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English Exposure through Social Media and Its Influence on Vocabulary Comprehension: A Case Study of Kampung Inggris Alumni

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Abstract

This study aims to explore how English exposure through social media platforms, such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, influences vocabulary comprehension among Kampung Inggris alumni. While social media provides a continuous stream of English input, its impact on adult learners who have completed intensive programs remains under-researched, pointing to a significant research gap. Using a qualitative case study design, data were collected from 15 purposefully selected participants through an open-ended questionnaire. The findings indicate that social media plays a significant role in supporting vocabulary comprehension, primarily through incidental learning processes. Audiovisual content, visual cues, and situational context help learners recognize and infer word meanings without direct translation. Furthermore, learner engagement and content preference were identified as key factors determining the effectiveness of this exposure. Active interaction, such as searching for word meanings, led to better vocabulary retention compared to passive consumption. This research implies that social media serves as a sustainable supplementary learning medium that supports long-term vocabulary development outside the traditional classroom environment.

Keywords: English exposure; social media; vocabulary comprehension; Kampung Inggris alumni; incidental learning

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INTRODUCTION

In today's digital era, English plays a crucial role as a global lingua franca, widely used in education, business, technology, and international communication (Kurniawan, 2023). As a result, mastering English vocabulary has become an essential skill for learners to achieve academic and professional success. In this study, vocabulary comprehension serves as the primary indicator of language development, particularly in informal and immersive English learning environments.

One of the most well-known immersive environments in Indonesia is Kampung Inggris, located in Pare, Kediri, East Java. This language village attracts thousands of learners from various regions every month with its short-term intensive English programs. Many of these learners begin the course with limited or no prior English skills. However, they are expected to show significant improvement in vocabulary comprehension by the end of the program. Unfortunately, real conditions in the field show a notable variation in vocabulary outcomes among alumni, even though they share similar initial backgrounds and attend nearly identical programs. Some alumni demonstrate strong improvement, while others still struggle with understanding basic vocabulary after completing the course.

This gap between the expected outcome (improved vocabulary comprehension) and the actual performance observed in some learners raises questions about the underlying factors that affect vocabulary development beyond the classroom. One emerging factor that is gaining attention is English exposure through social media platforms, such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube. These platforms, which were initially designed for entertainment, now provide a continuous and natural stream of English input through videos, captions, music, and comments. Learners are exposed to English content both passively and actively, making social media a potentially powerful tool for accessible and flexible vocabulary acquisition, especially outside formal educational settings.

Several previous studies support this assumption. Regular exposure to English in everyday contexts, such as social media, can enhance vocabulary recognition and contextual understanding (Nation, 2022). Learners who actively engage with English media consistently show better vocabulary retention over time (Teng, 2022). The importance of digital media like YouTube in improving lexical knowledge among young learners has also been highlighted (Setiawan et al., 2025). However, most of these studies focus on high school or university students in formal academic settings. Very few studies explore the

post-course learning experiences of adult learners who continue engaging with English after completing intensive programs like those offered at Kampung Inggris.

While social media provides broad access to English exposure, its actual impact on vocabulary comprehension among post-course learners remains unclear. Furthermore, differences in content types consumed, exposure frequency, and levels of learner engagement make it difficult to determine the extent to which this exposure contributes to vocabulary development. The lack of systematic investigation in this area points to a research gap that needs to be addressed.

Based on this context, the present study aims to explore how English exposure through social media influences vocabulary comprehension among Kampung Inggris alumni. The study examines the types of content consumed, the patterns of interaction, and the level of vocabulary retention among alumni who continue to engage with English content after completing their formal courses. Additionally, it explores the supporting and hindering factors that shape their exposure, such as motivation, content preference, and media usage intensity.

The urgency of this research lies in its potential to reveal how social media can serve as a sustainable language learning tool even after formal education ends. Understanding this phenomenon may help educators, curriculum designers, and learners themselves develop strategies to maximize informal learning opportunities and support long-term vocabulary growth.

The novelty of this research lies in its specific focus on Kampung Inggris alumni as a unique population of post-course learners, which has been largely overlooked in previous studies. Most earlier research centers on active learners in formal institutions. This study is expected to contribute new insights into how social media supports English vocabulary development outside the traditional classroom environment.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative case study design to explore the influence of English exposure through social media on vocabulary comprehension among Kampung Inggris alumni. A qualitative case study is considered appropriate because it allows for an in-depth understanding of participants' real-life experiences and perceptions rather than relying on numerical data (Mohd Noor, 2008). This design enables the researcher to examine

how learners engage with English content on social media platforms and how such exposure shapes their vocabulary development after completing formal English courses.

The case focuses on Kampung Inggris alumni who have studied English for a minimum of one month and continue engaging with English content through social media. By concentrating on this specific group, the study seeks to capture contextualized insights into learners' post-course vocabulary experiences, including content preferences, engagement patterns, and perceived learning outcomes.

Research Setting and Participants

This research was conducted in the context of Kampung Inggris, located in Pare, Kediri, East Java, a well-known English learning center in Indonesia. Although the participants had completed their courses at Kampung Inggris, data collection was conducted online to accommodate participants who had returned to their respective regions. Data were collected in July 2025.

A total of 43 alumni initially responded to the questionnaire. From these, 15 participants were purposefully selected as the primary subjects based on the completeness, relevance, and depth of their responses. The participants met the following criteria: (1) having studied at Kampung Inggris for at least one month, (2) being 18 years or older, and (3) actively engaging with English content on social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, or YouTube.

Research Instrument and Data Collection

The primary research instrument used in this study was an open-ended questionnaire distributed via Google Forms. The questionnaire was designed to explore participants' experiences and perceptions regarding English vocabulary acquisition through social media exposure. It covered aspects such as frequency of exposure, types of vocabulary encountered, preferred platforms, and perceived influence on vocabulary comprehension.

The questionnaire was distributed through WhatsApp and Instagram and functioned as an indirect interview method, allowing participants to provide detailed and reflective responses. Prior to distribution, the instrument was reviewed and validated by the academic supervisor to ensure clarity and alignment with the research objectives.

Data Triangulation

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, this study applied theory triangulation. Theory triangulation was conducted by comparing participants' responses with relevant theories and previous studies related to vocabulary acquisition, second language learning, and social media-based language exposure (Carter et al., 2014; Noble & Heale, 2019). This approach helped strengthen the validity of data interpretation and minimize subjective bias.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The analysis began with repeated reading of all participants' responses to gain familiarity with the data. Relevant statements were then coded manually, and similar codes were grouped into broader themes representing recurring patterns related to vocabulary learning through social media (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

The identified themes were reviewed and refined to ensure coherence and relevance to the research objectives. Finally, the themes were interpreted by linking participants' experiences with relevant theoretical perspectives, forming the basis for the findings and discussion sections.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the study by first outlining the profiles of the 15 participants involved. The participants are described based on several demographic and relevant background variables, including age, gender, duration of enrollment in the course, the most recent course attended, and the average time spent on social media. These characteristics provide an essential context for understanding the participants' experiences and responses, as well as for interpreting the patterns emerging from the data. By presenting this profile overview, the study ensures a clearer and more comprehensive foundation for the subsequent analysis of the research findings.

Table 1. Respondent Profile

Initial	Age	Gender	Course Duration	Last Time Attended Course	Socmed Screen Time
R01	23	M	> 2 months	> 1 year ago	1–3 hours
R02	21	F	> 2 months	> 1 year ago	> 3 hours
R03	21	F	> 2 months	< 6 months ago	1–3 hours
R04	19	M	> 2 months	< 6 months ago	1–3 hours
R05	20	F	> 2 months	< 6 months ago	> 3 hours
R06	19	F	> 2 months	< 6 months ago	1–3 hours
R07	19	M	> 2 months	< 6 months ago	1–3 hours
R08	24	M	> 2 months	6–12 months ago	> 3 hours
R09	18	F	> 2 months	6–12 months ago	> 3 hours
R10	18	F	> 2 months	< 6 months ago	> 3 hours
R11	22	M	> 2 months	< 6 months ago	< 1 hours
R12	19	F	> 2 months	< 6 months ago	> 3 hours
R13	19	F	> 2 months	> 1 year ago	1–3 hours
R14	19	F	> 2 months	< 6 months ago	> 3 hours
R15	21	M	> 2 months	< 6 months ago	1–3 hours

Types of Vocabulary Commonly Encountered on Social Media

The analysis of questionnaire responses revealed that the most frequently encountered types of vocabulary on social media platforms are predominantly informal expressions, including slang, idioms, abbreviations, and casual phrases commonly used by native speakers in everyday conversation. While some respondents reported exposure to formal vocabulary, the majority emphasized informal content as the most prominent.

Based on the open-ended responses, it was evident that learners are consistently exposed to vocabulary that is not commonly taught in classroom settings, yet proves highly relevant in real-life communication. Social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube serve as informal learning environments where learners are immersed in authentic English content, often accompanied by visual cues like facial expressions, tone of voice, and real-life scenarios.

Dominance of Informal and Slang Vocabulary

Respondents noted that informal and slang vocabulary was the most frequently encountered type. This included modern expressions such as *"slay," "I'm dead," "lowkey," "ASAP," "no cap," "FOMO," "FYI,"* and many more. For example, R05 stated:

> *The vocabulary I often encounter on social media tends to be informal and slang. For example, 'I'm dead' doesn't mean someone has died, but expresses something very funny. 'Savage' describes someone bold or brutally honest.*

This aligns with Nation's view that vocabulary exposure in natural contexts contributes significantly to comprehension, especially when learners engage with colloquial and idiomatic language (Nation, 2022).

Emergence of Abbreviations and Internet-Specific Language

A number of respondents highlighted the use of abbreviations and acronyms like *"OMG," "FYI," "FYP," "TBH," "SYBAU,"* and others, indicating the influence of **internet culture** on language development. One participant, R10, explained:

> *The vocabulary I mostly find is informal and slang expressions, like "slay," "lowkey," "I'm dead," or abbreviations such as "OMG," "FYI," "TBH," and many more.*

While these terms may not appear in formal textbooks, they are highly relevant in digital communication, reflecting a broader and more dynamic vocabulary.

Exposure to Idioms and Regional Slang

Some respondents noted they encountered **idioms and regional slang** from English-speaking countries, such as American, British, or Australian English. This included terms like *"Y'all," "Cheeky," "Arvo,"* and *"Main character energy.". R9 stated:*

> *The vocabulary I often find is usually informal in the form of idioms… such as "Y'all" (you all), "Arvo" (Australian slang for afternoon), and "Cheeky" (British term for mischievous but endearing behaviour).*

This variation enriches learners' vocabulary by exposing them to diverse registers and cultural expressions, as also noted by Rahmani, who emphasized the value of authentic input for language acquisition (Rahmani, 2024).

The prevalence of informal vocabulary types on social media suggests that learners are actively engaged with language that is dynamic, relevant, and practical for real-life interaction. This finding is consistent with the idea that

English exposure in casual digital environments can support vocabulary comprehension by providing repeated encounters with words in context (Nation, 2022).

Moreover, the emphasis on slang and internet-specific terms indicates that learners are not just passively consuming content, but actively processing and applying the vocabulary they encounter in their own digital communications. These experiences reflect the constructivist approach (Churcher et al., 2014), where social interaction and engagement reinforce learning.

The findings highlight that the types of vocabulary most commonly acquired through social media are informal, idiomatic, and often culturally embedded. Learners' exposure to authentic and engaging content facilitates meaningful language acquisition, underscoring the potential of social media as a supplementary tool for vocabulary learning outside of the classroom.

Learning Through Contextual Content

Respondents frequently mentioned that they understood new vocabulary more easily due to the **context** provided by social media content. Visuals, expressions, and situations made meanings clearer without needing explicit instruction.

> *Personally, I find it easier to understand new words when I see them on social media because they're usually accompanied by videos, expressions, or situations that help me understand the word's meaning in context. (R13)*

> *Because it's shown and spoken directly in the video, we can know how it is used in conversation, especially when we see the word often. (R05)*

This statement reflects how audiovisual content on social media helps the respondent recognize not only the meaning of the vocabulary but also how it is applied in real-life conversational contexts**.** The direct visual and auditory exposure supports contextual learning. The key point here is repetition, the more they encounter the vocabulary, the more confident they become in using it.

This aligns with Nation and Krashen who emphasized the power of repeated exposure and comprehensible input in second language acquisition. The learner receives input that is slightly above their current proficiency, which promotes incidental vocabulary learning (Luo, 2024; Schmitt, 2008).

> *Because most of the English content that I watch or read on social media contains simple and easy-to-understand words. I can often guess the meaning and remember it quickly. (R01)*

This shows that simplicity and frequency are key. The respondent finds it easier to grasp new vocabulary when the content is accessible and relatable, which leads to better retention. When they can guess the meaning based on context, it builds their confidence and strengthens understanding.

> *Because most of the content I watch uses everyday English. It makes it easier for me to understand what the word means, especially when I hear the same word several times in different contexts. (R11)*

Here, the respondent underlined the benefit of encountering vocabulary in daily and repetitive contexts. Words used in everyday speech tend to be easier to remember and apply. This natural exposure leads to deeper understanding and usage fluency. This supports the theory of informal learning which emphasizes spontaneous learning in natural environments (Eraut, 2004).

From these findings, it is clear that exposure to English content on social media significantly supports learners' vocabulary comprehension. The improvement is not only in recognizing the meaning of new words but also in understanding how they are used in contextual and conversational settings. Key aspects such as repetition, simplicity, relatability, personal interest, and intrinsic motivation all play a role in enhancing this process.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that English exposure through social media plays a significant role in supporting vocabulary comprehension among Kampung Inggris alumni. Most participants reported that frequent exposure to English content on platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube helped them recognize new vocabulary, understand word meanings through context, and reinforce vocabulary learned during their course. This exposure occurred naturally through videos, captions, and spoken language, allowing learners to encounter vocabulary repeatedly in meaningful situations.

In terms of vocabulary comprehension, participants emphasized that audiovisual content made unfamiliar words easier to understand. Visual cues, tone of voice, and situational context helped learners infer meaning without

relying solely on direct translation. This finding supports the concept of incidental vocabulary learning, where learners acquire new words unintentionally through repeated exposure in authentic contexts (Nation, 2022). Social media thus functioned as an informal learning environment that extended vocabulary learning beyond the classroom.

The findings also reveal that learner engagement plays a crucial role in determining the effectiveness of social media exposure. Participants who actively interacted with English content such as watching videos attentively, repeating expressions, or searching for word meanings reported better vocabulary retention than those who consumed content passively. This aligns with the statement about who argues that active engagement with language input enhances vocabulary acquisition and long-term retention (Teng, 2020).

Another important factor influencing vocabulary comprehension is content preference. Participants tended to engage more consistently with English content that matched their personal interests, such as entertainment, daily conversations, or educational videos. Interest-driven exposure increased motivation and sustained engagement, which contributed to repeated encounters with vocabulary items. This supports previous studies highlighting the role of motivation and meaningful input in vocabulary learning (Schmitt, 2008).

However, the findings also indicate several challenges. Some participants reported difficulty understanding fast speech, unfamiliar accents, or slang expressions commonly used in social media content. Additionally, inconsistent exposure and limited focus reduced the potential benefits of social media for vocabulary development. These factors suggest that while social media provides rich input, its effectiveness depends heavily on learners' engagement strategies and exposure consistency.

Overall, this study demonstrates that English exposure through social media can positively influence vocabulary comprehension among Kampung Inggris alumni, particularly when learners actively engage with relevant and interesting content. Social media serves as a sustainable supplementary learning medium that supports vocabulary development after formal English courses end. This finding extends previous research by highlighting the role of social media in post-course learning contexts, a population that has received limited attention in existing studies.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the influence of English exposure through social media on vocabulary comprehension among Kampung Inggris alumni. The findings demonstrate that social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube provide continuous and contextualized English input that supports vocabulary comprehension beyond formal classroom instruction.

The results reveal that vocabulary development among post-course learners occurs primarily through incidental learning processes. Repeated exposure to authentic English content, supported by visual and situational context, enables learners to recognize, understand, and retain new vocabulary items, including informal and conversational expressions. Learner engagement and exposure consistency were identified as key factors that determine the effectiveness of social media as a learning medium.

From a practical perspective, these findings suggest that social media can function as a sustainable supplementary tool for vocabulary development after formal English courses end. Educators may encourage learners to engage actively with English content on social media to maintain vocabulary growth, while learners can utilize their existing media consumption habits as informal learning opportunities.

This study advances the current understanding of vocabulary acquisition by highlighting the role of social media in post-course learning contexts, a population that has received limited attention in previous research. Unlike earlier studies that focus on formal educational settings, this research emphasizes vocabulary development beyond the classroom and contributes empirical evidence from Kampung Inggris alumni as a unique learning community.

In terms of scientific contribution, this study provides qualitative insights into how incidental exposure, learner engagement, and content preference interact in shaping vocabulary comprehension through digital media. These findings support and extend existing theories of vocabulary learning by situating them within contemporary social media environments.

Future research may explore longitudinal patterns of vocabulary development through social media exposure, involve larger participant groups, or combine qualitative and quantitative approaches to examine learning outcomes more comprehensively. Further studies could also investigate specific platform features that most effectively support vocabulary learning.

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