An Analysis of the Use of Instagram among English Education Students at University of Mataram

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Abstract: Instagram is being a popular platform among students nowadays. This demographic finds the platform engaging and useful for multiple purposes especially in language learning. This research study aimed to (a) find out how students of the English Education Program at the University of Mataram use Instagram for language learning, (b) to identify the motivation of the students in using Instagram for language learning, (c) to reveal the challenges faced by students in using Instagram as a learning tool. The research employed qualitative research method to provide a comprehensive understanding. Data were collected through questionnaire with 61 students in the third semester of English Education Program and interviewed ten students each of them. Among other findings, the present study reports the use, motivation, and challenge on using Instagram for language learning. Most students use Instagram to learn English by following English learning accounts; watching English content; learning from infographics and memes; reading captions; and etc. Their motivations include the desire for practical language application; the sense of community; and the convenience and entertainment value that Instagram offers. However, challenges such as potential distractions; the risk of encountering inaccurate information; and the need for self-discipline in a largely unstructured environment highlight the limitations of relying solely on this platform for language learning.

Keywords: English content, Instagram, language learning, qualitative research.

INTRODUCTION

Instagram is especially popular among students. This demographic finds the platform engaging and useful for multiple purposes. A report by We Are Social shows that Indonesia has the fourth-largest number of Instagram users in the world, with about 89.15 million users. This substantial user base indicates the platform's widespread appeal. Most of these users are teenagers and young adults, many of whom are students. Instagram offers features like posts, reels, stories, direct messages, IGTV, and live videos. These features cater to various content creation needs and preferences. Reels, which allow users to create and discover short, entertaining videos, are particularly popular. The dynamic and engaging nature of reels attracts a young audience. This feature has also become a tool for viral trends and widespread communication. Students use Instagram for many reasons, such as social interaction, self-expression, learning, entertainment, and professional networking. The platform's versatility supports diverse user activities. They stay connected with friends and family, follow educational accounts, and collaborate with peers. Instagram's visual nature enhances these interactions. Instagram also helps students learn informally by following trends in fashion, music, and culture. This informal learning complements traditional education (Veletsianos & Kimmons, 2021). Moreover, it is a platform where students can showcase their talents, seek career opportunities, and collaborate with brands (Greenhow & Chapman, 2020). These professional networking opportunities are significant for career growth. The platform's broad reach allows for a diverse and extensive audience. This diversity enriches the user experience and fosters a sense of global community.

Research shows that students have a positive view of using Instagram for learning. This positive perception is crucial for educational integration of social media. They use it to

improve their vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, and to get new information (Anindita & Noveintine, 2022). These language skills are essential for academic success. However, there is not much research on how students use Instagram for language practice. Identifying these gaps is important for targeted educational strategies. This study aims to explore students' use, motivations and the challenges they face in using Instagram. The research methodology will involve mixed-methods approaches to gather in-depth insights. Using this research methods, the study seeks to understand how usage and motivation on Instagram. These insights will be valuable for educators and researchers.

Despite the growing integration of social media into education, there is a noticeable gap in the research concerning the specific ways in which students use Instagram for language learning, particularly in an Indonesian context. Existing studies primarily focus on the general use of social media for educational purposes or the impact of digital platforms on learning behaviors broadly. There is limited understanding of the motivations driving their engagement with this platform for language practice. Furthermore, while some research has explored the educational benefits of social media, this research will analyze motivational aspects in the context of English language learning on Instagram. This study aims to fill these gaps by providing detailed insights into the motivations behind students' use of Instagram for English learning. By addressing these gaps, the research will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how social media can be effectively utilized to support language education.

Understanding why students use Instagram is important. It helps in designing effective educational interventions. Their motivations can be intrinsic, such as a personal interest in learning English, or extrinsic, such as needing to improve grades or social status. These motivations influence how actively students engage with the platform. Examining the types of mistakes students make helps identify areas of difficulty and informs educators about common issues that need to be addressed. Addressing these issues can enhance language learning outcomes. Djaali (2009) and Hamzah (2009) describe student motivation as either internal (self-driven) or external (influenced by the environment). This distinction is crucial for

understanding student behavior. Tailoring educational strategies to these motivations can improve effectiveness. It also helps in creating a supportive learning environment.

Social media, especially Instagram, has changed how we communicate and learn. It has introduced new dynamics in language use and interaction. For non-native English speakers, Instagram offers a chance to practice English in a real-world setting, but it also exposes them to mistakes. These real-world practices are invaluable for language learning. These mistakes can affect how others understand their messages. Clear communication is essential for effective interaction. Mistakes can be in grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, or typing. These errors are common in informal language use. Factors contributing to mistakes include incomplete understanding of language rules, lack of practice, and the informal nature of social media language. Understanding these factors can help in developing better teaching methods.

Based on the above points, this study focuses on how students use Instagram in their daily lives and what motives they use it. The everyday use of Instagram provides rich data for analysis. The research aims to provide insights for teachers and researchers on the use of technology in education. These insights can inform future educational practices. The study is titled "An Analysis of the Use of Instagram among English Education Students at University of Mataram." This title reflects the core focus of the research. The research questions will address usage patterns and motivations. These questions guide the research process. The outcomes will contribute to the body of knowledge on social media and language learning. This contribution is valuable for enhancing educational strategies.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative research method to find out more about the situations or settings in which people take part in a study (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative methods provide detailed descriptions and stories about people's experiences and feelings, which help to understand the context and reasons behind those numbers. The researcher selected 25% of the total student population to fill the questionnaire, choosing 61 students of 3th Semester of English Education Program in University of Mataram that using Instagram application. Then, ten students

from each of them were selected to follow interviews. Researcher collected the data using questionnaire and interview method. A questionnaire is a set of questions designed to gather statistically valuable information from individuals on a specific topic (Roopa & Rani, 2012). The questionnaire was administered via Google Forms that used a choice of answers from strongly agree to strongly disagree as widely known as Likert Scale. Questionnaire was used to find out how students use Instagram for language learning. After collecting the data through questionnaire, the researcher used interview to gather more detailed information about students' motivations and challenges on using Instagram for language learning. An interview is a qualitative research method that involves a direct, face-to-face or virtual conversation between a researcher and a participant to gather detailed information about the participant's experiences, opinions, perceptions, and behaviors. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted in this research to gain deeper insights into the students' motivations and challenges using Instagram for language learning. As stated by Kvale and Brinkmann (2015), a semi-structured interview is an interview designed to gather descriptions of the interviewee's life experiences, with the goal of interpreting the significance of the phenomena they describe. The data analysis have been conducted following the systematic approach outlined by Miles and Huberman (1994), which includes several key steps to ensure thorough and rigorous analysis. The data analysis was including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

FINDINGS

1. Findings for the Research Question 1: *How do students use Instagram for language learning?*

The findings of this research question were showed the data from the questionnaire that has been shared with the students from the third semester of the English Education program at University of Mataram. The researcher had collected the data from 61 students on that semester. The Google Form has four statements that employed a Likert scale to measure the level of Instagram usage among English Education students. Student respondents indicate their degree of agreement with the statements using a scale that spans from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. In this study, a survey was undertaken among English Education students who predominantly utilize Instagram as their social media platform. The results revealed that Instagram is the prevailing platform utilized by these students, outperforming other internet platforms in terms of overall utilization. These data suggest that Instagram has more appealing features and content, perhaps due to its visual presentation and user-friendly interface, which enable users to connect with peers and significant persons in their academic field. Most students use Instagram to learn English by following English learning accounts, watching English content, watching live streams, learning from infographics and memes, reading captions, and etc. In this relation, here are the findings of student responses about their use of Instagram.

Table 1. Instagram usage among students for language learning

No.	List of Items (N=61)	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)
1	I follow language learning accounts on Instagram	34.4%	52.5%	13.1%	0%	0%
2	I create or share language learning content on Instagram	4.9%	26.2%	23.0%	31.1%	14.8%
3	I find a lot of English content on Instagram	36.1%	57.4%	6.6%	0%	0%
4	I used Instagram for group study or project collaborations	3.3%	42.6%	36.1%	14.8%	3.3%
5	I used Instagram to share class materials	1.6%	37.7%	44.3%	9.8%	6.6%

No.	List of Items (N=61)	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)
6	I communicated with peers on Instagram	11.5%	72.1%	14.8%	1.6%	0%
7	I save or bookmark language learning content for later use	32.8%	54.1%	11.5%	1.6%	0%

Furthermore, researchers collected additional data from student responses to open-ended questions via Google Forms. Students use Instagram in various ways, acquiring more information to enhance their language learning.

Table 2. Another response of Instagram use

Using Categories	Respondent's Response Example
Following Language Learning Accounts	I follow foreign influencer content to learn vocabulary and pronunciation
Watching English Content	I often watch content about movies or anything that uses English. I also sometimes look at foreign Instagram accounts to learn new vocabulary or just to see how their lives are.
Watching Live Sessions	I usually watch live artists or stories from foreign artists
Learning through Infographics and Memes	Searching for quotes" in English where the source is directly from the country, and also watching memes/humor that use English
Noting Vocabulary	I usually check influencer accounts who teach English and then I note things or vocab that I don't know yet, I also sometimes when I see long caption on Instagram I immediately search for words that I don't know the meaning of.
Participating in Challenges and Quizzes	I use Instagram to learn by watching English educational videos, saving videos about grammar, actively participating in grammar quizzes on various educational accounts on Instagram, and then practicing the understanding I get in class.
Reading Captions	Reading long stories in captions
Seeking Academic Information	Looking for English Olympiads or competitions that can be followed to hone my English skills
Storytelling and Vlogging	Make vlogs

2. Findings for the Research Question 2: *What motivates students to use Instagram for language learning?*

a. Intrinsic Motivations

The interview data revealed that students are strongly motivated when they use Instagram as a tool for learning languages. The results indicate that the motivation of these students to use Instagram is closely connected to the platform's ability to enable their thoughts, experiences, and interests. Moreover, the enjoyable nature of Instagram significantly influences the motivation to use it for language learning purposes.

"First, it's probably FOMO, right? The fear of missing out because, these days, who among the younger generation isn't on Instagram? It's a place to express myself, see what others are up to, maybe even follow my idols. Of course, we all have different reasons for using it. For me, I also use it to find materials or references about activities, organizations, and more."
--Student 1

"I usually scroll for entertainment, but sometimes I also use it for learning, like finding platforms to study foreign languages. Since I'm in an English education program, I specifically look for English-language platforms."
--Student 2

"Yeah, because on Instagram, it's just enjoyable to be able to express myself through social media. I can also learn a lot of things and see beautiful places or other things that you wouldn't know about in real life."
--Student 6

"The benefit is that there are a lot of funny videos. People these days are really into memes, and for college needs, there are always tips and tricks. I also often watch content from abroad, so no matter what kind of content it is, I get a lot of information. It also helps me learn English."
--Student 4

b. Extrinsic Motivations

Based on the data, a few of students interviewed felt motivated by using Instagram for language learning. It influenced external factors that drive their engagement in academic and social lives. The platform provides a dynamic and interactive setting for students to engage in English practice within authentic contexts, acquire cultural understanding, and establish international friendships. These factors enhance their language learning experience and motivate them to further pursue the development of their skills.

"For interaction, because I am also involved in organizations, there are many positive people or environments there that I can interact with through the online world. Not just from the offline world, not just meeting. But like in the comments, especially with my bestie. We sometimes comment on funny videos in English. Then we tag our friends and the continuation is like laughing, using English. So, the feature is really, really fun if utilized."
--Student 1

"Absolutely. Especially people from abroad, they are really native speakers, right? So they know and if our grammar is wrong, they can help. If there are any inappropriate words, they can let us know."
--Student 2

"There is, for example, if there is a lecturer, like an ITB lecturer, they use English, they explain how to do it, not just the English but also like thesis writing for lectures, right? If it's English, it's mostly about grammar, right?
--Student 4

3. Findings for the Research Question 3: *What challenges do students face in using Instagram as a learning tool?*

An analysis of the study uncovered many obstacles that students have when using Instagram as a language learning tool. Although Instagram offers really useful instructional material, students face particular challenges that affect their learning experience. Based on the students' responses to the interview questions, the researchers found five challenges faced by students in using Instagram as a learning tool.

a. Distractions from non-educational content

According to the data, students felt like they didn't have enough access to useful learning materials, which made it harder for them to consistently learn and remember what they had learned. A lot of non-educational content can take students' attention away from their learning goals, making it harder for them to focus.

"The challenge is probably dealing with a lot of distractions. For example, if we're studying, we might suddenly get distracted because there's so much other content on Instagram. It can easily lead us to open something else and lose focus."
--Student 5

"I don't see educational content often in Reels, but when I do, it sometimes sticks with me a bit."
--Student 10

"When I scroll through Instagram, I often see random posts. One kind of post shows clips from Western movies and focuses on phrases I don't know. For example, it might explain that 'piece of cake' means something is very easy. It also shows how to use the phrase in different situations, like saying 'piece of cake' when talking about solving a problem."
--Student 3

b. Limited learning sources and active practice opportunities

The study also showed useful information about how easy it is to get educational tools and how people can be actively involved when using Instagram to learn English. One of the main issues that surfaced up was that there were no many learning tools on Instagram for people who wanted to improve their English. In addition,

there was a problem with managing and finding saved learning material on Instagram.

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c. Language variation and slang

Regarding the obstacles posed by language variation and slang for students, the students expressed that they encountered difficulties when exposed to the discourse of native speakers. The language used by native speakers often incorporates colloquialisms, regional variations, and slang that may be unfamiliar to non-native speakers.

"Eee, in some of the videos, it's native speakers who are talking, so there are some words I don't understand. When that happens, I have to look up what the native speakers are saying and what they mean."
--Student 2

d. Addiction and time management issue

The next findings is on the difficulties of addiction and time management when utilizing Instagram as a learning tool. These issues show how the very interactive character of the platform can result in excessive usage and challenges in managing educational activities with other obligations.

"The challenge with Reels is that, honestly, they consume a lot of data. I've found that even YouTube can't compare to Instagram in this regard. So when I'm watching, I have to think about my data usage. I often stop watching Reels, even if I'm enjoying learning from them, because of this challenge with data."
--Student 1

"The challenges? Well, Instagram often lags even when using WiFi here. And also, finding time to actually study English can be difficult."
--Student 7

e. Lack of connectivity or data quota issues

The study revealed that students encounter difficulties in using Instagram as an educational tool, namely related to connectivity issues and restrictions in data allowance. Such elements can significantly influence the efficacy of Instagram for educational objectives.

"Eee, in some of the videos, it's native speakers who are talking, so there are some words I don't understand. When that happens, I have to look up what the native speakers are saying and what they mean."
--Student 2

Discussion

The results revealed that Instagram is the prevailing platform utilized students, outperforming other internet platforms in terms of overall utilization. These data suggest that Instagram has more appealing features and content, perhaps due to its visual presentation and user-friendly interface, which enable users to connect with peers and significant persons in their academic field (Mulyana, 2024). The considerable extent of Instagram usage may also suggest that the platform has a notable influence on their academic lives, since it serves as a vital tool for interacting with academic material, forming relationships with peers, and finding educational materials.

Interviews revealed two main factors involve internal and external factors contributing to students' motivations in using Instagram for language learning. Internal factors offered opportunities for self-expression, creativity, and social interactions. This aligns with Reeve (2015) and Bandura (1986), who identified the platform empowers students to customize their learning experiences according to their educational objectives. The platform's ability to integrate interactive elements with educational material creates a captivating setting within which

students can derive pleasure while simultaneously improving their language proficiency. Wulandari (2022) noted that the utilization of Instagram as a tool for language learning is greatly influenced by the crucial factors of inspiration and role models. Within the domain of acquiring the English language, influencers offer a unique opportunity to cultivate practical abilities by offering direction, strategies, and educational materials. These influencers have a pivotal role in illustrating the practical use of language skills in various domains of life, such as professional communication and informal self-expression. By including these components into their daily timetables, students can effectively include language learning into their daily routines and achieve their language learning goals (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002).

External factors contributing to how the students build relationships with a global population, expand their social networks, and improve academic purposes. Enabling this social engagement is crucial for enhancing proficiency in the English language and fostering enduring relationships. The Reels on Instagram regularly displays English language materials and terms that are especially designed to cater to the interests of students and provide them with relevant curriculum content (Hikmah, Hidayati, Irwandi, et al. 2024). The ability of this platform to link students with a worldwide community represents a compelling incentive for language learning (Bandura, 1986). In essence, Instagram functions as a valuable and enjoyable platform for individuals to enhance their proficiency in spoken and listening English (Saputro, 2023). Instagram offers users the opportunity to explore a diverse array of content produced by artists from around the globe, therefore exposing them to a multitude of dialects, pronunciations, and speaking styles. Furthermore, Instagram has a substantial role in enhancing language retention by encouraging frequent engagement with posts, videos, and stories.

The present study reveals some challenges that students face when using Instagram as a platform for language learning. Factors such as distractions from non-educational content, a lack of learning tools, and linguistic diversity and slang pose significant difficulties for students. The abundant prevalence of non-educational material on Instagram might lead to a decrease in concentration and hinder the overall educational

experience (Auliyani, 2022). Limited learning resources and restricted opportunities for active practice present an extra challenge for students. Although Instagram provides conveniently accessible language learning resources, it has limitations in terms of the variety and organization of its content. A prevalent inclination among students is to obtain knowledge directly from films or books, which might exhibit either a repetitious or intriguing nature. Moreover, the challenge of safeguarding and retrieving stored instructional content may be fraught with difficulty due to the inclination to forget.

The presence of language variation and slang poses challenges for students when they are exposed to the spoken language of native speakers. Non-native speakers may perceive the language used in videos recorded by native speakers as marked by colloquialisms, regional variations, and unfamiliar nomenclature. Achieving proficiency in the casual and diverse language commonly used on platforms like Instagram can be a formidable undertaking that has the potential to impede the process of acquiring knowledge. Hence, it is crucial to develop theories or tools to aid students in effectively navigating this language. Moreover, using Instagram as an educational instrument leads to issue of addiction and difficulties in managing time. This aligns with Dhiman (2024), who explored the intrinsic level of involvement on the site can result in extended usage and challenges in efficiently managing educational tasks alongside other obligations.

CONCLUSION

This study indicates that Instagram is a platform that helps English education students to improve their language learning. Students mainly use Instagram to access real English content, connect with learners around the world, and practice their language skills in everyday situations. Their motivations include wanting to use language practically, feeling part of a community, and enjoying the convenience and fun that Instagram offers. Some problems with using Instagram for language learning include distractions, the risk of finding incorrect information, and the need for self-discipline in a less structured environment. To overcome these issues, students need to find ways to stay focused, check the accuracy of the information, and look

for interactive opportunities to practice their language skills. Therefore, while Instagram can be a good extra resource, students should use it carefully and combine it with more organized and reliable language learning methods.

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