The Impact of Watching Reels on Social Media Platforms on Enhancing English Language Learning: A Case Study of English Language Students at PTUK

Tahani R. K. Bsharat[1*] & Nawal Al-Sheikh[2]

[1]An-Najah National University, Faculty of Humanities – Department of English Language and Literature, Department of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL)

[2]English Language Department, Faculty of Arts and Educational Sciences Palestine Technical University

A R T I C L E   I N F O

ABSTRACT   **Original Research Article**

There has been a tremendous increase in recent years in the use of social media for second language (L2) learning, particularly through short-form video content like Reels. This quantitative study investigates the impact of social media Reels on students' English language learning at Palestine Technical University - Kadoorie (PTUK). It aims to determine students' attitudes towards these media and how they help improve specific English language skills, namely listening, speaking, vocabulary, writing, and grammar. Using a descriptive-analytical method, an online questionnaire was distributed to a purposive sample of 68 English major students across different academic levels. The dataset includes nominal, ordinal, and Likert scales to measure social media engagement, interest in Reels, and students' perceptions of learning outcomes. The findings demonstrate that Reels are extremely popular among students and are perceived as a valuable supplementary resource, particularly for developing pronunciation, speaking fluency, and vocabulary. However, the data suggests Reels have a negligible perceived impact on writing and grammar skills. Furthermore, the results indicate that students hold generally positive attitudes towards Reels, viewing them as engaging tools that can enhance foreign language recall and learning. The study concludes that while Reels offer significant potential for informal language learning, their pedagogical integration requires strategic planning to address all language skills comprehensively.

Keywords: Social Media Reels, Developing English Language Skills, Pronunciation, Speaking Skills, Vocabulary, Digital Learning, Student Engagement.

*Corresponding author: Tahani R. K. Bsharat

An-Najah National University, Faculty of Humanities – Department of English Language and Literature, Department of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL)

Introduction

The last few decades have witnessed rapid development in digital technology, transforming how languages are learned, practiced, and internalized. Social media have evolved beyond platforms for social communication into informal learning systems where learners are exposed to authentic language use daily. A particular strand of these systems that has garnered significant research attention is short-form video content, such as Reels on Instagram and Shorts on YouTube and TikTok. These videos, typically between 15 and 90 seconds long, combine sound, visuals, and text to provide integrated, context-rich information in a concise and captivating manner, making them particularly appealing to tertiary-level students (Gökçe, 2022).

From an educational standpoint, short-form videos can promote language acquisition by facilitating vocabulary retention, improving pronunciation, and enhancing listening comprehension. This efficacy is attributed to the repetition of

content, the support of visuals, and the presentation of language in authentic contexts (Mayer, 2009). The integration of social media into language studies aligns with constructivist and sociocultural theories, which emphasize interaction, contextual learning, and learner autonomy. Unlike traditional passive learning, Reels encourage active participation; learners can replay clips for pronunciation practice, engage in comments, and even create their own content, fostering socially meaningful language practice (Vygotsky, 1978).

Despite these potential benefits, the pedagogical value of Reels remains a subject of debate. Critics argue that the brevity and entertainment focus of such content might encourage superficial learning and short attention spans, potentially exposing learners to informal or incorrect language use (Carr, 2010). Therefore, the effectiveness of Reels is highly dependent on how learners interact with the content and how educators guide that interaction.

In the Palestinian higher education context, digital media has become increasingly significant as a supplement to conventional teaching. Students at Palestine Technical University - Kadoorie (PTUK) are digitally savvy and frequently use social media to consume English-language content. This exposure presents opportunities to enhance listening, pronunciation, vocabulary, and cultural understanding. However, empirical studies investigating the role of short-form video consumption in English language learning outcomes among Palestinian university students remain scarce. This study aims to fill this gap by examining the impact of Reels on the English learning of PTUK students, analyzing their engagement patterns, perceived learning outcomes, and attitudes towards this digital tool.

Problem Statement

The proliferation of short-form video reels on social media platforms has created new, informal avenues for language acquisition. These platforms offer exposure to authentic language use, which can potentially improve listening comprehension and speaking fluency by providing comprehensible input (Krashen, 1985; Webb & Nation, 2017). Furthermore, the multimodal nature of reels—integrating audio, video, captions, and text—can enhance understanding and retention through dual-channel processing (Mayer, 2009; Paivio, 1986). However, the pedagogical impact of this medium appears uneven across different language skills. While beneficial for listening and speaking, short videos may not sufficiently develop written competencies or grammatical accuracy, which often require explicit instruction, error correction, and deliberate practice (Ellis, 2008; Hyland, 2003).

Moreover, the effectiveness of reels is mediated by students' digital literacy—their ability to critically select, evaluate, and apply digital resources for learning (Gilster, 1997; Ng, 2012). Without these skills, learners may use social media primarily for entertainment, limiting its academic potential. This concern is particularly relevant in higher education, where digital media use is widespread but often lacks pedagogical purpose.

While existing research has noted the benefits of social media for vocabulary development and motivation (Blattner & Fiori, 2009), few studies have specifically examined the impact of short-form video content on diverse linguistic skills in non-Western contexts. In Palestine, research on the pedagogical potential of Reels for English language development at the university level is notably absent. This study addresses this gap by investigating the following research questions:

1. How does exposure to short-form social media reels influence the listening comprehension and speaking skills of English major students at PTUK?
2. What is the perceived impact of exposure to short-form social media reels on the writing skills and grammatical accuracy of English major students at PTUK?

Objectives of the Study

This research aims to analyze the impact of short-form social media reels on the English language proficiency development of students at Palestine Technical University - Kadoorie. Specifically, this study seeks to:

- Identify students' perceptions of the impact of Reels on their listening and speaking skills.
- Examine students' perceptions of the impact of Reels on their writing skills and grammatical accuracy.
- Investigate students' attitudes and engagement patterns regarding the use of Reels for English language learning.

Literature Review

The intersection of education and entertainment enables this study to focus on college-level students through short social media reels and self-directed learning in English as a Second Language (ESL) teaching. Creating informal, relaxed, nonacademic, and non-academic social media reels allows students to combine enjoyment and learning, which is how they are integrated with the Constructivist Learning Theory. According to Constructivist Learning Theory, students learn from and make sense of the world based on the meaningful social context in which they are engaged. In a study (2025) by Jayakodi and Rajendran) in their study of short videos that were posted on social media (e.g., TikTok or Instagram) captured the interest of students, produced positive results in learning vocabulary, improved pronunciation, and increased motivation to learn, in addition to supporting the traditional teaching methodologies. Furthermore, encouraging the use of social media videos in the context of Multimedia Learning Theory, which is based on the simultaneous use of visual and auditory channels to prompt learning and memory (Mayer, 2009; Paivio, 1986), and reinforcing them.

Short-form content has shown positive results in teaching EFL listening skills (Hamid et al., 2024) and in building learners' self-expression confidence (Rohmah and Irmayani, 2025). However, previous studies demonstrate that distracting content, mental distractors, and the absence of a digitally literate audience undermine the content's educative value (Isroilova, 2025). This paper aims to analyse such dynamics in the context of Palestine Technical University- Kadoorie (PTUK) and to provide an explanation for the overlapping use of digital media, learner-centred approaches, and multimedia in English language skills development. The findings will give the teaching community empirically substantiated guidelines for building technology-enabled socio-constructivist learning environments that respond to the demands of today's digital world.

Definition of Social Networks and Their Role in Education

Social networks are web-based platforms that allow people to communicate and form relationships. Users share their feelings and opinions, as well as activities, events, and information, with other users (Ababneh, 2021). Networking websites and social media platforms serve as tools for users to create profiles, connect with others, and view their connections (Ahmad, Khan, & Ali, 2019).

Social media provides novel communication methods, and for this reason, social networking tools have been integrated into classroom settings. Social media have been shown to enhance teaching and learning interactions, increase student active participation, and foster collaboration toward a common academic goal (Al-Ali, 2020). Additionally, these platforms allow students to communicate and express their ideas. They also serve as an excellent resource for teachers to distribute course materials and support instruction in developing digital literacy and guidance (Ababneh, 2021; Ahmad et al., 2019).

Short videos on social media platforms (like TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts) have also been found extremely beneficial for language learning because of their concise, interactive, and visually appealing designs (Gökçe, 2022; Yi, 2024).

Alfitri, B. (2025) explored the use of TikTok short-form content and its impact on English language learning at the Institut Elkatarie. For this research, Alfitri employed a quantitative research method, specifically a quasi-experimental design. In this, two groups of students are compared: one comprised students who used TikTok as an additional means to facilitate their learning, while the other consisted of students who followed the conventional approaches to learning employed in classroom settings. The research findings reveal that TikTok has the potential to improve language learning, particularly in areas where traditional approaches tend to fall short, such as informal language use and listening skills.

Short Videos on Social Media Platforms

These are short videos ranging from a few seconds to a few minutes. They are often used to convey a lesson in a classroom and to present clear, easily understandable, pertinent information quickly and concisely (Gökçe, 2020). Social media platforms offer short videos that help students quickly and easily complete lessons while remaining focused and engaged with the material.

These videos help learners strengthen their English language skills. Such videos help learners strengthen their English language skills. Students can overcome the challenges of learning a new language by using the videos alongside all the previously mentioned resources. In addition, the videos can be used as a learning resource outside the classroom to support retention of previously gained knowledge. As a resource outside the classroom, the videos can help retain previously acquired knowledge. The videos aid in establishing a more stimulating and enjoyable learning environment, and can be easily used as a supplemental resource outside the classroom (Grégis & Carvalho, 2019; Castrillo de Larreta Azelain & Monje, 2016).

Short Videos and the Impact on English Language Skills

The researchers discuss the impact of short videos on each component of English Language Skills, starting with pronunciation, which is part of the Speaking component.

1. Pronunciation (Speaking): As part of their English Language Skills, students can use short videos on social media to stimulate their pronunciation and help develop this skill. Effective pronunciation means that a speaker produces the sounds in a manner that does not impede communication (Jayakodi & Rajendran, 2025). Short videos provide students with numerous opportunities to hear and therefore practice imitating the sounds to achieve correct pronunciation. Kobilova (2022) argued that to communicate effectively, it is a necessity that one's pronunciation is correct. Furthermore, correct pronunciation also assists one in developing their listening, spelling, reading, and grammatical competencies. Numerous researchers have highlighted the improvement in one's communicative ability due to the improvement of one's speaking skills as a result of being exposed, on a regular basis, to a spoken language in its natural environment (Prodanvska-Poposka, 2017). This all serves to illustrate that short videos will help students improve their pronunciation in a natural yet motivating way.

2. Listening Skill: Students benefit from using social media advertisements to learn functional language and improve their understanding of spoken English. Repeated exposure to contextualized language supports improvements in pronunciation and the comprehension of natural language patterns. It enhances language acquisition. (Gokce, 2022;

Asmali & Earslan, 2021). Students are also provided the opportunity to improve their reading, listening, and writing. Of course, video activities develop motivation and active participation and reduce anxiety.

3. Reading and Writing Skills: The improvement of students' reading and writing skills through the use of short video clips displays reading and writing improvement. The use of written language showed students how language is used in various contexts, improved their reading comprehension, and enhanced their understanding of language. Yi (2024) showed the use of video clips on social media apps to aid in finding English reading materials and improving English reading. Focusing on a text improved while using videos in reading activities (Mohammadian et al., 2018).

4. In addition, short videos can motivate students to write. This means that short videos support both reading and writing and promote more active, authentic, real-world language learning.

5. Vocabulary skill: Vocabulary learning can be highly aided by short videos. Reels and the like show everyday English in context, which helps with retention and understanding. Learning through short videos has been shown to increase vocabulary acquisition, and the more videos viewed, the more new words are recognized and remembered (Sara Jayakodi & Rajendran, 2025; Puspitasari, 2024; Assakhi & Fakhrurriana, 2023). This context-rich repeated exposure aids not only vocabulary but also the other language skills: listening, speaking, and writing.

Engagement of Learners by Way of Short Social Media Videos

Engagement of learners is the most important element that contributes to successful language learning, and social media short videos have proved to significantly increase learner engagement. Attention is captured by short videos on sites such as Instagram Reels, TikTok, and YouTube Shorts. These videos are also interactive and encourage learner engagement. Liu and Zhu (2022) noted that learners are more motivated, more attentive, and more involved in learning after interacting with short videos. Also, video materials give learners the opportunity to process language in authentic situations. This authentic language processing is essential for comprehension, vocabulary retention, and the pragmatic use of English (Assakhi & Fakhrurriana, 2023). In language education, exposure to short videos enhances learner engagement and develops a range of skills, such as listening, writing, and, in particular, speaking (Zhang et al., 2022). This shows that short video materials should be used in the instruction of English as a Second Language (ESL) to improve learner engagement and learning objectives.

In his 2025 study, Alfitri empirically explored the impact of short-form media on the acquisition of English language competencies at Institut Elkatarie. This study adopts a quasi-experimental, quantitative design that examines two cohorts: the experimental group (incorporating TikTok as an additional teaching resource) and the control group (utilising traditional teaching methods). The findings suggest that TikTok can be an informal teaching resource for language acquisition when traditional teaching methods are inadequate, particularly for informal communication and listening skills. Moreover, the results of the current study are in agreement with other studies conducted in the Palestinian context.

An example is TikTok, which has been studied as a potential resource for English language teaching. Bsharat and Hamarsha (2023) studied TikTok's potential to improve the integration of speaking skills in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) instruction with 9th-grade students in the West Bank. The researchers conducted thematic analyses of classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and observation checklists. They determined that TikTok positively influenced students' speaking abilities, motivation, and self-confidence. The authors also noted improvements in students' listening and writing skills, highlighting the potential of short-form video platforms for language skill development. These studies confirm that when short video applications (i.e YouTube) are integrated into EFL instruction, they are able to create more worthwhile and relevant instruction for EFL learners in most cases, especially in the case of the Palestinian context (Bsharat & Hamarsha, 2023).

Methodology

This chapter details the methodology employed in this study to assess the impact of Watching Reels on Social Media Platforms on the Enhancement of English language learning among English language students at Palestine Technical University – Kadoorie. The research design, participants, data collection questionnaire, and the procedural steps undertaken by the researcher during the study are also detailed. Finally, the chapter presents the methodology to be used for data analysis.

Methodology Justification

Given that the main objective of the study was to examine students' perceptions, engagement patterns, and self-reported experiences related to the use of social media Reels while learning English, the descriptive-analytical method was appropriate. Also, the study aimed to evaluate behaviors as they naturally occurred, without the researcher manipulating any variables; as such, a non-experimental quantitative method was deemed appropriate. Regarding the use of online questionnaires, they allowed for the effective collection of responses from students across different years of study and enabled the researcher to analyze general patterns and trends across responses using descriptive statistical methods. In addition, this method of data collection is consistent with the exploratory nature of most studies in educational technology. In such studies, collecting data on students' perceptions and attitudes toward the technology and its use is the starting

point, prior to undertaking any deliberate or controlled experimental interventions.

Research Design

The study is descriptive-analytical, as it is based on the collection of students' experiences and opinions through questionnaires; in this case, no variables were manipulated. Such a design best captures the phenomenon, and in this case, it is best suited to capture the way students engage with social media Reels, and the way they perceive the value or otherwise of the Reels, in the learning of the English language.

Participants

The sample in this research consisted of English students from Palestine Technical University-Kadoorie, specifically ranging from first-year students to final-year students. The total number of completed online questionnaires was sixty-eight. Since the target sample frame ranged from 50 to 70 respondents, the sample size was sufficient for a powerful statistical analysis. The distribution of participants by academic year was as follows:

- First-year students: 11
- Second-year students: 12
- Third-year students: 30
- Fourth-year students: 14

Instrument: Online Questionnaire

The data for this research were collected via a Google Forms questionnaire designed specifically for this study. The questions aimed to capture students' interaction with, exposure to, and perceptions of the impact of social media Reels on their English learning.

Data Collection Procedures

The questionnaire link was shared digitally via the official online groups of English-major students. In addition, the researchers reached out to representatives from all academic years to motivate participants and to request that they disseminate the questionnaire within their class groups.

The questionnaire was designed to be completed by students at their discretion. Data collection occurred until the target sample size was met, leading to 68 valid responses, thus facilitating sufficient data for descriptive analysis.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to gain a sense of overall tendencies and trends in the collected data and to provide a foundation for a more extensive analysis focusing on the frequency, percentage, and mean of various contributors. The analysis of the data collected from the questionnaires, all of which were closed-ended, does not involve qualitative thematic analysis. This analysis will focus on the frequency of students' reel viewing, the use of reels in English learning, students' content-related preferences, and students'

perceptions of the impact of reels on various English language skills.

Discussion

This study aimed to investigate the perceived impact of social media Reels on English language learning among PTUK students. The findings largely support the initial hypothesis and align with existing literature, while also highlighting important pedagogical considerations.

Impact on Listening and Speaking Skills (RQ1): The results strongly suggest that students perceive Reels as beneficial for developing their listening and speaking skills. The high percentage of students reporting improvement in pronunciation (46.3%) and listening (44.8%), coupled with the preference for pronunciation and speaking practice content (52.2%), corroborates previous research (Jayakodi & Rajendran, 2025; Kobilova, 2022). This positive perception can be explained by key learning theories. First, **Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1985)** suggested that language is acquired through exposure to comprehensible input. Reels, with their combination of visual and auditory cues, provide such input in manageable, engaging segments. Second, **Mayer's Multimedia Learning Theory (2009)** posits that people learn more deeply from a combination of words and pictures than from words alone. The dual-channel processing (auditory/visual) activated by Reels enhances understanding and retention, particularly for pronunciation and vocabulary presented in context. Furthermore, the opportunity for repetition and active imitation supports the development of speaking fluency.

Impact on Writing and Grammar Skills (RQ2): Consistent with the hypothesis, students perceived Reels as having a minimal impact on writing (1.5%) and grammar (10.4%). This finding is not surprising, as these skills typically require explicit instruction, focused practice, and feedback—elements often missing in passive viewing experiences (Ellis, 2008; Hyland, 2003). The brief, informal nature of Reels content rarely provides the depth or structured input needed for developing grammatical accuracy or written expression. This underscores the theoretical distinction between acquiring language through input and developing specific skills through output and conscious attention to form (Swain, 2005).

Student Engagement and Attitudes: The overwhelmingly positive attitudes towards Reels as a learning tool (74.7% agree/strongly agree) and the high percentage of students following educational accounts (80%) reflect strong engagement and perceived value. This aligns with research highlighting the motivational power of short-form video content (Liu & Zhu, 2022). However, the finding that a majority (56.7%) do not actively practice after viewing reveals a critical gap. This suggests that while Reels are effective for initial exposure and motivation, their potential for deep learning is not fully realized without deliberate, active follow-up. This supports the concern that passive

consumption can lead to superficial learning (Carr, 2010) and highlights the importance of **learner agency and digital literacy** in transforming informal exposure into explicit knowledge (Ng, 2012).

In summary, Reels serve as a powerful tool for providing engaging, multimodal input that enhances receptive skills (listening, vocabulary) and aspects of pronunciation. However, they are not a panacea. Their pedagogical effectiveness is maximized when they are thoughtfully integrated into a broader curriculum that includes structured activities, explicit instruction, and opportunities for productive practice, particularly for developing writing and grammatical accuracy.

Ethical Considerations

Participation was voluntary and anonymous. The purpose of the study was explained at the beginning of the questionnaire, and informed consent was implied by completion and submission. Data were kept confidential and used solely for research purposes. Approval for the study was granted by the relevant departmental authorities at PTUK.

Results

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Conclusion

This research explored the role of social media Reels in English language learning among students at Palestine Technical University - Kadoorie. The findings confirm that students extensively use and positively regard Reels as a valuable supplementary resource. Reels are perceived as particularly effective for enhancing pronunciation, vocabulary, and listening skills, aligning with theories of comprehensible input and multimedia learning. However, their perceived impact on writing and grammar is minimal, underscoring the need for more structured pedagogical approaches to develop these skills. The study supports the growing recognition that language learning increasingly occurs in informal digital spaces. While Reels offer authentic and engaging linguistic input, their full potential is realized only when students actively engage with the content and when educators strategically integrate these tools into a balanced curriculum that addresses all facets of communicative competence.

Limitations and Recommendations

Limitations

This study has several limitations. The sample (N=68) was restricted to English majors at a single university, limiting the generalizability of the findings. The reliance on self-reported data introduces potential response bias, as it measures perceptions of improvement rather than objective language gains. The descriptive-analytical design, without a control group or pre-/post-testing, precludes causal claims about the effectiveness of Reels. Finally, the study did not conduct reliability and validity testing (e.g., Cronbach's alpha) for the questionnaire, nor did it employ inferential statistics to explore relationships between variables.

Recommendations for Future Research

To address these limitations, future research should:

- Employ experimental or quasi-experimental designs with pre- and post-tests to objectively measure language skill development.
- Include larger, more diverse samples from multiple universities and academic disciplines to enhance generalizability.
- Utilize mixed methods, combining questionnaires with interviews or focus groups to gain deeper insights into learners' experiences and strategies.
- Investigate the correlation between specific viewing habits (e.g., time spent, type of content) and actual language proficiency gains.
- Compare the effectiveness of Reels with other digital tools and traditional instructional methods.

Pedagogical Implications

For educators, Reels should be viewed as a supplementary tool, not a replacement for direct instruction. To maximize their pedagogical value, teachers can:

- Curate high-quality Reels that model accurate and appropriate language use.
- Design post-viewing activities that promote active learning, such as shadowing exercises, vocabulary journals, reflective writing prompts, and discussion forums.
- Guide students in developing critical digital literacy skills to evaluate content and use social media purposefully for academic goals.
- Create assignments that involve students in producing their own educational Reels, fostering deeper engagement and creativity.

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