

## **Indonesian EFL Students' Views on Short-form Video Language Learning**

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### **Abstract**

This study explored how Indonesian EFL students with different levels of short-form video (SFV) consumption perceived its impact on their English language proficiency. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, three participants were selected based on their daily duration of English-language SFV usage. Data were collected through interviews, 7-day learning logs, and reflective journals. Findings indicated that all participants reported improvements in listening, speaking, and vocabulary, particularly through repeated exposure to authentic speech and mimicry. However, reading and writing development remained limited. Crucially, the study found that the quality of engagement—such as intentional mimicry, vocabulary tracking, and content curation—was more influential than the amount of time spent watching. Participants who used SFVs strategically experienced greater gains than those who consumed them passively. Additionally, attention span and distraction emerged as factors affecting learning depth, especially in high-exposure contexts. The study concluded that SFVs can support informal language learning when used purposefully and in moderation.

**Keywords:** short-form video, EFL learning, learner strategy, digital engagement, language skills

## **1. Introduction**

The rise of short-form videos (SFVs) through platforms like TikTok, YouTube Shorts, and Instagram Reels has significantly influenced how youth engage with language in digital spaces. For Indonesian EFL learners, these platforms have become incidental sources of English exposure, offering access to authentic, fast-paced, and engaging content outside formal instruction (Wen, 2024; Zeng et al., 2021). As the digital environment becomes increasingly visual and mobile, the integration of such videos into informal learning practices has intensified, prompting educators to investigate their pedagogical relevance (Shen, 2022; Katadata, 2023).

Prior studies suggest that SFVs can positively impact speaking confidence, vocabulary growth, and listening comprehension when learners are exposed to naturalistic language input (Adhani et al., 2023; Suciani et al., 2023). Maretha and Anggoro (2022) found that students engaged with real-life expressions and idiomatic phrases through TikTok, which helped them gain fluency and pragmatic awareness. However, existing research often

centers around singular skills (e.g., speaking or listening), neglecting how SFV consumption influences the full range of English language proficiency—including reading and writing. Furthermore, few studies address how learner strategies, attention span, and self-regulation mediate the relationship between SFV consumption and language development (Chaika, 2023; Gao & Xiao, 2023; Alfatih et al., 2024).

This study aims to fill that gap by investigating how Indonesian EFL students with varying levels of SFV consumption perceive its influence on their overall English proficiency, specifically across reading, writing, speaking, and listening. It also explores the key differences in learning experiences among students categorized as high, moderate, or low SFV users. Through a qualitative phenomenological approach involving interviews, learning logs, and reflective journals, this research seeks to understand not just the outcomes but the processes—such as mimicry, vocabulary tracking, and attention regulation—that underlie language development via SFVs.

The findings from this study emphasize that the quality of engagement, rather than the quantity of exposure, is critical for learning gains. Learners who approached SFVs strategically—by consciously repeating pronunciation patterns or reflecting on pragmatic language use—reported deeper and more transferable skill development. Conversely, those who consumed SFVs passively showed limited improvement despite frequent use. This reflects the importance of metacognitive regulation (Zimmerman, 2002; Hawkins, 2018) and supports calls to treat digital media as a tool for microlearning when paired with reflective habits and educational scaffolding (Godwin-Jones, 2019; Assakhi & Fakhurriana, 2023).

This study contributes to the growing body of literature on informal digital learning by showing how SFVs can complement formal EFL instruction when used intentionally. It also offers practical insights for teachers and curriculum developers seeking to integrate popular media into language pedagogy without compromising academic rigor. While SFVs pose risks such as distraction and cognitive overload (Sweller, 1988; Alfatih et al., 2024), their value as supplementary tools lies in the learner's capacity for selective engagement and self-directed use.

## 2. Literature Review

The increasing integration of SFV platforms—such as TikTok, YouTube Shorts, and Instagram Reels—into everyday student life has sparked growing interest in their potential for language learning. As digital tools for microlearning, SFVs offer accessible, real-time exposure to spoken English, which aligns with Krashen's (1982) Input Hypothesis that emphasizes the role of comprehensible and engaging input in second language acquisition. For Indonesian EFL learners, whose opportunities for authentic English input may be limited, these platforms represent a low-barrier entry point to informal learning.

Several recent studies have explored how SFVs influence different aspects of English language development. Adhani et al. (2023) found that learners using TikTok reported increased speaking confidence and oral fluency, especially through mimicry and repetition of native speech. Suciani et al. (2023) emphasized that short-form content encourages learners to focus on listening accuracy and pronunciation due to its highly repetitive and accent-rich nature. Meanwhile, Maretha and Anggoro (2022) noted that TikTok helped

students engage with natural English expressions in meaningful contexts, despite the non-instructional nature of the videos themselves.

While these studies confirm the pedagogical potential of SFVs, many are limited to isolated language skills—primarily speaking or listening. There is still limited understanding of how SFV consumption influences overall English proficiency, particularly reading and writing, and how differences in learner behavior shape learning outcomes. Gao and Xiao (2023), for example, cautioned that while SFVs offer immersive content, passive consumption can lead to fragmented attention and shallow engagement, reducing the long-term retention of language input. In line with this, Chaika (2023) and Alfatih et al. (2024) warned that the algorithmic design of SFV platforms, which encourages continuous scrolling, can negatively affect learners' focus, discipline, and cognitive stamina.

To better understand why some learners benefit more than others, this study draws on the theory of self-regulated learning (Zimmerman, 2002), which highlights the importance of learners' ability to plan, monitor, and reflect on their own learning. Hawkins (2018) and Godwin-Jones (2019) also argue that informal digital learning environments require higher levels of learner autonomy, suggesting that simply increasing screen time is not enough—the learning value of SFVs depends on how students engage with them. Without conscious strategies such as mimicry, vocabulary tracking, or goal-oriented viewing, SFVs risk functioning as distractions rather than tools for development.

This study contributes to existing literature by examining SFVs not only as media products, but as learning environments that produce varied outcomes based on the strategies and habits of the learner. Specifically, it investigates how Indonesian EFL students with different levels of SFV consumption perceive the impact of these videos on their language skills, and what distinguishes the learning experiences of high-, moderate-, and low-frequency users. In doing so, it addresses the gap between media use and learning outcome studies, and emphasizes the role of intentional digital engagement in shaping English language development.

### 3. Methods

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological design to explore Indonesian EFL students' perspectives on SFV consumption and its perceived impact on their English language proficiency. A phenomenological approach was chosen to gain insight into the participants' lived experiences and meaning-making processes regarding their engagement with English-language SFV content.

The participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their self-reported average daily duration of English SFV consumption. Three undergraduate students from an English Language Education program were chosen to represent high (2–3 hours/day), moderate (1–2 hours/day), and low (30–60 minutes/day) SFV consumers. Each participant confirmed that the majority of SFVs they consumed were in English, either through narration, dialogue, or subtitles.

Data were collected using three instruments: (1) semi-structured interviews, (2) 7-day learning logs, and (3) a final reflective journal. The interviews explored participants' perceived effects of SFV use on each language skill (listening, speaking, reading, writing), learning

strategies, and their ability to manage attention. The learning logs were used to track participants' daily SFV engagement, including time spent, content type, and vocabulary noticed. The reflective journal was completed at the end of the observation period to allow participants to summarize their experiences and insights.

Data were analyzed thematically following the qualitative analysis framework outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). The analysis process included familiarization with the data, initial coding, identification of themes, and interpretation. Triangulation across the three data sources (interviews, logs, and journal entries) was used to ensure credibility and consistency of findings. Direct quotes from participants were used to illustrate key themes.

#### 4. Result

This section presents the key findings of the study in response to the two research questions. The results are drawn from three data sources: semi-structured interviews, 7-day learning logs, and reflective journals submitted by three Indonesian EFL students with varying levels of English SFV consumption. Each participant is represented as P1 (high consumer), P2 (moderate consumer), and P3 (low consumer).

##### 4.1. Perceptions of SFV Influence on English Proficiency

All participants reported that SFVs contributed to the development of their listening, speaking, and vocabulary skills, with limited impact on reading and writing. P1, a high-frequency user, described improved comprehension of English accents and faster speech:

*"Yes, because significant exposure has made me more familiar with American and British accents. It has improved my listening skills."* (P1, Interview)

*"I've become more used to fast speech and more complex explanation without prior subtitles/captions."* (P1, Learning Log)

P1 also described his habit of mimicking speech to enhance speaking fluency:

*"I imitate the way they explain things and how they construct sentences in the videos."* (P1, Interview)

*"I've learned how to organise the proper vocal tone to deliver a more effective speech."* (P1, Learning Log)

P2, who consumed SFVs moderately, noted incidental improvement in listening and confidence:

*"Frequent exposure has made my ears more accustomed. It helps with both listening and daily interactions in English."* (P2, Interview)

*"I feel more confidence in interacting online or even meetup using English."* (P2, Learning Log)

However, he clarified that imitation was not deliberate:

*“Not actively, it just happens naturally when I'm speaking.”* (P2, Interview)

P3, the low consumer, initially reported limited impact but reflected positively by the end of the week:

*“There has been some improvement, but not very significant.”* (P3, Interview)

*“I speak the sentences loudly.”* (P3, Learning Log)

*“By practicing pronunciation through repetition of words and phrases from the videos, I've gained more confidence in my speaking.”* (P3, Reflective Journal)

For vocabulary, P1 demonstrated highly intentional learning:

*“There's a new vocabulary that I've discovered today: Plateau... Elementary Error...”* (P1, Learning Log)

*“Demagoguery... Utilitarian...”* (P1, Learning Log)

*“I've learned slang too — like ‘rizz,’ which comes from ‘charisma.’”* (P1, Interview)

P2 recorded trending expressions, with some explanation:

*“‘Boisterous’ means very energetic, noisy, and rough.”* (P2, Learning Log)

*“‘Bet’ means agreeing... ‘big brain’ means smart.”* (P2, Learning Log)

P3 gradually moved from passive exposure to targeted academic vocabulary:

*“Pedagogy – The science or art of teaching and learning; Didactics... Andragogy...”* (P3, Learning Log)

*“This week... I intentionally looked for educational material... academic writing, thesis tutorials, and vocabulary.”* (P3, Reflective Journal)

In contrast, all participants reported minimal impact on reading and writing. P1 stated:

*“I can understand the comments in the videos, but it doesn't significantly improve my reading comprehension.”* (P1, Interview)

*“I didn't do any activity that associated with writing skills today.”* (P1, Learning Log)

P2 did engage with captions and comments and occasionally wrote replies:

*“I often leave comments. It helps me construct sentences and respond to content more effectively.”* (P2, Interview)

*“I can read fast without trying to translate word per word.”* (P2, Learning Log)

P3 reported faster reading of subtitles but little writing:

*“I read the subtitle better.”* (P3, Learning Log)

*“In this section, there’s no progress in my writing skills.”* (P3, Learning Log)

## 5. Discussion

This section interprets the findings in light of the research questions and existing literature. It explores how varying levels of SFV consumption influenced the English language proficiency of Indonesian EFL students and how their learning experiences differed depending on their consumption strategies and frequency.

### 5.1 SFV’s Influence on English Proficiency

All participants perceived that SFVs had the most notable impact on listening, speaking, and vocabulary acquisition. Consistent with Krashen’s (1982) Input Hypothesis, the frequent exposure to authentic English via SFVs helped participants improve their comprehension of diverse accents and speaking fluency. P1, the high consumer, reported using repetition and mimicry to develop oral fluency and pragmatic awareness—mirroring findings by Adhani et al. (2023) and Yenkimaleki and Van Heuven (2023) that support SFVs as tools for accent internalization and prosodic practice. Meanwhile, P2 and P3 also experienced gains, though more passive and incidental in nature.

Vocabulary learning occurred across all consumption levels, with P1 actively tracking and reflecting on lexical differences—such as slang versus formal usage—which aligns with Zimmerman’s (2002) theory of self-regulated learning. These results echo those of Rojas and Guaman Luna (2023), who argued that SFVs can support both incidental and intentional vocabulary development when input is contextualized and authentic.

Conversely, the impact on reading and writing was minimal. Reading activities were largely limited to captions and on-screen comments, lacking depth or critical engagement. Writing, when present, was informal—typically comments or mimicked phrases. These findings support concerns raised by Pantagakakis (2024) and Assakhi and Fakhurriana (2023), who argue that the brevity and informal tone of SFV content limits its usefulness in developing productive academic writing or deep reading comprehension.

### 5.2 Learning Experience Differences Based on Consumption Level

A clear difference emerged between participants in terms of how strategically they engaged with SFV content. P1, the high consumer, used SFVs as a self-directed learning tool—selecting relevant content, tracking vocabulary, and regulating his viewing time. His approach reflects the characteristics of metacognitively aware learners (Hawkins, 2018; Chaika, 2023), and his experience supports the potential of SFVs as microlearning platforms when paired with goal-setting and reflection (Alfatih et al., 2024; Fenuku, 2024).

P2, the moderate user, benefitted from exposure but lacked structured practice. Though he gained confidence in speaking and listening, his learning remained superficial—consistent with Schmidt’s (1990b) noticing hypothesis, where passive awareness may arise from exposure but needs reinforcement to be retained. His experience also reflects findings

by Suciani et al. (2023) and Maretha and Anggoro (2022), which suggest that learners often fail to transition from entertainment to intentional practice without scaffolding.

P3, the low consumer, showed an interesting shift from passive engagement to purposeful learning, particularly when seeking videos on academic writing. His case illustrates that even low-frequency users can benefit from SFVs when content is connected to personal or academic goals, supporting Djiwandono's (2018) concept of contextualized multimedia learning and Rios et al.'s (2020) argument that intentionality matters more than frequency.

### **5.3 Strategy Over Time: Quality Over Quantity**

Findings challenge the assumption that more exposure automatically leads to better language outcomes. P1's reported gains were due to strategic engagement rather than duration alone. P2, despite moderate exposure, did not report significant gains due to the absence of reflective learning behaviors. P3 showed measurable improvement only after shifting toward more intentional content use. These findings support the argument that metacognitive strategies (Zimmerman, 2002; Chaika, 2023; Hawkins, 2018) are stronger predictors of language proficiency than time-on-task alone.

### **5.4 Attention Span and Cognitive Load**

Another key factor shaping learning outcomes was cognitive regulation. Although P1 benefitted from SFVs, he also acknowledged their distractive potential. P2 and P3, too, experienced moments of off-task viewing. These experiences support findings by Alfatih et al. (2024) and Yan et al. (2024), who warn that SFVs—due to their algorithmic design and fast pace—can compromise focus and attention, particularly when learners do not set limits or filter content intentionally.

This concern extends beyond screen time: cognitive overload from rapid input can hinder academic tasks such as essay writing or grammar-focused learning (Zhang et al., 2019; Asif & Kazi, 2024). Without regulation, the immersive nature of SFVs may reduce learners' ability to process or retain information deeply, even when content is delivered in English.

### **5.5 Researcher's Reflection**

From the researcher's standpoint, this study affirms that SFVs do have pedagogical potential, particularly in supporting speaking, listening, and vocabulary development. However, their value lies not in the platform or format, but in the learner's approach. When used reflectively—with curiosity, purpose, and awareness—SFVs function as accessible tools for autonomous learning. When consumed aimlessly, they risk becoming counterproductive. Especially in EFL contexts like Indonesia, where access to authentic English may be limited, SFVs can serve as low-barrier resources—if accompanied by mindful engagement and educational guidance.

## 6. Conclusion

This study investigated how Indonesian EFL students perceive the influence of SFV consumption on their English language proficiency and examined differences in learning experiences among students with varying levels of SFV engagement. Findings revealed that all participants—regardless of usage frequency—perceived benefits in listening, speaking, and vocabulary development. These gains were primarily attributed to exposure to authentic spoken English, increased familiarity with diverse accents, and opportunities for mimicry and speech modeling. However, participants consistently reported limited impact on reading and writing, which were largely confined to casual interactions with captions and comments.

Importantly, the results indicated that time spent consuming SFVs was not a reliable predictor of language improvement. Instead, participants who engaged strategically—by tracking vocabulary, intentionally repeating phrases, or curating their content—experienced more meaningful progress than those who consumed content passively. The high consumer (P1), who employed self-regulated learning techniques, demonstrated substantial language development, while moderate and low consumers (P2 and P3) only saw significant gains when they approached SFVs with purpose. These findings affirm that learner agency, reflection, and metacognitive engagement are critical in transforming digital exposure into genuine skill development.

Another emerging concern was the role of attention span and distraction. The fast-paced, algorithm-driven nature of SFV platforms made it easy for learners to lose focus or fall into patterns of mindless scrolling, occasionally undermining their academic productivity and depth of learning. Even learners who used SFVs strategically reported the need for self-regulation to avoid cognitive overload and time mismanagement.

To maximize the benefits of SFVs while minimizing their drawbacks, it is crucial that educators and students approach them not merely as entertainment, but as tools that require conscious use. Teachers are encouraged to incorporate SFVs into instructional design with clear learning objectives—such as pronunciation practice, vocabulary tracking, or structured reflection—and to guide students in curating educational content. Learners should be encouraged to consume content intentionally, revisit useful phrases, and log or reflect on their learning. For researchers, further exploration is needed into how digital habits, algorithm awareness, and cognitive factors interact with language acquisition through SFVs, particularly in areas like writing and grammar. With mindful use and pedagogical support, SFVs have the potential to serve as accessible and engaging resources in the evolving landscape of informal EFL learning.

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