

# Using Instagram on Learning English Vocabulary with Reference to Iraqi Intermediate EFL Learners

**Akram Kadhim Cheyad**

Karbala Education Directorate

cheyadkadhim@gmail.com

## ABSTRACT

The social media platform worked well to advance their interest, focus, and capability in writing. Furthermore, they were more interested in the teaching and learning process and remained focused on the course. They also had more opportunities to sharpen their mastery of utilizing social media.

This study mainly aims at finding ways that could be integrated with traditional instruction to support EFL learners' writing skills. Additionally, it focuses on using Instagram to develop writing ability to enhance EFL learners' performance.

The investigation concluded with the following results:

1. Instagram has significant positive impacts on Iraqi EFL students.
2. Students whose instructors teach English by utilizing engaging techniques, rather than focusing solely on conventional ones, have positive motivation toward learning.

**Key words:** Instagram, Iraqi EFL, The World Wide Web (W.W.W), Social Media Forms, Second Language Teaching.

## 1. Introduction

Instagram was launched on October 6, 2010. It is one platform of social media in which its users can share photographs, and beginning from mid-2013 Instagram services extended to sharing 15-second videos. Since that time, the number of individuals utilizing Instagram expanded quickly. The Instagram statistics showed that it has attracted more than 150 million active users, with an average of 55 million photographs uploaded by users per day, and more than 16 billion photographs shared so far (Instagram 2013). Currently, Instagram can perform numerous functions: make accounts, post content (pictures or 15-second videos), apply filters, add captions, tag users, add locations, add hashtags, like content, add comments, browse and follow other accounts, check a feed created by followed accounts, and explore (search for) hashtags/users (Ali, 2014). In general, Instagram has particular features which are commonly used by users. The features can be described in the following: Instagram profile interface.

Instagram appears to be a perfect tool to support learning English for the following reasons. First, it offers plenty of contextualized visual information that can provide help in language classrooms. Second, utilizing Instagram within the classroom can help in making a socially connected community of learners, as the tool itself gives room for students to communicate and socialize with each other beyond classroom constraints. Third, Instagram is a commonly utilized social media outlet that young learners are presently nearly completely immersed in and accustomed to; including it in their learning process can be seen as a form of applying subjects learned in the course in a real-life environment. Finally, ease of access to Instagram and accessibility on most handheld devices make it more appealing to consider this platform for utilization in a language classroom. (Ali, 2014).

## 2. Theoretical Background.

### 2.1 Teaching Second Language Vocabulary

In the literature, teaching and learning vocabulary was not given due attention. In the early 1970s Wilkins wrote: ‘Linguists have had remarkably little to say about vocabulary and one can find very few studies which could be of any practical interest for language teachers’ (Hedge, 2000:110), and almost a decade later Meara (1980:221) commented that vocabulary acquisition had received short shrift from applied linguistics. In order to understand the task involved in learning the vocabulary of the English language well, we need to look at two aspects of meaning: the first concentrates on the link between meaning and the world to which words refer. The second involves the sense relations that exist among words.

The English language, like any other language, has different areas that students may study; however, vocabulary, grammar, spelling and listening were often given little priority in second language programs, but recently there has been a renewed interest in the nature of vocabulary and its role in learning and teaching (Richards & Renandya, 2002:255). Thornbury (2002:22) focuses on the teacher’s role of encouraging an enthusiasm for vocabulary acquisition, and provides learners with strategies for self-directed learning. The most important things that students need to know about a lexical item are its written and spoken forms and its most usual meaning. Nation (1990:31) proposes the following list of different kinds of knowledge that a person must master in order to know a word:

- a) The meaning (s) of the word,
- b) The written form of the word,
- c) The spoken form of the word,
- d) The grammatical behavior of the word,
- e) The collocations of the word,
- f) The register of the word.

## 2.2 The World Wide Web ( W.W.W)

Harris (1999:12) defines the WWW as “the most recent arrival on the Internet scene.” It combines most of the uses that the Net has been put to in the past and introduces some new ones. These new features include interactivity, multimedia, and hypermedia. In addition, the WWW offers a graphical interface that is easy and straightforward to use. The possibilities of the World Wide Web are limited only by imagination. As such, the WWW also has many benefits to offer to any FL (Foreign Language) classroom. Frizler (1995:32) identifies a number of these benefits:

1. Offers real-world examples of integrated knowledge.
2. Is a rich source of authentic language and cultural material.
3. Offers possibilities for collaborative work.
4. Enables users to retrieve up-to-date and abundant information.
5. Appeals to learners with visual/tactile learning styles.
6. Offers the opportunity to write with real purposes for a real audience.
7. Builds critical thinking skills.
8. Offers opportunities for online publishing.

## 2.3 Reasons for Using Internet in EFL Classroom

Magoto (1995:10) points out that the question arises as to whether schools can be allowed to fall behind in their role of educating our populations in things that are becoming core elements of economic and social life. “There is a need for new skills and a basic understanding of the underlying technology.” To achieve this, it is imperative that learning to work with social media and understanding new technology be assimilated into the curriculum and into teaching methods for both the student and the teacher. In this respect, Assche (1998:22) and Williams (1995:38) argue that the use of the World Wide Web and the Internet can have several potential results and benefits:

1. Schools will be able to cope better with the challenges of preparing students for the information society.

2. Schools and teachers that exploit ICT to the fullest will dramatically improve the effectiveness of the educational process.
3. It is a real example of getting information from all over the world.
4. It helps in group learning because it provides the ability to connect with others more freely.
5. It helps to connect with others faster and at a lower cost.

## **2.4 Common Social Media Forms**

According to Dewing (2010:5), “social media websites, such as Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook, have become extremely popular among Internet users who wish to share their ideas, videos, and other activities online. Social media covers many digital tools such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, MySpace, email, and SMS.”

### **2.4.1 Instagram**

Instagram is a very large, online community that being one of the most well-known sites on the internet, it is discovered in 2004 by “Mark Zuckerberg” .(Rosen, 2007:17) “explains that the name Instagram originates from “ the small photos albums that colleges once gave to incoming freshmen and faculty to helps them copes with meeting so many new people”.

Instagram allows registered users to create profiles, upload photos and videos send messages or join common interest user groups and keeps in touches with friends, family and colleagues”.

## **2.5 Advantages of Social Media in EFL Classes**

“Many have pointed to s the educational benefits of this s media and all agree that with the right g guidance ,the advantages outweigh the disadvantages. (Shihc, 2011 ;23 ).He claimed also that : “The internet,, and social media,, train our b rains to skim and scan “. So, social media can be used as an educational tools and to facilitate EFL learning by allowing interactions between

the teacher and the learners with different tools and websites via the social media platform students can learn from each other as well as “socializing with their peers and “develops their communication skills. (Schmitt, 2009:45) mentioned, that social scientists have concluded that being involved in groups, via social networking sites, has a positive impact on health and well-being. Social media can also be a source to increase doing projects on groups. Moreover, the social media sites give EFL students the opportunity to learn about other cultures, and to communicate directly with native speakers who can help, them improving/,, their vocabulary knowledge”. Nevertheless, there are reasons to use authentic materials, and media because they “can reinforce for students the direct relation between the language classroom and the outside world”. In addition, they offer a way to contextualize language learning. Media offers students a valuable source of language input, since they can be exposed to more than just the language presented by the teacher and the text (Gebhard,2009:105). “Platforms like Skype, Face, Time or Adobe Connect, for example, allows people to communicate while seeing each,, other in real, time . “This can be extremely. useful for student-to student communication, but also for individual coaching between a teacher, and a student ( Harmer, 2012:195).

## 2.6 Previous Study

Nouf Aloraini's (2018) study entitled “Investigating Instagram as an EFL Learning Tool”. The reason for this pondering was to explore the potential of the Instagram stage in learning EFL, especially whether the sort of post (lexicon or linguistic use) influenced the sum of yield the learners given and their level of precision in dialect generation. Moreover, whether the sort of post influenced the input the learners got has been examined.

Another study entitled "An Exploration of Instagram to Develop ESL Learners' Writing Proficiency" by Ronan Kelly (2015). This considers looks to examine how SNSs can be coordinated into L2

instruction. More particularly, it'll investigate how utilizing Instagram, an SNS influences English dialect learners' graphic composing capacity. As a portion of this examination learners' states of mind towards Instagram as a connections learning apparatus are moreover inspected. The current chapter will build up the reason, setting, and system for the examination of the consideration.

This study concludes that SNSs and their use in L2 education is a burgeoning field, with much more research required. In this study using Instagram, a prominent SNS was found to positively affect the vocabulary range and grammatical accuracy of learners' descriptive writing ability. Conversely, the structural aspects of learners' writing were mainly unaffected, further illuminating L2 learners' informal approach to writing on SNSs. Learners in this study have also been found to harbor generally positive attitudes regarding the use of the SNS Instagram in L2 education. The results of this study serve to offer an insight into the pedagogical potential of Instagram and SNSs in L2 education. Consequently, evolution can be achieved by exploring enhanced integration of SNSs in L2 education via smartphones, the development of diverse learning communities, and supporting autonomous learners within these communities. To conclude, the global magnitude of SNSs compels L2 educators to further embrace and celebrate their role in L2 education. Moreover "Improving Students' Writing Skill Using Instagram in Grade X of Science 5 at SMAN 5 Yogyakarta" by Irfan Zidny Suharto (2017). This study is classified as a classroom action research study that was aimed at improving students' writing skills using Instagram in Grade X of Science 5 at SMA N 5 Yogyakarta. The subjects were 28 understudies of Review X of Science 5 at SMAN 5 Yogyakarta. To do the research, the researcher referred to the four phases in conducting action research stated by Kemmis and Mc Taggart in Burns (2010) with a modification by adding a reconnaissance step as the first step. As a result, the whole steps were reconnaissance, planning, action, observation, and

190 reflections. The research was done in two cycles a month from March to April 2017 and obtained qualitative and quantitative data. The information was within the shape of field notes, meeting transcripts, perception checklists, and scores. Based on the information gotten within the field, the issues were students' more intrigued in learning composing, less hone, their trouble in getting thoughts, more language structure dominance, more lexicon, instructing strategy, and the part of media.

Finally, the study by Astiti Dwi Handayani (2018) entitled "The Use of Instagram in the Teaching of EFL Writing: Effect on Writing Ability and Students' Perceptions" thinks about inspecting the impact of the utilization of Instagram on EFL students' writing capacity. It included 34 EFL understudies of an Indonesian college. The comes about of the information examination appeared that there was a noteworthy distinction between the pre-test the post-test scores. Based on the discoveries of this consideration, a few suggestions are given for instructors and future analysts concerning the utilization of Instagram within the education of EFL writing.

Whereas the show study contrasts with these considerations centered on creating students' writing capacity by utilizing Instagram as a learning apparatus. The information was optioned by capability pre-post tests on both test and control bunches.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Overview**

In this chapter, the research will discuss information about the participants (numbers of students), research design (how to test students) and data collection and data analyses procedures employed in this research

#### **3.2 Design of the Study**

The method used in this research is a quantitative research design as the primary and significant method of the study. Quantitative research design is the research strategy that focuses on the

process of collecting and analyzing numerical data. This method can be used reliably with large samples and gives results that can be contextualized, and the findings can be reproduced in other cultures and settings with different participant groups reliably (Fielding & Schreier, 2001).

### **3.3 Data of the Study**

The test consists of (6) questions. The students are given questions and they are required to translate it according to their background knowledge. This study adopted a descriptive design as it aimed to describe the quality of the use of Instagram in Learning vocabulary.

#### **3.3.1 Participants**

The participants of this study were randomly selected among high school, and bachelor students, in the academic year 2024/2025. Ten students were randomly selected from open educational college, and they were given the questionnaires in person. All participants agreed to be part of the study as volunteers.

### **3.4 Data Analyses**

Data was collected using a set of Likert-scale English statements in a questionnaire. The researchers designed the Likert-scale questionnaire. The participants answered one group of questions (about 10 questions). In addition, the participants were asked about their opinions on the impact of Instagram on learning English.

Since the researchers designed the questionnaire, the validity and reliability of the questionnaire were tested. The type of reliability used to determine the reliability of the study is test-retest reliability.

#### 4.1 Result of Analysis

Based on the data analysis presented in the previous section, all those participated in the questionnaire have Instagram. Plus, they rely on Instagram to review literary study material in particular. This is for two reasons. First: mobile phones with Internet connectivity can provide university EFLs with full access to international literal libraries and information. Second, Instagram are both portable and compatible which can maximize the usability for university EFLs.

Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each of these statements regarding impact of Instagram on learning vocabulary:

Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I need a mobile phone to understand English words and sentences	0	45.5	36.4	9.1	9.1
2. Mobile phones can help me to improve my English writing skills.	36.4	36.4	18.2	9.1	0
3. Mobile phones help me to learn new words of English.	36.4	27.2	0	0	36.4
4. Mobile phones are necessary for me to translate English words into Arabic.	9.1	54.5	9.1	27.3	0
5. I can understand English words without using a mobile phone.	9.1	36.4	36.4	18.2	0
6. The applications I use on my mobile phone can translate English words correctly into Arabic.	0	36.4	36.4	27.3	0

7.	The applications I use on my mobile phone can translate	0	9.1	81.8	0	9.1
8.	I scan and save the study-related reading materials to my mobile phone.	9.1	27.3	36.4	9.1	18.2
9.	My English learning is supported by a mobile phone.	18.2	27.3	18.2	27.3	9.1
10.	My teachers of English allow me to use a mobile phone to translate English words in the classroom.	9.1	9.1	18.2	54.5	9.1

## 4.2 Finding and Discussion

Some of the research findings are read as follows:

1. The impact of mobile phones in university EFLs is found in their everyday activities, as well as in their academic activities, which proves its dominance.
2. It is observed that university EFLs scan study-related material on their mobile phones and read notes from their mobile phones during exams.
3. It is noted that university EFLs spend most of their time on their mobile phones in academic activities in addition to social networking activities.
4. It is suggested that university EFLs use mobile phones that come with English applications like English dictionaries so as to look up unfamiliar words.
5. Data analysis suggests that university EFLs prefer using Arabic, rather than English, in common communication activities.
6. The findings also reveal that students use translating applications available on the mobile phones, to understand and find synonym English words and sentences. Even when doing the

questionnaire, they used mobile phones to look up some words they did not understand.

7. In EFL classrooms, students are often frustrated with the traditional teaching methodologies, and it is time for English teachers to try and test mobile technology integrated activities to help students develop a positive attitude towards language learning. English teachers should encourage students to work productively and cooperatively on language learning activities by using mobile phone technology in the classroom.

## **5. Conclusion**

Through this study, the researcher tried to get acquainted with the effect of using Instagram to improve the vocabulary of students. The communication methods will be helpful for students to enrich their vocabulary, as students who using Instagram are more likely to improve their vocabulary than those who do not use it.

One of the issues that face EFL students, especially university learners, is the subject of vocabulary on improvement and in that is why many researchers investigate the possible solutions that may help in facilitating vocabulary learning. "After many studies, scholars found that pleasant and motivating atmosphere could in play a great role in enhancing learning vocabulary process in. Moreover, one of the techniques that creates funny and attractive" situation is using social media.

"The present study had been undertaken in to investigate the importance of creating the pleasant situation for obtaining satisfactory results. "It also aimed at investigating the impact of using Instagram in improving vocabulary, that is to say, it tried to study how Instagram can effect on learners' vocabulary storage improvement. "After analyzing the provided data concerning the use of Instagram by EFL on students for improving vocabulary storage, the researcher can realize that this research confirms that using Instagram can improve EFL students' in vocabulary

knowledge. In general, the obtained results asserted that Instagram is really helpful and effective in improving vocabulary. Accordingly, the researcher recommended that Instagram should be integrated in the learners and teachers of relationship. Because communication in English between the two, outside classroom doors, can help them to learn new words and improve their lexical knowledge. It is recommended also in that teachers and learners have to be conscious about the importance of using Instagram for learning and for vocabulary improvement.

## 6. References

- Ali, Sebah Al. "Embracing the Selfie craze: exploring the possible use of Instagram as A language learning tool." Issues and Trends in Educational Technology 2(2014): 1-16.
- Assche. F. Van ( n.d. \ 1998 ) The Web for Project ( WWW Document). URL <http://wfs.eun.org/about/context/wfs/ProjectFrame.html>.
- Dewing (2010) Social media . social affairs division . Library of Parliament.
- Frizler, K. (1995). The Internet as an Educational Tool in ESOL writing Instruction (www document ). Unpublished Master's , San Francisco State.
- Gairns, R. and Redman, S. (1989) . A guide to Teaching and Learning Vocabulary. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press.
- Gebhard G. (2006). Teaching English as a Foreign or Second Language. The University of Michigan Press.
- Harmar, J. (2012 ).The Practice of English Language Teaching. Essex: Longman.
- Harris, R (1999).Evaluation Internet Research Sources. (WWW Document) URL.<http://www.sccu.edu/faculty/RHarris/evalu8it.htm>.
- Hedge, T. (2000).Teaching and Learning in the Language Classroom. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Magoto, J. (1995). From the nets: World Wide Web and ESL. AELL

- Journal .
- Meara,P. (1980 ).”Vocabulary Acquisition : Neglected Aspect of Language Learning “.13-4:221-46.
- McCarthy, M. (1990 ). Vocabulary. Oxford : Oxford University Press.
- Nation, I.(1990 ).Teaching and Learning Vocabulary. New York: Newbury House.
- Richards, and Renandya, W.A. (2002).Methodology in Language Teaching: An Anthology of Current Practice: Oxford : Heinemann.
- Richards, and Renandya, W.A. (2002).Methodology in Language Teaching: An Anthology of Current Practice. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rosen( 2007 ) Facebook’s effect on Subtle Emotion Decoding, Academic Performance , and Identity protection . The Faculty of the Communication Department at Southern Utah University.
- Thornbury, S. (2005).How to Teach Speaking. Essex: Person Education Limited.
- Ur, P. (2012). A Course in Language Teaching: Practice and Theory. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wallace , M. (1988 ). Teaching Vocabulary. Oxford : Heinman.
- Williams, D. (1995). A suggested Framework for the Educational Use of Internet Technologies. (WWW Document )  
ORL [http://wfs.eun.org \ support\edumodel\ ppframe \ edu.htm](http://wfs.eun.org/support/edumodel/ppframe/edu.htm).