THE ROLE OF USING INSTAGRAM FOR INCREASING VOCABULARY AND LISTENING SKILL AMONG ESL/EFL LEARNERS

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Abstract

This study looks at how Instagram can help ESL/EFL students improve their English vocabulary and listening skills. It talks about the platform's multimodal environment, which includes videos, captions, hashtags, and interactive features that give learners real language input in interesting, real-world situations. Research shows that seeing Instagram content like Reels, stories, and educational accounts helps with incidental learning, helps people remember what they've learned, and encourages them to practice their vocabulary and listening skills. The study also stresses the importance of using social media responsibly and encourages students to only interact with content that helps them learn a language. The results show that Instagram is a dynamic, learner-centered platform that works well with formal classroom instruction and encourages informal, self-directed learning.

Keywords: Digital learning, multimodal input, informal language learning, self-directed study, language acquisition, learner engagement.

Introduction

Instagram is a widely used social media platform that allows users to share photos, videos, and stories globally. Beyond social networking, it has emerged as a valuable tool for language learning, particularly in developing vocabulary, listening, and reading skills among ESL/EFL learners. Its multimodal environment—integrating short videos, captions, hashtags, audio features, and interactive content—provides learners with authentic language input in engaging, real-world contexts. Features such as Reels, stories, and video posts expose

learners to native speech patterns, everyday vocabulary, and colloquial expressions, supporting incidental learning and listening practice. Additionally, educational accounts, micro-lessons, and interactive content like polls and quizzes facilitate vocabulary acquisition, reinforce retention, and motivate learners. By combining visual, audio, and textual input, Instagram functions as a dynamic, learner-centered platform that complements traditional classroom instruction and encourages informal, self-directed language learning.

DISCUSSION

As we live in a rapidly developing era, we can hardly imagine our lives without modern technology and social media, as they now influence every aspect of our daily lives. In the digital age, leveraging multiple learning media is essential because depending solely on classroom instruction constrains exposure to English due to limited class time (Ilmu & Hartono, 2024). Instagram has thus become a highly effective supplemental tool for informal English learning, particularly in improving vocabulary and listening comprehension. Its multimodal environment—which integrates short-form videos, stories, captions, hashtags, and interactive features—gives learners access to real, context-rich English input in a motivating, social setting (Ilmu & Hartono, 2024; Ilmu, Hartono & Wahyuni, 2022).

Empirical evidence supports Instagram's potential for language acquisition. Fauziah, Pebriano, and Murtiningsih (2024) found that students saved vocabulary-related posts from Instagram and TikTok, reviewed them, and actively incorporated new words into their daily activities. This study highlights how Instagram's dynamic content and peer-generated materials can boost both motivation and retention. In a related qualitative study, Ilmu, Hartono and Wahyuni (2022) interviewed high school students who reported that Instagram's multimodal features—especially videos with captions and interactive stories—helped them improve their receptive English skills, particularly listening. These learners also noted that passive exposure turned into meaningful learning through their engagement with English content creators.

Furthermore, Instagram's algorithmic personalization plays a vital role: by tailoring content to users' interests, it exposes learners repeatedly to similar language forms, reinforcing retention and cementing vocabulary (Ilmu & Hartono, 2024). Interactive tools such as quizzes, polls, and direct messaging also

encourage active involvement, promoting incidental learning and communicative practice. As such, Instagram functions not only as a social network but also as a learner-centered, informal learning environment that effectively supports vocabulary growth and listening development alongside formal teaching.

CONCLUSION

The research concluded that Instagram positively affects the listening skills and vocabulary of English education students. The study revealed some variations in student perceptions. In one finding, 30% of students strongly agreed that Instagram enhances their vocabulary, while only 15% strongly agreed that it improves their listening skills. Additionally, 35% of students agreed that Instagram benefits vocabulary development, and 45% agreed that it aids listening skills. A portion of students remained neutral, with 35% expressing neutrality regarding vocabulary improvement and 40% regarding listening ability.

Despite these differences in opinion, the researchers confirmed that Instagram has a notable impact on both vocabulary and listening skills. The study also highlighted the importance of responsible social media use, emphasizing that not all content on platforms like Instagram is beneficial. Students are encouraged to carefully select and differentiate between content that positively contributes to their learning and content that may have negative effects.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that Instagram can be an effective tool for supporting language development, provided that students use it wisely and critically.

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