

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the background, research questions, objectives, significance, scope, and key terms of the study. It introduces the topic of Instagram Reels as a source of digital language exposure and explains the rationale for examining its correlation with listening skills among undergraduate students. The chapter also highlights the gap in previous research, establishing why this study is relevant to current language learning practices.

A. Background of the Study

Among the four language skills, listening plays a foundational role in English mastery, since it is usually the first way learners meet spoken language before they can produce it themselves¹. Vandergrift and Goh describe listening as a process with three stages: hearing the sound, breaking it into meaningful parts, and using background knowledge to interpret meaning². This layered process is why listening, not speaking, reading, or writing, is the focus of this study. Speaking is a productive skill that needs active output, while listening is a receptive skill: it happens whenever learners are exposed to spoken input, including the audio in Instagram Reels. Students may not produce spoken

¹M. Rost, *Listening in Language Learning* (London: Longman, 2011).

²L. Vandergrift and C. C. M. Goh, *Teaching and Learning Second Language Listening: Metacognition in Action* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

English while scrolling through Reels, but they are still exposed to it, which makes listening the skill most directly connected to this kind of media use.

Despite its importance, listening is one of the hardest skills for EFL learners, partly because they must process sound, vocabulary, and meaning at the same time, in real time, unlike reading, where they can pause and read again. Field explains that much of this difficulty comes from limited exposure to authentic spoken English, since classroom materials are often scripted and slower than real speech³. This points to a clear problem: classroom exposure alone is not enough, and learners need more natural sources of spoken English outside class.

Because this study looks at exposure that happens outside formal instruction, it is important to clarify which process explains it better: acquisition or learning. In Krashen's Monitor Model, acquisition is a mostly subconscious process, similar to how children learn their first language through natural exposure, while learning is a conscious process of studying language rules through formal instruction; his Input Hypothesis further argues that acquisition, not learning, happens when learners receive understandable input slightly above their level, a condition he calls “ $i + 1$ ”⁴. Watching Instagram Reels is an informal, fun activity: students are not studying grammar rules, but are incidentally exposed to English. This matches acquisition more than learning, so this study

³J. Field, *Listening in the Language Classroom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

⁴S. D. Krashen, *The Input Hypothesis: Issues and Implications* (London: Longman, 1985).

treats the possible effect of Reels on listening skills as an acquisition-related process, not a form of formal learning.

The second variable, frequency of Instagram Reels consumption, also needs clear grounding. McQuail explains that frequency is one of the most basic ways to measure how engaged an audience is with a medium, reflecting how regularly a person uses it⁵. In this study, frequency means the regularity, duration, and intentionality students watch English-language Reels. Whether this exposure counts as authentic input, however, needs care rather than assumption. Godwin-Jones argues that short-video platforms expose learners to natural spoken input, but warns that this value depends on learners' focus and engagement, not exposure alone⁶. A further complication is that Reels content is multimodal: Lee and Dressman found that captions and visual cues can help comprehension, but this may also shift attention away from the audio itself, a condition quite different from audio-only formal listening tests⁷. Reels can, therefore, provide authentic input, but only under certain conditions.

Together, these ideas explain why a relationship between the two variables is possible, though not certain. More regular use of Instagram Reels means more accumulated exposure to English audio, and this exposure may, in principle, support language acquisition. Yet whether it actually improves listening depends on how actively students process what they hear, since exposure alone is not

⁵D. McQuail, *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory*, 6th edn (London: SAGE Publications, 2010), p. 391.

⁶R. Godwin-Jones, 'Emerging Technologies: Short-Form Video and Informal *Language Learning*', *Language Learning & Technology*, 27.2 (2023), pp. 1–8.

⁷J. Lee and M. Dressman, 'When Multimodal Texts Meet L2 Listening: Digital Media and Meaning Construction', *System*, 100 (2021), 102543.

enough. This idea is reinforced by Vygotsky's concept of social mediation, which frames Instagram Reels as a modern cultural tool for language exposure in students' daily digital lives, not only inside formal classrooms⁸. Together, these ideas form a chain of reasoning: frequent Reels use may increase exposure, which may support acquisition, but only if that input is actively processed, meaning a correlation between the two variables is plausible, but not automatic.

Previous research offers some support for this idea, though not conclusive proof. Hamid and colleagues found a positive correlation between short-video exposure and EFL listening skills, but among senior high school, not university, students⁹. Other studies on Instagram Reels mostly focus on speaking rather than listening, and where listening has been studied, most rely on self-report surveys rather than an objective listening test. Broader reviews confirm the theoretical potential of short-form video for language learning, while calling for more objective, outcome-based research¹⁰. What emerges, then, is a set of theoretically plausible but empirically unconfirmed claims: no study yet tests, using an objective listening measure, whether the frequency of Reels consumption correlates with listening skill among undergraduates. This is the exact gap the present study addresses. University students have limited exposure to authentic spoken English within formal instruction alone, and Instagram Reels has become

⁸L. S. Vygotsky, *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978).

⁹Faisal Hamid Syakirin Hamid, Florence Angelaila Fauzi, Azizatun Hafizah, and Abdul Syahid, 'The Correlation between Exposure to Short-Form Content on TikTok and Instagram Reels and EFL Listening Skills among High School Students', *Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan dan Ilmu Sosial*, 34.1 (2025), pp. 16–23.

¹⁰Rija Arribath Dwi Daep and Nafan Tarihoran, 'The Role of Instagram in Enhancing English Language Skills: A Systematic Review', *International Journal of Teaching and Learning*, 3.6 (2025), pp. 1055–1070.

one of their most-used sources of English audiovisual content. Yet whether this exposure is actually related to listening skill remains unclear, given inconsistent findings and unresolved questions about authenticity and engagement. This uncertainty, not any assumed weakness in students' listening ability, is the real reason for the present study, which investigates this correlation using an objective, researcher-administered listening test.

B. Research Question

Is there any significant correlation between the frequency of Instagram Reels consumption and listening skills among sixth semester undergraduate students at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung?

C. Research Objectives

To determine whether there is a significant correlation between the frequency of Instagram Reels consumption and the listening skills among undergraduate students at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung.

D. The Significance of Study

1. Theoretical Significance

This study is expected to contribute to the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), particularly in listening skill development. This research provides empirical evidence on the relationship between frequency of Instagram Reels consumption and listening skills among undergraduate students. The findings may support and extend Krashen's Input Hypothesis, which emphasizes the importance of comprehensible input in language

acquisition, by showing how digital short-form video content can serve as a source of listening input. In addition, this study contributes to listening comprehension theories by highlighting the role of authentic and multimodal input in helping learners process spoken English in real contexts. Therefore, this research enriches theoretical discussions on how digital media and social media platforms function as learning resources in EFL listening development.

2. Practical Significance

Practically, the results of this study are expected to provide useful insights for future English teachers, especially pre service teachers in English education programs. The findings may help future teachers understand the potential role of Instagram Reels as a supplementary learning tool for developing students' listening skills. Through understanding the relationship between social media consumption and listening performance, future teachers can design more engaging and relevant learning activities that integrate students' daily digital habits into language learning. This study may also encourage teachers to guide students in using social media more wisely by selecting appropriate content that supports listening practice rather than causing distraction.

3. Significance for Future Researcher

For future researchers, this study can serve as a reference for conducting further research related to social media and EFL listening skills. The findings may provide baseline data and methodological guidance for

researchers who are interested in exploring similar topics using different platforms, variables, or research designs. Future researchers may expand this study by involving different educational levels, using experimental methods, or examining other language skills. Therefore, this research is expected to open opportunities for deeper and broader investigations into the use of digital media in English language learning.

E. Formulation of Hypothesis

1. Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no significant correlation between the frequency of Instagram Reels consumption and listening skills among sixth semester undergraduate students at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung.
2. Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): There is a significant correlation between the frequency of Instagram Reels consumption and listening skills among sixth semester undergraduate students at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung.

F. Scope and Limitation

This study focuses on examining the relationship between the frequency of Instagram Reels consumption and listening skills among undergraduate students. The scope of the research is limited to students of UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung from English Education Department who have already taken listening related course. This study employs a quantitative correlational research design, which aims to identify whether a relationship

exists between the two variables without determining a cause and effect relationship. The predictor variable of this study is the frequency of Instagram Reels consumption, while the criterion variable is students' listening skills. Data on listening skills are obtained from students' listening test, and data on Instagram Reels consumption are collected through a questionnaire measuring students' frequency and intensity of watching Instagram Reels content.

This study has several limitations that need to be considered. The study only investigates the correlation between Instagram Reels consumption and listening skills, not the effect or influence of Instagram Reels on listening development. Listening skills are measured only through listening test, which indicate students' academic listening achievement but may not represent their overall listening competence in diverse real-life listening situations. This research focuses exclusively on Instagram Reels and does not include other social media platforms such as TikTok or YouTube that also provide short form video content. Therefore, the findings of this study cannot be generalized to students from other universities or educational levels. Furthermore, this study involved a relatively small sample size of 30 students who met the research criteria. Although this number satisfies the minimum requirement commonly recommended for correlational research, such a small sample size limits the statistical power of the correlation analysis, making it more difficult to detect a small-to-moderate correlation between the two variables even if one actually exists in the population. Therefore, the weak and non-significant correlation found in this study should be interpreted with caution, and future research using

a larger sample size is recommended to obtain a more powerful and generalizable test of the relationship.

Regarding variable clarification, this study defines the research variables both conceptually and operationally. Conceptually, Instagram Reels consumption refers to students' exposure to short-form video content on Instagram that provides audiovisual input, including spoken English, sounds, and visual context. Based on relevant literature, such exposure may serve as a source of authentic language input that supports listening comprehension. Listening skills, conceptually, refer to the ability to understand spoken English by processing sounds, vocabulary, grammatical structures, and meaning in spoken texts, involving both bottom up and top down processes as explained in listening comprehension theories.

G. The Definition of Key Terms

1. Listening Skills

Listening skills refer to the ability to understand spoken English by processing sounds, vocabulary, grammatical structures, and meaning conveyed through oral texts. In this study, listening skills are viewed as a receptive language skill that plays a central role in second language acquisition.

2. The Frequency of Instagram Reels Consumption

The frequency of Instagram Reels consumption refers to regularity undergraduate students engage short-form video content on Instagram Reels, particularly content that contains spoken English, within their

daily media use. In this study, it is treated as the outcome variable and is measured using a questionnaire that captures the regularity, duration, and intentionality of students' engagement with English-language Reels content.