

NEED ANALYSIS: INSTAGRAM REELS AS A LEARNING MEDIUM TO FACILITATE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' VOCABULARY MASTERY

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ABSTRAK

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk memperoleh data awal dari analisis kebutuhan media untuk menambah dan memahami kosakata baru bagi siswa sekolah menengah pertama. Menemukan data terkait kebutuhan media pembelajaran siswa dalam menambah dan memahami kosakata baru. Dan Instagram Reels dapat berfungsi sebagai alat pembelajaran dalam membantu siswa sekolah menengah pertama untuk memperbanyak dan memahami tentang kosakata bahasa Inggris dan persepsi mereka tentang penggunaan aplikasi tersebut. Data dianalisis menggunakan pendekatan naratif untuk menemukan kebutuhan media siswa SMP dalam proses menambah, dan menentukan kosakata yang baru. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa konten audio-visual yang singkat dengan kosakata meningkatkan keterlibatan siswa. Instagram Reels membantu mereka memahami kata-kata yang sering digunakan, membuat artinya lebih mudah dipahami, dan menunjukkan contoh penggunaan nyata. Selain itu, media ini membantu siswa lebih mudah menemukan kosakata yang penting untuk dipelajari. Instagram Reels dapat berfungsi dengan baik sebagai media pembelajaran yang mudah digunakan dan relevan dengan kebiasaan digital siswa. Dengan kata lain, penggunaan video kontekstual berdurasi pendek dapat membantu siswa belajar kosakata yang lebih bermakna, menarik, dan berpusat pada diri sendiri.

Kata kunci: *Instagram Reels, pembelajaran kosakata, siswa sekolah menengah pertama*

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine how Instagram Reels can function as a learning tool in helping junior high school students gain an understanding of English vocabulary and their perceptions of the use of this application. The data were analyzed using a narrative thematic approach to find patterns related to motivation, understanding of meaning, and the ability to use vocabulary in everyday contexts. The results showed that short audio-visual content with vocabulary increased student engagement. Instagram Reels helped them understand frequently used words, made their meanings easier to understand, and showed real-life examples of usage. In addition, this medium helps students more easily find important vocabulary to learn. Instagram Reels can function well as an easy-to-use learning medium that is relevant to students' digital habits. In other words, the use of short contextual videos can help students learn vocabulary that is more meaningful, interesting, and self-centered.

Keyword: Instagram Reels, vocabulary learning, junior high school students

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary is a fundamental aspect of English language learning because it supports students in understanding and expressing meaning. However, many junior high school students still face difficulties such as limited vocabulary, confusion in determining important words, and problems in forming simple sentences. English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners often experience difficulties in producing language due to inadequate vocabulary and psychological barriers, including anxiety and fear of making mistakes (L. Sari & Lestari, 2019). Needs analysis shows that students need guidance in selecting relevant vocabulary and meaningful examples of usage.

A preliminary study involving 27 students at SMPN Bogor Regency showed a strong demand for more contextual vocabulary learning. Students expected vocabulary to be organized based on topics and everyday communication, supported by teachers or appropriate media. Many students reported feeling overwhelmed by the large number of words and unsure about which vocabulary to prioritize. These findings highlight the importance of providing learning media that is engaging, clear, and easily accessible.

Reliance on textbooks can contribute to this challenge because vocabulary is often presented as a separate list without adequate context. Meanwhile, mobile technology allows students to access social media anytime and anywhere (Mamudi & Alamry, 2021). This situation is in line with the characteristics of Generation Z learners who prefer visual and interactive content, and social media has become very popular among young people (Anindita & Noveintine, 2022). Instagram, especially the Reels feature, provides short audio-visual content that can present vocabulary in everyday situations (Malik et al., 2025; Chaerunnissa et al., 2025).

Previous studies have reported the positive impact of Instagram on learning, such as increased vocabulary, communication skills, motivation, and achievement (Gonulal, 2019; Widarti et al., 2024). Instagram-based media has also been proven effective for students with special needs (Pieter et al., 2024). However, research focusing on the Reels feature for junior high school students is still limited, especially in local contexts such as Bogor, West Java.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the potential of Instagram Reels in facilitating students' vocabulary mastery and understanding in accordance with their digital needs and habits.

METHOD

This study applies the Narrative Literature Review method to examine various previous studies on the challenges and effectiveness of using Instagram Reels in teaching English vocabulary. The narrative review design was chosen to synthesize and interpret the findings from various relevant literature by mapping consistent issues and patterns found in academic discourse, rather than simply describing each study separately (Snyder, 2019; Ferrari, 2015). This approach was chosen to dissect previous studies in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the obstacles and conveniences experienced by students when using Instagram short video content for vocabulary mastery activities.

A total of eight (8) scientific journal articles were selected as the main sources in this study. The literature was obtained through searches on online academic databases, particularly Google Scholar, using keywords such as Instagram Reels, vocabulary mastery, English language learning, and EFL. To maintain the quality of the findings, only articles that had undergone peer review and were published between 2019 and 2024 were included in the analysis. In addition, the selection of articles also considered the extent to which the research discussed student learning experiences and positioned Instagram as a medium for vocabulary development. With these criteria, it is hoped that the sources used are truly relevant to the focus of the research.

After the articles were collected, each study was read in depth to find the main themes that frequently appeared. The findings from each study were then grouped based on similarities in issues, trends in results, and perspectives offered. This process allowed researchers to see the big picture of how Instagram Reels is understood and used in vocabulary learning. Next, these themes were synthesized and presented narratively in the Results and Discussion section. Because this study was a literature review, all data came from published article and journals, without involving participants or collecting primary data in the field.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the reviewed studies, several challenges and opportunities were identified in the use of Instagram Reels to help students improve their vocabulary mastery in English language learning. Although Instagram Reels is generally recognized as a highly engaging, visual, and accessible learning tool for the current generation, the results of the study show that students and educators still face various challenges in utilizing these short videos for vocabulary activities in various contexts.

To provide a clearer and more structured discussion, the findings and challenges identified from previous studies are organized into three main themes: (1) digital distractions and supervision issues, (2) the limitations of short-form content in conveying complex meanings, and

(3) technical barriers and digital literacy. These themes highlight various aspects that influence how well Instagram Reels function as a vocabulary learning medium and represent issues that are frequently reported in the literature. The following discussion synthesizes findings from previous studies based on these themes to provide a deeper understanding of the effectiveness and challenges associated with using Instagram Reels in English vocabulary teaching.

To provide a clearer picture of the reviewed studies, Table 1 presents a summary of the selected articles, including the author, year of publication, research title, methods, and key findings related to the use of Instagram Reels for vocabulary learning.

| No. | Author(s) & Year | Title | Research Method | Participants/Context | Key Findings & Challenges |
|-----|--------------------------------------|--|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| 1 | Datu, S. T., et al. (2024) | The Impact of Short Video Content in Instagram Reels in Learning English | Qualitative / Narrative | EFL Students (UKI Toraja) | Reels content has a positive impact on student engagement; the challenge is that the short duration requires very dense delivery of material. |
| 2 | Syifa, I. N., & Fauzi, M. R. (2024) | Efektivitas Penggunaan Media Sosial Instagram Reels terhadap Minat Belajar Bahasa Inggris Siswa | Quantitative / Experimental | Junior High School Students | Reels are very effective in increasing interest in learning; the challenge is the need for supervision so that students are not distracted by other entertainment content. |
| 3 | Krisdianata, M., & Ena, O. T. (2022) | Junior High School Students' Perception on the Use of Instagram Vlogs to Learn Vocabulary | Qualitative | Junior High School Students | Students find it helpful to understand the meaning of words through visuals; the challenge is limited internet quota and video duration. |
| 4 | Gonulal, T. (2019) | Instagram as a Mobile-Assisted Language Learning Tool: Quantitative and Qualitative Perspectives | Mixed Methods | EFL Learners (Adults) | Improving vocabulary retention and communication; The challenge is the difficulty for students who are not yet familiar with technology (digital literacy). |

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|---|-------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| 5 | Pieter, R., et al. (2024) | Developing Instagram-based English Vocabulary Learning Media | R&D (Research and Development) | Students with Special Needs | Visual media greatly aids vocabulary comprehension; the challenge is the complexity of the design, which must be tailored to specific needs. |
| 6 | Handayani, F. (2020) | Instagram as a Teaching Tool in EFL Classroom: Students' Perception | Qualitative / Survey | EFL Students | Providing a relaxed and informal learning environment; the challenge is unstable signals in some areas of the school. |
| 7 | Agustin, R., & Ayu, M. (2021) | The Use of Instagram to Develop Students' Vocabulary Size | Quantitative | High School Students | Helping students increase their vocabulary; the challenge is that students have difficulty distinguishing between formal and informal words. |
| 8 | Widarti, et al. (2024) | Instagram-based learning to improve student motivation and learning outcomes | Experimental | Secondary School Students | Significantly improving learning outcomes; The challenge is for teachers to prepare truly educational content. |

Digital Media to Learn Vocabulary

Various studies show that the use of digital media provides great opportunities to increase student motivation in learning English vocabulary.

Technological developments allow material to be presented through a combination of visuals, audio, and interaction, so that learning feels closer to the daily lives of students. A learning environment that utilizes technology is considered capable of creating a more engaging experience compared to conventional methods, as students are not only receiving information but are also actively involved in the process. The visual and interactive nature of social media has the ability to create an innovative and creative learning environment.

A number of empirical findings reinforce this view. The implementation of digital-based media is reported to have a high level of validity, practicality, and effectiveness in improving student learning outcomes (R. N. Sari & Siswono, 2020). In addition, learning that utilizes digital platforms is considered more efficient and capable of providing new experiences that make students more enthusiastic about participating in learning activities (Sinatrya & Aji, 2020). From an affective perspective, the use of such media can also foster students' self-confidence and creativity (Larassary & Wulandari, 2022).

However, experts also remind us that the success of digital media does not happen automatically. The role of teachers remains important in providing guidance so that students' attention is not distracted by the entertainment elements contained in the platform. Without adequate supervision, the positive potential of social media may not be optimally achieved. Thus, although there is a common view that digital media can help vocabulary learning, its effectiveness is still greatly influenced by the instructional design applied.

Instagram Reels as a Medium for English Language Learning

In a more specific context, researchers' attention has begun to shift toward the use of Instagram, including its Reels feature, as a means of language learning. Instagram is known as a photo and video sharing application that appeals to the younger generation and allows messages to be conveyed through text and visuals simultaneously (Syaputra et al., 2024; Agustin &

Ayu, 2021). Its ability to build visual narratives makes this platform very suitable for the digital habits of today's students (Kozharinova & Manovich, 2024). In addition, interactive features such as Reels are believed to increase motivation and creativity in various learning situations (Shlenova, 2025).

In line with this, several studies show that Instagram-assisted learning can improve students' vocabulary and communication skills (Gonulal, 2019). Presenting material through short videos allows students to understand the meaning of words more quickly because they obtain the context of usage directly. Material that can be accessed at any time also provides students with the opportunity to repeat lessons according to their learning needs, which ultimately helps them gain a deeper understanding (Pieter et al., 2024).

Although many studies show positive trends, there are variations in the focus of the findings. Some researchers emphasize improved learning outcomes, while others see a stronger impact on student engagement and interest. These differences indicate that Instagram Reels is indeed promising as a learning medium, but its success is greatly influenced by how teachers manage content and the goals they want to achieve.

Integrating Instagram into Student Vocabulary Learning

In addition to its benefits, the literature also shows that the use of Instagram in education needs to be understood as part of a broader learning strategy. In language acquisition, vocabulary is a fundamental element that supports speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills (Richards & Willy A. Renandya, 2002; Nurdini et al., 2017). Therefore, choosing media that can help students understand the meaning of words clearly is very important.

Instagram-based media allows words to be learned through images, sounds, and situations that resemble real life. This approach is considered to help students, especially young learners, who need visual support and concrete examples. However, the use of social media still requires teacher guidance so that learning activities remain focused on academic goals.

Through these findings, it can be understood that the success of Instagram is not

solely due to its technology, but rather the integration of digital features with pedagogical strategies. Without proper planning, the potential for improving vocabulary mastery may not be maximize.

CONCLUSION

This is a study that shows the importance of digital media, especially Instagram Reels, in helping students learn vocabulary. According to the study, technology-based platforms can create an engaging, interactive, and meaningful learning experience. Digital media greatly helps students because of its visual and contextual presentation, ease of access, and opportunities for repetition. According to previous research analysis, Instagram can increase motivation, engagement, and vocabulary comprehension. However, research specifically focusing on the Reels feature and junior high school students is still limited. Therefore, this study helps the field by fixing this discrepancy and aligning digital learning practices with students' real needs, habits, and expectations in today's technology-driven world. In essence, Instagram Reels should not be viewed solely as entertainment media; rather, it should be seen as a beneficial educational tool when used with clear educational objectives. When done correctly, it can help students become more confident, participatory, and engaged in developing their vocabulary.

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