

THE INFLUENCE OF INTAGRAM REELS ON ENGLISH VOCABULARY ACQUISITION AMONG ENGLISH LEARNERS

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Abstract

As one of the most popular social media platforms in the world, Instagram has evolved into a language learning tool through innovative features such as Instagram Reels. This study looks at several factors, such as the frequency of Instagram usage, the type of content consumed, and the way students use Instagram Reels to improve their English vocabulary. This study used a qualitative method by collecting Data collected through questionnaires provided to ten students from the English Education Study Program of Zainul Hasan University Genggong. The results of the study showed that the attractive and contextualized format of Instagram Reels significantly improved vocabulary acquisition. Instagram can be an effective educational tool, but it requires a planned strategy to maximize its benefits for students.

Keywords: Social Media, Instagram, Vocabulary.

INTRODUCTION

The 21st century saw the rapid development of technology that even changed the way people think. In addition, the way we interact with each other is changed by technology. With the rise of social media, hailed as the pinnacle of communication technology's evolution, individuals have found themselves liberated from the necessity of in-person interactions. This digital realm cultivates a space for social engagement, idea exchange, and constructive commentary on the creations they share. In addition, many fields, including health, defense, banking, commerce, entertainment, and even education (Bolat, 2018).

Social media has emerged as a fundamental component of the contemporary learner experience, especially in terms of English language acquisition. A number of previous studies have examined the effectiveness of social media on language skills. For example, Fauziah et al. (2023) compared the role of Instagram and TikTok in vocabulary learning and found that attractive visual content can increase students' interest and lexical ability. Meanwhile, Hikmah et al. (2024) examined students' perceptions of the use of Instagram Reels in speaking skills and stated that the majority of respondents acquired new vocabulary through exposure to English content. However, these studies still focus on general aspects of social media use or speaking skills, not specifically on vocabulary acquisition through Instagram Reels as a microlearning feature.

This research carries novelty by specifically highlighting Instagram Reels as a potential medium in vocabulary acquisition. Instagram Reels is unique compared to other platforms such as YouTube or TikTok in its short duration, dynamic visuals, and ability to

reach learners quickly and informally. By utilizing short audiovisual-based content, this feature is in line with the concept of microlearning which allows learners to absorb information in a short but intensive time. This study is also unique in that it examines the effects of informal exposure on vocabulary acquisition in the context of non-native speaker learners, which to date has rarely been studied in depth in the academic literature.

The research gap that this study tries to fill lies in the lack of empirical and systematic studies on how Instagram Reels directly affect English vocabulary acquisition. Research by Fadhlillah et al. (2024) did show a significant increase in vocabulary skills after the use of Reels, but the scope of the study was limited to quantitative results without discussing the strategy or process of vocabulary internalization by learners. In addition, there is no study that thoroughly explains how students use Reels features such as captions, subtitles and video repetition to support learning. Therefore, this study is important to provide theoretical and practical contributions in the development of technology-based learning media that are relevant and appropriate to the characteristics of today's digital generation.

Alfahadi (2017) investigated the role of social media in education. His study at Tabuk University showed that the International English curriculum uses social media sites. This is due to the fact that they provide a collection of videos, texts and sounds that students can use to improve their English skills by commenting and learning from others' direct feedback. Since social media has woven itself into the fabric of the curriculum, educators are expected to embrace it wholeheartedly. An interesting study spearheaded by Ünsal (2018) revealed that instructors often utilize platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and WhatsApp as their canvas to impart knowledge, guide instruction, and provide entertainment in their daily routine. Moreover, social media is embraced as an essential component of lifelong learning, with virtual learning communities nurturing teachers' growth as professionals.

Meanwhile, YouTube is the social media platform that students most frequently use for their research purposes. In addition, research conducted by Dunn (2013) and Handayani (2017) showed that incorporating social media into classroom settings proves beneficial for learners, they become increasingly inspired to engage in educational journeys, deepen their relationships with educators and peers, and gain the ability to exchange ideas, make their own creations, and showcase them as part of essential 21st century competencies. A significant number of students use the Facebook platform for their interactions. In contrast, students in Saudi Arabia gravitate towards Twitter as their preferred social media tool for learning English. This preference stems from the fast and user-friendly nature of social media, which empowers students to take part in discussions, voice their thoughts, and access information from around the world (Aloraini & Cardoso, 2018).

Consequently, a multitude of investigations have indicated that social media plays a pivotal role in the acquisition of the English language. As noted by Akhiar et al. (2017), leveraging social media can enhance students' experiences by favorably altering their perceptions, attitudes, and expectations, despite variations in their preferred social media platforms. Conversely, research by Dunn (2013) uncovered that students predominantly engage with social media for personal interests rather than scholarly activities. Furthermore, Instagram enjoys a popularity that rivals that of Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Nevertheless, the inquiry into the specific application of Instagram for English language learning remains sparse (Al-Ali, 2014). Thus, this research aims to investigate the use of Instagram as a means to enrich students' mastery of the English language, with a particular

focus on vocabulary enhancement. The application of Instagram in this scenario seeks to offer students a chance to expand their educational horizons, moving past the realm of social media for individual pursuits, particularly enhancing their language proficiency and skills, with a focus on enriching vocabulary.

Instagram stands as rapidly ascending mobile application designed to assist students in honing their talents. (Obeso et al., 2023). The Instagram usage as one of the most famous social networking sites will probably support mobile-assisted language learning strategies. According to statista.com, as of June 2018, Instagram has one billion active users per month. Among the countries with the most Instagram users, Indonesia ranked fourth with 94.2 million viewers (Jamilumkillah & Miftakh, 2022). A captivating element of Instagram is its Reels, designed to assist students in swiftly discovering fresh content. (Saputri, 2021). The Instagram reels can be utilized as an effective learning media in supporting the educational process, while enhancing understanding and meaning in learning. (Dewi et al., 2022).

Instagram has a feature called Instagram Reels. On 5 August 2020, global users started using this feature. Instagram Reels has many creative features that attract users, allowing them to create short videos or photos with customizable elements (Muzakky 2023). The addition of background music, use of various effects, use of special filters, and setting the playback speed are such components. Additionally, users can incorporate transitions to increase the flow and visual attraction of their content. Individual styles and preferences can be customized (Hong 2022).

Instagram is the hottest social media among Indonesian teenagers and they are the demographic group that has the highest number of social media users (Valkenburg et al. 2021). Instagram is ranked second among social media platforms in Indonesia, with 32% of users (Murnane, 2018). Instagram has many global users who use English captions. Without realizing it, we often read foreign translated words into our language. Retrieved from the process of translating words on the English into their native language, students can develop and expand their vocabulary. According to (Pujiati et al., 2019), Instagram is a hot favorite amongst teenagers due to its interesting features and the speed of sharing global news. In addition, students can use Instagram to improve their vocabulary by writing captions on every photo they upload to the platform. As a consequence, it is anticipated that student interest and desire to participate in learning activities will increase and have an impact on their English skills, especially vocabulary.

For Learning English, Vocabulary is really important as the basis for making sentences. However, English teachers sometimes overlook the importance of mastering vocabulary. English had rapidly grown to become the most commonly spoken second language with a lot of individuals, including students and employees, needing to master it to nurture their personalized day-to-day activities. For some, motivation to learn English can arise from intrinsic drives, such as sense of inquisitiveness and the eagerness to learn independently without external pressure (Aloraini 2018).

Understanding common terminology will facilitate communication. (Gyllstad et al., 2021) advise learning about 800 to 1,000 widely used words to quickly gain fluency in a foreign language. By knowing this common vocabulary, students can understand at most 75% of the language used in daily life. This frequently used language has a higher value because it is more frequently used in conversation. There are many ways to acquire a diverse vocabulary, which facilitates a diverse learning environment. A strong vocabulary knowledge

is essential to communicate well with others, particularly as English has the most extensive vocabulary in the world.

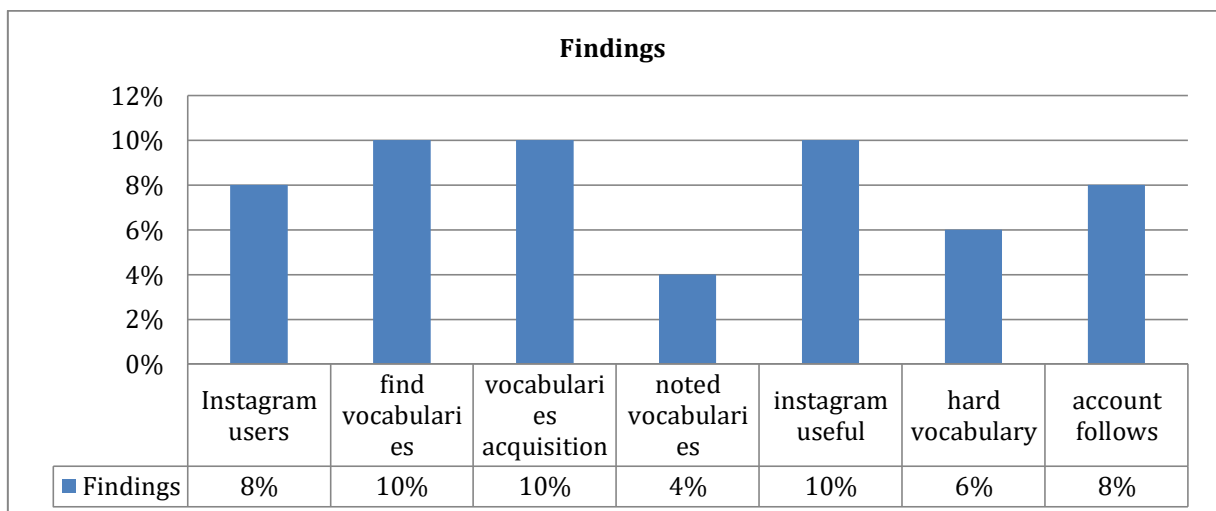
METHOD

In this study, a qualitative approach was used. Qualitative approaches usually describe and describe the situation of a phenomenon. Creswell (2019) states that qualitative research 'describes the existing model occurring in a natural set-up that requires the researcher to cultivate a high detail level of involvement in the genuine experience. Kothari (2015) states that both qualitative and sentence-based descriptive research refer to the presentation of facts in everyday language. According to Kothari, using descriptive qualitative methods means providing in-depth descriptions, explanations, and interpretations of the data to be obtained from a study. Both types of research report phenomena, provide a description of the data, and reveal the truth through critical analysis.

This research investigated how the utilization of Instagram platform affects students' English Vocabulary acquisition. This study involved 10 students. The purposive sampling method was used to select participants. Questionnaires and instructions were used for data collection. Questionnaires are lists of questions written and distributed to respondents with the aim of obtaining information. This research was carried out at the English Education Department of Zainul Hasan University Genggong in semesters 1st – 5th in the academic year 2024/2025. The study involved students who used Instagram as a media platform, where they wrote or memorized English vocabulary they acquired from Instagram accounts or from reels.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Instagram can be used by students as a tool to acquire or master English vocabulary. By following Instagram users who often provide advice or methods for learning foreign languages, students can improve their vocabulary acquisition by adding text to each photo they upload to the platform.



Based on the findings above that Instagram has great potential as a vocabulary learning medium as many as 8 respondents use the platform to support the vocabulary learning process, which demonstrates the popularity of social media in informal education. In addition, 10 respondents felt that they were able to discover new vocabulary through the platform, while the same number reported that they successfully mastered the new vocabulary they discovered. This suggests that Instagram content such as infographics, short videos and educational posts help develop vocabulary.

However, the interesting result is that only 4 out of 10 respondents recorded the new vocabulary they found. This low level of note-taking suggests that the respondents' learning approach is still spontaneous and unorganized. Nonetheless, recording new vocabulary can help strengthen memory and increase the chances of repeating the vocabulary in the future. In addition, 6 respondents stated that they had difficulty understanding the vocabulary they encountered on Instagram. This challenge may be due to the difficulty of the vocabulary being higher than the user's understanding or the lack of context in the content.

10 respondents recognized that Instagram helps with vocabulary learning. They said that the platform helps because its visual and interactive content attracts students' interest. In addition, the fact that 9 of the respondents follow educational accounts that specifically focus on vocabulary learning materials suggests that educational accounts on Instagram play an important role in supporting a more targeted and efficient vocabulary learning process. Therefore, setting the accounts to follow is one of the plan steps to maximize the learning benefits of Instagram.

Discussion

Based on the results of this study, Instagram media is proven to acquire new vocabulary in English. Findings from the questionnaire showed that 10 respondents agreed that Instagram can acquire new English vocabulary, and considered Instagram useful for learning. However, only 4 took notes on the vocabulary found, so learning tended to be passive. Some respondents also found the vocabulary difficult, suggesting the need for further explanation in the content. In addition, 8 respondents followed specific accounts to learn vocabulary, indicating an interest in learning through social media. Overall, Instagram Reels has the potential to support learning, but still needs strategies to be more effective.

Using Instagram as a learning-media can increase new vocabularies

Students who participated in the survey highlighted that utilizing Instagram for vocabulary learning simplified the process of adding new words to their repertoire, particularly informal expressions known as slang, which resonate with today's youth. Suprapti et al. (2021) bolster this perspective by noting that slang derived from platforms like Instagram and TikTok frequently emerges in the form of word adoption and abbreviations, such as 'OTW', which stands for 'On the Way'. This motivates students to keep their vocabulary and slang fresh to avoid becoming obsolete.

In addition, it is important to develop more structured learning strategies, such as encouraging users to take regular notes on new vocabulary or suggesting additional resources to enrich the context of their vocabulary. In addition, educational content creators on Instagram and linguists can work together to create more relevant and comprehensible

content. In the long run, this method could help more people learn vocabulary through social media, supporting the development of language literacy more broadly.

Given that millennials often use colloquialisms in their daily conversations, their immersion in the digital age and information age reflects their tendency to use such colloquialisms. Their speaking ability continues to improve as a result of their efforts to expand their vocabulary, which encourages them to read attentively and look up slang terms. In addition, students share methods for remembering their newly encountered vocabulary.

The results of previous studies are in line with these findings. Vocabulary is very important, especially when speaking. Speaking, which is an important component of English proficiency, includes four important macro skills. It is a productive ability, and if students want to utilize it properly, they need a lot of attention.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Instagram Reels has a positive influence on English vocabulary acquisition for learners. With its engaging and contextualized format, the platform helps learners discover and understand new vocabulary through content such as infographics, short videos and educational posts. Most respondents found Instagram effective for increasing their vocabulary, especially in the form of informal language popular among teenagers. However, there are challenges, such as the lack of systematic record of new vocabulary and difficulty understanding complex words. To fulfil the potential of learning, a more structured learning strategy is needed, including keeping a record of new vocabulary and following dedicated educational accounts. Collaboration between educational content creators and linguists is also recommended to create content that is relevant and easy to understand. Thus, Instagram, particularly the Reels feature, can be an effective tool in supporting informal English learning, although it must be balanced with a learning approach.

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