



## **Instagram as an Educational Tool for Autonomous Learning: Pre-Service EFL Teacher's Voices**

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Chicago Manual of 17<sup>th</sup> edition (full note) Style Citation:

Tandi Rahmanda Putra and Ahmad Madkur., "Instagram as an Educational Tool for Autonomous Learning: Pre-Service EFL Teacher's Voices,". *BENJOLE*, 5(1), 63-79.

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### **Abstract**

Instagram has become an essential tool for language learners outside of the classroom, in addition to creating new avenues for social networking. Some researchers have investigated the use of Instagram for self-directed learning, but research and knowledge on the extent to which Instagram can promote learner autonomy among preservice teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) remain under-explored. The purpose of this study is to investigate how EFL pre-service teacher use Instagram to support student autonomy in their English language learning, particularly in light of the growing trend of digitalization in education. Fifteen EFL PSTs from an Islamic university in the province of Lampung, Indonesia were involved as participants of this qualitative study. The findings show that the participants viewed Instagram as useful alternative platform for learning English. They employed various creative strategies to utilize Instagram's features, including enhancing vocabulary, grammar comprehension, and speaking skills. However, they also encountered challenges, such as distractions from non-educational content and connection issues. Despite certain limits of this platform, they also viewed learning English on Instagram as a pleasant experience. The study concludes that Instagram, when used wisely, can be a good platform to promote autonomous learning in ELT, especially in the context of growing educational digitalization.

**Keywords :** autonomous learning, elt learning, instagram, pre-service teacher

## **A. Introduction**

With the rise of digitalization, social media has increasingly influenced how teaching methods are transformed into technology-based learning.<sup>1</sup> This swift progress has urged educators to prioritize digital literacy for both language teachers and learners in order to discover innovative strategies and develop skills that foster learner autonomy, particularly in contexts beyond the classroom. As Chang argues, learner autonomy is a key element of effective language learning, which fundamentally depends on the learner's ability to take responsibility.<sup>2</sup> Given that digital platform-based education is primarily based on the use of features such as photos, captions and videos has highlighted the need to promote the digital literacy of educators.

Learner autonomy is regarded as fundamental for effective language learning and teaching. This idea has numerous aspects. Initially, students assume accountability for their own education.<sup>3</sup> In addition, as they determine their own learning objectives, students investigate appropriate learning materials and techniques.<sup>4</sup> Strong self-discipline on the part of the learner is required for expanding their knowledge and abilities outside of the classroom, and students must become proficient at practice, and activities on their own. It is interesting to observe that a lifelong learning skill is included in the learner autonomy approach. By developing a better sense of self-control during the learning process, learner autonomy can enhance the process of acquiring a new language.

In terms of self-learning methods, social media in current digital age has greatly increased in importance as a teaching and learning resource for all students.<sup>5</sup> One platform that stands out in this regard is Instagram, a widely popular online platform that supports learner autonomy by providing access to educational materials anytime and anywhere.<sup>6</sup> As an online platform for society networking, Instagram was first developed as a social media for sharing images and videos.<sup>7</sup> With its visual and interactive nature, Instagram is particularly effective in enhancing English language skills, depending on users' engagement and usage patterns.<sup>8</sup>

Studies indicate that using Instagram can enhance motivation for learning English and promote better self-directed learning. Instagram gives students the

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<sup>1</sup> Di Zou, Haoran Xie, and Fu Lee Wang, "Future Trends and Research Issues of Technology-Enhanced Language Learning: A Technological Perspective," *Knowledge Management & E-Learning* 10, no. 4 (2018): 426–40.

<sup>2</sup> Lilian Ya-Hui Chang, "Chang 1 Taiwanese EFL Language Teachers' Beliefs and Actual Practices Related to Learner Autonomy," vol. 4, 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Henri Holec, *Autonomy and Foreign Language Learning*. (ERIC, 1979).

<sup>4</sup> P Benson, "Autonomy in Language Learning," 2006.

<sup>5</sup> Emmanuel Zhanda, Thekiso Molokwane, and Baakile Motshegwa, "Integrating Social Media in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education: A Quest for Collaborative Learning in Botswana," *Technology*, 2014.

<sup>6</sup> Hayo Reinders, Chun Lai, and Pia Sundqvist, *The Routledge Handbook of Language Learning and Teaching beyond the Classroom* (Routledge, 2022).

<sup>7</sup> Jeffrey P. Carpenter et al., "How and Why Are Educators Using Instagram?," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 96 (November 1, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2020.103149>.

<sup>8</sup> Talip Gonulal, "The Use of Instagram as a Mobile-Assisted Language Learning Tool," *Contemporary Educational Technology* 10, no. 3 (July 1, 2019): 309–23, <https://doi.org/10.30935/cet.590108>.

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capacity to select metacognitive strategies.<sup>9</sup> In addition, EFL students are given the chance to think of themselves as unique persons with their own needs and preferences for finishing advancing their studies, rather than just as passive learners. Rao coined that learner autonomy has been well-documented in foreign language learning by motivating learners to be in charge of their independent learning through the use of technology and online sources outside the classroom rather than relying on teacher-centered traditional classroom teaching.<sup>10</sup> Regarding its multifunctional use in higher education, empirical studies show that Instagram improves various aspects of EFL learning as Othman states that Instagram is evidently effective to improve students' English learning.<sup>11</sup> In addition, Instagram can create a fun and meaningful learning environment for the students as they are enjoying using Instagram in doing self-directed learning.<sup>12</sup>

The existing studies, as mentioned previously, highlight Instagram's potential as a tool for independent EFL learning and primarily focus on general EFL learners. However, how pre-service teachers, specifically those preparing for teaching roles, use Instagram for autonomous English language learning remain less-explored. Therefore, this study attempts to fill in this gap by addressing this specific group, which has different learning needs and professional goals. Furthermore, this study expects to contribute to enriching insights on the use of Instagram as a learning tool by exploring the autonomy learning of EFL PSTs regarding to their perspectives, language learning approaches, and difficulties toward learning English using Instagram.

Holec first used the term "learner autonomy," which he described as "the ability to remain in responsibility for one's own learning".<sup>13</sup> Little proceeded that autonomy is linked to the psychology of the learner, which is their ability to behave independently, think critically, and make decisions without outside influence.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, autonomy refers to a learner's right to make decisions inside the educational system.<sup>15</sup> Thus, learner autonomy in this study refers to taking personal responsibility for learning by establishing and controlling one's objectives, content, progress, techniques, language acquisition strategies, evaluation, and assessment of language learning by oneself.

Empirical studies have explored learner autonomy across different settings. For example, Chinese students' overall English performance showed improvement

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<sup>9</sup> Ali Rashed Ibraheem Almoresh and Jinan Abdulaziz Hamad Altamimi, "Wow, I Cannot Stop: A Concentration on Vocabulary Learning via Instagram and Its Effects on Informal Digital Learning of English, Technostress, and on-Line Engagement," *BMC Psychology* 12, no. 1 (2024): 8.

<sup>10</sup> Parupalli Srinivas Rao, "Learner Autonomy: Trends and Issues in ELT," *ACADEMICIA: An International Multidisciplinary Research Journal* 8, no. 11 (2018): 84–96.

<sup>11</sup> Nur Zahirah Othman, Aspalila Shapii, and Mohd Fairuz Jafar, "A Review of Research on the Effectiveness of Instagram to Enhance Students' Learning of English Language," in *AIP Conference Proceedings*, vol. 2799 (AIP Publishing, 2024).

<sup>12</sup> Siti Sarah Shazali, Zati Hanani Shamsudin, and Melor Md Yunus, "Instagram: A Platform to Develop Student's Writing Ability," *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 9, no. 1 (2019): 88–98.

<sup>13</sup> Holec, *Autonomy and Foreign Language Learning*.

<sup>14</sup> David Little, Leni Dam, and Lienhard Legenhausen, "Language Learner Autonomy: What, Why and How," *Second Language Acquisition* 4, no. 1 (2017): 1–21.

<sup>15</sup> Benson, "Autonomy in Language Learning."

due to the implementation of the autonomous inquiry model.<sup>16</sup> However, the learners face certain limitations and learning approach demands time to acquire English and foster their motivation and interest. In another case, academic self-efficacy and motivation drove Turkish pre-service teachers to autonomous learning, and their improved grade point average (GPA) outcomes were substantially correlated with autonomous learning.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, it has been found that integrating blended learning with an extended reading instructional approach can enhance learner autonomy among EFL undergraduate students.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, cooperative learning has been shown to improve learner autonomy in non-English speaking students by positively influencing their attitudes, interests, and motivation.<sup>19</sup> These findings suggest that incorporating diverse instructional strategies, such as blended learning and cooperative learning, can effectively support the development of learner autonomy in language education.

Language learners' autonomy in the digital era has been significantly enhanced by advancements in technology, particularly through the availability of online education tools. Online education develops the independence and self-reliance of learners. Students may easily access online courses without having to travel, and it also makes it easier to create engaging, high-quality student-centered pedagogies. Since students can select how they want to learn, it is critical to empower them in three areas as part of the digital transformation of university instruction: motivation, digital pedagogy, and student autonomy.<sup>20</sup> For teachers, it is important for them to improve their proficiency in the use of technology to support students' learning.<sup>21</sup> Empowering students in these areas enhances their learning experience and prepares them for a digital learning development.

One of the most notable tools promoting learning autonomy in this digital age is social media, one of which is Instagram that plays a key role in supporting English language learning. Instagram offers learners the opportunity to engage with authentic language content, follow accounts related to English education, participate in language challenges, and interact with native speakers or fellow learners.<sup>22</sup> With its interactive features, Instagram encourages learners to take control of their learning journey, set personal goals, and practice their language skills in a more informal and engaging environment. Thus, this study aims to explore the role of Instagram in promoting learning for pre-service EFL teachers by

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<sup>16</sup> Lili Zhang, "Mobile Phone Technology Engagement in EFL Classroom," in 2013 *International Conference on Software Engineering and Computer Science* (Atlantis Press, 2013), 171–74.

<sup>17</sup> M F Alkan and M Arslan, "Learner Autonomy of Pre-Service Teachers and Its Associations with Academic Motivation and Self-Efficacy 1," *Malaysian Journal of Learning and Instruction*, vol. 16, 2019.

<sup>18</sup> Naruethai Chanthap and Punchalee Wasanasomsithi, "The Effect of Integration of a Blended Learning and Extensive Reading Instructional Model on Thai EFL Undergraduate Students' Learner Autonomy," *Journal: Language Education and Acquisition Research Network Journal*, vol. 12, 2019.

<sup>19</sup> Weixuan Shi and Ligang Han, "Promoting Learner Autonomy through Cooperative Learning," *English Language Teaching* 12, no. 8 (2019): 30–36.

<sup>20</sup> María Dolores Díaz-Noguera et al., "Autonomy, Motivation, and Digital Pedagogy Are Key Factors in the Perceptions of Spanish Higher-Education Students toward Online Learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 19, no. 2 (2022): 654.

<sup>21</sup> Rao, "Learner Autonomy: Trends and Issues in ELT."

<sup>22</sup> Denyze Toffoli and Geoff Sockett, "University Teachers' Perceptions of Online Informal Learning of English (OILE)," *Computer Assisted Language Learning* 28, no. 1 (2015): 7–21.

examining their strategies and the challenges they face in utilizing Instagram as a learning tool.

## **B. Method**

This study was conducted at an Islamic University in Lampung province, Indonesia, during July and August 2024. The study aimed to explore EFL pre-service teachers perspectives regarding the use of Instagram in relation to autonomous learning. A qualitative method was adopted as Creswell and Poth suggests, it allows researchers to explore complex phenomena within their natural context, allowing researchers to understand the richness and depth of participants' perspectives.<sup>23</sup> The qualitative study adopted a case study approach, as Creswell & Poth) emphasize, it provides an in-depth exploration of a bounded system, such as a particular group or phenomenon, within a real-life context. This methodology aligns with the research objectives, enabling a rich and meaningful understanding of the phenomenon being investigated. Ultimately, this approach facilitates a detailed exploration of how Instagram supports autonomous learning among EFL preservice teachers.

The participants were undergraduate students enrolled in the Bachelor of Education program in English language teaching. Purposive sampling was employed to select participants who actively use Instagram for English language acquisition. As shown in Table 1, the participants were grouped based on their Instagram usage: 3 years, 4 years, and 5 years. To maintain confidentiality, the participants were not personally identified; instead, they were labeled as PST (pre-service teacher) 1, PST2, PST3, and so forth. Small to medium sample sizes are often necessary for qualitative case studies in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of a particular phenomenon. Rich contextual data rather than a large sample size is more advantageous for case studies. This approach ensured a focused, in-depth exploration of Instagram's role in fostering autonomous learning.

**Table 1. Demographic information of participants**

<b>Demographic characteristic</b>	<b>N</b>
Gender	
Male	4
Female	11
Age (years)	
19-21	10
22-24	5
Experience learning English (Years)	
5	10
6	5

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<sup>23</sup> John W Creswell and Cheryl N Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches* (Sage publications, 2016).



Table 2. Research Participants Code

Groups	Interviewee Identification Code
3 years using Instagram	PST1-PST5
4 years using Instagram	PST6-PST10
5 years using Instagram	PST11-PST15
Total	15

Prior to data collection, the research was approved by the university's English language Education Department under project No. B-4112/In.28.1/J/TL.00/09/2024. Following the granting of permission by the Head of Study Program at the university where the research was conducted, the respondents were contacted and made an appointment for an interview at a mutually agreed time and location. All participants were provided with research information and a written consent form to ensure research ethics. Once the participant consented, the interview was then conducted.

Semi-structured interviews were used as a tool to collect the data regarding the ways in which participants learned English independently through Instagram. The interviews lasted for approximately 30 minutes to discuss the ways in which participants learned English independently through Instagram as well as the challenges they faced (see interview questions in the Appendix). Indonesian was used as the interview language because the participants and researchers are Indonesian citizens and Indonesian language is their mother tongue, making communication more effective. Mother tongue can foster mutual understanding, improve data authenticity and accuracy, and foster confidence between participants and researchers.<sup>24</sup> Data triangulation was also applied in this study to maintain the validity and reliability of the findings as Creswell & Poth described by verifying information from multiple sources. To improve the study's quality, the transcripts were given back to the participants for cross-validation. Respondent validation, such as interviewee transcript review (ITR), boosts participants' self-esteem and encourages their active participation.<sup>25</sup>

Prior After collecting the data, the data was analyzed using interactive model data analysis framework, which consists of four steps: data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.<sup>26</sup> In the first step, data collection, the researcher gathered data from EFL pre-service teachers using semi-structured interviews to explore their perspectives, approaches and challenges related to learning English through Instagram. In the next stage, the collected interview data was reduced by focusing on the most relevant responses concerning language learning perspective and strategies in the use of Instagram as a learning tool and the challenges faced. This involved coding the data and

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<sup>24</sup> Catherine Welch and Rebecca Piekkari, "Crossing Language Boundaries: Qualitative Interviewing in International Business," *Management International Review* 46 (2006): 417-37.

<sup>25</sup> James Rowlands, "Interviewee Transcript Review as a Tool to Improve Data Quality and Participant Confidence in Sensitive Research," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 20 (2021): 16094069211066170.

<sup>26</sup> Matthew B Miles, A M Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*, Third edition (Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2014), <http://catalog.hathitrust.org/api/volumes/oclc/828333812.html>.

organizing it into key themes, allowing for efficient analysis of the core elements related to learning autonomy. Thirdly, the data were displayed by presenting relevant extracts from the interviews. These extracts were classified based on the main points of research questions: perspectives, learning strategies and challenges in using Instagram as an English language learning tool.

Finally, conclusion drawing involved interpreting the patterns and relationships identified in the displayed data to derive meaningful insights regarding the use of Instagram as a tool for language learning. The researcher synthesized the findings to understand how Instagram influences learners' autonomy, the challenges encountered, and the effectiveness of various strategies used by the pre-service teachers.

### **C. Finding and Discussion**

Based on the data analysis, three primary themes emerge regarding the use of Instagram as an autonomous learning tool among EFL pre-service teachers: their perspectives, strategies, and difficulties.

#### **Pre-service EFL Teachers' Perspectives of Using Instagram as a Learning Tool**

Based on the interview, the participants provided insightful perspectives regarding the use of Instagram as a learning tool, particularly in the context of English language education. Several interviewees emphasized the relevance of Instagram in the current era of technology and social media, highlighting its role in disseminating knowledge and fostering language learning as mentioned by PST7:

*I highly recommend Instagram because in the era of technology and media Instagram is needed to disseminate knowledge, especially in the field of English in the era of widespread social media. (PST7).*

This participant's perspective highlights the relevance of Instagram as a learning tool in the current digital age. The recommendation reflects an awareness of how technology and social media can serve as platforms for language acquisition, particularly English. In addition, the participant recognizes the value of accessing diverse contents that can support autonomous learning. This view aligns with the idea that social media can bridge informal and formal learning contexts, offering learners opportunities to independently seek out resources and practice language skills outside the classroom.

The other participants showed positive aspect of Instagram as a learning tool in that it can increase learners' engagement by offering a variety of learning options. This viewpoint was expressed in the following interview extract:

*I think, learning monotonously through books makes me bored, so I am more interested in learning through social media such as Instagram. (PST11). With learning content delivered through entertainment content, learning through Instagram becomes more interesting. (PST13)*

Interestingly, the other views highlighted were related to the benefit of Instagram to provide a safer and more customized content experience compared to other social media platforms. As elaborated below by PST8 and PST3, Instagram is believed to be a platform that strikes a good balance between content relevance and safety.

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*In content filtering and safety, Instagram tends to be better than other platforms. The algorithm is also more balanced while keeping in mind the possibility of other content to be favored. (PST8)*

*In addition to its attractive display, the content is also more varied and diverse. (PST3)*

These two participants highlight several advantages of Instagram as a platform for autonomous language learning. PST8 emphasizes Instagram's effective content filtering and balanced algorithm, which creates a relatively safer and more focused environment compared to other social media platforms. This sense of safety is crucial for learners, as it ensures that the content they encounter is more likely to be appropriate and conducive to learning. Meanwhile, PST3 points out the attractiveness of Instagram's user interface and the variety of available content. The diversity of content not only keeps learners engaged but also exposes them to different aspects of language use, which can be particularly beneficial for developing well-rounded language skills. Together, these perspectives underscore the fact that Instagram offers a supportive, appealing, and varied learning experience that promotes learner autonomy in an effective and engaging manner.

The other participants, as can be seen in the following extracts below, perceived of the worldwide popularity of Instagram and the attractive presentation of contents as a plus point of this social media.

*In my opinion, Instagram can be recommended to improve English language skills because it is internationally popular and allows users to engage with other users from all over the world. (PST 3) (PST14)*

*To me, Instagram is good to be additional media to learn English. Therefore, I will recommend the use of Instagram as an English learning media to my students later. Instagram is very interesting with its audio visual display. (PST9)*

These participants highlight several reasons why Instagram is a valuable tool for English language learning. PST3 and PST14 emphasize that international popularity of Instagram and its potential for connecting users globally, which provides learners with authentic opportunities to engage with native speakers and practice their English communication skills in real-world contexts. This is a valuable opportunity, especially for the students who find it challenging to meet native speakers living in certain areas like Lampung. PST9 adds that audiovisual features of Instagram make it an attractive supplementary learning medium. The visual and auditory elements can enhance learners' engagement and motivation, making language learning more enjoyable. Additionally, PST9's intention to recommend Instagram as a learning tool to future students reflects a belief in its educational potential, suggesting that social media, when used effectively, can complement traditional classroom instruction and promote language learning autonomy.

### **Strategies of Maximizing the Potentials of Instagram as Learning Tool**

The next theme emerging from the data analysis was that participants did different strategies and focuses in utilizing Instagram as a learning tool.



### **1. Vocabulary Enrichment**

The primary and most frequently employed strategy among EFL pre-service teachers was utilizing Instagram as a tool to enhance their English vocabulary. This approach was clearly articulated in the following responses:

*On Instagram I usually read inspirational quotes then I get motivated as well as learn new vocabulary. (PST15) (PST13)*

*To me personally, I choose English daily activity video contents to help me acquire new vocabularies and maintain them. It is also interesting and not boring. (PST11)*

In the extracts above, PST15 and PST3 highlight similar point, i.e., the dual benefit of reading inspirational quotes, which not only serves as a source of motivation but also introduces new vocabulary in a context that resonates with learners. This method aligns well with the idea that meaningful content can enhance vocabulary retention. Similarly, PST11 emphasizes the value of engaging with English daily activity videos, which provide practical vocabulary in relatable contexts, making the learning process enjoyable and relevant. By choosing content that interests them, these participants demonstrate an understanding of how to leverage Instagram's diverse available contents to create a personalized and effective vocabulary learning experience.

Interestingly, the translation feature provided by Instagram was very helpful, participants found the translation feature provided by Instagram to be highly beneficial for vocabulary acquisition, as noted by PST12:

*I often open Korean Idol accounts on Instagram and they often use English in their posts. If there is a caption or vocabulary that I do not understand, I use the caption translation feature on Instagram. (PST12)*

This response delineates how translation tool provided in Instagram serves as a valuable resource for learners navigating English content within their areas of interest. By following accounts that resonate with them, such as those related to Korean idols, participants can engage with authentic language use in a context they enjoy. The ability to quickly translate unfamiliar captions enhances their learning experience by enabling them to comprehend and retain new vocabulary in a meaningful way.

Other intriguing aspects of vocabulary, such as idioms and slang, posted in many Instagram accounts often captured the participants' interest, prompting them to explore their meanings. The following responses illustrate this point:

*I often found the interesting vocabulary such as English slang on Instagram. (PST1)*

*Sometimes I go to meme and comedy accounts on Instagram and find vocabulary that is different from what I'm used to and I'm interested to know the meaning of the word. (PST6)*

These responses illustrate how Instagram serves as an engaging platform for encountering and learning non-standard varieties of English, such as slang and idiomatic expressions. The participants were exposed to informal language that may not be covered in classroom settings by interacting with content like memes and comedy posts. This interest in the informal aspects of language enriches their

understanding of English as it is used in everyday communication, helping them become more natural language users.

The increase of vocabulary through specialization content that contains elements of English for Specific Purposes learning is also very often used on Instagram:

*I am interested in some accounts posting a lot of specialized vocabulary used in content about beauty care and fashion on Instagram. (PST4)*

*I often find new vocabulary in automotive, history and nature documentation content. The way they write captions really uses authentic English because the content creator is a native. (PST8)*

The responses expressed by PST4 and PST8 highlight how Instagram can serve as an effective medium for learning specialized vocabulary across different fields. Contents related to their specific interests, such as beauty care, fashion, automotive, history, and nature, enrich students with subject-specific terminology, which is a core aspect of ESP learning. Engaging with specialized content not only helps learners acquire new vocabulary relevant to their interests but also familiarizes them with authentic usage, often presented by native speakers.

## **2. Better Understanding About Grammar**

Instagram was also used by participants to deepen their understanding of English grammar. With a lot of educational content presented in an interesting way, this platform helps users to understand grammar:

*I usually use Instagram to help me learn grammar through quiz or multiple choice on instastory feature. I can choose to start from the easy quiz; when I feel I already understand, I can find the more difficult one (PST6)*

*On Instagram, I can see answers and direct explanations about grammar through quizzes on Instastory. With this, I feel that the explanation is easier to understand (PST10)*

These comments reflect participants' appreciation for Instagram's role in supporting grammar learning through interactive features like Instastory quizzes. PST6 mentions the ability to select the difficulty level of quizzes, allowing for a gradual progression in learning, which can be an effective strategy for building confidence and understanding. Meanwhile, PST10 highlights the value of receiving immediate answers and direct explanations, which makes the learning process more accessible and helps clarify complex grammar concepts. These insights suggest that Instagram's interactive, user-friendly format can make grammar learning more flexible and personalized. The following figure illustrates the example of grammar quiz on instastory:



Figure 1. Learning Grammar Through Instastory Quiz

Other participants utilized Instagram Reels as a strategy for learning English grammar, as expressed in the following extracts:

*I follow more than the English Grammar account on Instagram. This is helpful to make my FYP shows many English-related posts. In addition, learning grammar becomes easier because it is completed with interesting explanations. (PST4)*

*I often watch video reels feature on Instagram. While watching, I pause it to allow me making some notes. (PST5)*

Here, the participants demonstrate how Instagram Reels and personalized content can contribute to grammar learning. PST5's approach of pausing videos to take notes shows an active learning strategy that allows for deeper engagement with the material. PST4 emphasizes the benefit of following specialized grammar accounts, which effectively tailors their feed to display more educational content, thereby increasing exposure to grammar lessons presented in an engaging way. The following figure illustrate about grammar comprehension on Instagram:



Figure 2 Using Instagram for Grammar Comprehension

### **3. Enhancing Speaking Skill**

Participants also used Instagram to improve their English speaking skills. It helps them practice directly both through English speaking content and interacting with native speakers:

*I use the video call feature on Instagram to communicate with friends from Korea and Egypt using English. (PST12)*

This statement highlights the global connectivity and accessibility that Instagram's features, such as video call. It's interesting to see how the platform facilitates cross-cultural communication, allowing users to practice and enhance their speaking skills with the relation from diverse countries. This suggests that Instagram is not just a social media platform for entertainment but also a tool for language learning and cultural exchange.

*I realized an improvement in my English speaking skills by watching conversation content in English. (PST13)*

The benefit of watching English conversation content in the process of improving speaking skills was also emphasized by PST13. This response indicates that Instagram users can utilize the platform as an autonomous learning resource that combines passive learning (viewing) with active skills (speaking).

Furthermore, enhancing speaking skill through pronunciation learning was also done by the participants as mentioned by PST5:

*I like to explore idol accounts who speak English fluently to practice my pronunciation. (PST5)*

Here PST5 emphasizes the learner's intrinsic motivation to acquire language skills through observation and imitation, which is a highly effective informal language learning strategy. The use of idol accounts as pronunciation models also demonstrates a personal interest in the learning process.

The original content of the native speakers was also a big draw for some participants while using Instagram:

*Instagram is very helpful for learning pronunciation from native speakers on the reels videos. I tried to imitate while watching the video. (PST2)*

*By examining the pronunciation, I understand where the shortcomings in my pronunciation lie. (PST3)*

Both statements emphasize the effectiveness of Instagram's Reels feature in enhancing pronunciation skills for language learners. They highlight how access to native speakers allows learners to engage with authentic language use and identify areas for improvement. This dual benefit of exposure to accurate pronunciation and self-reflection fosters greater linguistic competence and awareness in the language acquisition process.

### **Challenges in Using Instagram as an Online Learning Tool**

Some participants faced difficulties when using Instagram for learning. Frequently mentioned challenges, as expressed in the extracts below, include internet connection, distraction from non-educative content, and limited specific search features:

*When I open Instagram, I often get distracted by other entertainment content and also switch to other platforms. (PST15)*

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*Instagram is a platform that consumes a lot of internet quota and requires a stable connection. This sometimes requires more effort and cost than other platforms. (PST12)*

*When certain content takes a long time to load, I tend to switch to other content. (PST4)*

The challenges expressed by participants highlight some key limitations of using Instagram as a tool for English learning. PST15 points out the issue of distraction, which is common when using a platform designed primarily for entertainment. This distraction often leads to switching to other platforms, indicating the difficulty in maintaining focus on educational content in such an environment. Meanwhile, PST12 raises the concern of data consumption, noting that Instagram requires a significant amount of internet quota and a stable connection, making it less accessible for learners with limited resources. In addition, PST4 was concerned about slow content loading which can disrupt the learning process.

Last but not least, a participant also faced the limitation of specific search features especially when they want to find content with a certain theme:

*One of the obstacles that I find when using Instagram is that there is no specific search feature, so if I want to find material with a certain theme such as grammar, I have to remember the name of the account with a certain content theme. (PST3)*

The challenge raised by PST3 was the lack of a specific search feature for filtering content by theme. such as grammar. Unlike platforms that are designed with educational purposes in mind, Instagram's search functionality is primarily focused on accounts and hashtags rather than categorized learning topics. This forces users to rely on remembering specific account names.

This study has provided valuable insights into how pre-service EFL teachers in Indonesia use Instagram as a supplementary tool for learning English, with a focus on their perspectives, strategies, and challenges. Overall, the participants viewed Instagram as an effective alternative means in English language learning. This aligns with other studies exploring that Instagram can improve and enhance English language skills depending on their orientation and usage habits.<sup>27</sup> This study also similar to the findings of Maharani et al., that state the results showed that more than 93% of students responded positively to this method which was considered effective to develop their knowledge, understanding, motivation and the effectiveness to improve English skills.<sup>28</sup> Regarding participants' interest and interaction with foreign friends on Instagram, the results of this study are also in line with finding of Shazali who stated that Instagram can create a fun and meaningful learning environment for students.<sup>29</sup> This is in line with the growing trend of using social media platforms as informal tools to complement traditional language learning methods.

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<sup>27</sup> Gonulal, "The Use of Instagram as a Mobile-Assisted Language Learning Tool."

<sup>28</sup> Nabilla Maharani et al., "Instagram Sebagai Platfrom Interaktif Dalam Pengajaran Bahasa Inggris," in *Seminar Nasional Paedagoria*, vol. 4, 2024, 566–76.

<sup>29</sup> Shazali, Shamsudin, and Yunus, "Instagram: A Platform to Develop Student's Writing Ability."



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In terms of learning strategies, participants employed a variety of creative methods to maximize Instagram's features. The most common strategy was using the platform to enrich vocabulary, as they interacted with authentic English content in captions, videos, and posts. This aligns with Baruti & Subekti, state that Instagram proves beneficial for learning English vocabulary individually, as students consciously learn from captions on Instagram.<sup>30</sup>

Participants also made use of the platform's quiz and interactive features, such as Instagram Stories and Reels, to deepen their understanding of grammar, which is consistent with studies showing that social media can help learners engage with complex linguistic structures in a more accessible way. This finding is in line with Putri et al., that Instagram facilitates learners to obtain a variety of grammar knowledge.<sup>31</sup>

Moreover, some participants used Instagram to improve speaking skills by observing and mimicking content in English, often in interactive formats like video posts, which echoes findings that social media encourages language production through active engagement with visual and auditory stimuli. These findings are similar to the research results of Othman et al., that also underscores the effectiveness of Instagram as a versatile platform that serves the diverse learning styles and personal interests.<sup>32</sup> The results are also in concordance with Chang's research, who revealed that learner autonomy is related to students' motivation and their awareness of potential learning challenges.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, the participants positively revealed that Instagram is a platform that facilitates independent learning. It gives individuals access to explore multipurpose interpersonal interests.

Despite these advantages, participants also faced notable challenges when using Instagram for English learning. One key issue was distraction, as many reported that non-educative content often diverted their attention away from learning. This finding reflects common criticisms of social media platforms, where entertainment content can easily detract from educational objectives. Students frequently engage in multitasking, shifting focus from learning to non-course-related activities, which negatively affects academic performance.<sup>34</sup> Another difficulty participants faced was the platform's heavy data consumption, which was particularly problematic in areas with unstable or expensive internet connections. These findings confirm in an empirical study by Maharani who said that one problem for students learning English on Instagram was the lack of

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<sup>30</sup> Thesalonika Dwi Wardhani Puspita Baruti and Adaninggar Septi Subekti, "Instagram To Learn English Vocabulary: A Study Of Indonesian Non-English Major University Students," *IJEE (Indonesian Journal of English Education)* 10, no. 1 (July 27, 2023): 106–25, <https://doi.org/10.15408/ijee.v10i1.26969>.

<sup>31</sup> Dienillah Fitriana Putri, Muhamad S Hadi, and Mutiarani, "The Efficacy Of Instagram @Gurukumrd As The Media In Improving Students Reading Skills," *JOLLT Journal of Languages and Language Teaching* 9, no. 3 (2021): 350, <https://doi.org/10.33394/jollt.v9i3.3795>.

<sup>32</sup> Othman, Shapii, and Jafar, "A Review of Research on the Effectiveness of Instagram to Enhance Students' Learning of English Language."

<sup>33</sup> Ya-Hui Chang, "Chang 1 Taiwanese EFL Language Teachers' Beliefs and Actual Practices Related to Learner Autonomy."

<sup>34</sup> Jelena Opsenica Kostić and Kristina R Randelović, "Digital Distractions: Learning in Multitasking Environment," *Psychological Applications and Trends*, 2022, 301–4.

internet restrictions.<sup>35</sup> Additionally, the absence of specific search functionalities on Instagram for finding particular types of educational content, more specifically, was noted as a barrier to efficient learning.

#### **D. Conclusion**

This study examines how pre-service EFL teachers utilize Instagram for English learning, focusing on perspectives, strategies, and challenges. They view Instagram as an effective and credible platform for knowledge-sharing, particularly in language learning. Participants employ creative strategies to enhance vocabulary, grammar, and speaking skills through Instagram's features. However, challenges arise, including distractions from non-educational content and connectivity issues. Pedagogically, this study underscores the role of social media in fostering autonomous learning and engagement, with Instagram contributing to digital literacy, an essential skill in today's era. For pre-service teachers, it serves as a tool for lifelong learning and professional development. Future research should explore the systematic integration of Instagram into curricula, its long-term effects on language proficiency and digital literacy, and its applicability in diverse educational contexts, particularly in non-English-speaking countries. Understanding these aspects will help optimize Instagram's role in language education globally.

#### **E. Acknowledgments**

The authors acknowledge all the lecturers for their constructive feedback, invaluable guidance and support in the completion of this research. The authors also extend their gratitude to all participants for their essential contributions to this study.

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