

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Speaking ability is an important aspect of English language proficiency, especially for students in English Education programs who are expected to actively use English for academic and future professional objectives. However, many first semester English Education students struggle to develop their speaking skills. Previous research by Jiwandono (2021) and Jupri (2023) indicates that freshmen frequently display low speaking confidence, restricted fluency, and a high level of anxiety when compelled to speak English, especially in formal classroom contexts. These challenges often hinder students' participation in speaking activities and restrict opportunities for meaningful oral practice during the early stage of university learning.

In response to these issues, current innovations in educational technology have brought alternative learning methodologies that may better satisfy students' psychological demands, according to Torgerson (2021), with microlearning increasing popularity. According to Leong et al., (2021), microlearning is a learning technique that distributes content in short, targeted, and manageable sections, allowing learners to interact with learning materials freely and autonomously. This strategy has been demonstrated to reduce cognitive burden and improve knowledge retention, especially when implemented via digital platforms. Taylor and Hung (2022) conclude that microlearning is suitable for first semester students who require frequent exposure and practice without undue stress.

Microlearning is very directly related to the learning styles of Generation Z students, who are used to fast consume, visually attractive, and technologically driven content. Studies by Mohd Shah et al., (2025) found that microlearning improves learner engagement and self-directed learning among university students, making it an effective strategy in higher education situations. These qualities indicate that microlearning may provide a supportive atmosphere for strengthening speaking skills, especially for kids who are anxious in typical classroom settings. Taken together, these results indicate that microlearning is

pedagogical strategy that addresses the psychological demands of first semester EFL learners. Recent empirical has demonstrated that microlearning is not merely a contemporary instructional trend but a pedagogical approach with a measurable impact on students academic achievement in higher education. A systematic review and meta analysis by Senadheera et al., (2024) examining multiple international studies revealed that students who engaged in microlearning based instruction achieved significantly higher academic performance compared to those who experienced conventional long duration learning. The findings suggest that the structured delivery of content in short, focused units reduces cognitive overload and facilitates more effective knowledge retention , thereby supporting the relevance of microlearning as an instructional approach in higher education contexts. By offering short, repeatable, and learner-controlled learning units, microlearning may reduce anxiety and cognitive overload, allowing students to practice speaking gradually without pressure commonly experienced in formal classroom settings.

Social media sites like YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok have become an essential part of students everyday life and have great potential as microlearning tools. These sites offer short video content that enables students to watch actual language use, model pronunciation, and practice speaking freely. According to Denojean- Mairet et al., (2024), integrating microlearning with social media as been shown to boost accessibility, flexibility, and learner engagement, hence making learning more student centered and less scary. When carefully planned and chosen, social media sites can serve as microlearning systems that enable quick, concentrated, and psychological beneficial speaking practice.

My interest in this study is supported by the problems faced by first semester students who have difficulty in learning English, especially in developing their language skills and experiencing culture shock during the transition from high school to university, where the learning model is very different. In high school, English is taught in a general context, whereas in college, English is taught in a specific context with specific objectives. For example, in high school, there is only one English subject that covers tenses,

procedural texts, analytical exposition texts, and so on. Basically, the English learning material in high school is only general and not specific.

In reality, English language learning in college is more complex and specific, where English language learning focuses on three skills (speaking, listening, and writing) and is further deepened and developed. The specific and in-depth implementation of these three skills in courses, especially in the first semester, is introduced, for example, in the courses Speaking for Survival and Literal Listening. However, in this study, I want to focus more on speaking, because many first semester students are afraid to try to speak English, afraid of mispronouncing words, unable to pronounce vocabulary fluently, and afraid of making mistakes. And in overcoming the challenges or difficulties felt by students, it is necessary to start from the daily habits of students. The habits of students, especially Gen Z, are now closely related to and inseparable from social media. They watch many types of content that contain a lot of context in their daily lives. Social media platforms are used by students as trendsetters for their lifestyle and daily activities. Therefore, this study will explore the influence of social media on the English speaking skills of first semester students.

Previous research have shown that social media based learning can improve students speaking skills by giving opportunities for repeated practice, exposure to real language input, and a low pressure learning environment. In Saed et al., (2021) and Hongsa et al., (2023) students tend to perceive social media learning as enjoyable and motivating, which contributes to increased confidence and willingness to speak English. Furthermore, Iswahyuni (2021) and Tahmina (2023) states that students' positive perceptions and emotional engagement with audiovisual content have been shown to enhance learning experiences and participation in speaking activities.

While previous studies have indicated that social media based learning positively influences students speaking skills, further analysis of existing research shows that social media also plays an important role in creating a supportive learning environment for language learners. A systematic review conducted by Manogaran and Sulaiman (2022) explains that social media provides learners with opportunities to practice speaking beyond the classroom in a more relaxed and

less threatening setting. Through features such as video sharing and online interaction, learners are able to observe authentic language use, practice pronunciation, and engage in speaking activities with reduced anxiety. This condition encourages learners to participate more actively in speaking practice and gradually improves their speaking performance, especially in terms of confidence and fluency.

In line with this, John and Yunus (2021) also highlight that the integration of social media in speaking instruction allows learners to engage with short, focused, and repeatable learning activities. Their review emphasizes that social media platforms enable learners to control their learning pace and repeat speaking related content as needed, which supports gradual speaking development. Moreover, the studies reviewed suggest that social media helps reduce speaking anxiety and increases learners willingness to speak English, particularly when speaking practice is not limited to formal classroom interaction. These findings indicate that social media can function as an effective learning medium that supports speaking development through flexible and low pressure learning experiences. However, the positive findings reported in previous studies, most research has mainly focused on general learning outcomes or students performance improvement. Limited attention has been given to how social media functions as structured microlearning approach and how students, especially first semester English Education students, perceive and experience this learning process.

Despite the growing body of research on the use of social media in English language learning, several important gaps remain. First, many previous studies examine social media as a general learning tool rather than conceptualizing it explicitly as a structured microlearning approach designed to support speaking practice. Second, most existing studies predominantly employ quantitative methods and focus on measurable learning outcomes, providing limited insight into learners psychological experiences, perceptions, and challenges during the speaking learning process. Third, research that specifically explores first-semester English Education students, who are particularly vulnerable to speaking anxiety, low confidence, and transitional academic challenges remains scarce. Therefore,

this study seeks to address these gaps by qualitatively exploring how social media based microlearning influences students speaking skills, their perceptions, and the challenges they experience within the context of the *Speaking for Survival* lecture in a first semester EFL setting.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

To address these issues, the research questions of this study are formulated as follows:

1. How do first semester English Education students perceive the use of social media based microlearning for learning speaking?
2. What challenges do first semester English Education students experience when using social media based microlearning for speaking practice?
3. How is social media based microlearning perceived to influence the speaking skills of first semester English Education students in the *Speaking for Survival* lecture?

1.3. Purpose of the Study

Based on the research questions, this study aims to explore how social media based microlearning is perceived to influence the speaking skills of first semester English Education students in the *Speaking for Survival* lecture. Specifically, this study aims to:

1. Explore how social media based microlearning is perceived to influence first semester English Education students speaking skills, particularly in terms of speaking confidence and fluency
2. Examine first semester English Education students perceptions of the use of social media based microlearning in learning speaking.
3. Identify the challenges experienced by first semester English Education students when using social media based microlearning for speaking practice.

1.4 Benefit of the Study

This study is expected to provide practical benefits for various stakeholders involved in the teaching and learning of speaking skills in higher education. The benefits outlined in this section focus on how the findings of this study may be

applied in real instruction contexts, particularly in relation to the use of social media based microlearning for speaking development. The benefits are described based on the perspective of students, lectures, and future researchers who may directly or indirectly utilize the results of this study.

a. For Students

This study is expected to benefit first semester English Education students by providing insights into how social media based microlearning can support the development of speaking performance, particularly in terms of confidence, fluency, and willingness to speak. Through flexible and low pressure learning activities, students may gain alternative opportunities to practice speaking independently outside the classroom. The findings may help students become more aware of effective strategies for using social media as a supportive learning tool to prepare for classroom speaking activities.

b. For Lectures

For English lectures, particularly those teaching speaking course such as Speaking for Survival, this study provides pedagogical insights into the integration of social media based microlearning into speaking instruction. The findings may assist lectures in designing learning activities that accommodate first semester students psychological needs, such as reducing speaking anxiety and encouraging participation. In addition, this study may serve as a reference for lectures seeking to create more engaging, flexible, and learner centered speaking practices.

c. For Institutions

At the institutional level, this study may contribute to the development of innovative teaching practices that align with students digital learning habits. The findings can support curriculum development by highlighting the potential role of social media based microlearning as complementary approach in speaking course. Furthermore, this study may encourage institutions to consider the integration of technology enhanced learning strategies to support students early transition into academic English learning environments.

d. For Future Researchers

This study may help future researchers by providing empirical evidence on the utilization of social media based microlearning in EFL speaking environments, particularly at the first semester university level. The findings may be useful for academics who want to investigate similar problems utilizing alternative study designs, participant categories, or language skills. Future study may build on this finding to look at the relationship between microlearning, affective characteristics, and speaking performance in a variety of educational environments.

1.5. Significance of the Study

Beyond the practical benefits outlined above, this study also holds academic significance in the field of English language education. While the benefits emphasize the application of the findings in instructional contexts, the significance of this study lies in its contribution to scholarly discussions on speaking development, microlearning, and technology enhanced language learning. By providing qualitative insights into the use of social media-based microlearning for speaking development among first-semester university students, this study extends existing literature by highlighting the role of affective and cognitive factors in shaping speaking performance in EFL contexts.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the existing literature on speaking skill development by providing a qualitative understanding of how social media based microlearning supports students speaking confidence and fluency, particularly among first semester English Education students. By conceptualizing social media as a structured microlearning approach, this study also extends discussions on microlearning and Cognitive Load Theory within the context of EFL speaking instruction and learners psychological experiences.

Practically, the findings of this study may provide insights for English lectures in designing speaking instruction that integrates social media based microlearning to create more flexible, engaging, and psychologically supportive learning environments. The result may also assist students in developing effective strategies for practicing speaking independently in low pressure contexts using social media.

For future research, the findings of this study may serve as a reference for researchers who are interested in further exploring social media based microlearning in English language education. Future studies may use a variety of study methodologies, such as mixed method or experimental approaches, to objectively assess the impact of social media based microlearning on speaking skills. Future study may also include larger participant groups, varied proficiency levels, and an emphasis on other language skills and instructional situations in order to provide broader and more comprehensive insights into the function of microlearning in language learning.

1.6. Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study is conducted within a specific scope to ensure clarity, focus, and feasibility of the research. The scope of this study is limited to the exploration of social media based microlearning and its perceived influence on students speaking skills in the context of English language learning at the university level. Specifically, this research focuses on first semester students of the English Education Department at Muhammadiyah University of Ponorogo, particularly those enrolled in the Speaking for Survival lecture. Our environment was chosen because first semester students are in a transitional phase of learning after secondary school and frequently face psychological obstacles when improving speaking abilities, making them a suitable group for our study.

This study focused only on speaking skills, with a specific emphasis on confidence and fluency. These factors are regarded crucial components of speaking development for first semester learners, as they directly affect students willingness to communicate and their capacity to articulate ideas orally. Other language skills such as listening, reading, and writing are beyond the scope of this study and are therefore not examined. Although vocabulary and grammar play important roles in speaking performance, they are not analyzed as independent variables but are treated as supporting elements within students speaking practices.

This study specifically examines the use of social media platforms, namely Youtube, Instagram, and Tiktok, as microlearning tools that deliver short, focused and repeatable video content. These platforms were chosen because they are

widely used by students and naturally promote microlearning features like as brevity, flexibility, and learner control. However, the purpose of this study is not to analyze the effectiveness of various social media platforms or to determine which medium is best for speaking development. Instead, the focus is on assessing students overall experiences and perspectives of social media based microlearning.

From methodological standpoint, this study takes a qualitative approach to investigating students perspectives, experiences, and obstacles in adopting social media based microlearning for speaking practice. As a result, the study does not include quantitative measures of speaking ability or statistical testing of cause and effect relationships. The studies conclusions are not intended to be generalized to all EFL environments, but rather to provide a comprehensive and contextualized knowledge of the phenomenon within the specific research setting. Therefore, the conclusions drawn from this study should be interpreted within the defined scope and limitations of the research.

In this study, the term “impact” does not refer to a statistically measured causal effect or experimental improvement in students speaking performance. Instead, it is defined as a perceived pedagogical impact, as reflected in students experiences, perceptions, and observable engagement during the implementation of social media based microlearning. The impact is therefore understood through qualitative indicators, such as students narratives, reflections, and classroom behaviors, rather than numerical test scores. This delimitation is applied to ensure that the interpretation of the findings remains consistent with the qualitative narrative approach employed in this research.

1.7. Definition of Key Terms

To avoid ambiguity and ensure consistency in understanding, several key terms used in this study are defined as follows:

Social Media

Social media are digital platforms that allow users to produce, share, and engage with material and other users in real time. In the context of this study, social media platforms include Youtube, Instagram , and Tiktok which serve as informal and

independent language learning environments. These platforms promote multimodal learning through audiovisual content and allow students to observe authentic language use and participate in speaking related activities outside of the classroom, as emphasized by Anwas et al., (2020) and elaborated on by Denojean- Mairet et al., (2024).

Microlearning

Microlearning is a learning approach that delivers instructional content in small, focused, and manageable units designed to be completed within a short period of time. Microlearning emphasizes brevity, accessibility, learner control, and repetition, allowing learners to engage with learning materials flexibly and independently, as supported by Leong et al., (2021) as well as Taylor and Hung (2022).

Speaking Skills

Speaking skills refer to learners' capacity to express ideas, emotions, and feelings orally in an accessible and meaningful manner. In this study, speaking skills are seen as a concept that refers to speaking confidence and fluency. Speaking confidence refers to learners belief in their capacity to communicate in English without excessive fear, while fluency refers to the ability to talk smoothly with little pauses and interruptions, as reported by Jupri (2023) .