

THE ROLE OF INSTAGRAM IN ENHANCING ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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Abstract

The increasing use of social media in education has brought new opportunities for language learning. This study systematically reviews the role of Instagram in enhancing English language skills. A systematic literature review (SLR) approach was employed, selecting relevant studies from reputable academic databases published between 2020 and 2024, including Mendeley, PubMed, and Taylor & Francis, with an initial identification of 921 articles. After screening for relevance and duplication, 57 studies were shortlisted, and 19 empirical studies were selected for in-depth analysis, focusing on Instagram's impact on vocabulary acquisition, writing, speaking, and student engagement. The findings indicate that Instagram positively impacts various aspects of English learning, including vocabulary acquisition, writing, speaking, and engagement. The study highlights the effectiveness of Instagram's features, such as captions, reels, and interactive tools, in fostering language development. Additionally, the research reveals that Instagram enhances motivation and self-directed learning. However, limitations such as internet accessibility and digital literacy remain challenges. The study suggests that incorporating Instagram into English language teaching (ELT) can provide an engaging and practical learning experience. Future research should explore its long-term effects and best implementation strategies in formal education settings.

Keywords: Instagram, English Language Learning, Social Media, Education Technology, Digital Learning.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of technology has significantly changed the field of education, especially in language learning. Social media platforms like Instagram have gained popularity as tools for social interaction and as additional learning resources. Instagram's multimedia features, including images, videos, and interactive elements, provide an engaging environment for students to practice English in real life.

Instagram's accessibility and user-friendly nature make it a promising platform to enhance language acquisition outside the traditional classroom environment (Sanusi et al., 2021).

In today's digital era, traditional textbooks no longer confine learning. The widespread use of smartphones and applications has made access to educational content more convenient and engaging. As one of the most popular social media platforms, Instagram offers a unique environment where users can interact with educational content through images, captions, and videos (Rivera-Lozada et al., 2022). Many Instagram accounts are dedicated to English learning, providing users with valuable resources such as vocabulary explanations, grammar lessons, and pronunciation guides (Sesriyani & Sukmawati, 2019). These features make Instagram an effective tool for language acquisition, supporting self-directed learning and engagement beyond the classroom.

In the modern era, students increasingly use informal learning methods, utilizing online platforms to improve their language skills. Traditional language learning methods often lack interactivity, hindering motivation and engagement. With the rise of social media, platforms such as Instagram have emerged as alternative learning tools that offer a dynamic and immersive learning experience. However, despite its growing use, the effectiveness of Instagram in language learning is still an area that requires further exploration (Mohammadi, 2024).

Previous studies, such as (Rizal, 2021) and (Ikhsan, n.d.), have explored the role of Instagram in English language learning, highlighting its effectiveness in improving writing, speaking, listening and reading skills. Research has also shown that Instagram encourages engagement, collaboration and self-expression among learners, making it a valuable resource for educators. However, although many studies have examined the impact of Instagram on language learning, a comprehensive systematic review analyzing its effectiveness in different learning contexts is still needed.

Thus, this study intends to systematically review how researchers have explored the existing literature on Instagram's role in English language teaching (ELT) among school and university students. This research synthesizes multiple sources to identify key predictors contributing to the benefits of Instagram in ELT and analyzes which language skills users most frequently enhance through its use. It addresses the following research questions:

Based on the context described above, this systematic literature review aims to synthesize the existing literature on The Role of Instagram in Enhancing English Language Skills in Different Countries and the Factors Behind It. It aims to synthesize the existing literature on The Role of Instagram in Enhancing English Language Skills in various countries and the factors behind it. Therefore, the research questions in this study are: 1) What is the picture of Instagram research on undergraduate students in

schools and universities? 2) What are the predictors of Instagram's benefits in ELT learning? 3) Which skills are most commonly utilized with Instagram in ELT?

Technology in English Language Teaching

According to (Chapelle, 2001), the integration of technology in English language teaching is an important aspect of modern educational research. One of the major theories in this area is the concept of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), which emphasizes the use of computers and related technologies to support and enhance the effectiveness of language learning. Chapelle explores how educators can utilize technology in various aspects of second language acquisition, including teaching, testing, and research. He highlights that technology is a learning aid to create a more dynamic, interactive and contextualized learning environment. In this view, appropriate task design, based on relevant interaction and context, is a key factor in maximizing the potential of technology in language learning. Therefore, using digital platforms, including social media such as Instagram, is a form of development of the CALL approach that allows language learning to be more flexible and engaging for students.

Instagram in English Language Teaching

The integration of Instagram into English Language Teaching (ELT) can be understood through the lens of social constructivist theory, which emphasizes learning as an interactive and socially mediated process (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). As a digital platform, Instagram facilitates authentic language use, collaborative learning, and learner engagement through multimodal interactions such as images, videos, and text-based communication. Studies have shown that features like comments, captions, and live discussions encourage meaningful language practice and enhance communication (Rosdiani et al., 2022).

Several systematic reviews have analyzed the effectiveness of Instagram in English language learning. A study analyzing 25 journal articles concluded that Instagram is highly effective in enhancing all four language skills: writing, speaking, reading, and listening (Tarihoran, 2024). A systematic literature review (Nasution, 2023) analyzed the impact of Instagram on English language acquisition by synthesizing various studies on its effectiveness in language learning. The study identified several key benefits of Instagram in facilitating language learning, including vocabulary enhancement, writing skill development, engagement, and multimodal learning experiences.

Additionally, Instagram is crucial in increasing students' vocabulary, motivation, and creativity by providing an engaging and flexible learning environment. Instagram facilitates meaningful peer and teacher feedback through various features

like comments and direct messaging, contributing to an interactive and student-centred learning experience.

RESEARCH METHOD

The method section of this study provides a comprehensive explanation of the research process. It outlines the sample selection, the data collection procedures, and the methods used for data analysis.

Description of Sample

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to investigate the role of Instagram in enhancing English language skills. The sample includes journals from reputable academic databases, including Mendeley, PubMed and Taylor & Francis. The researchers considered only publications released between 2020 and 2024 to ensure the sources' relevance and quality. These selected studies specifically focus on integrating Instagram into English language learning and are written in English. Furthermore, the researchers included only empirical studies with full-text availability in the analysis. Articles that do not explicitly discuss Instagram in the context of language learning, involve participants outside formal educational settings, or are review papers without new empirical findings were excluded from the sample. This selection criterion ensures that the reviewed literature provides substantial insights into the effectiveness and applications of Instagram in improving English language proficiency.

Procedure

The study follows the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework to ensure a structured and transparent review process. The procedure consists of four main stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. 1) identification: Relevant studies were retrieved from academic databases such as Mendeley, PubMed and Taylor & Francis. Keywords such as "Instagram and English language learning" were used to locate potential studies. 2) eligibility: The remaining studies were further assessed based on predefined inclusion criteria: (a) publication year between 2020 and 2024, (b) focus on Instagram as a tool for English language learning, (c) written in English, and (d) availability of full text. Studies that did not meet these criteria were excluded. 3) inclusion: The final selection consisted of empirical studies that provide substantial insights into the role of Instagram in enhancing English language skills. These studies were analyzed to synthesize findings and identify key themes related to the research objective. By following the PRISMA methodology, this study ensures a rigorous and replicable approach to reviewing the existing literature on Instagram's impact on English language learning.

Study Selection Criteria

This review examined recent empirical studies with the following inclusion criteria: 1) Articles obtained from academic databases such as Mendeley, PubMed and Taylor & Francis. 2) Articles published in the last five years, i.e., between 2020 and 2024. 3) Articles written in English. 4) Articles that are original and available in full text.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Based on the results of a systematic search in the three major academic databases (PubMed, Mendeley, and Taylor & Francis), only articles relevant to using Instagram in English learning were selected. A search on all online research platforms resulted in 921 articles identified through an initial screening process. After removing duplicate and irrelevant articles based on title and abstract, 57 studies were obtained for further review. Of these, 56 full-text articles met the eligibility criteria, and 19 articles were finally selected for further analysis based on methodology and relevance to the objectives of this study. The results of the search of each research platform are described in Table 1. The selection process for this article follows the guidelines of Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) 2020. The PRISMA flow diagram (Figure 1) illustrates in detail the stages of article selection used in this study.

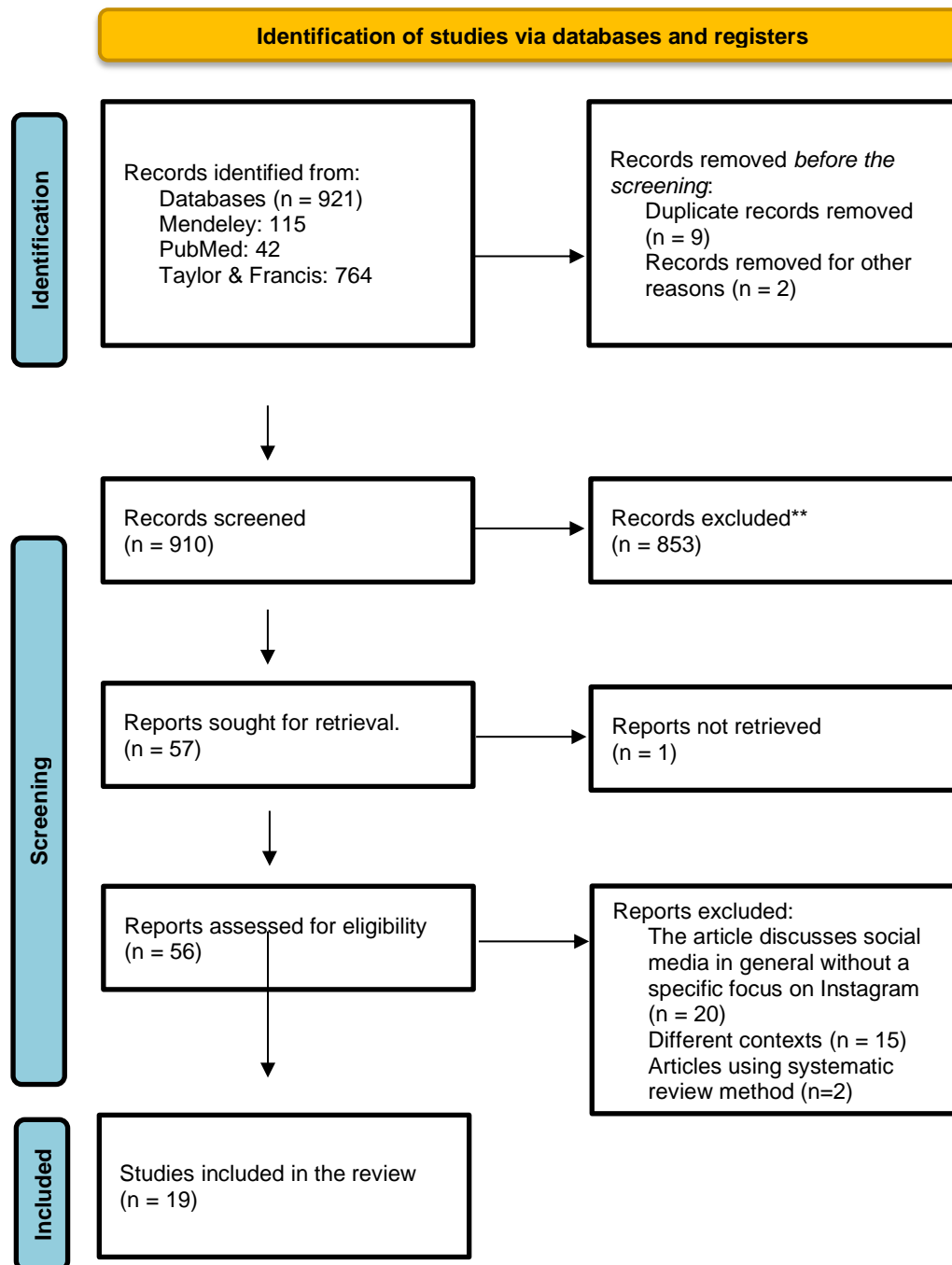


Figure 1. PRISMA Flowchart of the selection process.

Table 1. Summary and characteristics of the final studies selected

No	Authors	Country	Mean Characteristic	Variable	Study Design	Measure	Findings
1	(Sashikala Sarangapani &	Malaysia	30 grade 2 students of a private secondary	Instagram Reels, Grammar Learning,	Quantitative research using surveys based on the	Online questionnaires, Pretest	Through more interactive and creative learning, Instagram Reels improves students' motivation and grammar skills.

	Harwati Hashim, 2022)		school in Selangor, Malaysia	ESL, Social Media in Education	Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and pretest-posttest	and posttest	
2	(Disa Evawani Lestari & Emilius German, 2021)	Indonesia	50 EFL students from universities who use English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI)	Instagram Features, Quiz, Vocabulary Learning, Error Correction	Mixed-method research (quantitative & qualitative) with Likert-scale surveys and thematic analysis of open-ended questions	Online questionnaires and open-ended analysis	Instagram features such as quizzes and cartoon images effectively improve students' understanding of grammar and vocabulary.
3	(Malikhatul Lailiyah & Lian Agustina Setiyangsih, 2020)	Indonesia	80 ESP students from private universities in Indonesia	Instagram, Online Communication, Speaking Activity, MALL (Mobile-Assisted Language Learning)	Quantitative research with surveys using two sets of Likert-scale-based questionnaires	An online questionnaire to assess students' perceptions and attitudes towards the use of Instagram in language learning	Students positively perceive Instagram as a tool for learning English, especially in speaking skills and social interaction.
4	(Lima Alzamil, 2020)	Saudi Arabia	120 EFL students at Qassim University, Saudi Arabia	Instagram, Gender Differences, EFL Learning, Student Perception	Quantitative study with questionnaire	Questionnaire on the perception and use of Instagram for English language learning	Male and female students have a positive attitude toward using Instagram in English learning, with no significant differences based on gender.
5	(Dinara Sergaliyeva & Dariya Assanov, 2021)	Kazakhstan	30 first- & second-year students	Instagram, Digital Learning, Blended Learning, Social Media in	Quantitative surveys and descriptive analysis.	Questionnaire about motivation and learning experience	The use of Instagram alongside traditional methods improves the understanding

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6	(Kobra Tavassoli & Setare Beyranvand, 2023)	Iran	60 students majoring in Physical Education at Iranian universities	Instagram, MALL Technical Vocabulary, EAP (English for Academic Purposes)	Quasi-experiment with pretest-posttest, control group, and experimental group	Technical vocabulary tests (pretest and posttest) and perception questionnaires	Instagram helps improve understanding of technical vocabulary and is positively received by college students
7	(Istiqomatul Faizah, Nur Arifah Drahati & Melor Md. Yunus, 2022)	Malaysia	An English education student who creates a vocabulary quiz for adult college students	Instagram, Vocabulary Quizzes, Informal Digital Learning, Teacher's Experience	Narrative-based qualitative studies	Thematic analysis of the researcher's experience in designing an Instagram-based vocabulary quiz	Creating quizzes on Instagram is effective as an informal digital learning medium
8	(Ali Rashed Ibraheem Almoheesh & Jinan Abdulaziz Hamad Altamimi, 2024)	Saudi Arabia	79 intermediate-level EFL students	Vocabulary learning, Informal digital learning, Technostress, Online engagement	Experimental studies with pretest and posttest	Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT), vocabulary test, informal digital learning scale, technostress scale, and online engagement	The use of Instagram in vocabulary learning increases informal digital engagement and reduces technostress
9	(Siti Wijipratiwi & Yuri Lolita, 2023)	Indonesia	49 high school students with Cambridge curriculum	Instagram video, Speaking skills in giving opinions	Experiment with pretest and posttest	Speaking test and video analysis	The use of Instagram videos significantly improves students' speaking scores compared to conventional methods
10	(Djukica	The	Advanced ("C"	Instagram	Experimental	Vocabulary	Instagram can help C-level

	Mirković, 2022)	Republic of Serbia	level) students learning English with Instagram	m, English vocabulary improvement	studies with pretest and posttest	ry tests and student perception questionnaires	students improve their vocabulary spontaneously and naturally
11	(Amelia Nurdiansyah & Tryanti R. Abdulrahman, 2020)	Indonesia	74 grade 10 students at SMAN 3 Bekasi	Instagram, Descriptive text writing ability	The quasi-experimental method with randomized posttest only control group design	Writing test (10 essay questions based on writing indicators)	Instagram helps improve students' writing skills better than traditional methods
12	(Pipit Nurjannah, Muhammad Sukirlan & Ramlan Ginting Suka, 2022)	Indonesia	26 grade VIII students at SMPN	Instagram, Descriptive text writing feats	Quantitative research with a one-group pretest-posttest design	Pre- and post-treatment written tests, analyzed with Paired Samples T-test	Instagram improves students' writing achievement, especially in language use
13	(Kezia Anindita & Dhanesvar Karel Noveintine, 2022)	Indonesia	Students of the English Language Education Study Program (ELESP) class of 2019–2021 at Sanata Dharma University	Instagram Usage, English Learning, Student Perception	Qualitative research with open questionnaires	Questionnaire response analysis	ELESP students have a positive perception of Instagram as a learning medium that helps improve vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation
14	(Arif Nugroho & Any Rahmawati, 2020)	Indonesia	36 students majoring in Sharia Banking at IAIN Surakarta	Instagram, Writing Skills, ESP (English for Specific Purposes), Caption Writing	Pre-experimental with one-group pretest and posttest	Written tests and student perception questionnaires	Instagram improves writing skills and gets positive responses from students
15	(Ni Putu Purnaa Dewi, Ni Putu	Indonesia	5 grade 11 students at a vocational school in Bali	Instagram Reels, Speaking Skills,	Qualitative descriptive with interviews	Student Instagram Reels interview	Instagram Reels improve students' motivation, awareness, and speaking skills

	Era Marsakawati, Nyoman Adi Jaya Putra, & Ni Komaning Arie Suwastini, 2022)			Authentic Learning, Student Perception	and observations	transcript and video analysis	
16	(Kurnia & Hamzar, 2021)	Indonesia	41 students majoring in Management at STIE Muhammadiyah Mamuju	Instagram, ESP Learning, Writing Skill, Online Learning, COVID-19	Pre-experimental with one-group pretest and posttest	Writing test and questionnaire on students' perception of Instagram	Instagram significantly improves ESP students' writing skills during online learning
17	(Ary Putra Sanusi, Dea Serly Safitri & Surahmi Sabar, 2021)	Indonesia	Students and teachers who use Instagram in English learning	Instagram, Digital Media in ELT, Language Learning, Teaching Tools	Qualitative study with interviews and classroom observation	Social media content analysis and in-depth interviews	Instagram serves as an effective learning medium in ELT with various supporting features
18	(Yenny Ratnasari Sy & Tuntun Sinaga, 2023)	Indonesia	32 grade XII students of SMAN 1 Jatiagung, Lampung	Instagram, Writing Skill, Cutline Caption, Digital Learning	One-group pretest and posttest experimental design	Pretest and posttest essay writing, quantitatively analyzed	The use of Instagram significantly improves students' ability to write cutline captions
19	(Ghada Mousa Abdullah Alghamdi & Anas Hamed Almuhammadi, 2022)	Saudi Arabia	EFL students who use Instagram to learn to write	Instagram, Writing Skill, EFL Learning, Student Perception	Quantitative studies with surveys and experiments	Student perception questionnaire and analysis of writing results before and after the	Instagram positively impacts writing skills and is loved by students as a learning tool.

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Discussion

The findings from the systematic literature review suggest that Instagram plays a significant role in enhancing English language skills among learners. Studies by (Lestari & German, 2021) and (Sarangapani & Hashim, 2022) show that Instagram offers a more engaging and interactive learning environment than traditional learning methods. The analysis indicates that Instagram's features, such as reels, stories, quizzes, and interactive comment sections, contribute to language acquisition in multiple ways. These results align with previous research emphasizing technology's benefits in language learning, particularly in informal and interactive settings (Chapelle, 2001).

One of the key findings is that Instagram is particularly effective in improving students' writing and speaking skills. According to (Nurdiansyah & R. Abdulrahman, 2020), students using Instagram for writing activities demonstrated better grammar accuracy, vocabulary retention, and overall organization in their texts. This is reinforced by research (Sanusi et al., 2021) (Kurnia & Hamzar, 2021) and (Sy & Sinaga, 2023), which show that students who frequently write captions on Instagram are better at organizing ideas and using more accurate grammar. ESP students who used Instagram as a writing practice medium showed significantly improved text structure compared to the control group that used conventional methods. In terms of writing skills, research by (Nurjanah et al., 2022) and (Wijipratiwi & Lolita, 2023) found that students who used Instagram to learn descriptive text writing showed a significant improvement compared to those who used traditional methods. Similar results were found by (Nugroho & Rahmawati, 2020), which showed that students who actively used Instagram in writing exercises experienced increased text cohesion and coherence because they received feedback from fellow Instagram users and lecturers more often. Sharing posts, receiving peer feedback, and engaging with a broader audience fosters a collaborative learning environment essential for language development. For speaking skills, (Dewi et al., 2022) and (Anindita & Noveintine, 2022) found that students who used the Instagram Reels feature and live streaming experienced increased speaking fluency, pronunciation, and confidence. (Lailiyah & Setiyaningsih, 2020) also stated that ESP students who use Instagram in speaking practice have better communication skills than traditional learning methods. Similarly, speaking skills are enhanced as students create video-based content, participate in live discussions, and practice pronunciation engagingly and interactively (Ihsan & Aulia, 2020).

In addition, Instagram supports multimodal learning, where students can learn through text, audio, and visuals simultaneously (Sarangapani & Hashim, 2022). Furthermore, the literature indicates that Instagram's multimodal approach supports learner motivation and engagement. Studies from Malaysia and Indonesia (Lestari & German, 2021) show that Instagram's gamified features, such as quizzes and polls, encourage active participation. The findings support the view that students' motivation to practice English increases significantly when given opportunities to learn through engaging digital platforms. Another factor that affects the effectiveness of Instagram in ELT is motivation and learning independence, where students who actively use Instagram tend to have higher motivation and more confidence in developing their language skills (Sergaliyeva & Assanova, 2021) (Almohesh & Altamimi, 2024) (Faizah et al., 2022). In addition, (Alghamdi, 2022) found that students who engaged in Instagram-based learning experienced a higher increase in digital engagement, which improved their overall language skills. However, research by (Tavassoli & Beyranvand, 2023) shows that the role of instructors is crucial in maximizing the effectiveness of learning through Instagram, especially in more formal academic contexts. In addition, accessibility and digital literacy are also determining factors for the success of using Instagram in English learning, where limited internet access can hinder students' learning experience (Alzamil, 2020) (Dewi et al., 2022).

Another crucial aspect is the effectiveness of Instagram in vocabulary acquisition. Research by (Tavassoli & Beyranvand, 2023) in Iran suggests that Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) via Instagram enhances students' understanding of academic vocabulary. In addition, exposure to Instagram content in English, such as captions, hashtags, and comments, helps students enrich their vocabulary in a more authentic context (Rosdiani et al., 2022) (Almohesh & Altamimi, 2024) (Mirković, 2022). An experimental study conducted by (Mirković, 2022) found that advanced college students who used Instagram in vocabulary learning showed a significant improvement in the comprehension and use of academic vocabulary. For reading and listening skills, students who follow English education accounts or watch English videos experience an increase in their understanding of sentence structure and listening skills (Alghamdi, 2022). This aligns with the broader concept of technology-assisted learning, which posits that digital platforms facilitate contextual learning and long-term retention of new words (Vygotskij & Cole, 1981).

Despite the numerous benefits, challenges remain regarding integrating Instagram into English language teaching. Some studies (Lailiyah & Setiyaningsih, 2020) reveal that students often experience anxiety when sharing their language learning progress publicly due to fear of making mistakes. Additionally, concerns about social distractions and the potential over-reliance on informal learning methods must be addressed to optimize Instagram's role as a language learning tool. However,

most research shows that students positively perceive Instagram as a learning medium because it provides flexibility, accessibility, and a more engaging learning experience.

In conclusion, the reviewed studies collectively indicate that Instagram is a valuable tool for enhancing English language proficiency. It supports interactive, engaging, and authentic language use, making it a practical supplementary resource in English language teaching (ELT). However, educators should consider implementing structured guidelines to maximize benefits while mitigating potential drawbacks. Future research should explore more in-depth pedagogical strategies for integrating Instagram into formal classroom settings to ensure sustainable language learning outcomes.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to answer three key research questions: (1) What is the picture of Instagram research on undergraduate students in schools and universities? (2) What are the predictors of Instagram's benefits in ELT learning? (3) Which skills are most commonly utilized with Instagram in ELT? Based on the systematic literature review, the findings indicate that Instagram is an effective digital learning tool that enhances various aspects of English language learning.

Regarding the first research question, the study found that research on Instagram in ELT has been conducted across multiple countries, particularly in Indonesia, Malaysia, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. The reviewed studies suggest that Instagram is widely used for informal language learning and is increasingly integrated into formal education settings.

For the second research question, the predictors of Instagram's benefits in ELT include its multimodal capabilities, interactive engagement, and accessibility. Features such as videos, captions, comments, and quizzes provide learners with authentic language experiences and real-time interaction, increasing motivation and participation (Faizah et al., 2022).

In response to the third research question, the findings reveal that Instagram is particularly effective in improving writing, speaking, and vocabulary skills. Writing skills are enhanced through caption creation and peer feedback; speaking skills are developed via video-based assignments (Ihsan & Aulia, 2020), and vocabulary acquisition is strengthened through interactive posts and discussions (Lestari & German, 2021).

These findings are important because of their implications for English language teaching. Instagram's ability to engage students in authentic language practice makes it a valuable supplementary tool for educators. However, challenges such as student anxiety, potential distractions, and the need for structured guidance must be addressed for optimal implementation. Future research should explore long-term

effects, best pedagogical practices, and strategies for integrating Instagram into formal curricula to maximize its benefits in ELT.

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