

Reading in the Digital Age: Teaching Cyber Literature through Social Media-Based Learning

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Abstract *This classroom action research examined the effectiveness of social media-based learning in teaching cyber literature to third-semester students of the Publishing study program at Politeknik Negeri Media Kreatif PSDKU Makassar. Cyber literature, digitally native narrative forms such as Wattpad serialized fiction, Twitter/X microfiction, and Instagram-based short stories—was selected as the object of study because of its growing relevance to the publishing industry's shift toward digital-first content. Using a two-cycle Kemmis and McTaggart action research design, the researcher integrated social media platforms directly into classroom instruction: students read serialized cyber-fiction excerpts, analyzed reader-comment interactions, and produced short critical responses shared within a closed class social media group. Data were collected through literary-digital comprehension tests, observation sheets, and student questionnaires. Results showed that students' mean comprehension and critical-response scores increased from 60.5 in the pre-cycle to 70.2 in Cycle I and 81.4 in Cycle II, alongside marked gains in engagement and willingness to produce peer feedback. The study concludes that social media-based learning, when structured with clear analytical tasks, can effectively support Publishing students' understanding of cyber literature as both a literary form and an emerging publishing format. Implications for curriculum design in digital-era publishing education are discussed.*

Keywords: *Cyber Literature, Social Media-Based Learning, Digital Reading, Classroom Action Research, Publishing Study Program.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The rise of digital platforms has fundamentally reshaped how literary texts are produced, distributed, and read. Cyber literature, also referred to as digital-born or net literature, encompasses narrative works created specifically for and disseminated through digital and social media environments, including serialized fiction on Wattpad, microfiction on Twitter/X, and Instagram-based visual narratives (Hayles, 2008; Ensslin, 2007; Thomas, 2020). Unlike print literature that is merely adapted for digital display, cyber literature is shaped by the affordances of digital media, often incorporating reader comments, real-time serialization, multimodal elements, and interactive feedback loops that can influence narrative development (Rettberg, 2019; Lutostański, 2023). Existing scholarship has established cyber literature as a distinct literary form and has examined its technological characteristics, interactivity, digital authorship, and the changing relationship between writers and readers.

This shift matters for students in publishing studies, because the publishing industry is expanding into digital-first publishing, web-fiction licensing, and social-media-driven content discovery. Publishing students therefore need to read digitally native texts critically and to evaluate and edit them in ways that reflect current industry practice. Familiarity with social media, however, does not automatically produce these skills. Baron (2017) notes that digital reading practices may differ from the sustained attention associated with conventional reading, which makes critical reading skills as important as digital literacy. Social media can support learning when it is used for structured academic tasks rather than informal communication (Greenhow & Lewin, 2016), but without clear

structure, such tasks risk encouraging shallow, entertainment-oriented reading.

Previous studies have examined the use of Wattpad excerpts and Instagram-based micro-story discussions in university classrooms (Nugroho & Aditya, 2021; Lestari, 2022). Yet little research has examined social media as a deliberate instructional medium for teaching cyber literature in publishing education, particularly through a multi-cycle action research design that refines tasks based on classroom evidence. This gap is important because publishing students need to understand not only how digital literary texts are produced and consumed, but also how they can be interpreted, evaluated, and edited in digital publishing environments.

This classroom action research addresses the gap by using social media as an instructional medium for teaching cyber literature through structured reading, commentary analysis, and peer-response activities. The study asks two questions: (1) To what extent does social media-based learning improve Publishing students' comprehension of cyber literature across two action research cycles? (2) How do students' engagement, analytical responses, and perceptions develop as the instructional tasks are refined? The findings are intended to inform the design of digital literature courses in publishing programs.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Cyber Literature: Definition and Characteristics

Cyber literature refers to literary works that are born digital composed for, distributed through, and often co-shaped by digital platforms, as distinct from print texts merely converted to digital format (Hayles, 2008; Rauterberg, H., 2025). Key characteristics include seriality, reader interactivity through comments and votes, multimodal elements (images, hyperlinks, emojis), and a collapsed distance between author and audience (Ensslin, 2007; Rettberg, 2019; Tenrisanna et al., 2024; Jumriati et al., 2021; Rahim et al., 2024). Wattpad fiction exemplifies these features, with authors frequently revising ongoing narratives in response to reader comments, blurring the boundary between writing and publishing processes.

B. Theoretical Basis

Social media-based learning refers to the pedagogical use of platforms such as Instagram, Twitter/X, and Wattpad as spaces for structured academic tasks, rather than solely informal communication (Greenhow & Lewin, 2016). Research suggests that when social media use is scaffolded with clear academic purpose, it can enhance collaborative meaning-making and lower barriers to participation compared to traditional classroom discussion formats (Manca & Ranieri, 2016). However, scholars caution that without structure, social media-based tasks risk reproducing shallow, entertainment-oriented reading habits rather than fostering critical engagement (Baron, 2017).

C. Teaching Digital Literature in Publishing Education

Within publishing curricula, understanding cyber literature is tied not only to literary appreciation but to practical editorial competence: recognizing narrative viability for adaptation, evaluating audience engagement metrics, and understanding licensing considerations unique to web fiction (Thomas, 2020; Tenrisanna et al., 2022; Pratiwi et al., 2026; Andini et al., 2026). Teaching cyber literature therefore requires an approach that treats the text and its platform-native reception (comments, likes, shares) as inseparable objects of analysis.

D. Classroom Action Research as a Methodological Framework

Classroom action research (CAR) is a form of practitioner-led inquiry in which teachers examine and improve their own instructional practice through systematic, reflective cycles. In the model

developed by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), each cycle comprises four interrelated stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection. Planning involves identifying a problem and designing an intervention; action implements the plan in the classroom; observation collects evidence on how the intervention works; and reflection interprets this evidence to decide what should be retained, revised, or abandoned. The reflection stage of one cycle then informs the planning stage of the next, so that the process forms a spiral of continuous improvement rather than a single, one-off intervention.

This framework suits the present study because the effectiveness of social media-based learning depends heavily on how tasks are designed. Scaffolded social media use can support collaborative meaning-making and participation (Greenhow & Lewin, 2016; Manca & Ranieri, 2016), whereas unstructured tasks risk encouraging shallow, entertainment-oriented reading habits (Baron, 2017; Weda et al., 2021; Anggawirya et al., 2021). Because the right level of structure is difficult to determine in advance, an iterative design allows the instructor to test a task, examine how students actually respond, and adjust it accordingly. In this study, evidence from the first cycle, including comprehension scores, engagement indicators, and observation notes, served as the basis for the reflection that shaped the revised tasks in the second cycle. This allowed the study to trace how students' comprehension, participation, and analytical responses changed as the intervention was refined, rather than evaluating a single fixed treatment.

E. Previous Related Studies

Nugroho and Aditya (2021) found that structured use of Wattpad excerpts improved university students' narrative analysis skills, while Lestari (2022) reported that Instagram-based micro-story discussions increased student participation compared to conventional seminar formats. These findings are in line with broader research on social media in higher education, which suggests that scaffolded use of these platforms can support collaborative meaning-making and lower barriers to participation (Greenhow & Lewin, 2016; Manca & Ranieri, 2016). They also support the view that platform-native texts and their reception can serve as legitimate objects of literary study, as Thomas (2020) argues in discussing how social media reshape the production and reading of literary texts. At the same time, the two studies examined Wattpad and Instagram separately, which leaves open how different platforms and text types might be combined within a single instructional design. However, few studies have examined these interventions specifically within Publishing study programs or applied a multi-cycle action research design, a gap this study addresses.

III. METHODS

A. Research Design

This study used a classroom action research design following Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), conducted across two cycles, each comprising planning, action, observation, and reflection stages, with findings from Cycle I informing refinements implemented in Cycle II.

B. Research Setting and Participants

The research was conducted at the Publishing study program, [University/Institute Name], involving [number, e.g., 30] third-semester students enrolled in a Digital and Contemporary Literature course during the [semester/year] academic year. Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on the intact class assigned to the researcher.

C. Procedure

Cycle I. Students were assigned to read a serialized Wattpad excerpt and a set of Twitter/X microfiction pieces individually, then post short critical responses within a closed class social media group, addressing narrative technique and reader-comment interaction. In the reflection stage, the research team observed that many responses remained descriptive (plot summary) rather than analytical, and that some students were reluctant to comment publicly within the group.

Cycle II. Based on this reflection, the researcher introduced a structured response template requiring students to address three specific prompts (narrative technique, platform-shaped structure, and evaluation of publishing potential), and shifted initial responses to small private groups before public posting, to reduce social pressure. An Instagram-based visual microfiction task was added as the second cyber-literature object of study.

D. Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected through: (1) a literary-digital comprehension test assessing understanding of narrative technique, platform-shaped structure, and critical evaluation (20 items); (2) observation sheets recording engagement indicators (posting frequency, analytical depth, peer response); and (3) a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire on student perceptions. Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively; qualitative observation data were analyzed thematically and triangulated with test and questionnaire results.

IV. RESULTS

This section reports the findings of the two-cycle classroom action research in four parts: (A) the improvement in students' comprehension of cyber literature, (B) changes in engagement and participation, (C) students' perceptions of social media-based learning, and (D) the challenges encountered and how they were addressed. Quantitative results are reported descriptively, and the observation data are read alongside the test and questionnaire results.

A. Improvement in Comprehension of Cyber Literature

Table 1 shows a steady increase in students' mean comprehension scores across the research cycles.

Assessment Stage	Mean Score	Students Reaching Minimum Mastery (%)
Pre-cycle	60.5	33%
Cycle I	70.2	57%
Cycle II	81.4	83%

Mean scores rose from 60.5 in the pre-cycle to 70.2 in Cycle I (+9.7 points) and to 81.4 in Cycle II (+11.2 points), a cumulative gain of 20.9 points. The percentage of students reaching minimum mastery followed the same pattern, increasing from 33% to 57% in Cycle I (+24 percentage points) and to 83% in Cycle II (+26 percentage points). Gains on both indicators were therefore larger in Cycle II, the cycle in which the structured response template, the small-group-first posting strategy, and the Instagram-based microfiction task were introduced. By the end of Cycle II, most of the class had met the minimum mastery criterion, compared with one in three students before the intervention.

B. Engagement and Participation

Table 2 summarizes the engagement indicators recorded on the observation sheets.

Indicator	Cycle I	Cycle II
Posts per student (average)	1.2	3.1
Analytical depth (4-point scale)	1.9	3.0

Posting frequency in the class social media group rose from an average of 1.2 posts per student in Cycle I to 3.1 in Cycle II, about 2.6 times higher. Analytical depth, rated on the 4-point observation scale, increased from 1.9 to 3.0. In Cycle I, the observation notes recorded that many responses remained descriptive, mostly retelling the plot, and that some students hesitated to comment publicly. In Cycle II, after the structured template was introduced, responses were organized around the three prompts (narrative technique, platform-shaped structure, and evaluation of publishing potential), and the increase in analytical depth coincided with this change.

C. Student Perceptions

Questionnaire results (five-point Likert scale; figures combine “agree” and “strongly agree”) showed that 81% of students agreed that using familiar social media platforms made the analysis of literature feel more relevant to their intended profession. In addition, 74% reported greater confidence in evaluating a text’s suitability for digital publication after the intervention. These perceptions are consistent with the observation data: the students’ more frequent and more analytical posts in Cycle II were accompanied by positive views of the learning activities.

D. Challenges Identified

Three challenges emerged during implementation. First, students were initially reluctant to post publicly; this was addressed in Cycle II by having students post first in small private groups before moving to the public class group. Second, many responses tended toward summary rather than analysis; this was addressed through the structured prompt template. Both adjustments were followed by higher posting frequency and analytical depth (Table 2). Third, minor technical issues, such as inconsistent access to particular platforms, required the researcher to prepare downloadable backups of all text excerpts so that no student was excluded from the task.

V. DISCUSSION

A. Structured Social Media as an Instructional Environment

The findings support the argument that social media platforms can serve as legitimate instructional environments for literary analysis when tasks are deliberately structured. This is consistent with Greenhow and Lewin’s (2016) view of social media as a scaffolded learning space rather than an unstructured distraction, and with Manca and Ranieri’s (2016) observation that scaffolded social media use can lower barriers to participation. The contrast between the two cycles is especially informative. Cycle I used the same platforms and the same kinds of texts, yet responses remained largely descriptive; analytical depth improved only after explicit prompts were added in Cycle II. This pattern echoes Baron’s (2017) caution that familiarity with digital media does not automatically translate into critical reading without explicit pedagogical framing. In this study, the platform provided a familiar and accessible setting, but the structure of the task is what appears to have turned participation into analysis.

B. The Contribution of Iterative Action Research Cycles

The two-cycle design allowed problems identified in the reflection stage of Cycle I to be addressed directly in Cycle II, as the Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) model intends. Each problem (descriptive responses and reluctance to post publicly) was matched with a specific modification, and the indicators related to these problems improved in the following cycle. At the same time, the structured template, the private small-group posting, and the Instagram-based task were introduced together in Cycle II. The data therefore show that the revised package of activities was associated with improvement, but they cannot separate the contribution of each component.

The results are also consistent with earlier studies. Nugroho and Aditya (2021) reported that

structured use of Wattpad excerpts improved university students' narrative analysis skills, and Lestari (2022) found that Instagram-based micro-story discussions increased student participation. The present study combines both platforms in a multi-cycle design and reports gains in comprehension as well as participation within a Publishing study program, a context that, as noted in the literature review, has received little attention.

C. Relevance for Publishing Education

For Publishing students specifically, the prompt on evaluating publishing potential appears to have linked literary analysis with future professional practice. The questionnaire results, in which 81% of students found the analysis more relevant to their intended profession and 74% felt more confident judging a text's suitability for digital publication, point in this direction. This addresses the disciplinary relevance gap noted by Thomas (2020), who ties the teaching of digital literature to practical editorial competence, and it supports treating a text and its platform-native reception (comments, likes, and shares) as inseparable objects of analysis. These results reflect students' self-reported confidence, however, and not a direct measure of editorial performance.

The small-group-first posting strategy also appears to have lowered participation barriers. This suggests that affective scaffolding, and not only cognitive scaffolding, is needed when public-facing academic tasks on social media are introduced.

D. Pedagogical Implications

Four practical implications follow from these findings. First, social media-based literary tasks should include explicit analytical prompts, since open-ended posting tends to produce summary. Second, public exposure should be staged, with small private groups preceding the public class group. Third, literary analysis should be connected to industry-relevant judgments, such as assessing a text's publishing potential. Fourth, instructors should prepare offline copies of source texts so that uneven platform access does not disadvantage any student.

E. Limitations

These findings should be read with caution. The study involved a single intact class and had no control group, so the observed gains may partly reflect increased familiarity with the assessment format and not the intervention alone. The perception data are self-reported, and the researcher's role in teaching the class may have influenced the observations. In addition, only two cycles were conducted, and the study did not test whether the gains were retained after the course. Future research could use a comparison group, include a delayed post-test, extend the number of cycles, and examine other platforms and genres of cyber literature.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study examined the use of social media as an instructional medium for teaching cyber literature to Publishing students through a two-cycle classroom action research. The results show that structured, social media-based tasks improved students' comprehension: mean scores rose from 60.5 before the intervention to 70.2 in Cycle I and 81.4 in Cycle II, and the share of students reaching minimum mastery increased from 33% to 57% and then to 83%. Engagement also improved, with posting frequency rising from 1.2 to 3.1 posts per student and analytical depth from 1.9 to 3.0 on a 4-point scale. In the questionnaire, 81% of students agreed that the activities made literary analysis more relevant to their intended profession, and 74% reported greater confidence in judging a text's suitability for digital publication.

The comparison between the cycles suggests that the platform alone was not what produced the improvement. In Cycle I, responses remained largely descriptive and some students hesitated to

post publicly. The gains came after Cycle II introduced a structured response template, small-group-first posting, and an Instagram-based visual microfiction task. The study therefore indicates that social media works best as a learning environment when tasks are supported by explicit analytical prompts and staged public exposure.

Several limitations should be noted. The study involved a single class without a control group, so part of the gain may reflect growing familiarity with the assessment format. The perception data are self-reported, and the researcher's role as instructor may have influenced the observations. The study also cannot separate the effect of each Cycle II component, as they were introduced together. Future research could use a comparison group, add a delayed post-test, extend the number of cycles, and examine other platforms and genres of cyber literature. Publishing educators can nonetheless draw on these findings by pairing digital literary texts with explicit analytical prompts, introducing public posting gradually, and linking literary analysis to practical editorial judgment such as evaluating publishing potential.

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