

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the study

Speaking skill is widely recognized as one of the most challenging skills for learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), as it requires the ability to produce language in real time while simultaneously managing fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and interaction. Brown (2007) explains that speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving, and processing information, while Harmer (2015) emphasizes that speaking competence develops through regular practice in meaningful communicative situations. However, many EFL students still struggle with low confidence, limited vocabulary, fear of making mistakes, and speaking anxiety, which often hinder their oral performance. In this regard, the development of speaking skills is closely linked to the use of communicative and interactive learning environments. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), as highlighted by Richards (2006), promotes meaningful communication and active learner participation rather than passive learning. Nevertheless, in many classroom contexts, opportunities for speaking practice remain limited, and students often feel pressured or anxious when speaking in front of others. This condition aligns with Krashen's (1985) Affective Filter Hypothesis, which suggests that high levels of anxiety and low

self-confidence can impede language acquisition. Therefore, creating learning environments that reduce anxiety and encourage frequent, meaningful practice is essential for improving students' speaking skills.

Based on the researcher's preliminary observation in the fourth-semester English Education Study Program, several students showed hesitation and lack of confidence when performing speaking tasks in class. During classroom activities, some students tended to avoid volunteering, spoke in very short utterances, or relied heavily on reading notes. Informal conversations with several students also indicated that they felt anxious about making pronunciation mistakes and being judged by peers. In addition to these classroom observations, the researcher also found that Instagram was frequently used by fourth-semester students as a platform for sharing English-speaking videos. Several students participated as video talents for the English Education student organization's Instagram account, while many students also uploaded English-speaking videos as part of speaking course assignments required by their lecturer. These activities indicate that Instagram had already been integrated into students' academic speaking experiences rather than being used solely for personal communication. This phenomenon raised the researcher's interest in exploring how students perceive the use of Instagram, how they utilize its features to support English

speaking practice, and what challenges they encounter while using the platform. Therefore, these preliminary observations became the basis for conducting this study.

The rapid growth of digital technology has created new opportunities to support language learning beyond the classroom. Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) theory explains that mobile technologies enable flexible, autonomous, and contextual learning experiences (Kukulska-Hulme, 2012; Crompton, 2013). Through mobile devices, learners can access learning resources anytime and anywhere, allowing them to practice language skills more frequently. In the context of speaking, mobile platforms that provide audio-visual recording features allow students to rehearse, record, and evaluate their own speaking performance, which supports self-regulated learning and reflection.

One of the most widely used mobile applications among university students today is Instagram. As a social media platform, Instagram offers various multimodal features such as video posts, reels, stories, and interactive comment sections. These features make it possible for learners to create spoken content, share it with peers, and receive feedback in a more informal and less threatening environment. In line with Krashen's theory, practicing speaking through Instagram may help lower students' affective filters by providing a space where they feel more comfortable and confident. In addition,

the interactive nature of Instagram aligns with communicative learning principles, as learners engage in authentic communication and peer interaction.

Recent studies from 2020–2025 have highlighted the educational potential of Instagram in EFL contexts. Research has shown that Instagram can increase students' motivation, engagement, and confidence in speaking activities. It also provides opportunities for repeated practice and creative expression. Nevertheless, although numerous studies have explored digital media in language learning, several gaps remain. Many previous studies focus on measuring effectiveness using quantitative approaches and pay less attention to students' lived experiences and perceptions. In addition, research rarely provides an in-depth exploration of how students actually utilize Instagram features specifically for speaking practice. The affective and contextual challenges, such as anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, digital literacy differences, and technical constraints, are also often underexplored. Furthermore, there is still limited qualitative research conducted in the context of Indonesian Islamic higher education institutions, where cultural and educational backgrounds may shape students' experiences differently.

The novelty of this study lies in its exploration of how Instagram supports students' speaking development through authentic language exposure, learner autonomy, and self-

regulated learning. Unlike previous studies that mainly focused on students' perceptions or the effectiveness of Instagram, this study explains the learning process, the strategies students use, and the challenges they face when utilizing Instagram as a complementary learning tool for speaking development and many previous studies that rely on quantitative or survey-based methods, this research employs a qualitative descriptive approach, enabling a deeper and more contextualized understanding of how Instagram supports speaking development. Additionally, by focusing on fourth-semester English Education students at UIN Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu, this study provides a specific institutional and cultural perspective that has been underrepresented in prior national and international research.

Therefore, there is a need for a study that qualitatively explores students' perceptions, experiences, and challenges in using Instagram as a tool to enhance their speaking skills within a specific educational context. By examining students' engagement, speaking development, and the challenges they face, this study aims to provide a deeper and contextually grounded understanding of Instagram-based speaking practice.

B. Identification of the Problem

Based on the background of the study, several problems can be identified. First, many EFL students still face difficulties in developing their speaking skills. They often struggle with

fluency, limited vocabulary, pronunciation accuracy, and confidence when speaking English. Speaking anxiety and fear of making mistakes frequently prevent students from expressing their ideas orally.

Second, classroom speaking activities often provide limited time and opportunities for students to practice actively. As a result, students may not receive sufficient exposure to meaningful speaking practice that can help them develop their oral communication skills.

Third, although students are highly familiar with digital platforms such as Instagram in their daily lives, the use of Instagram as a structured learning tool for speaking practice has not been fully optimized. There is still a gap between students' digital communication habits and formal speaking activities in academic contexts.

Fourth, students' real perceptions and experiences regarding the use of Instagram for speaking practice remain underexplored. It is not yet clearly understood how students actually use Instagram features to support their speaking development.

Fifth, the use of Instagram for learning may also present various challenges, such as speaking anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, limited vocabulary, lack of digital literacy, and technical problems. These challenges may influence how

effectively Instagram can function as a tool for speaking practice.

In addition, the study focuses on Instagram as the primary digital platform and does not compare it with other social media applications or learning technologies. The findings are therefore context-specific and may not be generalized to other institutions or educational settings.

C. Limitation of the Problem

This study focuses on exploring the experiences, perceptions, and challenges of fourth-semester English Education Department students at UIN Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu in using Instagram as a tool to support English speaking practice. The study does not examine quantitative improvements in speaking proficiency but emphasizes students' subjective responses and contextual factors.

D. Research Questions

1. How do students perceive the use of Instagram as a tool for speaking skill development?
2. How do students utilize Instagram features to support their speaking practice?
3. What challenges do students face when using Instagram for speaking skill development?

E. Research Objectives

1. To investigate students' perceptions of using Instagram as a tool to enhance their speaking skills.
2. To examine how students utilize Instagram features to support their speaking practice.
3. To identify the challenges students face when using Instagram for speaking skill development.

F. The Significance of the Research

This study is expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions to the field of English language teaching.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of knowledge related to digital-assisted language learning, particularly in the use of social media platforms for speaking skill development. It enriches the discussion of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) by providing insights into how Instagram functions as a tool for speaking practice. In addition, the study adds to the understanding of affective factors and learner engagement in technology-mediated speaking activities within an EFL context.

Practically, the findings of this study are expected to be useful for several parties. For students, the study may provide awareness of how Instagram can be used more effectively as a medium for speaking practice beyond the classroom. For

lecturers, the results may offer alternative strategies for integrating social media into speaking instruction in a way that aligns with students' digital habits. For future researchers, this study can serve as a reference for further research related to social media, speaking skill development, and qualitative case study approaches in language education.

G. Operational Definitions of Key Terms

1. Instagram as a Learning Tool: In this study, Instagram as a learning tool refers to the use of Instagram features such as video posts, reels, stories, and interactive comments to support students' speaking practice and learning activities outside or beyond the classroom.
2. Speaking Skill Development: Speaking skill development in this research refers to students' perceived progress and experiences in improving aspects of speaking, including fluency, pronunciation awareness, confidence, and ability to express ideas orally, rather than measurable test scores.
3. Students' Perception: Students' perceptions refer to learners' views, opinions, feelings, and interpretations regarding their experiences in using Instagram for speaking practice.
4. Students' Experiences: Students' experiences refer to the actual activities, processes, and interactions students go

through when using Instagram as a medium for speaking practice.

5. Learning Challenges: Learning challenges in this study refer to difficulties or obstacles faced by students when using Instagram for speaking development, such as anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, limited vocabulary, technical issues, or digital literacy limitations.

