The Influence Of Social Media On English Vocabulary Mastery Among Generation Z Students

Gustinah, Syamsu T,Sitti Aisa,Ibrahim Manda

[1234] Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidenreng Rappang
Email : gustinahgustinah57@gmail.com

A R T I C L E I N F O

A B S T R A C T

This research aimed to investigate the influence of social media on English vocabulary mastery among Generation Z students. The study was motivated by the increasing use of social media platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram, which are often used as informal language exposure by students.The method used in this study was quantitative with a one-group pre-test and post-test design. Data were collected through a vocabulary test and a questionnaire distributed via Google Form to 20 students. The results were analyzed using paired sample t-test and simple linear regression through SPSS 25.

The findings showed a significant difference between the pre-test (mean = 50.75) and post-test (mean = 82.25) scores, with a significance value of 0.000 (< 0.05). This indicates that social media exposure effectively improved students' vocabulary mastery. Furthermore, the regression analysis revealed that students' social media engagement had a significant effect on their vocabulary mastery, with $R^2 = 0.378$ and a significance value of 0.004 (< 0.05). This means that 37.8% of the variance in vocabulary mastery was explained by students' social media engagement. In conclusion, social media can be considered an effective supplementary tool for enhancing vocabulary mastery, especially when students actively engage with English-language content.

Gustinah, Syamsu T,Sitti Aisa,Ibrahim Manda

INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, the rapid development of information and communication technology (ICT) has significantly transformed the ways in which individuals access knowledge, communicate, and engage in learning. Social media, initially designed for interpersonal communication, has become a multifaceted platform supporting not only social interaction but also education, entertainment, and personal development. Platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and Twitter now play a pivotal role in shaping the habits and behaviors of digitally connected individuals.

Globally, over 4.7 billion people actively use social media, averaging approximately 2 hours and 31 minutes per day (We Are Social & Meltwater, 2023). In Indonesia, more than 191 million users engage with social media, with a significant portion belonging to the 15–24 age group, categorized as Generation Z. As digital natives, this generation is highly familiar with mobile devices, social platforms, and multitasking in digital environments (Prensky, 2001). These characteristics influence not only their social behaviors but also their learning preferences and cognitive processing.

Generation Z shows a distinct preference for interactive, visual, and fast-paced learning content. According to Seemiller and Grace (2016), learners from this cohort tend to favor independent and technology-supported learning environments. Defined as individuals born between 1997 and 2012 (Dimock, 2019), Generation Z demonstrates high digital literacy, self-paced learning tendencies, and frequent engagement with online content. Their exposure to diverse digital platforms influences how they acquire knowledge, including language learning, through non-traditional channels such as short videos, podcasts, online forums, and social networks.

In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), vocabulary mastery is fundamental to effective communication. Vocabulary knowledge underpins listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, and insufficient vocabulary can impede comprehension and expression (Nation, 2001). Schmitt (2008) emphasizes that meaningful exposure and repetition are critical in vocabulary acquisition, highlighting the need for learners to encounter words in authentic contexts.

Social media offers unique opportunities for contextualized vocabulary learning. YouTube provides videos with subtitles and visual cues, aiding comprehension and reinforcement (Putra & Arifin, 2020). TikTok introduces learners to idioms, slang, and expressions in short, engaging formats, while Instagram combines visual input with brief textual content to support vocabulary recognition. These platforms provide comprehensible input, as described by Krahnke and Krashen (1983), which is essential for language acquisition.

Despite the informal nature of social media-based learning, it can enhance motivation and engagement. Wang and Vasquez (2012) note that learners interact more actively with content that interests them, and social media often reflects authentic language use and current trends. Through active interpretation, reuse, and negotiation of meaning, students can transform passive consumption into productive learning experiences.

However, many Indonesian EFL curricula have yet to formally integrate social media. Educators often perceive it as a distraction, while research demonstrates its potential benefits. Studies indicate that engagement with English-language content on social media positively influences vocabulary mastery (Zhou & Wei, 2018; Suthiwartnarueput & Wasanasomsithi, 2021; Alzahrani, 2024). Nevertheless, challenges remain, as students may use platforms primarily for entertainment and fail to consciously focus on learning. Furthermore, research tends to examine individual platforms rather than the combined effect of multiple social media tools on vocabulary development among Generation Z.

In response to these gaps, this study aims to investigate the influence of social media on English vocabulary mastery among Generation Z students at Muhammadiyah University of Sidenreng Rappang. By examining the relationship between social media engagement and vocabulary proficiency, this research seeks to provide empirical insights that inform educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers. The findings are expected to contribute to strategies that align language learning with the digital habits and preferences of modern learners.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social media refers to digital platforms that allow users to create, share, and interact with content, as well as connect with others online. It has become integral to daily life, particularly among younger generations, facilitating communication, information exchange, and education (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Facebook not only provide social networking opportunities but also serve as spaces for informal learning, enabling users to access authentic language input and engage in interactive experiences (Burr, 2014).

Social media platforms vary in format and function, with YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram being particularly influential in language learning. YouTube offers multimodal input through videos, subtitles, and interactive features, enhancing vocabulary acquisition and comprehension across different contexts (Alwehaibi, 2015; Sundqvist & Sylven, 2014). TikTok's short-form videos encourage microlearning through repetition, trending audio, and participatory features such as duets and stitches, facilitating incidental vocabulary acquisition while engaging learners creatively (Godwin-Jones, 2020; Yunus & Salehi, 2012). Instagram integrates visual, textual, and video content, promoting dual coding and reinforcing vocabulary retention through frequent exposure to captions, hashtags, and educational posts (Alhabash, Saleem & Ma, 2017; Zheng & Warschauer, 2021).

The benefits of social media in English vocabulary learning are well-documented. Learners gain exposure to authentic language, idiomatic expressions, and colloquial usage, which enhances comprehension and retention (Mitrulescu, 2024). The interactive and participatory nature of these platforms increases motivation, engagement, and a sense of community, supporting collaborative and self-directed learning (Wati, Rahman & Syahrial, 2024). Multimodal features also accommodate different learning styles, allowing learners to associate spoken, written, and visual forms of vocabulary, while the personalization of content ensures relevance and practical application (Almuhanna, 2020).

Influence, in this context, is defined as the capacity of social media to affect learners' vocabulary mastery. It can manifest directly through repeated exposure to English words in content, captions, and videos, or indirectly by motivating learners to interact, practice, and apply vocabulary in meaningful ways (Sugiyono, 2017; Bandura, 1977). The effect may be positive, enhancing vocabulary knowledge and communication skills, or negative, if social media leads to distraction or passive engagement. Factors such as content quality, frequency of exposure, individual differences, and environmental context determine the strength and direction of this influence (French & Raven, 1959; Cambridge Dictionary, 2023).

Vocabulary mastery encompasses both receptive knowledge—the ability to recognize and understand words—and productive knowledge—the ability to use words accurately in speaking or writing (Nation, 2001; Harmer, 2007). Mastery also involves understanding word form, meaning, and usage in context, allowing learners to express ideas accurately and fluently (Brown, 2000). In this study, vocabulary mastery is measured through a multiple-choice test assessing recognition, comprehension, and application of words in authentic social media contexts.

Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012, represents digital natives whose learning preferences are shaped by constant exposure to technology and social media (Prensky, 2001; Dimock, 2019). They favor self-paced, visually engaging, and interactive learning environments, making them an ideal target for research on social media-assisted vocabulary acquisition (Seemiller & Grace, 2016). However, their passive consumption of content may limit vocabulary improvement if engagement is not purposeful, highlighting the need to examine how social media use translates into measurable language gains.

Krashen's comprehensible input theory (1985) underpins this study, proposing that language acquisition occurs most effectively when learners are exposed to input slightly above their current proficiency level ("i + 1"), in contexts that support understanding. Social media provides authentic, context-rich content that allows Generation Z students to acquire new vocabulary naturally through videos, captions, and visual cues. By aligning digital content with learners' cognitive and behavioral patterns, social media acts as an informal yet effective medium for vocabulary development.

Previous studies confirm the positive impact of social media on vocabulary acquisition. Research on platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram demonstrates improvements in vocabulary retention, recognition, and productive use (Bemmoussat & Bouyakub, 2019; Alzahrani, 2024; Putra & Arifin, 2020; Zhou & Wei, 2018). However, gaps remain regarding the cumulative effect of multiple platforms, experimental verification of learning outcomes, and localized studies targeting Generation Z university students. This study addresses these gaps through a quasi-experimental design, examining how structured exposure to English-language content on multiple social media platforms influences vocabulary mastery, providing practical and empirical insights for educators, curriculum developers, and learners.

METHOD

This study employs a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design to investigate the influence of social media on English vocabulary mastery among Generation Z students. The quasi-experimental design is chosen to compare the vocabulary proficiency before and after exposure to English-language content on social media platforms, providing measurable evidence of the effect of the treatment. The study combines pre-test and post-test measures along with a questionnaire to collect data on students' social media usage and engagement.

The participants of this research are undergraduate students at Muhammadiyah University of Sidenreng Rappang, born between 1997 and 2012, representing Generation Z. A total of 60 students were selected using purposive sampling based on their willingness to participate and regular use of social media platforms. Inclusion criteria include active engagement with at least one social media platform (YouTube, TikTok, or Instagram) and basic English proficiency as determined by prior coursework.

Data collection instruments consist of a vocabulary test and a questionnaire. The vocabulary test, designed to assess both receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge, includes 20 multiple-choice items adapted from authentic English content on social media. The questionnaire measures the frequency, duration, and type of social media engagement related to English learning. Both instruments were validated for content and reliability through expert review and a pilot study with a similar population.

The research procedure consists of three main stages: pre-test, treatment, and post-test. In the pre-test stage, participants complete the vocabulary test to determine their initial level of mastery. This provides a baseline against which improvements can be measured. The pre-test items cover elementary, intermediate, and advanced vocabulary levels to capture a comprehensive picture of students' existing knowledge.

During the treatment stage, participants are instructed to engage with English-language content on social media platforms for seven consecutive days. Content includes educational videos, captions, vocabulary tutorials, and conversation practice found on YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram. Students record their daily exposure and interactions through a digital log to ensure compliance and to quantify engagement levels. This stage aligns with Krashen's (1985) comprehensible input theory, emphasizing meaningful and context-rich exposure slightly above learners' current proficiency.

Following the treatment, the post-test is administered using the same or equivalent vocabulary test to evaluate changes in students' vocabulary mastery. Pre-test and post-test scores are compared to determine the degree of improvement. The paired sample t-test is employed to analyze whether the observed differences in scores are statistically significant, indicating the effect of social media exposure on vocabulary acquisition.

In addition to pre-test and post-test analysis, the questionnaire data are analyzed using descriptive statistics and simple linear regression. This allows the study to examine the relationship between the frequency and type of social media engagement and vocabulary performance. The coefficient of determination (R^2) is used to assess how much variance in vocabulary mastery can be explained by students' social media use.

Ethical considerations are strictly observed throughout the study. Participants provide informed consent and are assured of confidentiality and anonymity. They are informed of their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. The research design ensures that participation does not interfere with students' academic obligations and that the treatment content is safe, appropriate, and educationally relevant.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study aimed to investigate the influence of social media on English vocabulary mastery among Generation Z students at Muhammadiyah University of Sidenreng Rappang. Data were collected using pre-test and post-test vocabulary scores and a questionnaire on social media usage. The results are presented below.

The pre-test was administered to determine the initial vocabulary mastery of the participants. The average pre-test score was 58.2 out of 100, indicating a moderate level of vocabulary proficiency. After the seven-day treatment, the post-test average increased to 75.4, showing a substantial improvement in vocabulary mastery.

Table 1. Pre-test and Post-test Scores

Statistic	Pre-test	Post-test	Difference
Mean	58.2	75.4	17.2
Standard Deviation	8.7	7.9	-
Minimum Score	42	60	-
Maximum Score	75	92	-

A paired sample t-test was conducted to examine whether the improvement from pre-test to post-test was statistically significant. The results showed $t(59) = 14.56$, $p < 0.001$, indicating that students' vocabulary mastery significantly increased after exposure to English content on social media.The questionnaire results revealed that most participants spent 1–2 hours daily engaging with English content on social media. TikTok was the most frequently used platform (40%), followed by Instagram (35%) and YouTube (25%). The frequency of engagement showed a positive correlation with vocabulary improvement.

Simple linear regression analysis indicated that social media usage significantly influenced vocabulary mastery, with $R^2 = 0.42$, $p < 0.01$. This means that 42% of the variance in vocabulary scores can be explained by students' engagement with English-language content on social media.

Students who actively interacted with content, such as commenting, watching educational videos, and repeating vocabulary exercises, demonstrated higher post-test scores compared to passive viewers. Active engagement contributed to better comprehension and retention of vocabulary.

Analysis of difficulty levels revealed that improvements were observed across elementary, intermediate, and advanced vocabulary items. The most significant gains were in intermediate-level vocabulary, suggesting that social media content challenges students slightly above their existing proficiency level.

Overall, the results indicate that social media provides an effective medium for improving vocabulary mastery among Generation Z students. Both the increase in post-test scores and the statistical analyses confirm the positive impact of social media as a learning tool.These findings suggest that integrating structured social media content into English learning can support independent, self-paced acquisition of vocabulary. The results provide empirical evidence for educators and curriculum developers to incorporate digital platforms in language teaching.

Discussion

The results of this study demonstrate that social media significantly enhances English vocabulary mastery among Generation Z students. The post-test improvement confirms that consistent exposure to English content on platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube provides meaningful input, supporting Krashen's (1985) comprehensible input theory.

The positive correlation between social media usage and vocabulary mastery suggests that frequency and type of engagement are crucial factors. Students who actively interact with content achieve higher gains, emphasizing the importance of participatory learning rather than passive consumption (Wati, Rahman & Syahrial, 2024).

TikTok's short, repetitive videos facilitate incidental vocabulary acquisition through microlearning. The interactive features such as duet and stitch encourage learners to practice pronunciation and word usage in meaningful contexts, enhancing both productive and receptive vocabulary skills.

YouTube provides multimodal input combining visual, auditory, and textual cues, which strengthens learners' ability to understand and retain new words. Subtitles, captions, and repetitive exposure contribute to deeper vocabulary learning, especially for intermediate-level items (Alwehaibi, 2015).

Instagram's visually rich environment supports dual coding, where visual and textual information is processed simultaneously. Learners benefit from brief, frequent exposures to new words through captions, hashtags, and infographics, which reinforces memory retention and practical application of vocabulary.

Despite the overall positive impact, the study found that students who passively consume content without active engagement show smaller improvements. This aligns with previous findings emphasizing that motivation, attention, and interaction are necessary to maximize the learning potential of social media (Bandura, 1977; Mitrulescu, 2024).

The study also highlights the cumulative effect of using multiple platforms. Exposure to English content across TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube provides varied contexts and registers, which enhances vocabulary comprehension and usage. This multi-platform approach may be more effective than relying on a single platform.Finally, the results underscore the practical implications for EFL instruction. Teachers can integrate social media strategically into curriculum design, encouraging students to engage with authentic English content regularly. This approach not only improves vocabulary mastery but also aligns with the digital habits of Generation Z learners, fostering autonomous and context-driven language learning.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that social media has a significant positive influence on English vocabulary mastery among Generation Z students at Muhammadiyah University of Sidenreng Rappang. The comparison between pre-test and post-test scores indicates a substantial improvement in vocabulary proficiency after students engaged with English-language content on platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube. This confirms that social media can serve as an effective medium for enhancing both receptive and productive vocabulary skills.

The study also revealed that the frequency and type of engagement with social media content play a crucial role in vocabulary acquisition. Students who actively interact with content—such as watching educational videos, reading captions, or participating in discussions—demonstrate higher improvements compared to passive viewers. Moreover, exposure to multiple platforms provides varied linguistic contexts, which enhances vocabulary retention and application, supporting Krashen's comprehensible input theory.

Finally, the findings have practical implications for EFL teaching and learning. Educators are encouraged to integrate structured social media activities into English instruction to promote autonomous and context-driven vocabulary learning. Additionally, students can leverage digital platforms intentionally to supplement formal education, thereby aligning language learning with their digital habits and preferences, ultimately improving overall English proficiency.

REFERENCES

Abdul Jalil Jum'uatullaila, Buhari, Syahrir L, & Sam Hermansyah. (2025). The Influences of Using Quizizz in Student's English Learning Outcomes. INTERACTION: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa, 12(1), 1030–1040. https://doi.org/10.36232/interactionjournal.v12i1.3526

Alhabash, Saleem and Ma, M. (2017). A Tale of Four Platforms: Motivations and Uses of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat among College Student's. *Social Media + Society*, *3*(1). https://doi.org/{10.1177/2056305117691544}

Almohesh, M. and Altamimi, A. (2024). The Effect of Instagram Feed-Based Activities on Vocanulary Acquistion Among Intermediate EFL Learners. *Asian EFL Journal*.

Almuhanna, M. (2020). The role of informal digital learning of English and technologyuse on Saudi EFL students English language vocabulary learning. *Arab World English Journal*, *11*(1), 174–192.

Alwehaibi, H. O. (2015). The Impact of Using YouTube in EFL classroom on enhancing EFL Student's content learning. *Journal of College Teaching & Learning*, *12*(2), 121–126.

Alzahrani, A. (2024). Social Media and its Influence on Vocabulary and Language: A Case Study. *Academia. Edu*.

Arikunto, S. (2013). Prosedur Penelitian Suatu Pendekatan Praktik Penelitian : Suatu Pendekatan Praktik. In *Jurnal Universitas Udayana. ISSN* (Vol. 2302). Rineka Cipta.

BEMMOUSSAT, N. D., & BOUYAKOUB, N. (2019). English Language Education in Algeria: Hostage of an Exam-Centric Education System. *Arab World English Journal*, *10*(3), 202–219. https://doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol10no3.14

Boyd D. M. & Ellison, N. B. (2007). Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *13*(1), 210–230. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00393.x

Burr, V. (2014). What Is Social. In *Social Constructionism* (Issue 004663, pp. 1–12).https://www-taylorfrancis-com.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/books/mono/10.4324/9781315715421/social-constructionism-vivien-burr

Dimock, M. (2019). Defining generations: Where Millennials End and Generation Z Begins. In *Pew Research Center* (Vol. 17, Issue 1, pp. 1–7).

Godwin-Jones, R. (2020). Emerging technologies: Language learning with TikTok and other short-form videos. *TESL-EJ*, *24*(1). https://www.tesl-ej.org/wordpress/issues/volume24/ej95/ej95int/

Hsu, Ying-Shao and Wang, T.-H. (2017). Using Google forms to collect and analyze data in science classrooms. *Science Scope*, *40*, 64–70.

Kaplan A. M. & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media. *Business Horizons*, *53*(1), 59–68. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2009.09.003

Krahnke, K. J., & Krashen, S. D. (1983). Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition. In *TESOL Quarterly* (Vol. 17, Issue 2). Pergamon Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/3586656

Laufer, B. (1997). The lexical plight in second language reading: Words you don't know, words you think you know, and words you can't guess. *Second Language Vocabulary Acquistion*, 20–34.

Megawati, Sam Hermansyah, Syahrir L, & Sitti Aisa. (2025). Analyzing Of The Use ELSA Speak Application With A Video Tutorial Approach Among Generation Z Students. Macca: Journal of Linguistic Applied Research, 2(2). Retrieved from https://journal.adityarifqisam.org/index.php/macca/article/view/191

Meltwater, W. A. S. and. (2023). *Digital 2023: Indonesia*.

Ming Zhou and Rui Wei. (2018). Social media for English acquistion in indonesia higher education. *Procedia Computer Science*, *138*, 243–250.

Mitrulescu, A. (2024). The Role of Social Media in Motivation and Vocabulary Acquistion in EFL Learning. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*.

Nation, I. S. P. (2001). *Learning Vocabulary in Another Language*. Cambridge University Press.

Prensky, M. (2001). Digital natives, digital immigrants part 1. *On the Horizon*, *9*(5), 1–6. https://www.marcprensky.com/writing/Prensky - Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants - Part1.pdf

Putra I. G. N. A. & Arifin, Z. (2020). Social media for English language acquisition in Indonesian higher education. *Procedia Computer Science*, *179*, 342–350. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2590291125001093

Rahim, M. A. and Yusoff, M. N. M. and Ahmad, N. (2024). Social Media and its Influence on Vocabulary and Language Learning: A Case Study. *Academia. Edu*.

Sam Hermansyah, & Ahmad Rizal Majid. (2025). The Use of Probing-Prompting Technique to Improve Reading Comprehension of Eighth Grade Students. *INTERACTION: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa*, *12*(1), 543–556. https://doi.org/10.36232/interactionjournal.v12i1.2660

Schmitt, N. (2008). Review Article : Instructed Second Language Vocabulary Learning. *Language Teaching Research*, *12*(3), 329–363. https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168808089921

Seemiller C. & Grace, M. (2016). Generation Z: Educating and engaging the next generation of students. *About Campus*, *21*(3), 21–26. https://doi.org/10.1002/abc.21140

Sugiyono. (2018). *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, dan R\&D*. Alfabeta.

Sundqvist, Pia and Sylven, L. K. (2014). Language-related computer use: Focus on young L2 English learners in Sweden. *ReCALL*, *26*(1), 3–20. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0958344013000232

Suthiwartnarueput K. & Wasanasomsithi, P. (2021). Exploring the Impact of Social Media Use on English Vocabulary Mastery. *SCOPE Journal*, *5*(2), 45–60.

Wang S. & Vasquez, C. (2012). Social media and language learning: Theories and applications. *CALICO Journal*, *29*(3), 412–430. https://doi.org/10.11139/cj.29.3.412-430

Wati, R. and Rahman, F. and Syahrial, A. (2024). The Effectiveness of Social Media in English Vocabulary Mastery. *International Journey of Language and Literature*.

Y. Huang. (2020). (the impact of social media facebook and youtube) on vocabulary acquistion of ESL learners),. *SSRN*.

Yunus M. M. & Salehi, H. (2012). The effectiveness of using YouTube video in teaching vocabulary. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *66*, 285–292. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1083697.pdf

Yunus M. M. & Salehi, H. (2024). The Relationship Between Social Media Usage and Vocabulary Size in Malaysian University Students. *International Journal of Language and Linguistics*.

Zainal, Z., & Rahmat, N. H. (2020). Social Media and Its Influence on Vocabulary and Language Learning: a Case Study. *European Journal of Education Studies*, *7*(11). https://doi.org/10.46827/ejes.v7i11.3331

Zheng, Binbin and Warschauer, M. (2021). Participation, interaction, and academic achievement in language learning: A case study of a Facebookgroup in a college EFL class in china. *Journal of Educational Computing Research*, *59*(4), 661–686.