INSTAGRAM AS AN INNOVATIVE MEDIUM FOR ENHANCING ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION SKILLS: AN ANALYSIS OF COLLEGE STUDENT PERCEPTIONS

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Abstract: This study investigates the perceptions of college students regarding Instagram as an innovative medium for enhancing English pronunciation skills. With the rise of social media as a tool for language learning, this research aims to explore how students utilize Instagram to improve their pronunciation abilities and the effectiveness of this platform in achieving their language learning goals. Utilizing a qualitative descriptive approach, data will be collected through surveys administered to students who actively engage with English language content on Instagram. The survey will include open-ended questions designed to capture students' experiences, motivations, and challenges encountered while using Instagram for pronunciation practice. By analyzing the responses, the study seeks to identify common themes and insights regarding the impact of Instagram on students' pronunciation skills, as well as their overall perceptions of its usefulness as a learning tool. The findings are expected to contribute valuable information to educators and content creators about effective practices in leveraging social media for language education, particularly in enhancing pronunciation skills among learners. Ultimately, this research highlights the potential of Instagram not only as a social networking site but also as a dynamic resource for language acquisition in the digital age.

INTRODUCTION

In the context of the digital era, Instagram has undergone a significant transformation from a mere photo-sharing platform to a multidimensional social media ecosystem with profound implications across various aspects of communication, education, and social interaction (Jungselius, B., 2019). Initially launched in October 2010 by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger, and subsequently acquired by Facebook (now Meta) in April 2012 for a spectacular transaction value of 1 billion US dollars, the platform has evolved into a complex and dynamic digital space that transcends its original function. Instagram is no longer viewed as a simple medium for sharing personal moments, but has rather evolved into a global

communication infrastructure that enables millions of users from diverse geographical, cultural, and demographic backgrounds to connect, interact, and generate creative content. Its innovative features such as feed posts, stories, reels, and live streaming have created a multimodal communication ecosystem that allows users not just to consume content, but also to become active content producers, develop digital identities, build virtual communities, and even utilize the platform as a means of education, personal branding, and creative exploration. From an educational perspective, Instagram has emerged as an innovative alternative learning platform that transcends the boundaries of traditional classrooms (Ahmad, E. A., 2024). Its interactive and visually-oriented features enable the development of new pedagogical models, where knowledge is no longer perceived as static and hierarchical, but as a dynamic and collaborative process. Educational content, tutorials, and various forms of knowledge sharing have found significant space within the Instagram ecosystem, creating an open, inclusive, and responsive learning ecosystem that caters to the needs of the digital generation.

In the context of modern linguistic development, pronunciation skills are no longer viewed merely as a technical ability to produce language sounds, but have evolved into a complex construct representing the intersection of cognitive, social, psychological, and cultural dimensions in human communication processes. This skill serves as a fundamental bridge connecting mental language representation systems with actual communication practices, where each produced sound carries a meaning load that goes beyond mere phonetic articulation. Neurologically, pronunciation skills represent a sophisticated manifestation of the human nervous system that enables complex transformation processes of mental concepts into meaningful sound sequences (Di Carlo, S., 2017). This process involves intricate coordination between language processing centers in the brain (Broca's and Wernicke's areas), the motor system controlling speech organs, and auditory perception mechanisms that continuously calibrate and adjust to prevailing linguistic standards (BULBUL, C., 2023). Each pronunciation is not just a mechanical sound production, but a dynamic representation of human cognitive adaptation capabilities in capturing, processing, and reproducing abstract communication systems (Tatham, M., & Morton, K., 2006). The sociolinguistic dimension of pronunciation skills reveals that every language sound cannot be separated from the cultural and historical context in which the language develops. Pronunciation is not merely a technical issue of producing phonemes, but a social practice carrying identity loads, power relations, and meaning negotiations in human interactions. Dialect variations, accents, and pronunciation nuances become symbolic markers representing a speaker's geographical origin, social background, and

individual experiences. From a psychological perspective, mastering pronunciation skills is a transformative process involving complex emotional and motivational dimensions. Every effort to improve pronunciation is not just a technical exercise, but a personal journey of reconstructing linguistic identity, overcoming psychological limitations, and building communication confidence. Psychological factors such as language anxiety, intrinsic motivation, and self-confidence play crucial roles in an individual's success in mastering accurate pronunciation skills. In contemporary pedagogical contexts, pronunciation skills development has undergone a paradigmatic evolution from mechanical behaviorist approaches towards holistic models that consider individual diversity, learning style preferences, and digital technology potential. Learning methods are no longer focused on repetition and imitation but have developed into strategies that facilitate metacognitive awareness, personal reflection, and creative exploration of language sound systems (Goh, C. C., & Vandergrift, L. 2021). The significance of pronunciation skills in the globalization era has become increasingly complex, where cross-cultural communication abilities have become the primary capital in various professional and academic domains. Pronunciation skills are no longer viewed as merely a subset of linguistic ability but have become the key to building intercultural communication bridges, facilitating knowledge exchange, and creating inclusive and mutually understanding dialogue spaces. Thus, pronunciation skills represent a multidimensional phenomenon that transcends mere speaking techniques. They are a complex manifestation of human intelligence in constructing, representing, and transmitting meaning through dynamic, continuous, and unlimited language sound systems with the potential to create human connections.

Instagram serves as an innovative medium for enhancing English pronunciation skills, presenting a complex interplay of advantages and disadvantages that significantly impact its effectiveness in language learning. On the positive side, Instagram is an immensely popular platform among students, making it easily accessible for those looking to improve their language skills. The engaging nature of visual content—such as videos, infographics, and interactive stories—captures the attention of learners and motivates them to practice their pronunciation regularly (Procel, G. J. O., et al . 2024). This element of engagement is crucial, as motivation plays a key role in language acquisition. Furthermore, the platform offers a plethora of resources tailored specifically for English learners, including accounts dedicated to teaching pronunciation. These accounts provide students with high-quality examples of correct pronunciation through various formats, such as short instructional videos and live demonstrations. This exposure not only aids in developing listening skills—essential for

accurate pronunciation—but also allows students to hear diverse accents and styles of speaking, enriching their overall learning experience.In addition to the wealth of resources available, Instagram fosters an interactive learning environment that can enhance the educational process. Students have the opportunity to engage directly with content creators and fellow learners through comments, direct messages, and collaborative challenges. This interaction creates a sense of community among learners, allowing them to share tips, seek feedback on their pronunciation practices, and support one another in their language learning journeys. Such a collaborative atmosphere can significantly boost motivation and accountability, encouraging students to practice more consistently and effectively. However, despite these advantages, there are notable drawbacks that must be considered when evaluating Instagram as a tool for improving English pronunciation skills. One significant concern is the potential for distraction inherent in the platform's design (Benghalem, B. 2024). The entertaining nature of Instagram can easily divert students' attention away from focused language learning activities. As they scroll through a seemingly endless feed of entertaining posts, students might find themselves spending more time on unrelated content rather than engaging with educational materials that promote their pronunciation skills. This distraction can undermine the effectiveness of their learning efforts and lead to inconsistent practice. Another critical issue is the quality of content available on Instagram. While there are many reputable accounts offering valuable insights into English pronunciation, not all content is accurate or beneficial for learners. Students may encounter misleading information or poorly executed examples that could hinder their progress rather than facilitate it. This variability in content quality underscores the importance of critical evaluation; learners must develop the ability to discern which sources are credible and which may lead them astray. Moreover, while Instagram is effective for providing quick tips and exposure to various aspects of pronunciation, it may not offer the comprehensive instruction necessary for a deeper understanding or mastery of complex pronunciation rules (Nurfadillah, N. 2024). The platform's format often favors brevity over depth, which can limit students' ability to grasp nuanced aspects of pronunciation that require more thorough exploration and practice.

RESEARCH METHODS

The methodology for this study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to explore the perceptions of students regarding Instagram as an innovative medium for enhancing English pronunciation skills (Widari, K. I. 2024). This approach is particularly suitable for understanding complex social phenomena, as it allows for an in-depth exploration of

participants' experiences and viewpoints without manipulating the variables being studied. The research involves gathering data through surveys, which will be distributed to a sample of students who actively use Instagram for language learning. The survey will consist of open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed responses about the students' experiences with using Instagram for improving their pronunciation skills. Questions may include inquiries about specific features of Instagram that they find helpful, such as video tutorials, interactive content, and community engagement, as well as challenges they face while using the platform. This qualitative method facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the participants' attitudes, motivations, and perceived effectiveness of Instagram in their language learning journey. Data collected from the surveys will be analyzed thematically, allowing for the identification of common patterns and insights regarding how Instagram influences students' pronunciation skills. The aim is to provide a rich description of the phenomenon under investigation, highlighting both positive and negative aspects as perceived by the respondents. By employing this qualitative descriptive approach, the study seeks to contribute valuable insights into the role of social media in language education, particularly in enhancing pronunciation skills among learners.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The survey responses revealed rich insights into college students' perceptions of Instagram as a medium for enhancing English pronunciation skills. Most respondents reported using Instagram frequently, engaging in various activities ranging from seeking entertainment to educational purposes. For instance, some students mentioned using Instagram to follow accounts like @kampunginggrislc or creators who specialize in pronunciation tips, such as videos showing phonetic symbols and demonstrating the pronunciation of challenging words. This indicates that Instagram, while primarily a social media platform, has become a supplementary tool for learning English pronunciation by providing easily accessible content curated by language experts or enthusiasts.

Among Instagram's features, Reels emerged as the most effective tool for learning pronunciation. Respondents appreciated its short, focused videos, which they could replay and save for later practice. Some highlighted that Reels allow creators to present dense information in an engaging and easily understandable format, helping learners focus on specific pronunciation aspects like vowel sounds or common pronunciation errors. Additionally, several participants noted that Reels often include demonstrations of mouth and tongue positions,

which are critical for mimicking accurate pronunciation. Instagram's Stories were also mentioned as a beneficial feature, allowing creators to post daily tips or quizzes that make learning more interactive and consistent.

Despite its benefits, Instagram also presents notable limitations as a learning medium. One of the significant challenges identified by respondents was the lack of personalized feedback. Unlike traditional learning settings, Instagram does not provide direct interactions with mentors or experts who can correct mistakes in real-time. For example, one student explained that while they could mimic pronunciation from videos, they were unsure whether their attempts were accurate without feedback from a teacher or native speaker. Additionally, many students reported being easily distracted by Instagram's non-educational content, such as entertainment posts and notifications, which could disrupt their focus on learning.

Another challenge is Instagram's format limitations. Several respondents pointed out that the platform's short video durations restrict creators from delivering comprehensive explanations. Compared to platforms like YouTube, which allows for more detailed instructional videos, Instagram often falls short in providing depth and context. Furthermore, some students noted that Instagram's features, while innovative, do not support active engagement with the material, such as voice recognition tools or pronunciation drills that could enhance practice.

Respondents also compared Instagram to conventional learning resources like books and face-to-face classes. While Instagram was recognized as a practical and engaging supplementary tool, many students agreed that it could not replace traditional resources. Books and classes provide structured, in-depth learning with opportunities for discussion, questions, and immediate feedback. Instagram, on the other hand, was seen as more suitable for reinforcing concepts or providing quick tips that align with the needs of digital learners with shorter attention spans.

The survey responses included valuable suggestions for improving Instagram's educational potential. Many students proposed integrating features such as slow-motion audio to help learners better understand subtle pronunciation differences and interactive sessions where creators provide real-time feedback. Others suggested verifying educational accounts to ensure content credibility and guiding users toward high-quality material. For example, a verified badge for professional language educators or institutions could help learners distinguish trustworthy sources from less reliable ones.

Overall, Instagram offers a unique and innovative approach to learning English pronunciation by leveraging its multimedia capabilities to deliver accessible and engaging content. Its emphasis on micro-learning aligns with contemporary preferences for consuming bite-sized educational materials, making it an excellent supplementary resource for learners. However, its limitations, particularly the lack of personalized feedback and depth, underscore its role as a complement rather than a replacement for traditional educational methods. With the suggested improvements, such as enhanced interactivity and content quality, Instagram has the potential to become a more robust and reliable tool for pronunciation learning in the digital age.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

This study underscores Instagram's potential as an innovative medium for enhancing English pronunciation skills among college students. The platform's multimedia features, particularly Reels and Stories, provide accessible, engaging, and visually rich content that aligns with the preferences of digital learners. Students appreciate the ability to learn at their own pace, replay content for practice, and engage with various pronunciation-focused creators. However, Instagram's limitations, including the lack of personalized feedback, short video durations, and potential distractions, emphasize its role as a supplementary rather than a primary educational tool (Timmi, M., et al. 2024, May). While effective in introducing and reinforcing pronunciation concepts, Instagram cannot fully replace traditional learning methods like face-to-face classes or textbooks, which offer structured and interactive learning experiences. Therefore, Instagram functions best as a complementary resource, bridging formal learning methods with interactive and engaging digital micro-learning strategies.

To maximize Instagram's potential as a tool for improving English pronunciation skills, several recommendations can be made. First, content creators should be encouraged to produce high-quality, focused pronunciation materials, including slow-motion demonstrations and interactive exercises that engage learners. Instagram could also enhance its platform by introducing interactive features such as voice recognition tools or live feedback sessions to provide real-time corrections and guidance. Implementing a verification system for educational accounts would help users identify reliable and professional content, ensuring a better learning experience.

Furthermore, content creators could design structured learning series, such as progressive pronunciation challenges or thematic lessons, to provide learners with a clearer

pathway for improvement (McQuiggan, S., et al. 2015). Enhancing accessibility with features like closed captions, phonetic transcriptions, and adjustable playback speeds can also make learning more inclusive and user-friendly. Collaborations between Instagram and language educators or institutions could lead to curated content or campaigns specifically focused on pronunciation improvement. Finally, to address distractions, users might be encouraged to create dedicated learning accounts or playlists that focus solely on educational content.

By addressing these areas, Instagram could solidify its role as a valuable tool for English language learning, particularly pronunciation, while supporting learners in achieving tangible and meaningful improvements.

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