

The use of Instagram to enhance EFL learners' speaking skills

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Abstract:

Speaking skills are indispensable in this era of globalization as without the mastery in this it would be nearly impossible to progress in both professional and personal life. Speaking skills demands preparedness from the learners but many students in general and EFL students in particular are not motivated to speak, major reason being the lack of vocabulary, while some of them are hesitant as they are afraid of making mistakes. Unfortunately, this attitude has made the EFL students inept in speaking in foreign language. Therefore, to enrich preparedness among EFL students the educators are adopting different web tools one such tool that is gaining immense popularity due to its users is Instagram. This research intent to explore whether vlogs on Instagram can help students in improving their speaking skills. It will also weigh how learners perceive the integration of Instagram in their speaking classes, 22 students from foundations level four at University of technology and applied sciences, Nizwa, Oman participated in this study. The researcher administered the pretest and posttests to analyze the effect of Instagram vlogs and activities on speaking competence of EFL learners. The results ...

Key words:

Speaking skills, EFL students, Instagram vlogs, social media, and assessment.

Introduction:

In this era of globalization, social networking sites are gaining immense popularity due to their usage and availability. These networking site are not only easily available but they are also user friendly even novice can use it with ease. The use of such social networking sites and other web tools have become very useful after the emergence of covid-19 pandemic as everyone is relying on them not only for their everyday communication but also for educational purposes. Though the situation has confined students to their homes, on the other hand it has provided educators with an opportunity to experiment with new learning methods. This scenario has made learning foreign language easy and fun. Speaking is considered the difficult skill to achieve by EFL students for many reasons (Luoma, 2004). Firstly, because a great deal of practice and exposure to the language is required for its mastery. Second, EFL learners' speaking competency is effected by some psychological factors also such as self-confidence and anxiety (Aydin, 2001). Effective production of target language is hampered by anxiety (Pasaribu & Harendita, 2018). This hurdle can be overcome if the language teachers assign a task to the learners, which can promote a sense of achievement and lessen their speaking anxiety resulting in boosting their self-confidence (Saint-Leger, 2009). Another major difficulty in developing speaking skills that the learners get minimum exposure to language a fewer opportunities to practice the language outside the classroom and the only place where they can learn to speak is in the classroom. Therefore, it is expected of the language teachers to exert social media application ingeniously so that learners get more exposure and opportunities to practice extensively outside the classroom rather than being dependent on in-class practices (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996). The emergence of covid-19 pandemic has completely take away the in-class exposure and practice opportunity from learners and the only way left for the teachers is to use social media.

There a large number of social media sites available at our disposal; WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, YouTube, etc. (Ali, 2018, Bolat, 2018, Kavaliauskiene & Ashkinazi, 2014). According to an article on Statista (2020), 3.6 billion people are using social media all over the world. Out of which 1 billion are Instagram users around the world. Incorporating social media in speaking lessons can help students improve their speaking skills. According to Hashim et.al, (2017) learning a language can be escalated using mobile phones. Therefore, the researcher

chose Instagram as a tool to assist EFL students in boosting their confidence, being a communicative social media platform Instagram can be used by students to record videos that in turn would give them first-hand experience (Aloraini, 2018). The use of social media in the education motivated and engaged students in the learning process as they have the opportunity to collaborate, share their novel ideas, develop innovative content and publish it online all these are part of 21st century skills (Dunn, 2013 and Handayani, 2016). Social media effects human brain in variety of ways. According to an article in “social cognitive and Affective Neuroscience” the likes which people get on social media from others on the images, videos and posts leads to activation in brain circuitry implicated in reward and, as rewards have positive relationship with motivation these social media rewards motivate students to engage in speaking even outside the classroom. Owing to the reason the researcher opted for Instagram as a tool to enhance EFL students speaking skills, students are very comfortable in using social media these so this tool would help them to use language conveniently and comfortably. Omani students are more inclined towards Instagram hence it was chosen to help students improve their speaking skills.

Research purpose

The aims of the study are:

- To analyze the effect of using Instagram on students’ readiness to speak English outside the classroom.
- To explore how students perceive social media in learning a language.

Research questions and Hypothesis

- Do foundation students at UTAS Nizwa perceive Instagram as a helpful tool in learning a language?
- How is the general attitude of students towards using social media in learning?
- What is students’ opinion on Video blogs on Instagram for practicing language outside the classroom?

Research Methodology

1. Research Design

The conducted will employ static group comparison design the researcher compares the control group with the rest of the groups of level four. All the groups will be post-tested and the differences between them will be the result of the treatment. This comparison with other groups having same dependent variable will aid in knowing the effects of using Instagram vlogs on speaking ability of students. The researcher will only administer the posttest, which will be the level four final speaking exam. The data collection method for this study will be quantitative.

2. Sample of the study

The study focused on level four students in the foundations program at the English Language Center of Nizwa College of technology for the second semester of AY 2020-2021. The speaking class of level four consisting of 24 students was selected and they would be required to make vlogs based on IELTS part 1 speaking topics and post on Instagram page created by the teacher. The experimental group was selected as per the researcher's convenience.

3. Research Tool

3.1 Achievement Test

Researcher will collect the data after the final speaking test is conducted. The language center follows IELTS rubrics to award marks to students in the speaking exam. As it is a static group comparison, research the final speaking exam marks will be used to obtain the results of the effectiveness of the vlog approach. The researcher used "Instagram" to record and post vlogs.

3.2 Instagram

The Instagram App was launched in October 2010 within 10 years of its inception it has gain immense popularity and usage. With Over 1 Billion users, it has become the most popular social networking sites. It is designed to be used as a mobile phone application. People who use Instagram can perform certain functions like post content (audio, video, text), check feeds, add captions, follow others, add and like comments and posts. Videos on Instagram can be shared on other sites also like Facebook or twitter. The immense popularity that social media has gained in recent

times has forced educators to employ Instagram for learning purposes. It can be a good and interesting tool for language classes. It is also a very effective interaction tool.

Data Analysis

A different teacher will be conducting the speaking exam and awarding the marks after the treatment. The marks will be allotted based on IELTS marking criteria. These marks will be compared using ANOVA test. Moreover, the students will be interviewed to know about their attitude towards the approach and to find out about the difficulties they faced. All the calculations or computations will be done using SPSS.

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