

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains the research background, research question, research purposes, research significance, research scope, conceptual framework, and previous studies.

A. Background

In the digital era, social media has become an inseparable part of students' daily lives. Media platforms such as TikTok, YouTube Shorts, and Instagram Reels provide short-form video content that can be accessed anytime and anywhere through mobile devices. Alongside their entertainment function, these platforms increasingly expose users to English-language content in authentic and informal contexts. For English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students, such exposure may play a significant role in supporting language acquisition, particularly in the development of listening skills (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012).

Listening is a fundamental skill in second language learning. It involves not only the perception of speech sounds but also complex cognitive processes such as interpreting meaning, processing linguistic input, and integrating new information with prior knowledge (Rost, 2011). This cognitive process is well-explained by the Cognitive Model of Listening Comprehension (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012), which details the mental operations from perception to parsing and interpretation that learners must manage, often under time pressure.

The potential of video-based media to support this process is underscored by Mayer's (2020) Multimedia Learning Theory, which posits that people learn more deeply from words and pictures together than from words alone. This dual-channel processing aligns with the audio-visual nature of short-form videos, suggesting they can provide complementary cues to aid comprehension. In the EFL context, listening is often considered one of the most challenging skills for learners to master due to limited

exposure to authentic spoken English outside the classroom (Nation & Newton, 2009). Students frequently encounter difficulties related to speech rate, unfamiliar accents, pronunciations, and complex grammatical structures, all of which can hinder comprehension.

Numerous studies indicate that limited opportunities for authentic English exposure in daily environments contribute significantly to learners' low listening proficiency in EFL contexts (Field, 2008). Unlike learners in English as a Second Language (ESL) settings, EFL students rarely interact with native speakers in real-life situations. As a result, classroom-based listening materials often become the primary source of spoken input, which may not adequately represent natural language use. This condition highlights the importance of exploring alternative sources of authentic listening input beyond formal instructional settings.

With the rapid growth of social media usage, many university students are now indirectly exposed to English through short-form videos. Research has shown that exposure to English-language content on platforms such as TikTok and Instagram Reels can positively influence EFL students' listening development, although challenges such as distraction and inconsistent content quality remain (Hamid et al., 2024). These findings suggest that short-form videos may function as a potential source of informal English input, whether students engage with them intentionally for learning purposes or incidentally during leisure activities.

Furthermore, short-form videos are often associated with the concept of microlearning, which refers to learning that occurs in short focused segments while still delivering significant information (Meliana & Seli, 2023). This format aligns with the learning preferences of many young adults, who tend to favor concise, visually engaging, and interactive materials. Through the integration of audio, visual cues, subtitles, and contextual information, short-form videos may reduce learners' anxiety and increase motivation to engage with English content outside the classroom.

Despite these potential benefits, not all students experience the same level of success when using short-form videos to develop listening skills. Some learners reported that their improvements are due to increasing exposure and familiarity with spoken English, while others continue to struggle with comprehension. Factors such as fast speech rate, informal language, idiomatic expressions, slang, and accent variations often pose significant challenges for EFL learners (Field, 2008). Additionally, the dense and rapid delivery of information in short videos may increase cognitive load, making it difficult for learners to process spoken input effectively.

Another critical issue related to the use of social media for language learners is interference. Social media platforms are designed to encourage continuous scrolling and content consumption, which can reduce learners' focus and attention. Studies have indicated that the effectiveness of learning through social media is strongly influenced by learners' motivation, self-regulation, and time management skills (Zimmerman, 2002). Without adequate control, social media can shift from being a learning resource to a source of interference.

Based on a preliminary observation, among English department students at a state Islamic university in Bandung, perceptions of using social media for listening practice vary widely. Some students perceive platforms like TikTok as helpful tools for becoming accustomed to spoken English, while others remain skeptical about their educational value. For those in favor, the benefits include exposure to a variety of authentic accents and colloquial expressions, as well as algorithms that tailor content to their interests, making the experience feel less like formal learning. Conversely, skeptics point out significant drawbacks, such as the abundance of unverified content or content containing grammatical errors, the platform's entertainment-focused nature that can easily disrupt focus, and the lack of in-depth and structured explanations.

These differing perceptions suggest that learning experiences through social media are highly subjective and influenced by individual habits, interests, and readiness to engage with language input.

Recent research has begun to explore the potential of social media for EFL listening practice, with studies documenting positive perceptions and general benefits of using platforms like YouTube (Syahputra & Fadilah, 2022) and even TikTok (Al Falaq et al., 2023) among Indonesian learners. However, this growing body of work predominantly focuses on acceptance, attitudes, and overall effectiveness. A critical aspect that remains underexplored is the specific constellation of challenges and obstacles that students actively encounter during the process. There is a lack of in-depth inquiry into what precisely hinders learners from converting their casual engagement with short-form videos into effective, sustained listening practice. Understanding these practical barriers is essential. By shifting the focus from general perception to a detailed analysis of learning difficulties, this study aims to provide concrete insights for developing targeted pedagogical strategies that address the real-world complexities of using short-form video platforms for language acquisition.

Based on the discussion above, English-language short-form videos on social media hold considerable potential for supporting EFL students' listening development. However, various linguistic, cognitive, and contextual challenges may influence the effectiveness of this learning process. Therefore, further in-depth research is needed to explore students' experiences in using short-form social media videos for listening development.

This study aims to explore the challenges faced by EFL university students when using short-form video content on social media to develop their English listening skills. By applying a qualitative approach, this research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of students' perceptions and experiences, including both the benefits and the difficulties they encounter. The findings are expected to contribute to the development

of more effective digital media–based listening strategies in higher education contexts.

A review of recent literature reveals a growing interest in the role of social media in EFL listening development. Key studies in the Indonesian context, such as those conducted by Syahputra & Fadilah (2022) on YouTube and Al Falaq et al. (2023) on TikTok, have successfully established a foundational understanding. Their primary contribution lies in documenting students' positive perceptions and general attitudes towards these platforms, confirming their acceptance and perceived utility as tools for informal listening practice. However, this collective focus on acceptance and overall potential has inadvertently created a distinct research gap.

There remains a critical lack of in-depth, qualitative investigation into the practical and specific challenges that learners actively encounter when engaging with short-form video content for listening skill development. In other words, while existing research answers the question of "whether students find these platforms useful," it leaves unanswered the more nuanced question of "what specific obstacles hinder them from using these platforms effectively." It is precisely this gap the detailed exploration of learner challenges in a specific context that the present study seeks to address.

B. Research Questions

The researcher develops two research questions based on the background described above:

1. What is the perceived impact of short-form social media videos (e.g., TikTok, YouTube Shorts, and Instagram Reels) on EFL university students' English listening skills?
2. What challenges do EFL university students face when using short-form social media videos to improve their English listening skills?

C. Research Purposes

According to the research questions, this study has the following purposes:

1. To examine EFL university students' perceptions of how short-form social media videos support their English listening development from a sociocultural perspective.
2. To explore the sociocultural challenges experienced by EFL university students when using short-form social media videos to develop their English listening skills.

D. Research Significance

This study holds significant theoretical and practical value in the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning and educational technology integration.

Theoretically, it contributes to the academic discourse on digital-mediated language learning, particularly in the domain of listening skill acquisition. While established theories such as Multimedia Learning Theory (Mayer, 2020) and cognitive models of listening comprehension (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012) explain general principles, their application to the context of algorithm-driven short-form video platforms remains limited. Therefore, this in-depth investigation of learner challenges aims to enrich existing theoretical frameworks by providing empirical data on the unique mediating factors within this informal learning environment. The findings are expected to bridge the gap between the theoretical potential of digital media and the complexities of real user experience, thereby fostering the development of more contextualized learning models.

On a practical level, the significance of this research extends to various educational stakeholders. For students as learners, a comprehensive mapping of challenges can enhance their metacognitive awareness, transforming passive viewing habits into more directed and strategic listening practice. For educators and curriculum developers, profound insights into the obstacles students face—from linguistic aspects to platform

distractions—can serve as a solid foundation for designing more relevant learning activities. These may include bridging activities that connect popular content with instructional goals, as well as providing guidance to overcome specific difficulties. Furthermore, for educational institutions and policymakers, this study highlights the urgency of equipping students with digital literacy and self-regulated learning skills, promoting the adoption of flexible and responsive pedagogical approaches attuned to the digital reality of the younger generation. Thus, this research is expected not only to contribute to the body of knowledge but also to provide an empirical basis for enhancing the quality of listening instruction that is in harmony with contemporary dynamics.

E. Research Scope

This study focuses on EFL university students who are enrolled in the English Language Education program at a state Islamic university in Bandung. It examines how these students engage with short-form video content on social media platforms such as TikTok, YouTube Shorts, and Instagram Reels. The research specifically aims to explore their perceptions, experiences, as well as the perceived benefits and challenges they encounter when using these platforms as a source of informal English listening input.

A qualitative approach is used to gain an in-depth understanding of students' experiences in developing their listening skills through short-form videos. The data are collected using open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, allowing participants to share detailed accounts of their personal engagement. The choice of methodology enables the researcher to gather profound and descriptive insights based on the students' perspectives and reflections.

The scope of the study is deliberately focused on short-form video content created by social media content creators. While other long-form formats such as podcasts and vlogs are also relevant, they are beyond the scope of this study. Furthermore, this research does not address the use of social media videos as formal instructional materials in the classroom.

Instead, it concentrates on how students independently interact with short-form videos as part of their informal and self-directed learning practices.

By maintaining this focus, the study aims to explain how everyday digital habits intersect with language acquisition, especially in contexts where exposure to authentic English is often incidental. This approach allows a clearer understanding of the autonomous learning behaviors that characterize contemporary EFL students' engagement with digital content.

F. Conceptual Framework

This study is constructed upon an integrated conceptual framework that synthesizes three interconnected theoretical domains to analyze how EFL university students engage with short-form social media videos for listening development. The framework posits that the learner's experience is situated at the intersection of the skill of listening, the nature of the multimedia format, and the architecture of the social media platform.

1. EFL Listening Skill

Listening skills in the context of EFL are described as an active cognitive process in which learners construct meaning from spoken discourse. This process involves the integration of bottom-up processing (analyzing sounds, vocabulary, and grammar) and top-down processing (using background knowledge and context to anticipate meaning) (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012; Field, 2008). As a fundamental receptive skill, listening serves as the main source of input for overall language acquisition (Nation & Newton, 2009). However, this process faces intrinsic challenges such as natural speech rate, foreign accents, connected speech phenomena, and limited vocabulary mastery (Goh, 2018).

Therefore, the main challenge in teaching listening comprehension is to provide easily accessible oral input without sacrificing its authenticity. This is where media, especially digital media, plays a relevant role. Any technological media used for this purpose needs to consider the complexity of the cognitive task of listening comprehension, both to utilize its potential and to overcome its challenges.

2. Short-Form Videos as a Multimedia Input for Listening

The research is based on multimedia learning theory, which emphasizes the synergy between visual and verbal channels (Mayer, 2020). Short videos on social media platforms as the object of research are a concrete manifestation of this synergy. Their multimodal characteristics are evident in the presentation of spoken language combined with supporting visual elements such as illustrations, screen text, and gestures. This combination proves that multimodal input functions as scaffolding for understanding through contextualization and the removal of ambiguity of meaning (Montero Perez, 2020). In the practice of listening to a second language (L2), this visualization becomes a tool that facilitates basic processing while reducing affective barriers.

However, the conflict in short-form formats lies in their distinctive production style. Features such as rapid cuts, fast tempo, and dense and often striking visuals—designed to increase engagement and memorability in platform algorithms—can inadvertently create unnecessary cognitive load (Sweller, 2020). This type of load burdens learners limited working memory with processing that is not essential for learning purposes (in this case, linguistic comprehension), potentially distracting attention from auditory input.

Therefore, this conceptual framework states that social media short videos are a medium characterized by fundamental tension. Its effectiveness in second language (L2) listening comprehension is believed to depend on a dynamic balance between its potential as a facilitator (derived from its multimodal and context-rich nature) and its potential as an inhibitor (derived from its cognitively demanding production features). It is this inherent duality that serves as the core lens in research investigating the role of short videos in the development of second language listening skills.

3. Social Media

The environment in which this listening activity takes place is the world of social media. This space is characterized by user-generated content, algorithm-driven content delivery, and dynamic user interactions (boyd & Ellison, 2007; van Dijck, 2013). For language learning, this environment presents significant opportunities for informal and incidental language acquisition (Sockett, 2014). Three main advantages can be identified: the availability of authentic and engaging audiovisual materials (Krashen, 1982); algorithmic personalization that tailor content to users' interests (Zheng et al., 2022); and the high frequency of incidental exposure to English through daily social media engagement (Renandya & Jacobs, 2016).

However, social media also presents considerable drawbacks. Its primary design objective is user engagement and retention, not pedagogical effectiveness (Zuboff, 2019). Features such as endless scrolling, autoplay, and push notifications are engineered to maximize screen time, often fostering passive consumption rather than focused learning. This presents a fundamental tension, as language acquisition particularly listening comprehension demands sustained attention and active cognitive engagement (Goh, 2018). Consequently, learners may experience a loss of agency; the same algorithms that personalize content may also deliver input that is either cognitively overwhelming or misaligned with their proficiency level and learning goals (Thorne & Reinhardt, 2018).

Building on these three theoretical foundations, this study argues that the use of short-form social media videos for EFL listening practice constitutes a unique and complex phenomenon. This complexity arises from the dynamic interaction between three interconnected dimensions: (1) the cognitively demanding nature of listening as a skill, (2) the multimodal characteristics of short videos which offer both affordances and constraints for comprehension, and (3) the structural dynamics of the social media environment that simultaneously facilitate and undermine focused engagement. Therefore, the effectiveness of this learning practice cannot be

evaluated through any single lens, but must be understood through the interplay of these dimensions as they manifest in learners' authentic, everyday experiences.

In the context of this study, I argue that the tension between the potential benefits and inherent challenges of short-form social media videos for extensive listening is not merely a technical issue but a deeply subjective one. Drawing from the theoretical foundations discussed above, I posit that whether a student perceives short-form videos as an effective tool for listening development depends largely on how they navigate three key factors: their individual listening proficiency and strategies (EFL Listening Skill), their ability to manage cognitive load imposed by multimodal content (Short-Form Videos), and their agency in resisting algorithmic distractions (Social Media). Therefore, this study does not assume that short-form videos are inherently good or bad for extensive listening. Instead, I approach them as a contested space where learners actively construct their own learning experiences. It is this subjective, learner-driven nature of the practice that my study seeks to explore.

G. Previous Study

Previous research on the use of short-form video on social media for EFL listening development can be grouped based on its thematic focus.

The first group consists of studies examining the perceptions, acceptance, and general potential of these platforms. In the Indonesian context, Syahputra & Fadilah (2022) conducted a quantitative survey study involving 120 Indonesian university students to examine their perceptions of using YouTube for listening practice. Using questionnaires as the main instrument, they found that students view YouTube as a useful and engaging platform for listening development. Similarly, Al Falaq et al. (2023) employed a qualitative case study design with in-depth interviews involving eight active TikTok users to explore their experiences of learning listening through TikTok. Their findings consistently report that students perceive TikTok as providing authentic exposure to English. On a global scale,

Zheng et al. (2022) conducted a mixed-method study with an experimental design involving 150 university students to investigate the impact of TikTok on learning motivation and engagement. Using a combination of pre-post questionnaires and follow-up interviews, they confirmed that TikTok can significantly increase students' motivation to engage with English content. The key finding from this body of work is that the utility and acceptance of short-form video as an informal learning resource has been well established.

The second group includes research that acknowledges the barriers or challenges in using digital media for learning. Hamid et al. (2023), in their qualitative phenomenological study, conducted in-depth interviews with 10 university students to explore the challenges of using Instagram Reels for language learning. They found that factors such as distractions, inconsistent content quality, and lack of structured learning pathways can significantly hinder the learning process. Meanwhile, Meliana & Seli (2023) employed a quantitative experimental design involving 60 students to investigate the effects of microlearning format on cognitive load. Using a combination of listening comprehension tests and cognitive load scales, they found that the dense format of short videos, while efficient, may paradoxically increase cognitive load and reduce comprehension for some learners.

An analysis of these two research groups reveals a consistent pattern. Studies in the First Group have successfully demonstrated the potential value and acceptance level of short-form video. Through surveys, interviews, and experimental designs with sample sizes ranging from 8 to 150 participants, these studies consistently answer the question: "Are these platforms useful and well-liked?" in the affirmative.

However, knowing the potential of a tool does not explain the reality of its use. This is where the research gap lies. Although the Second Group mentions existing challenges, these obstacles are not the primary focus of investigation. In Hamid et al. (2023), challenges appear as findings from interview data, but the study's scope remains exploratory. In Meliana & Seli (2023), cognitive load is measured experimentally, but the study does not

explore learners' subjective experiences of these challenges in authentic, self-directed contexts. Consequently, there is still very little systematic understanding of the full spectrum of practical challenges—linguistic, cognitive, technical, and contextual—that learners genuinely face when independently using platforms like TikTok or Instagram Reels specifically for listening practice.

Therefore, this study is designed to address this gap. Employing a qualitative approach with semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaires, this research focuses on shifting the lens from "potential" to "problematic." The aim is to investigate in depth the subjective experiences of students from the English Education Department of a state Islamic university in using short-form video for listening development, with the primary goal of mapping the real obstacles they encounter. By giving voice to learners' authentic experiences through qualitative inquiry, the findings are expected to provide a concrete empirical basis for developing more effective and empathetic learning guidelines or strategies that acknowledge both the affordances and limitations of these increasingly ubiquitous digital platforms.

