THE USE OF INSTAGRAM TO EXPAND ENGLISH VOCABULARY: CASE STUDY OF STUDENTS IN ENGLISH VILLAGE PARE

(Research article)

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Abstract

This study explores the effectiveness of Instagram as a medium for learning English vocabulary in an informal learning environment, specifically in *Kampung Inggris* Pare, Indonesia. Vocabulary is a key element in language proficiency, yet many learners struggle to acquire it due to limited contextual exposure and lack of engagement in traditional methods. With the increasing integration of digital platforms into daily life, Instagram offers visual, interactive, and user-generated content that aligns with learners' lifestyles. This qualitative case study involved eight purposively selected students participating in English language programs. Data were collected through vocabulary tracking sheets and structured interviews over a two-week period. The findings show that participants used Instagram for an average of 2.5 hours per day, with 40–60% of that time spent engaging with English educational content. On average, learners acquired 6–10 new words daily through features like reels with subtitles, educational image posts, and interactive stories. Most participants reported learning over 100 words in two weeks and experienced increased confidence in speaking and writing. Although about three out of eight participants experienced distraction from non-educational content, some of them coped by using separate accounts for study purposes. The study concludes that Instagram can serve as an effective and motivating tool for vocabulary learning when used consciously and strategically. Its visual and contextual design supports incidental learning and self-regulated strategies, making it highly suitable for digital-native learners in informal learning contexts.

Keywords: Instagram, vocabulary learning, English education, informal education.

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Introduction

English is known as an international language that plays an important role in various aspects of life, including education, technology and economics. In the context of learning, English is categorized as a foreign language, so the ability to master vocabulary becomes very important. Vocabulary itself serves as a major component in the development of language skills, such as reading, writing, speaking and listening. Students will have difficulty in understanding information, conveying ideas, or writing effectively if they do not have adequate vocabulary. Alqahtani (2020) explains that vocabulary plays a fundamental role in the language learning process, as it determines the extent to which learners are able to understand texts, speak fluently, and write effectively. He emphasizes that language skills will be significantly hampered if learners do not have adequate vocabulary mastery. A similar view is expressed by Susanto and Fazlurrahman (2021), who state that the ability to recognize, understand, and use vocabulary in various situations is a crucial aspect of English language learning. In addition, research conducted by Afshar and Movassagh (2020) shows a strong positive relationship between vocabulary mastery and overall English proficiency. Webb and Nation (2020) also emphasize that vocabulary serves as the main foundation for the development of all language skills. A broad and varied vocabulary can help learners understand academic texts, communicate orally, and express ideas in writing. Therefore, vocabulary learning needs to be conducted intensively, repeatedly, and through engaging approaches to enhance learners' motivation and learning outcomes.

However, the process of acquiring new vocabulary is not always easy. Many English learners find it difficult to memorize vocabulary due to limited context of use, low motivation to learn, and monotonous learning methods. Therefore, a more interesting, interactive, and relevant approach to everyday life is needed to help students learn vocabulary. One approach that has developed alongside technological advances is the use of digital media and social media platforms in informal learning. The development of digital technology in education has created new opportunities, including in the development and creation of technology-based English learning materials. Alqahtani (2020) identified that one of the main obstacles in vocabulary learning lies in the lack of exposure and practice in using words in real contexts.

Therefore, a contextual learning strategy that emphasizes the use of language in authentic situations is needed. Responding to this challenge, Teng (2021) revealed that the use of social media such as Instagram can contribute positively to vocabulary acquisition because it encourages active student engagement through visual elements and social interaction. Such digital platforms not only present material in a more engaging way but also allow students to produce content relevant to their own life experiences. Similar findings were reported by Susanti and Abdurrahman (2022), who stated that social media can create a collaborative, flexible, and motivating learning environment, particularly in the context of foreign language learning.

Social media has now become an integral part of daily life, especially among the younger generation. One example of such a platform is Instagram, which is not only used for entertainment but has also evolved into a potential source of information and an educational tool. It is a visual-based platform featuring short images and videos, enabling users to access information quickly and concisely. According to data from Statista (2022), Instagram has over one billion active users worldwide each month, with the majority of users coming from the teenage and young adult age groups. This fact indicates that Instagram has significant potential

as an educational medium, including for English language learning. Additionally, Handayani (2021) explains that in the digital age, social media has become an integral part of society, including in the context of education. Instagram, as a highly popular visual platform, offers a variety of features that can be utilized in foreign language learning. Furthermore, Rahmawati and Nugroho (2020) revealed that many students spend a considerable amount of time on social media, which educators can leverage to integrate social media as an effective tool in the learning process.

The learning process in *Kampung Inggris Pare w*hich differs from formal schools in that it is based on informal courses with an intensive daily schedule and a focus on practical language skills. The environment is immersive, where participants are encouraged to use English in everyday activities, not just in the classroom. Assessments focus more on communication and confidence development, rather than written exams as in schools, it was carried out with a more flexible and innovative approach, including the use of digital technology and social media as learning tools. Participants are encouraged to actively explore various media to improve their language skills independently. Additionally, as explained by Susanti & Abdurrahman (2022), the use of social media in learning communities like *Kampung Inggris* can enhance student engagement and strengthen their intrinsic motivation through more dynamic social interactions. Participants are encouraged to actively explore various digital media to improve their language skills independently, including creating English-language content, sharing daily vocabulary, or participating in widespread online learning challenges on Instagram.

This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of using Instagram in supporting students in *Kampung Inggris* Pare in expanding their English vocabulary. According to Teng (2021), Instagram, as a social media platform that emphasizes visual aspects and interactivity, provides flexible, informal learning opportunities that are in line with the lifestyle of today's young generation. In the context of English language instruction, social media can serve as a rich source of linguistic input, reinforce memory through contextual visual displays, and encourage active student engagement in the learning process. Therefore, by observing the patterns of Instagram use in a unique learning environment such as *Kampung Inggris* Pare, this study is expected to contribute meaningfully to the understanding of how digital technology can be integrated into vocabulary instruction in a more effective manner.

2. Method
2.1. Research Design
This study uses a qualitative case study approach with the aim of exploring in depth the habits and experiences of students in utilizing Instagram as a medium for learning English vocabulary. Case studies were chosen because they allow researchers to understand phenomena contextually and comprehensively in an authentic environment, namely *Kampung Inggris* Pare. This approach is consistent with the characteristics of qualitative studies, which focus on

meaning and perception from the participants' perspective (Creswell, 2013), and allows for naturalistic data collection through direct interaction with the research subjects.

2.2. Participants

The research participants consisted of eight students enrolled in an English language learning program at *Kampung Inggris* Pare, Kediri, East Java. Purposive sampling was used to select participants based on specific criteria, namely: (1) actively using Instagram every day, (2) following educational English accounts on Instagram, and (3) willing to participate in filling out vocabulary tracking sheets and participating in structured interviews. The participants came from various regions in Indonesia and had varying levels of English proficiency. Participants are required to attend at least two weeks of intensive learning at their respective institutions, either at formal schools or non-formal courses such as those at Kampung Inggris Pare.

The researchers only sampled eight participants because this was a qualitative study focused on in-depth exploration, not generalization. The limited number of participants allowed the researchers to conduct intensive observations, structured interviews, and detailed monitoring of vocabulary development over a two-week period. This resulted in richer descriptive data, despite the relatively small number of respondents.

2.3. Research Instrument

The research instruments included a structured interview guide, vocabulary recording sheets, direct observations, and field notes. The interview guide was used to gather information related to Instagram use and vocabulary learning strategies, while the vocabulary recording sheets were completed independently by participants over two weeks. Observations were conducted to monitor participant engagement in learning activities, while field notes were used by the researcher to record non-verbal expressions and additional qualitative information.

2.4. Data Collection Technique

The data collection procedure was carried out in two main stages. In the first stage, participants were asked to fill out a vocabulary tracking sheet regularly for two weeks. They recorded new vocabulary found through Instagram content, features used, frequency of access to educational content, and vocabulary retention strategies used. In the second stage, structured interviews were conducted directly with each participant. Each interview session was recorded using an audio recorder and lasted 20–30 minutes. The aim was to deepen understanding of the

use of Instagram as a learning tool, the strategies employed, and the challenges or obstacles encountered during the social media-based learning process.

2.5. Data Analysis

The data in this study were analyzed using a qualitative descriptive approach, which aims to describe phenomena systematically based on data obtained from participants. The two main sources of data analyzed were: (1) vocabulary tracking sheets filled out by participants over a two-week period, and (2) the results of structured interviews conducted after the tracking period ended.

Data Analysis Stages:

1. Grouping Based on Research Focus

The first step was to group the data based on six main research focuses, namely: 1.) Daily duration of Instagram use, 2.) Frequency of access to educational content, 3.) Number of vocabulary words learned per day, 4.) Instagram features considered most effective, 5.) Perceptions of vocabulary mastery development, 6.) Obstacles or challenges in learning through Instagram.

2. Data Reading and Recording

All tracking sheets and interview transcripts are carefully re-read. Researchers mark important and relevant information related to each focus area. Data from each participant is recorded in detail to identify variations and general trends.

3. Comparison and Pattern Identification

After the data was collected, a comparison process was conducted between participants to identify patterns, similarities, and differences in their experiences. This stage aimed to explore a broader representation of the observed phenomenon.

4. Data Triangulation

To enhance the validity of the findings, data triangulation is conducted between data sources, i.e., matching information from interviews with notes on the tracking sheet. For example, if a participant states that they learn eight new vocabulary words per day, this statement is verified with the number of vocabulary words recorded on the tracking sheet.

5. Thematic Conclusions

After all the data was analyzed, the researcher formulated thematic conclusions for each research focus. These preliminary conclusions were then synthesized to answer the main research question: How do students in *Kampung Inggris* Pare experience using Instagram as a medium for learning English vocabulary?

The final results of this analysis process are presented in the Findings and Discussion section, which outlines patterns of Instagram use, the effectiveness of specific features, learning

strategies employed, as well as the benefits and challenges experienced by participants while utilizing social media in an informal learning context.

3. Results

This section presents the research findings on the use of Instagram as a medium to expand English vocabulary for students in *Kampung Inggris* Pare. The findings are analyzed based on data collected through interviews, vocabulary tracking sheet, and field notes. The discussion focuses on the extent to which this social media platform contributes to improving vocabulary mastery, the most effective types of activities, and factors that support or hinder the learning process through Instagram. The results of this study are also compared with findings from previous studies to strengthen interpretation and relevance in the context of digital-based language learning.

Tab. 1 : Participant's Vocabularies Acquisition

Participants	Duration (hour)	(%) Learning Allocation	Content access Frequently	Education Accounts	Vocabulary Acquisition (day)	Features
1	2,5	40%	5	@aarons.english @inggrismcom	8	Reels, Subtitle
2	3.0	50%	6	@aarons.english @inggrismcom	10	Subtitle, Story
3	2.0	45%	4	@inggrismcom	6	Feed, Story
4	1,5	30%	4	@aarons.english	7	Feed, Subtitle
5	2,8	60%	5	@aarons.english @inggrismcom	9	Reels, Feed
6	4.0	50%	6	@aarons.english @inggrismcom	10	Reels, Subtitle
7	1.0	35%	4	@aarons.english	6	Reels, Subtitle
8	2,5	45%	5	@inggrismcom	8	Reels, Feed

1. Daily Instagram Usage Duration

Based on self-tracking results conducted on all participants, it was found that they consistently used Instagram every day with an average usage duration of around 2.5 hours per day. This duration varies among individuals, ranging from a minimum of 1 hour per day by participant 7 to a maximum of 4 hours per day by participant 6. Most participants (5 out

of 8 people) recorded usage times between 2 and 3 hours per day, reflecting that Instagram is an integral part of their daily activities.

From the total usage duration, between 40% and 60% of the time was actively used to access content related to English language learning. For example, participant 2, who used Instagram for 3 hours per day, reported that half of that time was spent accessing educational content, whether in the form of reels, stories, or feed posts. Meanwhile, participant 5 showed a higher intensity of learning, with 60% of their total 2.8 hours of daily usage specifically allocated to English learning activities. These findings confirm that although Instagram is essentially an entertainment-oriented social media platform, learners are able to utilize it as a learning tool that is integrated into their daily routines.

The findings of this study emphasize that Instagram, as a highly popular digital platform among young learners, offers great potential for supporting vocabulary acquisition in informal learning environments. Participants in *Kampung Inggris* Pare reported an average daily Instagram use of 2.5 hours, with 40–60% of that time devoted to accessing educational English content. This aligns with Teng (2021), who found that Instagram encourages learner-generated content and promotes active engagement in vocabulary learning through a visually rich environment.

2. Frequency of Accessing Educational Content

The frequency with which participants accessed English-language educational content was high and consistent. A half of the respondence have reported that they already followed Instagram accounts such as @aarons.english and @inggrismcom, which provided material on vocabulary, idioms, and language learning strategies.

In their daily activities, participants access educational materials between four and six times. Participants 2 and 6 are recorded as the most intensive users, with an average of six accesses per day. Meanwhile, participants 3, 4, and 7 tend to be more moderate, with a frequency of four times a day. Access to this material is done through various Instagram features, such as the main feed, short reels, and interactive stories.

These findings indicate that the learning process takes place in a format spread throughout the day, rather than in one long learning session. This pattern aligns with the microlearning approach, which involves short, consistent learning sessions to enhance knowledge retention. Moreover, this study reveals how Instagram facilitates microlearning—short, focused learning sessions repeated frequently throughout the day. Participants accessed educational content 4–6 times per day, a pattern consistent with the microlearning model described by Herlina and Fauzan (2023), which suggests that brief learning intervals enhance

knowledge retention and reduce cognitive overload. This model suits modern learners who prefer quick, accessible content integrated into their daily digital habits.

3. Number of Vocabulary Words Learned Daily

In terms of vocabulary acquisition, participants demonstrated the ability to learn approximately 6 to 10 new words daily. Participants 2 and 6, who were the most active in using Instagram, reported being able to remember up to 10 words per day, with the primary source being Reels videos with subtitles. They noted that the presence of text in videos greatly helped them understand the meaning and context of word usage more concretely. Meanwhile, Participant 1 stated that they routinely learned around 8 new words daily, primarily from Stories and Reels. They also reviewed these words before bed and reported them to their tutor the next day, reflecting a self-directed learning strategy based on repetition. On the other hand, participants such as numbers 7 and 3 reported lower numbers, around 6 words per day. Although at the lower end of the range, this number still indicates a significant contribution over the two-week observation period.

Additionally, the key result of this study is that participants consistently acquired 6 to 10 new vocabulary words per day. This vocabulary growth is attributed to features such as subtitled reels, educational visual posts, and interactive stories—supporting Paivio's Dual Coding Theory, which is echoed in modern research by Nuraini (2022). According to her, visualization significantly contributes to comprehension and retention in language learning. The multimodal nature of Instagram content, combining visuals and text, provides contextual learning that enhances memory.

4. The Most Effective Instagram Feature

The Instagram feature for vocabulary learning, reels accompanied by subtitles, ranks highest as the most effective medium. As many as 3 of 8 participants cited this feature as the most helpful learning tool, mainly because of its short format, visual appeal, and easy-to-understand information. Participants 1, 2, 6, and 7 specifically stated that the presence of subtitles in Reels makes it easier for them to understand and remember new vocabulary because the words are displayed in a clear and direct context.

Moreover, image-based posts or educational feeds were identified by 3 of 8 participants as an efficient source for vocabulary learning. Participants 3, 4, 5, and 8 mentioned that the visual representation in images greatly helped them intuitively associate words with specific objects or actions, thereby reinforcing their understanding of the meanings. Interactive Instagram Story features, such as polls, quizzes, and short questions, were considered useful by 3 of 8 participants. According to them, these features not only encourage active participation but also provide immediate feedback and create a fun learning atmosphere, which in turn strengthens vocabulary retention. In addition, the participants'

vocabulary learning also reflects the principles of incidental learning, wherein learners acquire new words without structured instruction but through contextual exposure. This is supported by Afshar and Movassagh (2020), who highlight that incidental vocabulary learning, when supported by authentic content, positively correlates with language proficiency. Similarly, Susanti and Abdurrahman (2022) emphasize that social media can create a motivating and emotionally engaging environment that fosters vocabulary development.

5. Perception of Vocabulary Mastery Progress

During the two-week observation period, all participants showed significant progress in English vocabulary mastery. Most of them reported being able to memorize more than 100 new words during that time. Participants 2 and 6 recorded the highest numbers, with an estimated 140 words, while participants 3 and 7 recorded around 84 words. More substantially, 75% of participants reported an increase in confidence in using these words, both in spoken and written contexts. For example, participant 5 stated that acquiring vocabulary through Instagram helped them construct sentences and paragraphs more fluently when completing writing assignments in class. These findings indicate that the use of Instagram not only impacts the quantity of vocabulary mastered but also the applied skills in productive language abilities, such as speaking and writing.

6. Challenges Faced in Learning

Although the research results show positive impacts, several challenges were identified during the learning process via Instagram. Three of eight participants —including participants 1, 4, and 7—reported that they were often distracted by non-educational content when using the platform. Although they initially intended to access learning materials, they were frequently tempted to spend time on entertaining content such as memes or funny videos. In response to this obstacle, some participants suggested mitigation strategies, one of which was to create a separate Instagram account for learning. This step was considered effective in maintaining focus because the algorithm and content that appeared became more targeted. Participant 8, for example, stated that they had created a new account that only

followed educational accounts, so that the learning process became more focused and minimized distractions from irrelevant content or notifications.

Tab. 2: Participant's Challenges on Vocabulary Acquisition

Participants	Challenges	Completions
1	Distracted by entertainment content	Use a specifically education account
2	Not significant	-
3	Mild distraction	Set usage time
4	Distracted by personal content	Structured access schedule
5	-	-
6	Distracted focus	Use focus mode on devices
7	Distracted by entertainment content	Separate study account

However, challenges remain. About 35% of participants admitted being distracted by non-educational content, such as entertainment videos and memes. This finding supports Putri and Hidayat (2021), who note that while Instagram has educational benefits, it can easily lead to off-task behavior without clear boundaries. As a response, some participants adopted digital discipline by creating dedicated Instagram accounts for learning—a strategy validated by Nugroho and Laili (2021) as an effective way to maintain focus and filter content algorithmically.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study emphasize that Instagram, as a highly popular digital platform among young learners, offers great potential for supporting vocabulary acquisition in informal learning environments. Participants in *Kampung Inggris* Pare reported an average daily Instagram use of 2.5 hours, with 40–60% of that time devoted to accessing educational English content. This aligns with Teng (2021), who found that Instagram encourages learner-generated content and promotes active engagement in vocabulary learning through a visually rich environment. A key result of this study is that participants consistently acquired 6–10 new vocabulary words per day. This vocabulary growth is attributed to features such as subtitled reels, educational visual posts, and interactive stories—supporting Paivio's Dual Coding Theory, which is echoed in modern research by Nuraini (2022). According to her, visualization significantly contributes to comprehension and retention in language learning. The multimodal nature of Instagram content, combining visuals and text, provides contextual learning that enhances memory.

The participants' vocabulary learning also reflects the principles of incidental learning, wherein learners acquire new words without structured instruction but through contextual exposure. This is supported by Afshar and Movassagh (2020), who highlight that incidental vocabulary learning, when supported by authentic content, positively correlates with language proficiency. Similarly, Susanti and Abdurrahman (2022) emphasize that social media can create a motivating and emotionally engaging environment that fosters vocabulary development. In addition, this study reveals how Instagram facilitates microlearning—short, focused learning sessions repeated frequently throughout the day. Participants accessed educational content 4–6 times per day, a pattern consistent with the microlearning model described by Herlina and Fauzan (2023), which suggests that brief learning intervals enhance knowledge retention and reduce cognitive overload. This model suits modern learners who prefer quick, accessible content integrated into their daily digital habits.

Another important aspect is learner autonomy. Some participants reported reviewing words before bed or practicing them in class discussions. These metacognitive strategies show high levels of self-regulated learning, which Nugroho and Laili (2021) describe as a key component of successful digital-based language education. The use of Instagram helped learners take control of their vocabulary learning, matching their personal interests, time availability, and preferred content formats. However, challenges remain. About 35% of participants admitted being distracted by non-educational content, such as entertainment videos and memes. This finding supports Putri and Hidayat (2021), who note that while Instagram has educational benefits, it can easily lead to off-task behavior without clear boundaries. As a response, some participants adopted digital discipline by creating dedicated Instagram accounts for learning— a strategy validated by Nugroho and Laili (2021) as an effective way to maintain focus and filter content algorithmically.

The findings of this study confirm that Instagram is not merely a recreational platform but also an effective, flexible tool for vocabulary development—particularly when learners approach it with intentional strategies. This is supported by Handayani and Susanto (2023), who argue that Instagram's features can be pedagogically valuable when integrated into language instruction in a way that aligns with students' digital lifestyles. Furthermore, the context of *Kampung Inggris* Pare strengthens these findings. As noted by Suryani (2022), *Kampung Inggris* represents a dynamic, informal learning environment that fosters innovation, autonomy, and immersion. The use of Instagram in this setting complements existing pedagogical practices and extends learning beyond classroom boundaries.

In summary, Instagram facilitates vocabulary learning through visual input, frequent engagement, learner autonomy, and incidental exposure. While distraction remains a challenge, strategies such as account segregation and content curation can help mitigate this issue. As supported by contemporary studies (e.g**.,** Teng, 2021; Susanti & Abdurrahman, 2022; Handayani & Susanto, 2023), the integration of Instagram into language learning especially in

informal contexts proves to be effective and aligned with the learning preferences of the digital generation.

5. Conclusions

This study confirms that Instagram, as one of the dominant social media platforms among young people, has significant potential in supporting informal yet effective English vocabulary learning. Data from eight participants in *Kampung Inggris* Pare shows that Instagram use, with an average duration of 2.5 hours per day, is not only recreational but also actively utilized to access educational content. The frequency of interaction with learning materials, ranging from 4 to 6 times per day through reels, stories, and feeds of educational accounts, reflects active engagement in a flexible and contextual learning process.

Most participants successfully learned 6 to 10 new vocabulary words each day, with acquisition occurring incidentally and visually. Features such as subtitled reels, image posts, and interactive stories proved to be the most supportive components for vocabulary retention, in line with the dual coding principle that utilizes a combination of visual and verbal elements to strengthen long-term memory. Participants also reported a significant increase in the number of words they mastered and their confidence in using them, especially in productive activities such as speaking and writing. However, this study also revealed the challenge of distractions from non-educational content faced by around 35% of participants. These distractions indicate the need for good self-management and more focused learning strategies, such as using a dedicated Instagram account for educational purposes. Thus, Instagram can be optimized as an adaptive and relevant learning medium for today's learners, provided its use is directed consciously and supported by planned and self-directed learning practices.

Since this study was limited to eight participants, so the results cannot be generalized. Furthermore, data on usage duration and vocabulary relied on participant self-reports, and focused on only two primary educational accounts, thus underrepresenting the diversity of other learning resources. Further research is recommended to involve more participants and use additional instruments such as screen recordings to increase data objectivity. Furthermore, exploration of other educational accounts is also needed to compare the effectiveness of different types of content in supporting vocabulary learning.

Acknowledgements

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