

## **STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES OF LEARNING ENGLISH THROUGH SHORT VIDEOS IN INDONESIAN EFL CLASSROOMS**

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### **ARTICLE INFO**

#### **Article History**

Submission : 17-01-2026

Received : 18-01-2026

Revised : 29-01-2026

Accepted : 03-02-2026

#### **Keywords**

Short Video-Based Learning

English as a Foreign Language (EFL)

Students' Learning Experiences

Multimedia-Assisted Instruction

Qualitative Descriptive Research

### **ABSTRACT**

The growing use of short video platforms such as TikTok, YouTube Shorts, and Instagram Reels has increasingly influenced how students are exposed to English. In Indonesian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, short videos are often used as supplementary learning media; however, empirical studies that focus on students' actual learning experiences remain limited. This study aims to explore students' experiences of learning English through short videos in an Indonesian EFL classroom. A qualitative descriptive research design was employed. The participants were ten eighth-grade students from a private junior high school in Pematangsiantar, Indonesia, selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings reveal that short videos create a more engaging and less intimidating learning environment, facilitate vocabulary comprehension through visual and contextual support, and increase students' confidence in classroom interaction. However, students also encountered challenges, particularly related to fast speech and limited processing time. This study contributes to EFL research by providing empirical insights into students' lived experiences of short video-based learning in the Indonesian EFL context. The findings offer practical implications for EFL teachers, highlighting the importance of careful video selection and pedagogical scaffolding to optimize the use of short videos in classroom instruction.

### **Introduction**

The rapid development of digital media has significantly influenced how students interact with English in their daily lives. Short video platforms such as TikTok, YouTube Shorts, and Instagram Reels have become particularly popular among young learners because they offer brief, visually engaging, and easily accessible content. These platforms expose students to authentic English expressions, pronunciation models, and contextualized language use that often feel more relevant to their everyday experiences than traditional classroom materials.

In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, short videos have increasingly been recognized as potential supplementary learning media. Compared to conventional teaching materials such as long texts or grammar-focused exercises, short videos provide multimodal input that combines visual, auditory, and contextual elements. This multimodal nature may help sustain students' attention, support comprehension, and create a more engaging learning environment, particularly for learners who are accustomed to digital media consumption.

The pedagogical potential of multimedia is supported by several theoretical perspectives. Mayer's Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning suggests that learners process information more effectively when verbal and visual channels are used simultaneously, reducing cognitive overload and enhancing retention. Similarly, Paivio's Dual Coding Theory explains that information presented in both visual and verbal forms is more easily understood and remembered. In addition, Krashen's Input Hypothesis emphasizes the importance of comprehensible input in low-anxiety learning environments, which short videos may provide through their informal and engaging nature.

Previous studies have explored the use of video-based materials in EFL classrooms and reported positive effects on student engagement, vocabulary development, and listening comprehension. However, much of the existing research has focused on long-form instructional videos, teacher-produced materials, or quantitative measurements of learning outcomes. Fewer studies have examined short, fast-paced video content that students frequently encounter in digital platforms, particularly from the perspective of students' own learning experiences.

Although short videos are increasingly used in EFL classrooms, there is limited empirical research that explicitly investigates how students experience learning English through short videos, what benefits they perceive, and what challenges they encounter in classroom settings, especially within the Indonesian EFL context. Previous studies tend to emphasize effectiveness or outcomes, leaving students' experiential perspectives underexplored. This gap indicates the need for qualitative research that captures learners' voices and classroom experiences more directly.

Therefore, this study aims to explore students' experiences of learning English through short videos in an Indonesian EFL classroom. Specifically, it seeks to examine students' perceptions of the learning process, the perceived benefits of short video-based instruction, and the challenges they face during its implementation. By focusing on students' lived experiences, this study offers a novel contribution to EFL research and provides practical insights for teachers seeking to integrate short videos effectively into classroom instruction.

## Method

### 1. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore students' experiences of learning English through short videos in an EFL classroom. A qualitative descriptive approach was chosen because it allows researchers to present participants' experiences and perceptions in a clear and straightforward manner without imposing complex theoretical interpretations (Sandelowski, 2000).

### 2. Research Setting

The study was conducted in an eighth-grade EFL classroom at a private junior high school in Pematangsiantar, Indonesia. The school was selected because short videos had been integrated into regular English instruction. The classroom was equipped with basic digital facilities, including a projector and audio system, which supported the use of multimedia learning materials.

### 3. Participants

The participants consisted of ten eighth-grade students (five male and five female) aged 13–14 years old. They were selected through purposive sampling based on their participation in English lessons that incorporated short videos. The students represented varying levels of English proficiency, ranging from beginner to intermediate, which allowed the study to capture diverse learning experiences.

### 4. Instruments

Two instruments were used to collect data: classroom observation and semi-structured interviews. Classroom observations focused on students' engagement, interaction, and responses during short video-based learning activities. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain deeper insights into students' perceptions, perceived benefits, and challenges related to learning English through short videos.

### 5. Data Collection Procedures

Data collection was carried out in three stages: preliminary classroom observations, individual student interviews, and data organization. Observations were conducted during English lessons that integrated short videos. Interviews were conducted face-to-face in Indonesian to ensure clarity and comfort, and all interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent.

## 6. Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The analysis involved familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, identifying themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report.

## 7. Data Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, several strategies were employed. Method triangulation was applied by comparing data obtained from classroom observations and semi-structured interviews to enhance credibility. Member checking was conducted by clarifying and confirming key points from the interview data with the participants to ensure accuracy of interpretation. In addition, detailed field notes and interview transcripts were maintained to support transparency and consistency during data analysis.

Ethical considerations were carefully addressed throughout the research process. Prior to data collection, permission was obtained from the school and participants were informed about the purpose of the study. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants. Students' anonymity and confidentiality were maintained by using pseudonyms, and all data were used solely for research purposes.

## Results and Discussion

### 1. Students' Engagement and Learning Atmosphere

The findings indicate that the use of short videos created a more engaging and lively learning atmosphere in the EFL classroom. During classroom observations, students appeared more attentive and responsive when short videos were introduced. Many students showed immediate reactions, such as commenting on the video content or discussing scenes with peers.

Interview data further support this finding. One student stated:

“When we watch short videos, the class feels more fun and not boring. I can pay attention longer than when we only read from the book.” (Student 3)

This suggests that short videos helped reduce monotony and increased students’ attention during lessons. However, this engagement was not uniform across all students. A few students reported that while videos were interesting, they sometimes became distracted by visual elements that were not directly related to the lesson.

## 2. Vocabulary Comprehension and Contextual Understanding

Students reported that short videos supported their understanding of new vocabulary by providing visual and situational context. Rather than memorizing isolated words, students were able to associate vocabulary with actions, expressions, and situations shown in the videos. As one student explained:

“I understand new words more easily because I can see what is happening in the video. It helps me guess the meaning.” (Student 6)

This finding aligns with Paivio’s Dual Coding Theory, which suggests that combining verbal and visual information enhances comprehension and memory retention. However, some students noted that when videos progressed too quickly, they struggled to process both the visuals and spoken language simultaneously, indicating a potential cognitive overload.

## 3. Students’ Confidence and Classroom Participation

Another important finding relates to students’ confidence in participating during English lessons. Many students reported feeling more confident expressing opinions or answering questions after watching short videos, as the content provided concrete ideas to discuss.

One participant stated:

“After watching the video, I know what to say. I feel more confident to speak English, even if my grammar is not perfect.” (Student 1)

This increased confidence reflects Krashen’s Input Hypothesis, which emphasizes the role of low-anxiety environments in language acquisition. Nevertheless, a small number of students still felt hesitant when the language used in the videos was too fast or unfamiliar, suggesting that confidence gains depended on the level of comprehensibility.

## 4. Challenges in Learning through Short Videos

Despite the positive experiences, students also encountered challenges. The most frequently mentioned difficulty was understanding fast speech. Several students explained that native-like pronunciation and rapid delivery made comprehension difficult.

As one student noted:

“Sometimes the video is too fast, and I cannot catch the words. I need to watch it again.”  
(Student 8)

This finding highlights a tension between authenticity and accessibility. While authentic videos expose students to real language use, they may also increase cognitive demands if not carefully selected. From a pedagogical perspective, this suggests the need for teacher support, such as replaying videos, using subtitles, or pre-teaching key vocabulary.

## Discussion

The findings of this study illustrate how short videos contribute meaningfully to students' learning experiences in an EFL classroom. First, the high level of engagement observed in the classroom supports the principles of Mayer's Multimedia Learning Theory posits that learners process information more effectively when learning materials engage both visual and auditory channels. The combination of moving images, context, and spoken language helped students make sense of the material more smoothly than when relying on printed texts alone. The strong emphasis on vocabulary understanding in this study aligns with Paivio's Dual Coding Theory, which explains that the human mind stores information in both verbal and visual forms. When students watched a short video, they received two forms of input that worked together to reinforce learning. This dual exposure helped the students recall vocabulary more easily, especially when the visual scenes served as cues that activated word meaning. Increased confidence among students further demonstrates the emotional benefits of multimedia learning. According to previous research on digital media in language classrooms, visual material can reduce anxiety by providing clearer context and lowering the cognitive burden on learners. This study's findings support this view: students became more confident to speak because the video gave them concrete content to discuss and minimized the fear of “not knowing what to say.” However, the challenges students encountered—such as fast speech and the need for repeated viewing—remind us that multimedia resources are not automatically effective without proper instructional guidance. Teachers must carefully select videos that align with students' proficiency level and support comprehension with strategies such as subtitles, vocabulary previews, or video-pausing techniques. This echoes the idea that multimedia materials must be scaffolded to avoid excessive cognitive load. Overall, the results reveal that short videos can enrich the learning experience by making lessons more dynamic, improving comprehension, and boosting student confidence. At the same time, thoughtful instructional design is needed to ensure that students can fully benefit from the videos. These findings highlight the potential of short videos as an engaging and meaningful tool for EFL learners when integrated appropriately into classroom practice.

## Conclusion

This study explored students' experiences of learning English through short videos in an Indonesian EFL classroom. The findings indicate that short videos positively contributed to students' engagement, vocabulary comprehension, and learning confidence by providing multimodal input that supported meaning-making and classroom interaction.

Beyond confirming the effectiveness of multimedia use in language learning, this study contributes theoretically to multimedia-assisted EFL learning by contextualizing Mayer's Multimedia Learning Theory within an Indonesian EFL setting. The findings suggest that multimedia input in such contexts functions not only as a cognitive enhancer but also as a pedagogical scaffold that compensates for learners' limited exposure to authentic English outside the classroom. In this way, the study extends existing multimedia learning theory by highlighting its context-sensitive application in EFL environments.

From a practical perspective, the findings imply that EFL teachers can strategically use short videos to foster engagement and comprehension, provided that the materials are carefully selected and accompanied by appropriate instructional support. Teachers should consider factors such as speech rate, visual relevance, and guided activities to maximize learning benefits while minimizing cognitive overload.

Despite these contributions, this study has several limitations. The research was conducted in a single educational context with a relatively small number of participants, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. In addition, the qualitative design relied on students' self-reported experiences, which may reflect subjective perceptions rather than measurable learning outcomes.

Future research is therefore encouraged to involve larger and more diverse participant groups, incorporate mixed-methods or experimental designs, and examine the long-term effects of short video use on specific language skills. Such studies would further enrich the theoretical and empirical understanding of multimedia-assisted learning in EFL contexts.

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