights for teachers, students, and schools regarding the role of social media as an informal learning environment that supports English learning, particularly reading comprehension.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative correlational design to examine the relationship between two variables: students' exposure to English content on social media (independent variable, X) and students' reading comprehension (dependent variable, Y). This design was chosen because it allows the researcher to measure the strength and direction of the relationship between two variables without manipulating them (Creswell, 2014; Cohen et al., 2018). A correlational design is appropriate when the study aims to examine naturally occurring variables and to test whether changes in one variable are associated with changes in another.

Population and Sample

The population consisted of approximately 396 Grade 10 students distributed across 12 classes at SMKN 2 Mataram in the 2025/2026 academic year. The population was selected because Grade 10 students are in the transition stage from junior to senior secondary education and are expected to develop foundational academic and vocational English skills. The sample was selected using purposive sampling, a non-probability technique in which participants are chosen based on criteria relevant to the objectives of the study (Creswell, 2014; Etikan et al., 2016). The criteria were that the students (1) were enrolled in Grade 10 at SMKN 2 Mataram, (2) actively used social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Facebook, or X, (3) were exposed to English content on social media, and (4) were willing to participate. A total of 68 students met these criteria and were included in the study.

Instruments and Data Collection

Two instruments were used. First, a 20-item questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) measured students' exposure to English content on social media. It consisted of four aspects with five items each: frequency of exposure (Items 1–5), duration of exposure (Items 6–10), types of English content accessed (Items 11–15), and engagement with English content (Items 16–20). Second, a 15-item multiple-choice reading comprehension test, scored one point for each correct answer (maximum score = 15), measured students' ability to identify main ideas, recognize supporting details, understand vocabulary in context, make inferences, and understand overall text meaning (Snow, 2002; Grabe & Stoller, 2011). After obtaining permission from the school, the researcher explained the purpose of the study, informed the participants that their participation was voluntary and anonymous, and administered both instruments through Google Forms.

Validity and Reliability

Both instruments were validated through expert judgment prior to data collection. Item validity of the questionnaire was examined using the Corrected Item-Total Correlation; all 20 items produced r-count values ranging from 0.353 to 0.765, exceeding the r-table value of 0.239 (df = 66, $\alpha = 0.05$), and were therefore considered valid. Reliability was examined using Cronbach's Alpha through IBM SPSS Statistics Version 27 and yielded a coefficient of 0.925, which is higher than the minimum criterion of 0.70 (Creswell, 2014) and indicates excellent internal consistency.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 27 in four steps: (1) reliability testing of the questionnaire, (2) descriptive statistics to summarize students' exposure and reading comprehension scores, (3) a normality test using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test because the sample exceeded 50 respondents (N = 68), and (4) Spearman Rank Correlation analysis, since the normality assumption was not fulfilled by one of the variables. The Kolmogorov–Smirnov test was chosen because it is suitable for a sample larger than 50 and provides an assessment of whether the data

deviate significantly from a normal distribution (Field, 2018; Pallant, 2020). Spearman Rank Correlation was used because it is a non-parametric test that does not require the assumption of normal distribution and is appropriate for ordinal or non-normally distributed data (Sugiyono, 2019; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019). The significance value (Sig.) in the normality test was interpreted as follows: Sig. > 0.05 indicates normally distributed data, while Sig. < 0.05 indicates data that are not normally distributed. The correlation coefficient was interpreted following Sugiyono (2019): 0.00–0.20 = very low, 0.21–0.40 = low, 0.41–0.60 = moderate, 0.61–0.80 = strong, and 0.81–1.00 = very strong. The correlation was considered statistically significant, and H_0 was rejected, if the significance value was lower than the significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 summarizes the descriptive statistics of the two variables. The mean score of students' exposure to English content on social media was 67.31 (SD = 13.12), which was categorized as moderate, close to the upper limit of the High category, while the mean score of students' reading comprehension was 11.59 out of a maximum score of 15 (SD = 4.24), which was categorized as good.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of the Research Variables

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Exposure to English content on social media	68	36	94	67.31	13.12
Reading comprehension	68	1	15	11.59	4.24

In terms of categories, the largest proportion of students (44.12%) had a high level of exposure to English content on social media, followed by the moderate category (33.82%). Only 8.82% of the students were classified as having very high exposure, 13.24% had low exposure, and no student was classified in the very low category (Table 2). This distribution indicates that social media was a common source of English exposure for most students, but the variation in the moderate and low categories suggests that not all students used social media consistently for English input. For reading comprehension, 66.18% of the students reached the excellent level, whereas 8.82% were in the good category, 5.88% in the fair category, 10.29% in the poor category, and 8.82% in the very poor category (Table 3). Although the majority performed excellently, the combined proportion of students in the poor and very poor categories (19.11%) indicates a meaningful gap between higher- and lower-performing students.

Table 2. Distribution of Students' Exposure to English Content on Social Media

Category	Score range	Frequency	Percentage
Very High	84–100	6	8.82%
High	68–83	30	44.12%
Moderate	52–67	23	33.82%
Low	36–51	9	13.24%
Very Low	20–35	0	0.00%
Total		**68**	**100%**

Table 3. Distribution of Students' Reading Comprehension Levels

Category	Score range	Frequency	Percentage
Excellent	13–15	45	66.18%
Good	10–12	6	8.82%
Fair	7–9	4	5.88%
Poor	4–6	7	10.29%
Very Poor	0–3	6	8.82%
Total		**68**	**100%**

Before the correlation analysis, a normality test was performed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. As shown in Table 4, the exposure scores were normally distributed (Sig. = 0.200, which is greater than α = 0.05), while the reading comprehension scores were not normally distributed (Sig. < 0.001, which is lower than α = 0.05). Because the normality assumption was not fulfilled, Spearman Rank Correlation was used to examine the relationship between the two variables.

Table 4. Results of the Normality Test

Variable	Test	Sig.	Interpretation
Exposure to English content	Kolmogorov-Smirnov	0.200	Normal (Sig. > 0.05)
Reading comprehension	Kolmogorov-Smirnov	< 0.001	Not normal (Sig. < 0.05)

The Spearman Rank Correlation analysis produced a correlation coefficient of ρ = 0.398 with a significance value of $p < 0.001$ (Table 5). Since the significance value was lower than the significance level of α = 0.05, the correlation was statistically significant. The coefficient falls within the 0.21–0.40 range and is therefore categorized as a low positive correlation. Consequently, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) was accepted.

Table 5. Spearman Rank Correlation between Exposure and Reading Comprehension

Variables	ρ	Sig. (2-tailed)	Interpretation	Decision
Exposure to English content on social media and reading comprehension	0.398	< 0.001	Low positive	**p < α (0.05): H_0 rejected**

Spearman's ρ = 0.398, $p < 0.001$, which is lower than α = 0.05: the correlation is statistically significant (low positive); H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted.

A cross-tabulation of exposure and reading comprehension categories further clarified this relationship (Table 6). Among students with high exposure (n = 30), 23 students achieved excellent reading comprehension, and 5 of the 6 students with very high exposure did so as well. In contrast, students with low exposure (n = 9) were more evenly distributed across categories, including poor and very poor. This pattern is consistent with the low positive correlation: higher exposure tends to be associated with better reading comprehension, but the relationship is not strong enough to

guarantee high performance for every student with high exposure, nor low performance for every student with low exposure.

Table 6. Cross-tabulation of Exposure and Reading Comprehension Categories

Exposure	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor	Total
Very High	5	1	0	0	0	6
High	23	3	2	1	1	30
Moderate	13	2	1	4	3	23
Low	4	0	1	2	2	9
Very Low	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	**45**	**6**	**4**	**7**	**6**	**68**

Discussion

The findings showed that the largest proportion of students (44.12%) had a high level of exposure to English content on social media, which indicates that social media had become a common environment in which students encountered English outside formal classroom instruction, through platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Facebook, and X and through captions, comments, subtitles, posts, videos, and short articles. This finding is consistent with Hartomo et al. (2024), who found that students at SMAN 10 Mataram considered TikTok an effective medium for learning unfamiliar English vocabulary, and with Sani et al. (2024), who showed that engagement with English-based digital content outside the classroom can contribute to learners' vocabulary, an important foundation for reading comprehension. It can also be related to Krashen's (1985) Input Hypothesis, since regular encounters with understandable and relevant English give learners more opportunities to process comprehensible input.

However, the distribution also shows that exposure varied among students, with 33.82% in the moderate category and 13.24% in the low category. This variation can be understood through the concept of extensive reading, the practice of reading large amounts of accessible, self-selected material primarily for meaning (Krashen, 2004): students in the high exposure category likely engaged more frequently in voluntary, low-pressure reading of English captions, comments, and posts. It also relates to Soepriyanti et al. (2022), who emphasized the importance of digital literacy in making meaningful use of digital resources for English learning. While that study highlighted variation in how students use digital resources, the present study highlights variation in how much English content students are exposed to in the first place, which suggests that exposure and digital literacy are related but separate factors. The variation may also reflect differences in students' interests, algorithmic content selection, device access, and the extent to which students intentionally follow English-language accounts.

Regarding reading comprehension, most students demonstrated excellent performance (66.18%), which is in line with the view that reading comprehension involves the interaction between the reader, the text, and the activity of reading (Snow, 2002) and requires processes such as identifying important information, processing vocabulary and sentence structures, and constructing meaning (Grabe & Stoller, 2011). This relatively high performance may be associated with students' increasing interaction with written English in digital environments. Nevertheless, a combined 19.12% of the students were classified as poor or very poor, indicating a meaningful

gap between the highest- and lowest-performing students, possibly related to differences in vocabulary knowledge, reading strategies, motivation, and previous learning experiences. The cross-tabulation also showed that 28 of 36 students (77.78%) with high or very high exposure reached the excellent category, compared with 4 of 9 students (44.44%) with low exposure, although this pattern should be interpreted cautiously.

The most important finding of this study concerns the relationship between the two variables. The Spearman Rank Correlation analysis revealed a significant low positive correlation between exposure to English content on social media and reading comprehension ($\rho = 0.398$, $p < 0.001$). Because the significance value was lower than the significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$, the null hypothesis was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis was accepted. This supports Krashen's (1985) Input Hypothesis, which posits that language acquisition, including reading ability, develops through exposure to meaningful and comprehensible input. Students who frequently interact with English content on social media are likely to encounter vocabulary and sentence structures repeatedly in authentic contexts, which may gradually strengthen their reading comprehension (Nation, 2001). The finding is also consistent with the socio-cultural perspective of Vygotsky (1978), since social media provides a digital environment in which students encounter authentic English and interact with content produced for real communication.

The finding is also broadly consistent with previous studies. Ramadana and Lolita (2026) reported a significant positive relationship between social media engagement and reading comprehension among senior high school students in Indonesia, and Mohamad et al. (2023) found that social media use in English learning across Southeast Asia was associated with several learning outcomes. In other contexts, Hamat and Abu Hassan (2019) reported that Malaysian university students perceived benefits of social networking services for English learning in several language areas, including reading, and Al-Ghamdi (2025) found perceived benefits of social media for Saudi students' vocabulary, listening, and motivation, while noting the need for appropriate guidance and formal feedback. At the local level, the result is in line with Alpina et al. (2025), who also used a correlational design and found a significant relationship between students' interest and English learning outcomes at SMAN 5 Mataram. Related to reading materials, Elmiana (2018) found that the tasks in senior high school EFL textbooks in Indonesia did not fully reflect the principles of communicative language teaching, which highlights the importance of complementing textbooks with authentic and varied English texts such as those found on social media.

Nevertheless, although the relationship was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), the coefficient of 0.398 falls within the low correlation range. The result should therefore not be interpreted as evidence that social media exposure is the only or dominant factor determining students' reading comprehension. Reading comprehension is a complex ability influenced by vocabulary knowledge, reading strategies, motivation, prior knowledge, reading habits, classroom instruction, and individual learning differences, so the present finding suggests an association rather than a complete explanation. This low correlation may also occur because social media exposure is often incidental, fragmented, and entertainment-oriented; without purposeful reading, strategy use, and teacher guidance, exposure may not be

converted into improved comprehension. In addition, vocational students' reading comprehension may be shaped more strongly by their vocational English materials, classroom instruction, and workplace-oriented literacy demands. This is also consistent with the broader effort in Indonesian English language education to strengthen students' English proficiency through both informal exposure and structured curricular support (Lestari et al., 2026). Future research should therefore include additional variables such as vocabulary mastery, reading habits, motivation, digital literacy, prior English proficiency, and instructional quality, and should consider longitudinal or experimental designs to examine whether specific forms of social media exposure contribute to changes in reading comprehension over time.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the level of Grade 10 students' exposure to English content on social media, the level of their reading comprehension, and the relationship between the two variables among 68 students of SMKN 2 Mataram. The main findings can be summarized into three points. First, students' exposure to English content on social media was high, with 44.12% in the High category and 8.82% in the Very High category. Second, students' reading comprehension was generally good, with 66.18% reaching the Excellent category. Third, Spearman Rank Correlation showed a statistically significant low positive relationship between exposure to English content on social media and reading comprehension ($\rho = 0.398$, $p < 0.001$). Because the significance value was lower than the significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) was accepted. Students with higher exposure tended to have better reading comprehension, but because the relationship was low, social media exposure should not be regarded as the only factor associated with students' reading comprehension.

This study contributes to English language education, particularly in vocational high schools, by providing empirical evidence that social media can serve as a supplementary source of authentic English input outside the classroom. However, its contribution depends on purposeful use, critical content selection, and support from teachers and schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research findings, it is recommended that students use social media purposefully as a supplementary resource for learning English—rather than merely for entertainment—by actively engaging with captions, comments, subtitles, and short articles, while critically selecting content that aligns with their personal interests and vocational fields. English teachers are encouraged to integrate curated, authentic content from social media—such as captions, subtitled short videos, posts, comments, or short articles—as supplementary reading material, while simultaneously providing explicit instruction on reading strategies, including identifying main ideas, understanding meaning within context, and making inferences. Schools are advised to support the responsible integration of digital resources and provide guidance on digital literacy within English language instruction. Furthermore, future researchers are encouraged to examine these relationships using larger samples and by accounting for additional factors such as

vocabulary mastery, reading habits, motivation, digital literacy, baseline English proficiency, and the quality of instruction. Employing longitudinal, experimental, or mixed-methods research designs would also be beneficial to explore whether specific types of exposure to English on social media contribute to changes in reading comprehension over time, particularly among vocational high school (SMK) students.

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