# When Social Media Shapes Instruction: Credibility, Implications, and Cautions

Rowe, L. W., Jerasa, S., Dunham, H., Bates, C. C., Pirolla, T., & Malloy, M. M. (2025). The Science of Reading on social media: TikTok content creators' discourse patterns and bodies of knowledge. *Reading Research Quarterly, 60*(4), 1-16. https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.70057

## WHAT DID THEY DO?

In this two-phase qualitative study, Rowe et al. (2025) collected 156 Science of Reading (SOR) videos on TikTok over a 4-week period. In the first phase, all of the videos were viewed and placed into one (or two) of the four main categories, depending on the content of the video:

- professional content knowledge
- direct demonstration
- materials and resources
- identity formation (e.g., content creator's beliefs, knowledge, experiences)

The second phase only focused on videos from the first category- professional content knowledge. These videos were created to build teachers' background knowledge of the SOR. Knowledge shared by content creators either had:

- Cited research (7%)
- General claims or theories (62%)
- No source (31%)

The purpose of this study was to understand the quality of content that teachers are consuming on TikTok, as well as the potential limitations of videos presented as "aligned with the SOR".

## WHAT DID THEY FIND?

In each video, content creators (CC) were positioned as credible experts. The CC either spoke to viewers about the SOR, shared personal experiences, or provided direct modeling of reading instruction. While a handful of CCs did reference theoretical frameworks (e.g., Simple View of Reading), the majority did not cite specific research or only made sweeping generalizations. Due to the short nature of TikTok videos, the content oversimplified the complex nature of reading instruction and often failed to acknowledge the limitations of instructional strategies shared within an average 90-second (or less) video.

## WHAT COULD THIS MEAN FOR TEACHERS?

Social media platforms are increasingly shaping conversations around education, and have the potential to reach a diverse range of educators. However, teachers should be cautious when engaging in bite-sized videos on social media. While these videos could provide a way for teachers to enhance their educational practice, teachers should also be aware of the limitations or oversimplifications presented. When CC's are positioned as experts, regardless of their qualifications, it is important that educators cross-check these claims of "high-quality instruction". For example, teachers can seek out more thorough explanations from literacy experts within their own buildings (e.g., Reading Specialists, instructional coaches). While social media could serve as an educational tool, not all content is created equally, and it is important for teachers to evaluate the quality of content presented, especially prior to adopting and implementing new instructional practices.

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