

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of Study

English has become an essential language in the globalized world, functioning as a primary medium of communication in various fields such as education, technology, and international interaction. In the context of English language learning, Richards (2015) emphasizes the importance of authentic language use in developing communicative competence, while Taguchi (2019) highlights that pragmatic competence is acquired through exposure to real social interaction. These perspectives indicate that learning a language is not only about mastering grammatical forms, but also about understanding how language is used meaningfully in context.

In Indonesia, English is learned as a foreign language (EFL), where learners have limited opportunities to engage in authentic communication outside the classroom. Several studies have pointed out challenges in this context. Putri (2024), Almehmadi (2024), and Hadiapurwa (2023) suggest that EFL learners often struggle to comprehend spoken English, particularly when it involves natural and informal communication. This limitation is closely related to the lack of exposure to authentic input, which affects learners' ability to process real-life language use.

Among the four language skills, listening plays a crucial role as the primary source of language input. Through listening, learners are exposed to how language is actually used in communication. However, in many classroom settings, listening materials are often limited to scripted and simplified audio, which do not fully represent natural spoken English. As a result, learners may become familiar with structured language but find it difficult to understand real conversations.

One of the major challenges faced by EFL learners, particularly university students, lies in listening comprehension when dealing with informal spoken English. In many cases, students are able to recognize individual words, yet they struggle to understand the speaker's intended meaning. This difficulty arises not only from limited vocabulary, but also from a lack of ability to interpret pragmatic aspects of language, such as tone, implied meaning, and contextual intention. Informal conversations frequently include sarcasm, humor, and indirect expressions, which require listeners to go beyond literal understanding. Consequently, learners may misinterpret messages even when they successfully hear the words being spoken.

This issue is closely related to pragmatic competence, which involves understanding meaning based on context and social norms. In classroom practice, however, listening instruction often focuses on identifying explicit information, such as main ideas and specific details,

while paying less attention to pragmatic features like tone, sarcasm, and implied meaning. As a result, learners may develop basic listening comprehension skills but still struggle to interpret the speaker's actual intention in authentic communication.

In line with this, the development of digital technology has provided alternative sources of authentic language input. Social media platforms, such as YouTube, offer a wide range of conversational English content that reflects real-life communication. Through such platforms, learners are exposed to natural speech, including informal expressions, varied accents, and spontaneous interaction. This type of exposure has the potential to support the development of listening skills, particularly in understanding pragmatic meaning.

The importance of understanding meaning beyond literal interpretation is also reflected in Islamic teachings. In the Qur'an, Surah An-Nahl (16:125):

أَدْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجَادِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ

بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ

"Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best. Indeed, your Lord is most

knowing of who has strayed from His way, and He is most knowing of who is [rightly] guided".

The verse emphasizes the importance of communicating with wisdom and good instruction. This implies that effective communication involves not only delivering messages, but also understanding context, intention, and the appropriate way of conveying meaning. In the context of language learning, this perspective aligns with the concept of pragmatic awareness, where learners are expected to interpret meaning appropriately in different situations.

Despite the potential benefits of social media as a source of authentic input, not all learners are able to utilize it effectively. Exposure alone does not guarantee understanding, especially when learners are not aware of the pragmatic features embedded in the input. This suggests that there is a need to examine how exposure to conversational English content on social media relates to learners' ability to interpret meaning in listening.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the correlation between students' exposure to conversational English content on social media and their pragmatic awareness in listening. In addition, this study seeks to identify specific features in social media content that contribute to the development of students' pragmatic understanding. By focusing on these aspects, this research is expected to provide meaningful insights into how

authentic input can support the development of pragmatic listening skills in EFL contexts.

B. Definition of Key Terms

To prevent conceptual ambiguity and ensure a consistent interpretation of the variables investigated in this undergraduate thesis, several core terms require operational clarification. The following definitions outline the specific scope and context in which these terms are utilized throughout the research.

1. Students' Exposure to English Content on Social Media

In this study, exposure refers to the frequency and intensity with which university students interact with spoken, informal English videos on digital platforms. Following the concept of input exposure by Ellis (2008), this term emphasizes the importance of consistent engagement with authentic language to trigger incidental learning. In a digital context, this exposure occurs through multimodal social media environments where students are "immersed" in real-world communication (Ellis, 2008; Sykes, 2018).

2. Conversational English Content

This term covers spoken or informal communication in English, commonly found in everyday interactions. Social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok provide authentic conversational content, exposing learners to pragmatic elements such as idioms, colloquialisms, and turn-taking communication strategies (Almehmadi, 2024; Richards, 2015).

3. Social Media

Social media refers to digital platforms that enable content creation, sharing, and interactive communication. These platforms provide rich opportunities for EFL learners to engage with authentic English, enhancing their pragmatic and listening skills (Hadiapurwa et al., 2023; Putri, 2024). The researcher will not focus on a single platform because the study is focused on the type of content rather than the platform.

4. Pragmatic Awareness in Listening

Pragmatic awareness in listening is the ability of students to consciously notice and interpret the speaker's intended meaning, social cues, and implicit messages through auditory input (Ishihara & Cohen, 2022; Taguchi, 2019). It goes beyond literal comprehension, as it requires the listener to recognize how context, tone, and social relationships (Power, Distance, and Imposition) influence the meaning of an utterance (Schmidt, 2010).

C. Research Questions

In order to provide a clear focus and direction for this investigation, the core problems addressed in this study need to be formally specified. Consequently, the following research questions are formulated to guide the empirical examination regarding social media exposure and pragmatic listening capabilities.

1. Is there a significant correlation between students' exposure to conversational English content on social media and their pragmatic awareness in listening?
2. What features of conversational English content on social media are perceived by students as most helpful in developing their pragmatic awareness in listening?

D. Objectives of Study

Based on the operational problems identified in the previous section, the explicit targets of this research must be clearly defined. The objectives of the study outlined below serve to clarify what this quantitative investigation aims to achieve upon its completion.

1. To examine whether there is a statistically significant correlation between students' exposure to conversational English content on social media and their pragmatic awareness in listening.
2. To determine which features of conversational English content on social media are perceived to be most influential in enhancing students' pragmatic awareness in listening.

E. Significance of Study

Theoretically, this study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on pragmatic competence in learning English as a foreign language. This study explores how communicative English content on social media serves as a tool for developing learners' ability to interpret and use language appropriately in a variety of social contexts. By focusing on listening and developing social pragmatics through digital platforms, this study provides new insights into informal learning environments as a complement to formal education. (Almehmadi, 2024; Kusumaningputri, 2020; Taguchi, 2019).

Practically, this study provides valuable information for educators, curriculum designers, and policy makers. It highlights strategies for integrating social media into English as a foreign language teaching to improve listening and pragmatic skills. The findings can guide the design of interactive and engaging language learning activities that take advantage of students' familiarity with social media platforms. Additionally, educators can identify features of communicative English content, such as idioms or accent variation, that are most effective in promoting pragmatic awareness. (Aritonang et al., 2022; Hadiapurwa et al., 2023; Tulgar, 2016).

F. Hypothesis

1. (H_0): There is no significant correlation between students' exposure to conversational English content on social media and their pragmatic awareness in listening.
2. (H_1): There is a significant correlation between students' exposure to conversational English content on social media and their pragmatic awareness in listening.