Article

EFL STUDENTS' PERCEPTION TOWARD THE USE OF INSTAGRAM FOR ACADEMIC SPEAKING SKILL LEARNING

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Abstract

This research aimed to determine EFL students' perceptions of using Instagram as a learning medium for academic speaking skills. As social media becomes increasingly integrated into education, Instagram offers flexible, engaging, and easily accessible content that supports students' language development. This study employed a descriptive qualitative method and involved six students from the 2021 intake of the English Language Education Study Program at Jambi University. To collect data, the researchers used a questionnaire to screen participants and conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews. The findings indicate that students positively viewed Instagram as helping to improve vocabulary, fluency, and confidence in academic speaking. They highlighted Instagram's flexibility and authentic content as key advantages. However, challenges such as the lack of immediate feedback and the need for independent learning were also noted. The results of this study can be useful for teachers in helping students improve their academic speaking skills in English learning using Instagram.

Keywords: *Instagram, Learning academic speaking skills, Perception*

Sari

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui persepsi mahasiswa EFL terhadap penggunaan Instagram sebagai media pembelajaran untuk keterampilan berbicara akademik. Seiring dengan semakin terintegrasinya media sosial dalam dunia pendidikan, Instagram menawarkan konten yang fleksibel, menarik, dan mudah diakses yang dapat mendukung pengembangan bahasa siswa. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dan melibatkan enam mahasiswa angkatan 2021 dari Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris di Universitas Jambi. Untuk mengumpulkan

data, peneliti menggunakan kuesioner untuk menyaring partisipan dan melakukan wawancara mendalam secara semi-terstruktur. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa para mahasiswa memiliki pandangan positif terhadap penggunaan Instagram dalam membantu meningkatkan kosa kata, kelancaran berbicara, dan kepercayaan diri dalam berbicara akademik. Mereka menyoroti fleksibilitas dan konten autentik dari Instagram sebagai keunggulan utama. Namun, tantangan seperti kurangnya umpan balik langsung dan kebutuhan untuk belajar secara mandiri juga dicatat. Hasil penelitian ini dapat berguna bagi para guru dalam membantu siswa meningkatkan keterampilan berbicara akademik dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris melalui Instagram.

Kata kunci*: Instagram, Pembelajaran keterampilan berbicara akademik, Persepsi*

Introduction

Learning academic speaking is essential for students because it offers numerous advantages that might help them in their learning environments. Enhancing speaking skills in a classroom context can benefit students in several ways, including enhancing critical thinking, boosting comprehension of the material being studied, and actively increasing classroom involvement (Sriniva, 2019). Speaking for academic purposes allows students to express themselves in structured ways that they can use in formal settings such as public speaking, accurately state ideas in the discussion, build confidence, and help them communicate both inside and outside of the classroom (Hervina, 2017; Padmadewi, 2019). Academic speaking competence has taken on a crucial role for fresh graduates, allowing them to function well in the workplace, help them communicate daily, and develop collaborative skills with people from different backgrounds. According to Pratiwi (2023), mastery of academic speaking skills is a crucial aspect for students to improve their academic performance. However, various obstacles such as limited vocabulary, lack of confidence, and minimal opportunities to practice often hinder this achievement. Amid these challenges, Instagram is seen as an alternative learning medium that can provide easy access, flexibility, and an engaging learning environment to support the development of students' academic speaking skills.

Instagram has evolved into a multipurpose social media tool that can help students improve their academic speaking in English. In addition, various English-language resources are now available to students, which can help them in their academic endeavors (Agustin, 2021). In recent years, many Instagram accounts have offered English content. These accounts offer various English resources, such as grammar, conversation practice, pronunciation guides, vocabulary courses, and advice on academic speaking that can assist students in improving their academic speaking. Thus, by encouraging exposure to real-world English usage, Instagram can help students improve their academic speaking (Albiladi, 2020). Instagram also provides many features that can be used to train and develop students' speaking skills.

Moreover, several studies (Handayani, 2016) emphasize that Instagram can be used for academic speaking practice through activities like watching educational videos, role-playing, sharing personal experiences, and engaging in pronunciation exercises. Features such as Reels and Stories allow students to interact with real-life language use, learn from native speakers, and imitate correct pronunciation and sentence structures. Such practices make the learning process more engaging, student-centered, and aligned with individual learning preferences.

This study aims to determine students' perceptions in the use of Instagram for academic speaking skill learning, based on the perceptions of students in the English Education Study Program at the University of Jambi regarding the use of Instagram. The researcher is interested in this study because he realizes that English is a language used by the entire international community as a means of communication, and he also realizes that technological developments, such as Instagram, will have an impact on the development of students' English skills.

Methods

This study used a qualitative descriptive design to explore EFL students' perceptions of using Instagram for academic speaking skills. The research was conducted at one university in Jambi with six participants from the 2021 English Language Education cohort who had completed the Academic Speaking course. Participants were selected purposively based on their active use of Instagram for English learning and willingness to participate.

Data were collected through a demographic questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire was used to identify participants' use of Instagram and gather general information, while the interview provided deeper insights into students' experiences, benefits, and challenges when using Instagram for academic speaking practice. Interviews were conducted via WhatsApp voice notes, calls, or text messages, depending on participants' preferences and accessibility. The data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman (2014) interactive model, which involves data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. Triangulation was applied by combining data from questionnaires and interviews to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings.

Results and Discussion

This study explored EFL students' perceptions of using Instagram as a learning medium for academic speaking skills at one university in Jambi. Data were collected through questionnaires and interviews with six participants who had taken the Academic Speaking course and actively used Instagram for learning English. The findings are summarized into five main themes: students' perceptions of Instagram as a learning tool, benefits and relevance of its content, learning processes through Instagram, comparison with formal classroom learning, and challenges encountered.

The following table summarizes the themes, sub-themes, and participants involved in research on the use of Instagram as a medium for learning academic speaking skills. This data summarizes various perceptions, benefits, learning processes, and challenges faced by students while using Instagram in the context of English language learning.

Table 1: Themes, subthemes and participants' use of Instagram as an English learning medium for academic speaking

Themes	Sub-Themes	Participant	
Students' Perception of Using Instagram for Academic Speaking	Flexible and fun	(P1, P3, P5)	3 out of 6
	Increased self-confidence	(P1, P5, P6)	3 out of 6
Benefits and Relevance of	Fit for academic needs, Vocabulary and Structure	(P3, P4, P5, P6)	4 out of 6

Instagram Content	Variety of accents and expressions	(P3, P4)	2 out of 6
Process through Instagram Learning	Creative content	(P3, P4, P5)	3 out of 6
Comparison with Other Learning (e.g. Classroom)	More flexible Classroom: There is direct interaction	(P2, P5)	2 out of 6
	Can be repeated at any time	(P1, P3, P5)	3 out of 6
Challenges in Using Instagram as an Academic Speaking Tool	No direct feedback	(P3, P5, P6)	3 out of 6
	Must learn independently	(P3, P5)	2 out of 6

Students' Perception of Using Instagram for Academic Speaking

Flexible and fun

Many students reported that learning academic speaking through Instagram felt flexible and enjoyable because it allowed them to study anytime and anywhere without the pressure of formal classroom settings. They appreciated the freedom to choose learning materials that suited their needs and learning pace. Several participants stated that this flexibility reduced anxiety and made the learning process more relaxed and engaging. One participant shared:

> *"..I can learn from Instagram anywhere at any time, and even before I sleep, I can learn easy learning from Instagram. It is very fun and easy for me to understand because the explanation of the video content or in the caption is very easy for me to understand." (P1)*

This indicates that the flexibility of time and place, combined with the creative and enjoyable learning atmosphere on Instagram, can enhance students' motivation and make them feel more comfortable when practicing academic speaking skills.

Increased Self-Confidence

Some students admitted that before using Instagram, they often felt anxious and lacked confidence when speaking in academic settings. They worried about their pronunciation, vocabulary accuracy, and how others perceived them. However, after

consistently engaging with educational content on Instagram, they reported feeling more comfortable and self-assured when speaking English. One participant shared:

> *"I personally feel much more confident and outspoken after watching the content on Instagram... it really helped me boost my confidence, gain knowledge, and continue to improve my speaking skills." (P1)*

This indicates that regular exposure to English content and practice opportunities on Instagram can significantly improve students' confidence and reduce their anxiety when speaking in academic contexts.

Benefits and Relevance of Instagram Content

Fit for academic needs, Vocabulary and Structure

Students reported that Instagram content was highly beneficial in meeting their academic speaking needs, especially in terms of vocabulary and sentence structure. Many participants felt that the availability of formal vocabulary and structured expressions helped them improve their speaking accuracy and fluency in academic contexts. One participant stated:

> *"Yes, because the vocabulary they use is so varied, it's very relevant for academic speaking. Instagram has really helped me learn English more accurately and fluently…" (P3)*

This support helped them feel more confident when speaking in academic settings and reduced the hesitation they previously experienced due to limited vocabulary and sentence structures.

Variety of Accents and Expressions

Some students reported that exposure to different accents and expressions on Instagram greatly influenced their academic speaking practice. They explained that watching native speakers with varied accents helped them understand pronunciation, intonation, and natural expressions used in formal contexts. This exposure allowed them to imitate authentic speaking styles and improve their academic speaking fluency. One participant explained:

> *"Of course, the content greatly influenced my expression, speaking style, pronunciation, and facial expressions. Because I watched it so often, I got carried away and unconsciously imitated their speech style..." (P4)*

This exposure reduced students' uncertainty about pronunciation and expressions, enabling them to communicate more smoothly and with greater fluency in academic settings.

Process through Instagram Learning

Creative Content

Some students highlighted that the creative design of Instagram content made learning academic speaking more engaging and enjoyable. They explained that videos featuring role-plays, storytelling, accent comparisons, or even humorous elements kept them interested and motivated to practice English consistently. One participant shared:

> *"Many accounts share creative content, like fake interview videos or short dialogues that I can try right away... The vocabulary they use is varied, and the way they explain things is clear and easy to understand." (P3)*

Such content made students feel more engaged and motivated, reducing the boredom and pressure often associated with academic speaking practice.

Comparison with Other Learning

More Flexible Classroom: There is direct Interaction

Some students acknowledged that while Instagram offers greater flexibility in terms of time and place, classroom learning still provides the advantage of direct interaction with lecturers and peers. They felt that structured lessons and real-time feedback in the classroom complemented the independent learning experience on Instagram. One participant shared:

> *"Learning through Instagram is more flexible and relaxed, while in class is more structured and in-depth. On Instagram, I can study*

> *anytime and choose the topics I need. However, learning in class is still important because there are direct explanations from the lecturer and opportunities for hands-on practice. The two complement each other." (P2)*

This balance between independent learning on Instagram and direct interaction in the classroom helped students stay focused and ensured they received the guidance needed to develop their academic speaking skills effectively.

Can be Repeated at Any Time

Some students emphasized that one of the main advantages of learning academic speaking through Instagram is the ability to replay content multiple times until they fully understand it. They felt that this feature allowed them to learn at their own pace and revisit difficult materials whenever needed, unlike in classroom settings where lessons move on quickly. One participant shared:

> *"Learning on Instagram is flexible and stress-free... I also create a self-study schedule, for example, from 8:00 PM to 9:00 PM I have to study on Instagram." (P5)*

This opportunity to review the content repeatedly reduced students' anxiety and allowed them to learn more independently without relying heavily on external explanations.

Challenges in Using Instagram as an Academic Speaking Tool
No direct feedback

Students pointed out that one major challenge of using Instagram for academic speaking practice was the lack of immediate feedback. Unlike in formal classroom settings where teachers or peers could provide instant corrections, learning through Instagram required them to figure out mistakes on their own or wait for delayed responses. As one participant said:

> *"...If there's something I don't understand, I can't just ask and get an instant answer like in class… I usually have to figure it out myself*

> *or ask in the comments or DM and wait for someone to answer."*
> *(P3)*

This shows that the absence of direct feedback can significantly affect students' ability to monitor their speaking progress and develop confidence in academic settings.

Must learn independently

Some participants admitted that learning through Instagram required them to be more independent because there was no direct guidance from teachers or peers. They had to search for additional explanations, practice on their own, and sometimes even create their own learning schedule to stay consistent. One participant shared:

> *"....Learning on Instagram is flexible and pressure-free, but it can sometimes be confusing because there's no immediate feedback. In class, however, learning is more structured and can be discussed directly with lecturers or peers. Both are important, as independent learning can reinforce material learned in class." (P5)*

This makes the learning process more structured on a personal level, but leaves less room for spontaneous interaction that can improve fluency.

The findings of this study revealed that students' experiences in using Instagram for academic speaking practice were influenced by a combination of learning opportunities and learning challenges. These results provide deeper insights into how digital platforms like Instagram can both support and limit students' efforts to improve their English-speaking skills in academic contexts. The first major opportunity identified is the flexibility and accessibility offered by Instagram. Students appreciated the ability to learn anytime and anywhere, which reduced the pressure of traditional classroom learning. This aligns with Santosa (2020), who noted that digital media allows learners to manage their own learning pace and environment effectively.

Another advantage is the availability of academic vocabulary and structured content. Many students reported that exposure to authentic English expressions, academic phrases, and correct sentence structures helped them build confidence and improve fluency. This supports findings by Agustin (2021), who emphasized the role of

social media in enriching learners' linguistic resources through real-world language input.

However, the findings also revealed several learning challenges. The most prominent issue was the lack of direct feedback, which made it difficult for students to correct errors in real time. Additionally, students admitted that learning on Instagram required high levels of independence since guidance from teachers or peers was not always available. These findings resonate with Handayani (2016), who argued that while social media promotes autonomous learning, it may also limit immediate interaction and personalized feedback.

Conclusion & Recommendation

This study aimed to determine students' perceptions of using Instagram as a learning medium for academic speaking skills in English Language Education programs. The research findings revealed that Instagram provides a variety of learning opportunities that can significantly improve students' speaking competence outside of the traditional classroom environment. Students appreciated the platform's flexibility, which allows them to access learning materials anytime and anywhere, making learning more enjoyable and less constrained by time and place. The ability to replay learning content multiple times helped students master academic vocabulary, sentence structure, pronunciation, and overall fluency at their own pace.

However, the study also uncovered several challenges that limited the effectiveness of Instagram as a learning medium. The absence of direct feedback, minimal real-time interaction with teachers, and the need for independent learning sometimes left students uncertain about the accuracy of their language use. Without immediate correction or guidance, some students felt hesitant to apply what they had learned, which occasionally slowed their progress. These challenges point to the necessity of integrating structured support mechanisms, such as online consultations or collaborative activities, to complement independent learning on digital platforms.

Overall, this study suggests that Instagram holds significant promise as a supplementary tool for academic speaking practice. When used alongside formal classroom instruction, it can provide students with flexible, authentic, and engaging

learning experiences that promote linguistic development and speaking confidence. Future research may explore strategies to address the lack of real-time feedback, such as incorporating interactive features or integrating hybrid learning models that combine online platforms with direct teacher supervision. By addressing these challenges, educators can maximize the pedagogical potential of social media to enhance students' academic speaking proficiency in diverse learning environments.

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Conflict of Interest

Potential conflict of interest, if any, should be reported here during data collection.

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