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ENHANCING ESL STUDENTS' SPEAKING MOTIVATION THROUGH INSTAGRAM (IG)

Siti Mardhihah Mat Ishak & Aizan Yaacob

School of Education

Universiti Utara Malaysia, Malaysia

Corresponding Author: ctmardhihah@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This study addresses the issue of investigating how Instagram (IG) helps to enhance students' speaking skills in English, particularly their confidence and motivation in speaking. While many studies have looked at the impact of IG on language learning, little is known about Instagram could enhance ESL students' communication skills. A qualitative case study was conducted which involved 6 students selected based on the purposive sampling technique, at one multi-ethnic secondary school in Petaling Jaya, Selangor. Multiple methods such as pre and post-interview sessions and IG postings were used to collect the data. Data were analyzed thematically and via content analysis. The findings revealed three themes associated with IG which are: Connecting, sharing and learning. IG also helped to enhance ESL students' motivation and confidence in using English. It is recommended that language teachers implement media platform

such as Instagram to create more conducive language learning environment. It also contributes to new ideas and knowledge on how teachers and learners can conceptualize and use Instagram in English-speaking lessons.

Keywords: Social Media, ESL, Instagram, InstaStory, Speaking Skills.

INTRODUCTION

In the modern digital era, many language researchers have investigated the use of social media as a tool for language learning as it makes the lesson more interactive. Social media is used extensively for communication. According to Boyd (2014), social media is a set of Web 2.0 e-platforms used to socialize gossip, share information, and hang out. It comprises of activities that involve socializing and networking online through words, pictures and videos. Some of the common platforms of social media are Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Pinterest, YouTube and Instagram. These platforms provide users with many activities that give them opportunities to interact with other people. Users can share, exchange, comment, discuss and enjoy information and knowledge collaboratively using social media, people can create personal pages and connect with friends and family to share their content on their account. For those reasons, it has become a new trend to sign-up for social media accounts.

Related Studies on Instagram

Instagram is widely used by many people, particularly school students. It allows users to capture and share their life moments with followers through a series of filter-manipulated pictures and videos in an instantaneous way (Hu et al., 2014). As a matter of fact, it is common for school students to have an account in their Instagram and update their life moments to their friends and followers. Instagram can also be seen as a useful tool to enhance students' motivation and confidence in English communication, as students will be exposed to various users from all over the world.

There are numerous studies conducted on how Instagram has helped to enhance writing skills for the past few years (Handayani, 2017;

Anggraeni, 2017; Sirait & Marlina, 2018; Rinda, Novawan, & Miqawati, 2018; Soviyah, 2018; Shazali, Shamsudin, & Yunus, 2019; Warda, 2019; Eraslan, 2019; Pujiati, Zahra and Tamela, 2019; Prasetyawati, 2020; Yusuf and Jazilah, 2020; Parangu, 2020; Husna, 2020; Andik, 2021; Maulidia, 2021; Ramalia, 2021; and Min & Hashim, 2022, Khulel, 2022). However, until recently, little attention has been focused on how Instagram could be used to enhance language proficiency and communication skills among students inside and outside the classroom. Hashim et al. (2019) suggested in one of her studies that teachers can promote the use of this Web 2.0 tools like the social networking sites by reassuring ESL learners to actively participate in the discussion. Hence, it is essential as an English teacher to provide sufficient practice which would enhance students' motivation and confidence in speaking skills, not only in English lessons, but also outside the classroom contexts. Therefore, this study seeks to provide some insights on the use of Instagram as a pedagogical tool to improve ESL learners' motivation and confidence, specifically in English communication skills. The purpose of this study was to examine how Instagram enhanced students' motivation to speak English and to gain their perspectives on that.

Specifically, this study was carried out to accomplish the following objectives:

1. To explore students' views on the use of Instagram to practice speaking English.
2. To investigate the use of Instagram to enhance students' motivation and confidence in English speaking skill.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

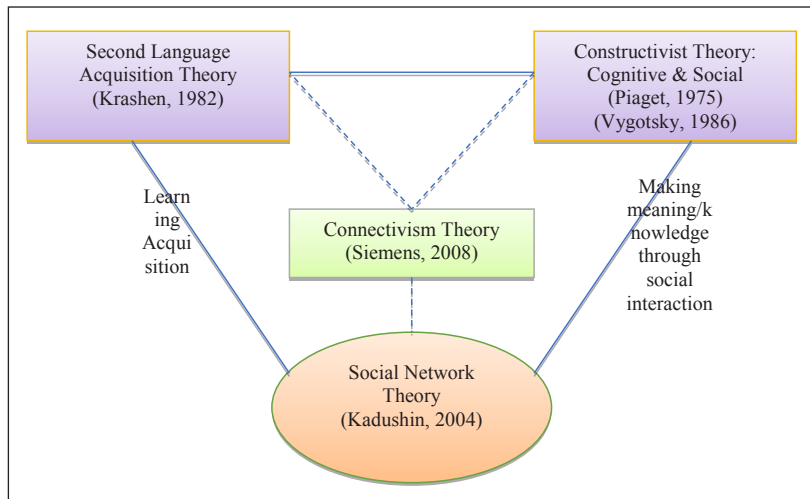
There are four theories that underpin this study: Krashen's Second Language Acquisition (SLA), Vygotsky's Social Constructivism theory, Siemen's Connectivism theory and William's Social Network theory. They are related to the support system that scaffolds the implementation of the networked learning. SLA, as proposed by Krashen (1982) has five hypotheses. Two of these hypotheses are learning-acquisition hypothesis and input hypothesis, are very much relevant to this study as they involve second language learners of English. Language is best mastered through acquisition process rather than learning process. In acquisition process, language learners would

pick up words, sentence structures and intonation patterns in speech naturally, and these language inputs are relevant and contextual. Krashen (2009) stated that, in his SLA theory, language acquisition is a sub-conscious process, unlike language learning that is a conscious process in which students may learn specific language items out of context. A conscious process is a situation in which students acquire the language in a formal setting, whereas a subconscious process is a situation in which students pick up or ‘absorb’ or ‘internalize’ the language inputs in a formal setting. Krashen also argued that in low anxiety environment, which is characterized as less threatening but fun, learners may master the language faster. In this study, the students engaged in the InstaStory tasks on their own and at their own pace as they share the information in a small group, and they have to communicate in English without any interference from the researcher cum the teacher during the process.

Figure 1 provides an insight of the theoretical framework adapted for this study.

Figure 1

Theoretical Framework



Besides SLA theory, a learning theory is crucial to frame the process of learning. Constructivism theory focuses on the importance of social

interaction that enhances the process of communication. It is during the interactions that students construct and reconstruct meanings in their process of learning. Vygotsky (1981) stated that learning becomes more meaningful when students are able to apply the learned knowledge by sharing it with others in the Zone of Proximal Development. He suggested that learning outcomes may be achieved in the Actual Development Zone prescribed by the course, and the enrichment of the learning outcomes might be achieved in the Potential Development. In both Zones, Vygotsky stated that a support system, which includes infrastructure and the info structure, as well as software are pertinent to scaffold the process of learning that the students are engaged in.

In relation to this study, students were involved in creating InstaStory tasks using English. A communication channel or platform, is also formed which is Instagram Closed Group, in order to provide room for them to communicate and share their works. Researcher's interventions or comments are kept to minimal so that students would actively communicate with their friends. In the actual development zone, learners learn specified items but when the learning environment is supported by facilities like online group discussion and teacher's support via online, learners might learn and acquire additional language input in the potential development zone. In the case of this research, students were also given the opportunity to practice their language and communication skills in their InstaStory activities. They interacted among themselves in English, practiced speaking based on the topics given, recorded videos, and gave comments collaboratively. This interaction with their peers relates to the Social Constructivism Theory which posits that learners learn better through interaction with more knowledgeable others. It is in this process that they would use English as well as improved their existing language competency and communication skills as the support system was provided by the researcher to facilitate their video stories development on Instagram. The above two major theories did not address the technological issues particularly on how learners connect to one another, how they engage in the platform, and how inputs and outputs in the engagement are managed. This is addressed by the Connectivism theory and Social Network theory. In the context of this study, students who engaged in the Instagram Story activities were connected via Instagram and WhatsApp platforms, in which they exchanged ideas and information

to accomplish their tasks. It is during the engagement they acquired language inputs such as relevant vocabularies and correct sentence structures. They also improved their communication skills in terms of how to agree and disagree, how to suggest, how to inquire, and how to seek for information. These platforms would encourage the students to easily express themselves using day-to-day conversational language but with some short forms and sentence fragments which they could be understood by themselves. Another relevant theory is the Social Network Theory. Kadushin (2004) argued in his social network theory the main focus is the relationship. He stated, “a network is a set of relationships. More formally, a network contains a set of objects (in mathematical terms, nodes) and a mapping or description of relations between the objects or nodes” (2004, p. 3). He further explained that the network of people can be directional relationships and non-directional. Directional relationship means one-to-one link, while non-directional can be a sub-link or sub-connection. As for example, when a person clicks like or share the postings made by someone to others, a connection is established.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A qualitative case study design is used in this study. Qualitative case study is a research methodology that helps in exploration of a phenomenon within some particular context through various data sources, and it undertakes the exploration through variety of lenses in order to reveal multiple facets of the phenomenon (Baxter & Jack, 2008). According to Creswell (2014), “we conduct qualitative research when we want to empower individuals to share their stories, hear their voices and minimize the power relationships that often exist between a researcher and the students in a study”. As this study involved learning processes that required students to actively participate in completing the tasks such as uploading videos in InstaStory, the qualitative approach was seen appropriate.

Participants

The participants of this research were 6 students (three males and three females) from one of the secondary schools in Petaling Jaya,

Selangor. It is situated between residential areas namely Kampung Tunku, SS2 and SEA Park. It is a big school with a total of 1427 students and 94 teachers. The students were Form 1 students, aged 13 years old.

Table 1 illustrates a summary of the participants' age, gender and race.

Table 1

Demographic Information of Participants

Student	Age	Class	Gender	Race
Student A	13	Class B	Female	Chinese
Student B	13	Class D	Female	Malay
Student C	13	Class D	Female	Indian
Student D	13	Class B	Male	Indian
Student E	13	Class D	Male	Malay
Student F	13	Class M	Male	Chinese

As indicated in Table 1, this study consisted of students from various races, such as Malay, Chinese, and Indian. Even though they studied in the same school, some of them were not in the same class. The participants were chosen based on purposeful sampling with the following criteria: First, they have their own Instagram account and Instagram is their most favourite social media compared to Facebook, Twitter and Snapchat. Second, the participants spend almost every day on Instagram. Third, the participants are accessible as they have their own smartphones. Therefore, students may have opportunity to use any media of technology such as Instagram to do independent learning of English.

Table 2 shows the hours spent on Instagram per day.

Table 2

Hours Spent on Instagram

Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Less than 1 hour	2	33
1 – 2 hours	3	50
3 – 4 hours	0	0
More than 5 hours	1	17

It is evident in Table 2 that the participants were familiar with Instagram and that they used it quite frequently. Thus, the issues such as technical abilities and knowledge about the tools are alleviated.

Data Collection Methods

The case study approach was adopted using a three-pronged information gathering techniques which were pre and post interviews, entries from Instagram Stories tasks and observation. The interview was conducted to provide extensive and in-depth qualitative data as well as functions as a means to verify and validate the samples' learning processes and experiences. The interview questions were used to obtain the data related to the students' views on using Instagram to improve their English speaking skill. The researcher used open ended, semi-structured questions to allow the participants to give their experiences related to the use on InstaStory. The interview sessions were recorded using a recording device for analysis.

Meanwhile, the IG entries from the videos uploaded on Instagram were used to obtain more detailed information on how IG helped to enhance students' speaking skills. At the same time, peer feedback was also obtained as the students gave comments and feedback to one another. They were asked to rate each other based on coherence, commitment, creativity and courtesy.

Data Collection Procedures

This study involved a few stages: Group Briefing, Pre-Interview, InstaStory Tasks, Peer Feedback and Post-Interview.

All respondents were gathered and they were clarified about the purpose of study and their consents were obtained. Next, they were asked to participate in the pre-interview session before they participated in the InstaStory tasks. The pre-interview was to find out about their personal information and their views on the use of IG. The students were given three interesting topics to talk about and they were required to share them on their InstaStory where the teacher and their peers were able to see and comments.

The topics are presented in Table 3:

Table 3

InstaStory Tasks

Task	Topic
Task 1	Getting to know me
Task 2	Book sharing
Task 3	Food Promoter at McD

The participants were expected to use the target language and share it in the closed group on InstaStory. After each video posting, they had the peer feedback session on whatsapp group discussion and face-to face discussion based on the given rubric. Finally, post interview sessions with the students were conducted to obtain their views on the use of InstaStories to enhance their speaking skills. The interviews were conducted in a relax, comfortable and enjoyable discussion as they shared ideas and opinions in a non-threatening environment.

Data Analysis

All the data were analysed qualitatively. Extracts from the transcripts were not edited for grammar and sentence structures, rather the whole paragraphs were presented verbatim so that the ideas can be seen in the context. Within the extracts the key words or phrases which illustrate the emerging themes were circled. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and thematic analysis was used to analyze the answers to the research questions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Students' Views on the Use of Instagram to Practice Speaking English

The findings indicate that the students seemed to have a good knowledge on how to use Instagram, particularly InstaStory features. There are three themes derived from the findings: IG was used as a platform for connecting, sharing and learning. At the same time IG

boosts their confidence and motivation to learn English. Students mostly agreed that Instagram helped them to connect with their friends. They could see other people posts, chat with their friends, liked friends and followers' photos and watched other people's InstaStories. IG has helped them to practice using the language directly and indirectly. This is in line with Hadiyanti & Simona (2016) who claim that Instagram is a platform, which can help the students to learn English by enriching their language learning experiences. Students can practice to use the language by having communication with their friends. One of the students responded:

Learn

"Yes. I think IG is a really good way for me to practice speaking in English because I can see what other people post on IG and I can learn from them, like how to pronounce some words". (Student A)

"I like this project so much because I think it has helped me to learn from my mistakes and be confident to talk in English". (Student C)

"In my opinion, by doing this project on Instagram, I can learn from my mistakes (Student E)

In the above extracts, Student A mentioned that she could learn from others when it comes to speaking especially their pronunciation. Student C, on the other hand, claimed that IG helped her to correct her mistakes and to be more confident to talk in English. This is also supported by Student E who also learned from mistakes.

Connect

Another student also valued the skill acquired from Instagram: From the post-interview questions asked at the end of the study, most of the students gave their opinion on how Instagram helped to improve the speaking indirectly. Instagram enabled them to speak freely and comfortably without feeling anxious. Since all of the students recorded their videos using their own phones and that they were fairly technology savvy, all of them were enthusiastic on the ideas of using technology for English activities. It was also flexible and a lot more interactive compared to the traditional teaching media when doing

speaking activities. Instagram has given them a platform to use the language without boundaries. It plays the fastest media in enhancing speaking skill and enhancing knowledge as users, in general can learn new words and accents of native speakers such as the accent of American or British people.

“Definitely yes because we can speak and chat with other people. So, we can practice speaking in English”.

(Student F)

“Instagram definitely helps me to practice speaking English because I can speak and chat with other people.”

(Student E)

They claimed that IG became a platform for them to connect with other people.

Share

Next, the students also shared the same ideas that Instagram gave them a chance to share their photos, videos and lifestyle with their followers.

“I feel comfortable to share my ideas and thoughts on IG because I love to expose myself. So, the whole world will see it and know me”. *(Student C)*

Motivation and Confidence

At first, I don't really have confidence to talk in front of others. But after seeing my friends' posts, I give me confidence and motivation to share my videos too. I learn from my friends. I think we learn from each other too. It motivates me to do better in the next video postings”. *(Student E)*

Through observation, it was noticed that students' motivation and confidence gradually improved. It was not yet seen in the first IG story until the second Instagram video posting was conducted, that students showed more participation in the activities as well as more responses were gathered. They also showed their excitement for the second

(book review) and third (food promoter at McDonald) topics, as they spent longer time speaking and sharing the ideas. By the time the last observation was conducted, it was clear that students were more motivated and confident in using English. Overall, student motivation and confidence is significant, as it involves stimulating feelings that students associate with learning (Maley & Duff, 2005). They argue that students should engage in “goal-directed behaviour” to initiate and sustain the learning process (p. 234). Research reveals that when students participate in setting their own goals, student performance is more likely to improve (Moeller et al., 2012). It is clear that the use of Instagram can affect one’s learning efficiency.

Instagram also helped the students to overcome mistakes. They learned from other people’s posts in order to improve their speaking content in the next posts. As students are allowed to edit and make changes in their postings, it will make them motivated to upload a better version of videos based on the topic given. In another study using Instagram in writing activities, Kurniawan and Kastuhandani (2016) stated that students are given some freedom in generating ideas of captions and uploading pictures to complete writing tasks. Similarly, in this study, students are given their autonomy to upload their videos in the Instagram Story in order to complete the tasks.

Similarly, Hu (2014) mentioned that Instagram provides users an instantaneous way to capture and share their life moments with friends through series of filter manipulated pictures and videos. Lastly, Instagram has helped the students to learn other languages, not just English but Korean language. By looking at other people’s posts and videos, they can pick up new words, vocabulary, pronunciation and sentence structure. This notion is supported by Paz (2017) who claimed that the Instagram application can help learners to improve their capacity for learning academic vocabulary. Al-Ali (2014) also mentioned that “Instagram eased the process of providing students with contextualized content they could relate to and use to produce further content that made sense to them” (p.12). Students may learn from others by imitating others’ pronunciation and pretending like native speakers. The students can use this medium to talk like English people and copy their accents without being judged by other people. As outlined by Kramer and Winter (2008), social media provides the opportunity for individuals to create positive portrayals and

self-presentations. Generally, users intend to create positive self-presentations by depicting themselves in the most favourable light. The interactions that students experienced with their friends particularly in creating their own Instastories have helped them to connect with one another in English. Through these platforms (Instagram and WhatsApp) they exchanged ideas and information to accomplish their tasks. It is during the engagement that they acquired language inputs such as relevant vocabularies and correct sentence structures. They also improved their communication skills in terms of how to agree and disagree, how to suggest, how to inquire, and how to seek for information. All these are in line with what Social Constructivism and Connectivism Theories are addressing.

Reflection

As ESL practitioners, it is felt that IG and InstaStory could be used as language learning task to enhance ESL students' proficiency. Teachers should provide more opportunities for students to express their creativity and ideas through pictures uploaded in their IG. By doing this, they could share their life moments with other people and learned to give and receive feedback from their postings. Ultimately, they would acquire more English in a fun and meaningful way. As ESL teachers, it is necessary to provide a non-threatening environment for language learning. In the context of this study, in order to ensure that a non-threatening environment is provided for them, they are allowed to select their own group members and they posted their Instastory in their own private groups, only for their group members to view. This is to ensure that they only posted their stories only when they are confident with the contents. At the same time, teachers also need to keep their interference at a minimal level to provide ownership for their own learning.

ESL teachers also need to be prepared and adapt themselves to the rapid technological development. They have to be alert and keep up with the new learning styles of the digital natives and emerging trends such as the use of social media and other networking websites. Teachers in this technological era therefore, need to have sufficient knowledge of how to use these tools effectively, which can promote successful teaching and learning for their ESL students. Despite all the positive views of IG in language learning, it also has some

setbacks. One of the challenges is that our students come from various backgrounds and have different dispositions. They also have different language abilities. Therefore, teachers need to be extremely careful in preparing activities to suit these learners' needs. Apart from that, the sample size of the students in this study was relatively small and it is concentrated only on one group of Form One students in one school in Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia. Therefore, future studies should include more students' participations from diverse contexts. Besides Instagram, there are other platforms that can be utilized to evaluate communication skills such as YouTube, WhatsApp, Facebook, Skype.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study demonstrates how Instagram can enhance students' motivation and confidence in speaking English. The participants in this study mentioned that Instagram is an appropriate tool to practice communication skills and when used properly it can provide a safe and engaging learning environment. Utilizing this type of medium allowed students to enjoy and feel more comfortable participating in English speaking activities. The integration of Instagram in English lessons, outside the school environment afforded students the opportunity to use a technology that was natural for them and allowed them to interact with their friends in an innovative manner. Despite its limitations, we have provided evidence from students' interview that IG could be used in the language classroom as one of the tools to enhance their language learning.

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