


The Instagram Effect: How Social Media Shapes Students' English Language Skills

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ABSTRACT

Social media has become a significant tool for language learning in the digital era. This study focuses on three features of Instagram Reels, Stories, and Feeds with the aim of investigating how students of the English Language Education Study Program perceive the platform's influence on their English language skills. A qualitative method was employed using semi-structured interviews with ten participants. The results indicate that Instagram supports the development of various English language skills, including vocabulary acquisition, grammar understanding, and increased confidence in speaking and writing. Participants reported that educational content from English learning accounts made their engagement with the language more informal yet effective. However, they also highlighted the importance of balancing social media use with conventional learning methods to avoid distractions. This study concludes that Instagram can be a supportive and engaging medium for English language development when used appropriately.

KATA KUNCI

*Instagram,
Media Sosial,
Pembelajaran
Bahasa Inggris,
Keterampilan
Bahasa Inggris,
Persepsi
Mahasiswa*

ABSTRAK

Media sosial telah menjadi alat penting dalam pembelajaran bahasa di era digital. Penelitian ini berfokus pada tiga fitur Instagram yaitu *Reels*, *Stories*, dan *Feeds*. dengan tujuan untuk mengetahui bagaimana persepsi mahasiswa Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris memandang pengaruh platform tersebut terhadap keterampilan berbahasa Inggris mereka. Metode kualitatif digunakan dengan wawancara semi-terstruktur kepada sepuluh partisipan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Instagram mendukung pengembangan berbagai keterampilan berbahasa Inggris, termasuk pemerolehan kosakata, pemahaman tata bahasa, serta peningkatan kepercayaan diri dalam berbicara dan menulis. Partisipan melaporkan bahwa konten edukatif dari akun pembelajaran bahasa Inggris membuat keterlibatan mereka dengan bahasa menjadi lebih santai namun efektif. Namun, mereka juga menekankan pentingnya menyeimbangkan penggunaan media sosial dengan metode pembelajaran konvensional untuk menghindari distraksi. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa Instagram dapat menjadi media yang mendukung dan menarik untuk pengembangan bahasa Inggris apabila digunakan secara tepat.

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Introduction

In the age of globalization that we are experiencing today, the role of technology has become inseparable from the learning and teaching process. With the increase of digital technology in the current era of globalization, teachers are required to utilize technology in the teaching and learning process (Hidayat & Khotimah, 2019). Teachers must utilize digital technology with the aim of making it easier for students to understand learning material. Therefore, by utilizing Digital technology, teachers will be more creative in implementing appropriate learning strategies based on learning curriculum materials.

The development of information and communication technology has an impact on the ability of the younger generation to access a variety of the latest information. Information can be easily obtained in various ways, one of which is by using mobile technology. In the field of education, Nasution et al. (2021) argue that mobile technology is a facility in the form of Android and IOS smartphones that encourages students to develop in the learning process in formal and non-formal institutions. Researchers agree that the use of mobile technology influences students' ability to access various types of information. Students are very familiar with mobile devices, namely smartphones, because they use them in their daily lives. With the understanding they have about smartphones, access to learning materials becomes easier.

The results of research from Hajarudin (2023) stated that social media creates an independent learning environment that has an effect on improving English communication skills outside the classroom. Social media has an effect on students' vocabulary if used appropriately. The features found on social media are mostly in English, which allows students to increase their vocabulary. Vocabulary is very important as a language of communication. With adequate vocabulary, messages can be effectively conveyed, and misunderstandings can be avoided between each other.

In general, English Language Education Study Program students of the faculty of literature and culture have taken several core courses in the initial semester consisting of Grammar, Vocabulary, Speaking, Reading, Writing, and Listening. It can be concluded that students' English language skills can vary depending on their educational background, learning motivation, and exposure to English. In general, English language skills of students majoring in English education are at the intermediate to advanced level, especially in receptive skills such as reading and writing (Yung & Fong, 2019; Zhang et al., 2023). Productive skills such as speaking and listening are still a challenge for some students due to limited authentic practice environments. In this context, social media such as Instagram can be an effective complement to formal learning, as it provides exposure to language in a real context and encourages flexible language interaction (Wati et al., 2024).

There are several previous studies that have been done by some researchers that are related to this research. The first study is from Agustin & Ayu (2021). They investigated the students majoring in the English language education study program in Universitas Teknokrat Indonesia. The Aim of this research is to determine the

impact of using Instagram on increasing Students vocabulary and listening skills. The result of this research is “TRUE” that Instagram affects the listening skills and vocabulary of English education students. The second study was done by Alfu et al., (2021). They investigated the students of 2019 third semester English Tadris study program IAIN Palu academic year 2020-2021. The purpose of this research is to know the effect of Instagram in learning English vocabulary. The result of this research is that the influence of using Instagram on students' vocabulary learning is in the high category and most students feel effective in learning vocabulary via Instagram.

While both studies employed quantitative approaches and focused on the learning outcomes resulting from Instagram use, the current research differs in several important ways. This study adopts a qualitative approach by exploring students' perceptions of Instagram as a learning tool. Rather than measuring outcomes alone, it emphasizes how students personally experience and interpret Instagram's role in their language learning journey. It also specifically investigates key Instagram features such as feed, story, reels, analyzing how these features contribute to language skill development. Therefore, this study offers a deeper, more contextual understanding that complements previous research by focusing on user perceptions and everyday learning experiences.

Method

In conducting this research, the researcher used the qualitative method. The reasons for choosing this method are that this research would like to know how the students' perceptions of “The Instagram Effect: How Social Media Shapes Students English Language Skills”. Through qualitative research, researchers can explore participants' broader understanding of research topics that participants have been applied in their lives. This research has been conducted at the English Language Education Study Program, Faculty of Letters and Culture, Universitas Negeri Gorontalo. The participants of this research are students majoring in the English Language Education Department who are active and used Instagram for learning English Language Skills. To facilitate this research, the researcher used Semi Structured Interview technique with students majoring in English education who are active on social media, especially on Instagram and used this platform to learn English languages. This research was carried out by giving several lists of questions to students related to the research topic. Research data collection was carried out using open-ended interviews. The interview model using open-ended questions is a method that gives research participants the freedom to answer questions freely without being limited by the researcher's point of view. Participants can answer questions according to their own understanding, experience and point of view (Creswell, 2012: p.218).

In this research researcher used several questions for an interview adapted from the opinion of an expert named Sarah J. Tracy. There are several types of information that researchers can obtain, including descriptive, comparative, functional answers, perceptions as well as students' opinions and experiences in using the social media Instagram as a medium for learning English languages.

This research followed the six-stage framework of thematic analysis proposed by Braun & Clarke (2019), which is as follows:

Familiarization with the data: The researcher read through the interview transcripts thoroughly to understand the context and content of the data. At this stage, the researcher began to note the initial ideas that emerged from the participants' answers.

Generating initial codes: After understanding the data, the researcher began to identify and label or code parts of the data that were considered relevant to the research questions.

Searching for themes: The codes that have been made are then grouped into initial themes. Themes are significant and recurring patterns of meaning in participants' answers.

Reviewing themes: At this stage, the researcher re-evaluates the themes that have been identified. Themes that are irrelevant, too broad, or overlapping will be revised, separated, or combined.

Defining and naming themes: Each refined theme is then clearly defined. The researcher names the themes according to their meaning content and explains the story behind the data.

Producing the report: The final stage is to compile a research report based on the themes that have been analyzed. The researcher presents direct quotes from participants to support the findings and provides a thorough interpretation in accordance with the research context.

By following these stages, the data analysis in the research is carried out systematically and transparently, thus enabling reliable and meaningful findings.

Results

In determining the theme of this study, researcher carried out the identification stages as applied by braund and clarke experts. from the application of the six stages above, researchers found various important themes which were then selected outline so that 6 important points were obtained in accordance with the research context. as for the important points in question, the researchers summarized in the form of a table below:

No	Theme	Descriptions
1	frequency and motivation	In this theme, it is also explained how often the research participants use the Instagram platform.
2	Types of content accessed	shows the type of content that research participants accessed through the Instagram platform.
3	influence on language skills	summarize the impact of using the Instagram platform on the language skills of the research participants.

4	Comparison with other learning methods	describe participants' opinions regarding the Instagram platform and traditional learning media.
5	features that support learning	mention and explain the features that are helpful while using the Instagram platform.
6	future roles and development suggestions	collecting suggestions from research participants for future platform improvements.

Based on the analysis of Students perception regarding *The Instagram Effect: How Social Media Shapes Student English Language Skills*, shows that this platform has a significant role in improving students' motivation and language skills.

First, students actively use Instagram for social interaction, accessing educational content and entertainment, which helps them learn vocabulary more easily. Second, the diverse educational content, including accounts offering tutorials and explanations on grammar, proved effective in improving comprehension. Third, students reported improvements in their English language skills, including comprehension, grammar, and pronunciation, thanks to interaction through Instagram features. Fourth, while Instagram can increase motivation to learn, students also recognize that the platform has its downsides, such as a shift in focus from learning to entertainment content. Fifth, Instagram features such as reels, stories, and IGTV are considered to be very supportive of the learning process, making it more fun and interesting.

Finally, the students believe that in the future Instagram will become increasingly important as an English learning tool, with the potential to share positive knowledge and attract new users.

Social media, particularly Instagram, plays an important role in shaping students' English language skills by providing a dynamic, engaging and accessible environment for informal language learning. Through features such as Reels, Stories and educational accounts, students are exposed to authentic English content that helps in enriching vocabulary, improving pronunciation and deepening comprehension. The visual and interactive nature of social media encourages students to explore language in real contexts, thus increasing their motivation and confidence in using English, especially in speaking and writing skills.

In addition, social media bridges the gap between formal and informal learning, allowing students to practice English outside the classroom in a way that suits their interests and daily habits. Thus, social media not only complements conventional learning methods, but also transforms the language learning process into a sustainable and personally meaningful experience.

Conclusions

This research aims to find out the perceptions of students about how social media (especially Instagram) shapes their English Language Skills. who use social media, particularly Instagram, as a medium for learning English. From the results of the study of 10 students, we can conclude that Instagram has a significant impact on students'

English Language Skills including vocabulary skills and mastery. Some of the features found on Instagram such as stories and reels help students to explore the context of English according to their interests. The type of content that matches the interests of students helps motivate them to learn. So, Instagram can be said to facilitate student vocabulary learning.

Various educational content that students access on Instagram, helps them in improving vocabulary understanding. Most students think that educational content such as tutorials and grammar learning videos contribute to students' language understanding. Learning becomes more interesting and not monotonous because the learning media is in accordance with students' interests, namely using Instagram. The variety of content on Instagram indirectly motivates students to learn further.

Most students recognized a marked improvement in their English skills, including vocabulary expansion, grammatical accuracy and pronunciation. The interactive nature of Instagram allowed for real-time communication and practice, which built confidence in using English. These findings support the idea that social media platforms can be valuable tools for language acquisition by providing opportunities for authentic interaction.

While students recognized the motivational benefits of using Instagram for learning, they also noted the potential for distraction due to the entertainment-oriented content on the platform. This duality suggests that while Instagram can increase motivation and engagement, it should not replace traditional learning methods entirely. Conventional classroom settings continue to play an important role in providing a structured and purposeful learning experience.

Looking ahead, the students expressed optimism about Instagram's growing role in English education. They see its potential as a medium for sharing knowledge and fostering a community of learners. As technology evolves, Instagram is likely to become an increasingly important part of language learning strategies, especially among the younger generation who are adept at using social media.

In this study, researchers hope that students can utilize Instagram wisely as a medium for learning English. The Instagram platform is not a learning strategy, but the various features available are expected to be an indicator in helping to further increase students' understanding.

The researcher hopes that teachers can collaborate with current digital technology in the learning process. With technology, it will make it easier for teachers and students to achieve results in learning. This research is still imperfect because it is limited by research participants. Researchers conducted research on students without a specific generation. So that in the future researchers hope that further research can be carried out with the object of research being active English students in a certain generation. This aims to be able to see the impact of Instagram in shaping the students' English Language Skills.

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