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# THE USE OF *INSTAGRAM* TO LEARN ENGLISH VOCABULARY: A STUDY OF INDONESIAN NON-ENGLISH MAJOR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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## Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the attitudes of non-English major university students in Indonesia on the use of *Instagram* for vocabulary learning and to find out the students' views of learning English vocabulary using *Instagram*. The study involved 213 Indonesian non-English major university students who were *Instagram* users in an online survey and six of them in one interview. Through the survey, the study found that the participants reported generally positive attitudes towards the use of *Instagram* for vocabulary learning. However, through the Thematic Analysis of the interview data, the study found the interview participants' somewhat ambivalent views on the use of *Instagram* to learn English vocabulary. Students reported that consciously learned new isolated English vocabulary from English captions on *Instagram*. Furthermore, they unconsciously acquired isolated English vocabulary from photos and videos on *Instagram*. However, *Instagram* was not helping in obtaining vocabulary in contexts as it gave a limited content explanation. The findings could help teachers to make an informed decision when using *Instagram* in the instructional process, optimising its strength and potential. Researchers are also suggested to investigate the use of *Instagram* to learn English skills.

**Keywords:** English vocabulary, *Instagram*, vocabulary learning, isolated vocabulary, vocabulary in context

## Abstrak

Tujuan studi ini adalah untuk mengetahui sikap mahasiswa jurusan non-bahasa Inggris di Indonesia terhadap penggunaan *Instagram* untuk pembelajaran kosakata bahasa Inggris dan untuk mengetahui pandangan mahasiswa mengenai pembelajaran kosakata bahasa Inggris menggunakan *Instagram*. Studi melibatkan 213 mahasiswa pengguna *Instagram* melalui survei daring dan enam di antaranya melalui wawancara daring. Studi ini menemukan bahwa para peserta secara umum memiliki sikap positif terhadap penggunaan *Instagram* untuk pembelajaran kosakata. Namun, melalui analisis tematik hasil wawancara, ditemukan bahwa peserta wawancara memiliki pandangan yang sedikit ambivalen. Mereka melaporkan bahwa melalui *Instagram*, mereka secara sadar mempelajari kosakata lepas baru melalui *captions Instagram*. Selanjutnya, para peserta melaporkan bahwa secara tidak sadar mereka memperoleh kosakata lepas dari foto dan video di *Instagram*. Namun, dilaporkan bahwa *Instagram* tidak begitu membantu dalam pemerolehan kosakata dalam konteks. Hasil studi ini dapat membantu pengajar untuk membuat keputusan yang tepat saat menggunakan *Instagram* dalam proses pembelajaran, mengoptimalkan kekuatan dan potensinya. Peneliti juga disarankan untuk meneliti penggunaan *Instagram* untuk keterampilan bahasa Inggris.

**Kata kunci:** Kosakata bahasa Inggris, *Instagram*, pembelajaran kosakata, kosakata lepas, kosakata dalam konteks

## INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary mastery is very important in learning a second/foreign (L2) language. Vocabulary plays an important part in learners' writing and speaking production (Alqahtani, 2015). Thornbury (2002) in an early yet still relevant work posited that vocabulary learning is paramount for the development of all language skills. Language learning including listening, speaking, reading, and writing cannot be successfully achieved without vocabulary (Zhi-liang, 2010). Hence, teachers are encouraged to pay more attention to their students' vocabulary learning, including optimising the use of technology.

In this modern era, technology becomes necessary in the world, including in the education sector. The role of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is growing rapidly, especially in the education field (Sarkar, 2012). The role is becoming more essential and it continues to grow in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, students can learn language by using technology anywhere, and teachers need to adapt and be prepared (Gajjar, 2013). One form of ICT in social media.

Several fairly recent studies about social media in language learning have been conducted, perhaps suggesting the growing importance of the use of social media in language learning. A study by Khan et al., (2016) involving 36 university teachers in Pakistan reported that social media was perceived to affect university students' English learning, especially vocabulary. Khan et al., (2016) also mentioned that the use of social media helped engage students' interest in English and minimise hesitation or boredom. In Indonesia, Lailiyah and Setyaningsih (2020) found that their Indonesian student participants reported positive experiences of using *Instagram* for communication in English. Similarly, in a Saudi Arabian context, Fadda (2020) found that students preferred to use *Instagram* because through it they were actively engaged and immersed in using English to communicate with others. Nonetheless, Fadda (2020) admitted that *Instagram* lacks structure in learning opportunities and may provide limited information at a time.

Furthermore, there have been several studies investigating the use of social media such as *Instagram* for vocabulary learning (Fadda, 2020; Indari & Putri, 2018; Lasmiasih, 2019; Lina, 2021; Sivagnanam & Yunus, 2020). A study by Sivagnanam and Yunus (2020) in Malaysia involving primary school students found that students improved their vocabulary skills by collaborating with other social media users in the comment section on *Instagram*. In an earlier study, Indari and Putri (2018) found social media significantly affected Indonesian high school students' vocabulary achievement. Furthermore, in another Indonesian high school context, Lasmiasih (2019) found that students got difficulties mastering the English language because they did not know the meaning of the words, both written and spoken and using *Instagram* photos, videos and captions helped these students know meanings of words they did not know before. In line with that, a recent study by Lina (2021) involving Indonesian university students also suggested that students making status updates in their accounts related to their English learning in online classes could be a way for them to recycle learning materials. The findings however suggested that whilst many students applied correct grammar, only a few students used vocabulary learned from the online class (Lina, 2021). Furthermore, though investigating learning in general, a mixed-methods study involving 166 high school students by Mao (2014) found that when students were using social media, they felt relaxed and connected with other users and it made learning more fun, meaningful, and interactive. However, some participants in this study perceived *Instagram* to be distracting and not helpful enough for learning purposes (Mao, 2014), hinting at the limitation of this platform.

Several authors posited that *Instagram* has the potential to facilitate vocabulary learning with fewer studies suggesting otherwise. In an Iranian context, an experimental study by Beyranvand and Rahmatollahi (2021) found that the group using *Instagram* outperformed the other group using Adobe Connect in terms of vocabulary mastery. As *Instagram* provides

contextualised visual information (Ahmadi & Tabatabaei, 2021; Gonulal, 2019; Gunawan et al., 2021), it could be useful for visual learners to learn English vocabulary (Ahmadi & Tabatabaei, 2021) and contribute to more enjoyable vocabulary learning experiences (Al-Ghamdi, 2018). Studies by Alorai<sup>6</sup> (2018) and Fadda (2020) in Saudi Arabia and Qisthi (2020) in Indonesia found that students might prefer to use *Instagram* in systematic ways over others in learning English vocabulary, for example by observing English accounts and hashtags to find new vocabulary (Qisthi, 2020). *Instagram* also offers interactive vocabulary enrichment (Lailiyah & Setiyaningsih, 2020). Hence, *Instagram* might be learning media for students with prior experience in using the social media platform (Fadda, 2020). However, a study by Wahyudin and Sari (2018) found that albeit being a minority, some participants reported their disagreement on the usefulness of *Instagram* for language learning, suggesting that individual students' use of *Instagram* may affect the extent to which they could obtain learning experiences through *Instagram*.

Furthermore, previous studies also suggested that as *Instagram* could facilitate vocabulary learning, it indirectly could facilitate writing, of which vocabulary is an essential part (Listiani, 2016; Soviyah & Etikaningsih, 2018). In the writing process, students should have sufficient vocabulary mastery, as with limited vocabulary, they may not be able to express their thoughts optimally (Soviyah & Etikaningsih, 2018). Soviyah and Etikaningsih (2018) added that to face those difficulties, *Instagram* has some features that can be used in the learning process of writing. The features of *Instagram* such as photo or video-sharing and social networking are a good resource to use in the instructional process, especially in L2 writing (Soviyah & Etikaningsih, 2018). Similarly, several studies suggested that students could upload photos, write photo captions, and comment on others' pictures in unlimited provided space, thus facilitating the learning of vocabulary and writing (Bestari et al., 2020; F. Handayani, 2016; Listiani<sup>5</sup> 2016; Maolida & Purnamasari, 2018). Furthermore, several vocational college student participants in a study by Rinda et al. (2018) acknowledged that their vocabulary repertoire improved through the activities of giving comments in English among friends on *Instagram*.

Concerning the Indonesian context, furthermore, *Instagram* is a very popular social media platform. As of early 2022, for example, *Instagram* had 99.15 million users in the country, 35.7% of its total population (Kemp, 2022). Hence, it is common for Indonesian university students to have *Instagram* accounts and become active users of *Instagram*. Considering the popularity of *Instagram* among Indonesian students and that students can optimise features of *Instagram* as a learning tool (Mahmudah & Ardi, 2020; Shafie & Mahadi, 2019), investigating Indonesian students' use of *Instagram* for English vocabulary learning can be worthwhile and very relevant for the students.

Studies about *Instagram* in L2 learning in Indonesia have been conducted using various methods. For example, there have been several qualitative studies (Agustin & Ayu, 2021; Gunawan et al., 2021; Rosyida & Seftika, 2019) and quantitative studies (Qisthi, 2020; Soviyah & Etikaningsih, 2018; Wahyudin & Sari, 2018) about *Instagram* and English vocabulary. The participants of these previous studies were mostly <sup>33</sup> English department students. Only the qualitative study by Gunawan et al. (2021) involved a university student from a non-English department. In addition, several studies have also been conducted on *Instagram* for language learning skills (Asyiah, 2017; Listiani, 2016; Mahmudah & Ardi, 2020). These studies involved Indonesian junior high school students. Despite the possible contributions of these aforementioned studies, a study involving more participants could be needed to produce findings with the possibility of generalisation. Furthermore, considering the scarcity of such studies involving Indonesian non-English department students, it could be worthwhile to involve these students.

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Considering the aforementioned rationales, the present study seeks to answer these two research questions. First, what is Indonesian non-English major university students' attitude



4wards the use of *Instagram* to learn English vocabulary? Second, what are the students' views on the use of *Instagram* for English vocabulary development?

The findings of this study can generally benefit teachers in the way that they can make an informed pedagogical decision concerning the use of *Instagram* for L2 learning. For researchers, the finding of the first research questions obtained through a survey may be generalised to a wider population sharing the same characteristics as the participants.

## METHODS

### Research Design 20

The present study employed a mixed-methods design 30 combining an online survey to answer the first research question and online interviews to answer 22 the second research question. It was informed by the pragmatism paradigm focusing on "what works" to best answer the research questions. The possibility of 10 generalisation was the rationale for selecting the survey method (Gray, 2014). In comparison, interviews were conducted to obtain in-depth data about the phenomenon and explanations of the "how" and "why" of the quantitative data (Gray, 2014) and to 12 gain understanding, meaning, and points of view, from the standpoint of the participants (Hammarberg et al., 2016). Furthermore, the use of mixed-methods was also attributed to the equally popular quantitative methods (Al-Kandari et al., 2016; Aloraini, 2018; Duggan & Brenner, 2013; Gonulal, 2019; R. D. Handayani et al., 2020; Li, 2017) and qualitative methods (Gunawan et al., 2021; Mansor & Rahim, 2017; Rosyida & Seftika, 2019) in the field of studies on social media in education.

### Research Instruments

The online survey, made in *Google Form* to answer the first 3 research question, employed a set of a questionnaire consisting of eight close-ended items on students' attitudes towards the use of *Instagram* for vocabulary learning. Items 1 and 2 were adapted from a study by Gonulal (2019), items 3 up to 6 were adapted from that of Khan et al. (2016), and items 7 and 8 were adapted from that of Muain et al. (2019). The participants were to choose among the following possible responses: "Strongly Agree", equal to 5, "Agree", equal to 4, "Disagree", equal to 2, and "Strongly Disagree", equal to 1. For easier data presentation in Findings and Discussion, the eight questionnaire items were categorised into two categories. The first category is "*Instagram* as a platform to improve English vocabulary mastery" and the second category is "*Instagram* and vocabulary learning".

Furthermore, to answer the second research questions, online semi-structured interviews through the *Google Meet* platform were employed. The interviews used several interview checklists on the participants' views regarding the use of *Instagram* for vocabulary development. Examples of questions included "Did you learn English vocabulary through *Instagram* or not?" and "How did you learn English vocabulary through *Instagram*? - If you did not, what did you learn through it, if any?"

### Research Participants and Ethical Consideration

A total of 213 Indonesian non-English department students participated in the present study. They were 51 males (23.9%) and 162 females (76.1%). The minimum age of the participants was 18 and the maximum was 23. They were from various islands or regions in Indonesia, and their domiciles could be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. The participants' domiciles

No.	Domiciles	Number of Participants	Percentage
1.	Java	149	70.0%
2.	Nusa Tenggara and Bali	4	1.9%
3.	Sumatera	23	10.8%
4.	Kalimantan	13	6.1%
5.	Sulawesi	12	5.66%
6.	Papua	7	3.3%
7.	Others	5	2.3%

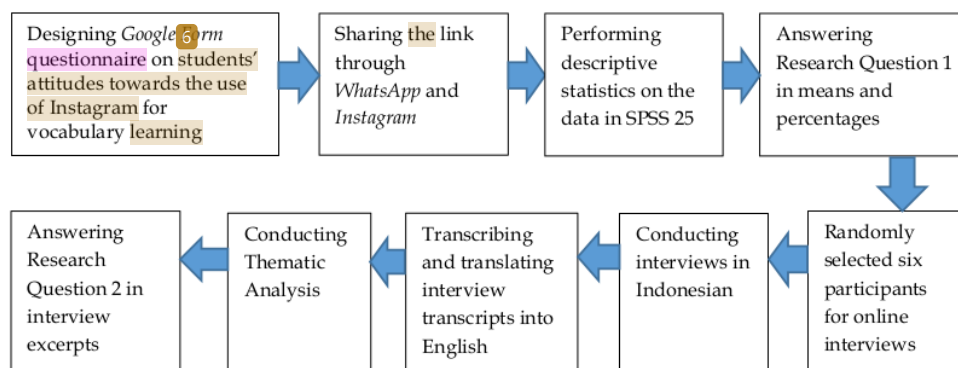
From these 213 survey participants who indicated their willingness to be invited for possible follow-up interviews, six participants were randomly selected using a random picker application to be invited for interviews. Of these six participants, three were males and the other three were females.

This present study used three ethical principles, autonomy, beneficence, and confidentiality. Autonomy, the freedom for everyone to decide whether to participate in a study (Hammersley, 2015), was maintained through the use of an informed consent form indicating that the participants participated in this study voluntarily (Gray, 2014). The questionnaire consent form was available in the first part of the Google Form questionnaire whilst the interview consent form also prepared in Google Form was given to the interviewees to be read and completed before the interviews. Second, beneficence, focusing on benefiting others (Beauchamp, 2008), was maintained through prioritising the needs of the participants during data collection and giving monetary rewards for participation. Last, the confidentiality principle was maintained through the use of pseudonyms in the interview excerpts throughout this report (Oliver, 2003).

## 26 Data Collection and Data Analysis

The data collection sequence was divided into two phases, the quantitative, online survey, and the qualitative, online interviews. The online survey was made in Google Form and the link was shared through WhatsApp and Instagram. To make sure that the prospective participants were indeed Instagram users, the information on intended participants was provided in the WhatsApp caption and the Google Form questionnaire. The period of the survey was from November 2021 up to December 2021. After the questionnaire distribution, the data were downloaded in the form of an Excel file and then processed in SPSS 25. Descriptive statistics on SPSS 25 were employed to answer the first research question in the form of mean scores and percentages.

The qualitative data collection phase of online interviews was conducted during the period 17 up to 12 February 2022. Through Google Meet, online interviews were conducted in the Indonesian language, with which language the participants were familiar. Each interview lasted around 30 minutes. The data were fully transcribed, translated into English, and further analysed using Thematic Analysis per the second research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The steps included getting familiar with the dataset through reading and rereading the transcripts, searching for themes, and selecting excerpts which could best reflect the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These selected excerpts were presented in the report along with pseudonyms of the interviewees stating the said excerpts. The sequence of data collection and analysis can be observed in Figure 1.



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Figure 1. The Sequence of Data Collection and Analysis

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Findings

Indonesian non-English major university students' attitudes towards the use of Instagram to learn English vocabulary

The eight questionnaire items used in the survey had .85 Cronbach's alpha coefficient, indicating a quite high internal reliability. The mean score of these eight questionnaire items was 3.73 from the range of 1-5 (SD 7.31) indicating a fairly positive attitude toward the use of Instagram for vocabulary learning.

Furthermore, as previously explained in Methods, the questionnaire was categorised into two categories, 'Instagram as a platform to improve English vocabulary mastery' and 'Instagram and vocabulary learning', to make the presentation of findings easier. The detailed results on questionnaire items in the first category could be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Instagram as a Platform to Improve English Vocabulary Mastery

No.	Statement	Mean Scores	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	Instagram is a good platform to increase English vocabulary.	4.09	22.6%	71%	6.5%	0%
2.	Instagram is a good platform to learn new words in English.	4.38	22.1%	65.4%	12.4%	0%
3.	Instagram provides vocabulary which contains words and images.	3.97	40.6%	58.5%	0.9%	0%
4.	Instagram is an easy way to develop English vocabulary.	3.77	14.7%	66.8%	18%	0.5%
5.	Instagram facilitates English learners' vocabulary development process.	3.63	12.4%	63.1%	24.4%	0%

Furthermore, the detailed results on questionnaire items in the second category could be seen in Table 3.

**Table 3. Instagram and Vocabulary Learning**

No.	Statement	Mean Scores	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
6.	Instagram helps me to develop my English vocabulary.	3.71	13.8%	65.9%	18.4%	1.8%
7.	I learn more English vocabulary by using Instagram.	3.33	12.9%	49.3%	34.1%	3.7%
8.	I prefer using Instagram to learn English over other media.	2.96	6.9%	40.6%	47%	5.5%

#### Students' views on the use of Instagram for English vocabulary development

Regarding the second research question, six participants were interviewed. The pseudonyms of these participants were Endri (Male/M), Sasa (Female/F), Dido (Male), Zara (F), Eca (F), and Bibi (M). From the interviews, the study found three themes and these can be observed in Table 4.

**Table 4. Student's Views on the Use of Instagram for Vocabulary Development**

Theme 1	Students unconsciously acquired isolated English vocabulary from photos and videos on Instagram.
Theme 2	Students consciously learned new isolated English vocabulary from English captions on Instagram.
Theme 3	Instagram was not helping students to use the obtained vocabulary in sentences.

#### *Theme 1. Students unconsciously acquired isolated English vocabulary from photos and videos on Instagram.*

The study found that learning vocabulary through photos and videos on Instagram made students unconsciously obtain new English vocabulary. Three students, Endri, Sasa, and Eca, experienced that they unconsciously learned English vocabulary from English content or English accounts on Instagram. They reported:

"[...] Because each content on Instagram provides English content using the English language, I learn English unconsciously." [Endri/M]

"Instagram provides many pictures and videos. It is easy to remember the information through photos or videos. [...]" [Sasa/F]

"[...] Instagram is one social media that could provide funny content compared to other applications. It helps me learn new words in fun ways since Instagram shows the visualization." [Eca/F]



**Theme 2. Students consciously learned English vocabulary from writing English captions on Instagram.**

Two out of six participants, Zara and Eca, reported that they learned English vocabulary through writing a caption on *Instagram*. Furthermore, they also practised their writing skills when they posted a photo or video on *Instagram* in English. They stated:

*"[...] I prefer to write captions in English when I want to post photos or videos. From writing a caption, I become more confident in using vocabulary in sentences rather than when I just see an English account to learn vocabulary."* [Zara/F]

*"[...] Nowadays, teenagers mostly use English when writing captions, so I also learn English vocabulary from [writing] captions."* [Eca/F]

Moreover, these students also added how they learned English vocabulary through writing captions on *Instagram*. They shared:

*"I learn vocabulary through reading someone's caption especially I learn from young learners like us. For example, usually, people from South Jakarta often use 'which is... literally'. For me, those words could be a new way to learn vocabulary. So, most of the words that often come up, they could be learned."* [Zara/F]

*"[...] Some of my posts used English captions. It is not for style, but sometimes I want to test my vocabulary skills."* [Eca/F]

**Theme 3. Instagram was not helping students to use the obtained vocabulary in sentences.**

Albeit the generally positive views on the use of *Instagram* for vocabulary learning, it turned out that two students had different points of view. Those students, Sasa and Zara, reported that *Instagram* was not helping when it came to learning vocabulary in context. They stated:

*"[...] So, when I get a new word, I do not directly apply it in a perfect sentence... such as there are adverb, object, subject... I do not construct the sentence. So, for learning English vocabulary in more detail, Instagram could not help me much."* [Sasa/F]

*"[...] Instagram increases my English vocabulary. But if we learn the basics of English such as applying the vocabulary and grammar in a sentence, I think Instagram was not helping."* [Zara/F]

**Discussion**

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**Indonesian non-English major university students' attitudes towards the use of Instagram to learn English vocabulary**

**1. First category: Instagram as a platform to improve English vocabulary mastery**

As could be seen in Table 2, items 1 and 2 had the highest mean scores of more than 4.00 (on a 1-5 scale) indicating their favourable attitude towards *Instagram* as a good platform for vocabulary learning. This finding was similar to the finding of a study by Lailiyah and Setiyaningsih (2020) who found that their Indonesian student participants expressed positive attitudes about their experiences of using *Instagram* for communication in English. The similarity might indicate that Indonesian students had a positive attitude towards *Instagram* for education purposes.

Item number 1, “*Instagram* is a good platform to increase English vocabulary,” produced the second highest mean score (4.09). There were 154 participants (71%) answering 'Agree' and 45 participants (22.6%) answering 'Strongly Agree', indicating the participants' endorsement that *Instagram* could facilitate students to improve their English mastery. This endorsement may be attributed to the participants' familiarity with *Instagram* features, allowing a wide range of activities to facilitate learning. This finding was in line with the finding of studies in Saudi Arabia by Fadda (2020) and Aloraini (2018) who found that students perceived *Instagram* as an advantageous tool to learn English vocabulary and it provided students with a fun online learning environment.

Item number 2, “*Instagram* is a good platform to learn new words in English,” furthermore, had the highest mean score (4.38). 189 participants (87.5%) endorsed this statement. The participants' agreement resonated with a finding of a study in Saudi Arabia by Al-Ghamdi (2018) where the participants reported that *Instagram* could their students' vocabulary control and contribute to positive and enjoyable online learning experiences. The similarity suggested that both Indonesian and Saudi Arabian participants generally shared positive attitudes towards *Instagram* as a language learning tool.

Furthermore, item number 3, “*Instagram* provides vocabulary which contains words and images,” produced a mean score of 3.97. 99.1% of participants endorsed this statement. This may be because many *Instagram* accounts were providing English vocabulary content. This platform also might become an online vocabulary library since students could follow different English accounts or search for new words using hashtags. Similar to this present study, a study by Qisti (2020) in an Indonesian university context found that students observed English accounts and hashtags to find new vocabulary. In addition, a qualitative study by Agustin and Ayu (2021) and a quantitative study by Sovih and Etikaningsih (2018) in Indonesian contexts also reported that *Instagram* had some interesting features one of which was that students could share or watch interesting photos or videos and this was favoured by students. The uniform findings among these studies could indicate that Indonesian students generally favoured *Instagram* features allowing multimodal learning.

Next, item number 4, “*Instagram* is an easy way to develop English vocabulary”, had a mean score of 3.77. 81.5% of participants endorsed the statement. This may be attributed to the fact that students were likely to use *Instagram* since this platform allowed students to learn anywhere and anytime. Students could develop their English vocabulary based on their situation and be flexible per their needs. This finding aligned with a finding of an experimental study in Iran by Beyranvand and Rahmatollahi (2021). The study suggested that the group using *Instagram* outperformed the other group not using it in terms of vocabulary mastery (Beyranvand & Rahmatollahi, 2021). Related to the present study, the finding may suggest that *Instagram* had engaged students to be more enthusiastic about learning.

Moreover, item number 5, “*Instagram* facilitates English learners' vocabulary development process,” produced a mean score of 3.63. 75.5% of the participants either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. This finding showed alignment with a finding of a study by Khattak et al., (2016) in Pakistan involving 36 English teachers on the perceived dominant role of social media in students' English vocabulary development. Nevertheless, it is important to note that this item had the highest disagreement compared to other items. 24.4% of participants answered “disagree” This disagreement may suggest that the positive effects of *Instagram* usage on language learning were not uniform among students. Several students may have limited vocabulary learning experiences when using *Instagram* because they made or were exposed to limited English content on *Instagram*.

## 2. Second category: *Instagram* and vocabulary learning

In Table 3, there were three questionnaire items. Item number 6 produced a fairly high mean score of 3.71, followed by item number 7 with a moderate mean score of 3.33, and item number 8 with a rather low mean score of 2.96.

First, item number 6, “*Instagram* helps me to develop English vocabulary” with a mean score of 3.71 was endorsed by 79.7% of the participants. The fairly positive attitude was following a finding of a study by Rinda et al. (2018) involving Indonesian vocational high school students who found more than 71% of their participants also perceived *Instagram* to be facilitating English vocabulary development. *Instagram* allows students to interact with people around the world. Hence, students could develop their English vocabulary by communicating with *Instagram* users around the world.

Furthermore, both item numbers 7 and 8 seemed to produce the lowest mean scores among all questionnaire items in both categories. Item number 7, “I learn more English vocabulary by using *Instagram*” with a mean score of 3.33 was endorsed by 62.2% of the participants whilst 37.8% expressed their disagreement with it. Similarly, item number 8, “I prefer using *Instagram* to learn English than other media” with a low mean score of 2.96 was endorsed by only 47.5% of the participants whilst the other 52.5% or 112 out of 213 participants expressed their disagreement. These findings may be attributed to the possibility that *Instagram* could not fully help students to do meaningful vocabulary learning experiences. For example, *Instagram* just offers a limited content explanation. This finding was in line with a study by Wahyudin and Sari (2018) in an Indonesian context who found that *Instagram* could not help students access good English learning materials. Moreover, a mixed-methods study on high school students has been conducted by Mao (2014) who also found that some students assumed that *Instagram* was distracting, time-consuming, and good for socialising but not so much for learning. Thus, some participants in the present study and previous studies (e.g: Mao, 2014; Wahyudin & Sari, 2018) may have believed that *Instagram* might be good for entertainment purposes and not good enough for very elaborated language learning purposes.

### Students' views on the use of *Instagram* for English vocabulary development

**Theme 1. Students unconsciously acquired isolated English vocabulary from photos and videos on *Instagram*.**

The findings, as seen from the interview excerpts, suggested that learning English vocabulary through *Instagram* had engaged students' interest in a variety of English content or English learning accounts. Students independently chose the contents and learned the contexts since this platform provides an authentic source. Moreover, students could access a lot of photos and videos and follow many English accounts from which they could learn English vocabulary. Regarding this, several studies also have documented students' experiences of learning vocabulary using *Instagram* (Ahmadi & Tabatabaei, 2021; Gonulal, 2019; Gunawan et al., 2021). These studies found that *Instagram* provided visual data with contextual texts. The visualised contents engaged students to unconsciously acquire vocabulary (Ahmadi & Tabatabaei, 2021; Gonulal, 2019; Gunawan et al., 2021). In addition, the use of *Instagram* could make students get rid of boredom through the photos and videos uploaded on this platform. As Eca, one of the interviewees mentioned in the interview, *Instagram* showed offered various creative content to eliminate boredom. This finding was in line with the findings of studies by Lina (2021) and Lasmiasih (2019) who found that this platform was an effective way to increase students' vocabulary mastery by showing various visual contents to reduce their boredom in the learning process. Thus, students might enjoy gaining more English vocabulary without getting bored.



**Theme 2. Students consciously learned English vocabulary from writing English captions on Instagram.**

As suggested through the mentioned excerpts in this theme, *Instagram* had given students space to improve their writing ability and from writing, they also expanded their vocabulary as used in sentences. Students freely selected their photos or videos to upload and wrote the relevant captions. Through this, students obtained the opportunity to practice their writing skills as well as improve their analytical and error correction skills. Similar findings were also reported by several previous studies in Asia (Shafie & Mahadi, 2019; Wahyudin & Sari, 2018) in the way that when students posted on *Instagram*, they would prepare their sentences for captions. Eventually, students consciously increased their vocabulary by writing a caption or description on their photos or videos. Several studies investigating the use of *Instagram* for writing in Indonesian contexts also suggested that writing captions on *Instagram* helped students practice their writing (Bestari et al., 2020; F. Handayani, 2016; Maolida & Purnamasari, 2018), with vocabulary learning being an inevitable part of it.

**Theme 3. Instagram was not helping students to use the obtained vocabulary in sentences.**

The interview excerpts on this theme suggested that there was an obstacle to learning English vocabulary using *Instagram*. Students reported that they could not produce English vocabulary in sentences and *Instagram* could not support students' needs. The first possible reason was an *Instagram* content specifically for English learning typically only offers one English vocabulary word and the Indonesian translation. An example we found on *Instagram* to better illustrate this was information in a picture, "*Hati-hati yang suka masih tertukar antara kata ini: 'Borrow: Meminjam' 'Lend': Meminjamkan'*" (Translated: Pay attention for those of you who are still confused between these words: 'Borrow': [Indonesian translation] 'Lend': [Indonesian translation]). The second reason was many *Instagram* contents written in English did not provide any specific explanations from which students could learn. This was expected considering the students' encounters with English content on *Instagram* were typically accidental and most contents were not specifically meant for language learning. This finding was in line with the finding of a study in Saudi Arabia conducted by Fadda (2020) suggesting that the amount of information available on *Instagram* may be limited at a given time. Fadda (2020) also reported that *Instagram* lacks structure in learning opportunities.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The present study has several implications. Informed by the finding that *Instagram* did not facilitate students to learn English vocabulary in a sentence, teachers may optimise several *Instagram* features in instructions such as providing content about English vocabulary in the *feed*, *story*, *Reels*, *IGTV*, or *IGLive* with detailed explanation. Hence, students can learn vocabulary in contexts through *Instagram*. Similarly, teachers can provide English materials in contextualised visual products on *Instagram* to allow students to understand the meaning of words as used in sentences. Furthermore, since *Instagram* allows posts containing photos and videos with captions, students can develop their ideas to write a caption in English related to the photo or video that they will upload. Moreover, students can freely follow English accounts that will help them increase their vocabulary mastery, making social media experiences beneficial for their language learning.

Furthermore, this study also has several contributions. First, the survey data from 213 Indonesian non-English major university student participants may be generalised to the wider Indonesian context sharing the same characteristics as participants. The in-depth data about students' perspectives on the use of *Instagram* for vocabulary development also suggested that the use of *Instagram*, albeit popular among students, also had limitations. The particular finding could be on the other side of the pendulum thus far heavily favouring the use of social media for language learning.



The limitation of the present study mostly stemmed from the limited empirical studies with which the findings on the limitation of *Instagram* could be compared. That was because the plethora of literature on social media has heavily reported the positive effects and attitudes towards social media for language learning.

Last but not the least, there are several suggestions for future studies. Based on the findings on students' inability to construct sentences from the vocabulary they knew from *Instagram*, future studies could explore ways to enhance students' ability to use the isolated vocabulary they know in spoken or written contexts. Furthermore, considering the development of *Instagram* enabling students to learn through technology and its popularity among young people, future researchers may conduct studies on the use of *Instagram* for learning other language skills such as speaking and listening.

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