

# THE IMPACT OF INSTAGRAM IN THE PROCESS OF IMPROVING ENGLISH VOCABULARY AT “C” LEVELS

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**Abstract:** The Internet revolution stems from a rapid development of Information Technology which considerably determines human`s lives. The necessity for new jobs appears, there is a demand for new life skills that might not have been developed in the past, people connect on global level, businesses are established and run in this virtual world, but the access to gaining knowledge is one of the Internet benefits as well. The result of this digital revolution is the creation of social media, initially invented for amusement. Little is known about how many benefits social networks can bring to the sense of learning foreign languages. The aim of this paper is to discover the impact of Instagram in improving English vocabulary at “C” levels on its users in 2022. Furthermore, it will also elaborate on the means used for improvement of, allegedly, the most demanding segment of English. The development of technology in 21st century and its discoveries revolutionised approach to education. While popularity of the Internet grew considerably, it commenced to predominantly affect society, in general. Nevertheless, at the same time, it offered such possibilities which enabled all the Internet population to do jobs or learn from their homes. Accordingly, this invention generated social media which has transcended traditional education in classrooms. The application that proved supremacy of this phenomenon is Instagram. The primary goal of this social network was entertainment; however, the fact that even students can learn English vocabulary, aimed at “C” levels in a spontaneous and natural way, transformed this application into the leading learning tool. As a result, it appears that the major purpose of social media nowadays, including Instagram, is educating. People tend to regard it as an extremely important discovery particularly in 2020 and 2021, when online learning was the only possible alternative to traditional classroom education due to COVID-19. In addition, even after the pandemic, students occupied this space for learning principally foreign languages, as classroom education was considered time-consuming. This paper will deal with the effects which Instagram has on advancing English vocabulary at “C” levels in 2022. Besides, it will also provide the examples of how posting on Instagram helps, explaining various options available for practising and mentioning skills that might be developed. The method used in the paper is quantitative and is associated with the previous research corresponding to the topic. Similarly, the corpus for this paper is based on the Instagram profile @english,exams.with.djukica. The questionnaire used in the research was created in the Instagram story on the aforementioned profile and it collected the votes from its followers. The insight into the results prove the theory that Instagram significantly influences enhancing English vocabulary at “C” levels. In the conclusion, the author recommends that offline English teachers should include social networks in their curriculum to complement the material in the form of extra resources. Not only will the social media be an exceptional asset to education, but it will connect students worldwide and encourage their communication in English.

Keywords: *English vocabulary, social media, Instagram, learning.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION - DIGITAL LITERACY IN 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY

As David Crystal states, the development of modern information technology occurs simultaneously with the development of globalisation. The Internet, as an exceptional innovation, plays an important role in all spheres of human lives in 21st century. It is known to serve as good source of any information. “Social networks are not only entertaining means of communication between people but also a powerful component of the information and educational environment that has considerable educational potential” (Aleksandrova et al., 2021; Tolmachev et al., 2021; Zenin et al., 2021). With respect to education, the approach to learning foreign languages has almost changed beyond recognition. In this domain, Instagram became increasingly powerful on global level, spanning entertainment and learning. As lingua franca, English is dominant among all foreign languages. “Emails, chatgroups, instant messages, and the Web have one thing in common: they are all electronic interactions where the subject-matter comprises – apart from the occasional aberration – real thing in the real world.” (Crystal, 2012). Some scholars claim that Instagram provides its users with certain tools and options valuable for specific linguistic units such as vocabulary. “A wide range of vocabulary is the key to learning a foreign language successfully and confidently. The more vocabulary you know, the easier you will find it to understand the language, whether written or spoken.” (Mirkovic, 2022).

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## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

### 2.1. SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is the matter of the utmost importance which gives new momentum to education. In spite of the fact that these applications such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and TikTok liken to each other in terms of learning, they are all different and suitable for various types of people and their objectives. “Recent investigations have pointed out that Facebook can have a positive effect on the student-to-student and student-to-teacher relationship” (Mazer et al, 2007). Furthermore, users acknowledge social networks as a resourceful capacity which enables them to advance language skills, including grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation as well. This appeared to be pivotal during the pandemic in 2020 and 2021, when Instagram became a life-altering tool for learning foreign languages. It is noticeable that interaction and learning are inextricable to the extent that this process reinforces the scientific theories which are based on the presumption that online learning has a tendency to suppress classroom learning. Taking into account the fact that the topic is wide, our focus in this paper will be on enhancing English vocabulary at “C” levels.

### 2.2. INSTAGRAM

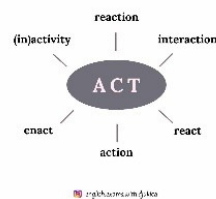
Instagram is a visual social network, which implies that aesthetics is momentous. “Instagram allows the users to express themselves, as in writing a caption below the photos or videos, share information, interact with others, spend their free time, and even for entertainment (Alhabash & Ma, 2017; Handayani, 2016). Seemingly, this trend attracted numerous users on global level, bridging entertainment and education. Conversely, entertainment is seen to have been diminished, perhaps even repressed substantially. The rise of various businesses is a further manifestation of new Instagram; education is no exception. Besides, it was upgraded and comprised long videos but now, short video forms, called reels, are the most recognised ones. This platform connects people in the way that they gain knowledge unwittingly, through entertainment, yet spontaneity. Regardless of the fact that Instagram is a social network, the nature of some accounts is highly professional. The capacity of “market” is immense – paid or free programmes, courses, e-books, videos in which teachers give explanations, and then invite followers to comment or ask questions, stimulating interaction. Subscription to the newsletter may be rewarding for the reason that it enables subscribers to get engaged more and they may receive a free e-book on a certain topic. In actual fact those who pay for programmes, earn extra privilege. Students have a chance to be taught by native speakers or non-native teachers who are qualified. One of the implemented options in demand on Instagram is so called “live” where a host invites a guest and they discuss a certain topic. Followers are informed about the time of the live and may directly participate in the discussion or be answered the questions thoroughly. Instagram predominantly plays an important role regarding exchanging DM messages (direct messages) which are private. Hence, the sense of confidence to require a further explanation or any information arises. One argument in favour of Instagram is that the content is condensed, giving rise to new optimism that learning is possible. As it excludes the climate of fear, communication is intensified. Practising English and regular interaction lead to the closer relationship with teacher; therefore, this mechanism affects learning positively. “Besides being used as a tool of communication, institutions have integrated social media such as Instagram as learning tools to deliver new information and connect with students.” (<https://deejournal.org/index.php/dee/article/view/26/22>). Instagram undeniably has a beneficial effect on both – teachers and students. Accounts are created in the way that it is emphasised in the form of a short biography on the profile what service is offered, disclosing crucial information. Such standards facilitate the process of selection of the teacher and the content. It is usually the case that the followers can participate in commenting on the given topic and, thus, discussion or interaction with the teacher and other followers spontaneously develops. Interacting on a regular basis makes progress. While fears of the students subside, confidence simultaneously rises. Not only does Instagram contribute to learning, but it also encourages connecting with people worldwide. Users have an opportunity to make friendships and increase interpersonal intelligence. “Instagram is not only for sharing photos and videos, but also to create a community in any field, where the people involved may widen their networking as well as exchanging ideas, knowledge, or information (Soviyah & Etikaningsih, 2018). Moreover, being a member of a community triggers the sense of trust and the members do not hesitate to express their personal opinion on something to practise English. For instance, in closed groups, all the users who have the access exchange useful information, help each other, promote or ask a question, as they feel comfortable in that surroundings. Psychologists have argued that these positive characteristics create an intrinsically rewarding reason to continue participation in such a group (Kuo, 2003; Whitworth & De Moor, 2003). Mazer and his colleagues who conducted the research claim that, by joining these

groups and becoming a member of a community, students connect with the other peers and discover similarities. Not only does this relate to the peers, but to the teacher as well, since they learn what their life values are. This leads to a productive outcome which initiates a clear demonstration of the need to belong to a community. Furthermore, all the members become supportive and motivate each other. This implies that all the factors entailed will undoubtedly have a positive impact on the students' learning.

### 2.3. VOCABULARY

“It is true that knowing effective vocabulary learning strategies is important, yet applying the strategies, exploring new strategies, making the commitment to learn new words, using them in speaking and especially in writing, and having a strong desire to increase one's vocabulary size are even more crucial” (www.researchgate.net/publication/343252325\_Effective\_English\_vocabulary\_learning\_strategies\_A\_research\_summary). Definition of the word vocabulary in the Cambridge Dictionary is: “All the words that exist in a particular language or subject”. Vocabulary is considered one of the most demanding segments of the English language, although new words can be found everywhere, for instance, in movies, in songs, or generally, on the Internet, even when users are in pursuit of entertainment. “Given the significance of having extensive vocabulary knowledge, that is, knowing a lot of English words, particularly high frequency ones, many, if not all, English as a second or foreign language learners from all over the world may have a strong interest in knowing and understanding how English vocabulary can be learned in an effective way” (www.researchgate.net/publication/343252325\_Effective\_English\_vocabulary\_learning\_strategies\_A\_research\_summary). Appropriateness of “C” level vocabulary should correspond to the complexity required at the highest levels – advanced and proficiency. The central challenge that Instagram users face is to recognise the professional account run by a qualified teacher. It is of a paramount importance to understand and apply the techniques which help vocabulary acquisition. However, at this stage, when students have already levelled up overall knowledge, their capacity is expected to be greater than “A” and “B” level simple words used on a regular basis, principally for the purpose of the English exams. This category entails collocations, idioms (in speaking), phrasal verbs, two-word adjectives, and such language segments, which are critical for the English exams - IELTS and Cambridge. Additionally, these aspects are taught and presented on the Instagram account @english.exams.with.djukica together with various techniques which have been proven to foster acquiring new high-level vocabulary. One of the objectives of this Instagram account, which is exclusively aimed at “C” levels, is to provide its followers with different techniques and strategies, considering learning vocabulary, for instance, Word Families or Grouping Vocabulary. The Word Families technique is defined as “words with similar roots and meanings” (Puchta, Stranks and Lewis-Jones, 2012).

The photo exemplifies Word Families technique posted on the Instagram account @english.exams.with.djukica.



Another technique, Grouping Vocabulary, covers the strategy which promotes creating different groups, such as organising words in topics, and this encompasses sets of links between the items.

The picture illustrating Grouping Vocabulary was taken from the E-book “Boost Your Vocabulary”.

1 Match the two parts of the sentences.

A It was a split-
B Do you apologise when you jump
C You should weigh up
D It was a snag
E I spent hours dithering
F Did you mull
G I am in two
H Is the conference organiser wavering

1 things over before you said "no"?
2 between the hotel and the lecture hall?
3 second decision and it helped her get a better job.
4 the pros and cons before the interview.
5 judgement. I shouldn't have taken out a loan.
6 to the wrong conclusion?
7 over my decision whether to go to university or not.
8 minds about which car to buy.

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## 2.4. METHODS

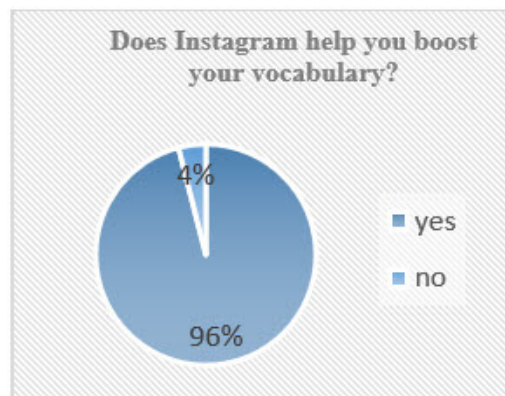
The prior studies are based on the premise that the role of Instagram is manifested through variety of accounts which provide its followers with the content for learning English vocabulary. The previous research “The Effect of Instagram on learning English Vocabulary” conducted in 2021 proved high effectiveness of Instagram on learning English Vocabulary. The data in this research was collected through survey, studying the effect of Instagram in learning Vocabulary of third semester students at English Tadris Study Program in IAIN Palu academic year 2020/2021. Relying on this research and the questionnaire created in the Instagram story on the account @english.exams.with.djukica, this paper will answer the following questions:

1. Is it possible to enhance and adopt English vocabulary at “C” levels on Instagram?
2. How does Instagram contribute to learning and improving English vocabulary at “C” levels?

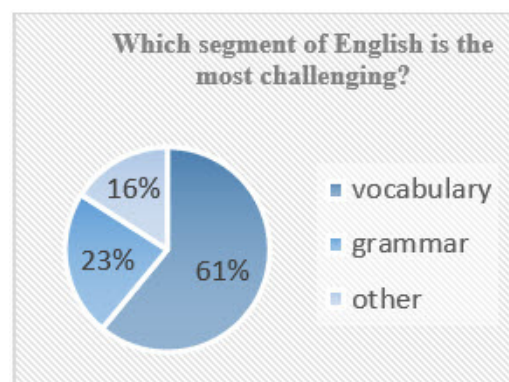
Hence, the paper will contextualise the use of Instagram for improving English vocabulary at advanced and proficiency levels. 57 followers who are at one of these two levels participated. The questionnaire, which was posted in Instagram stories, contained several questions with given options. After the followers had voted, the Instagram immediately calculated the percentage. Here, it will be explained what the option “story” is. “The photos and videos will disappear after 24 hours and won’t appear on your profile grid or in feed.” (<https://about.instagram.com/blog/announcements/introducing-instagram-stories>).

## 3. RESULTS

The first bar chart shows how useful Instagram is for improving English vocabulary at “C” levels. The percentage of those who consider it beneficial (96%) overweighs the ones who assume that Instagram is not helpful (4%). In support of this, there is a positive view that they understand and recognise complexity of the process of improving vocabulary, since at this level, they need both formal and informal register.



The second bar chart illustrates the percentage of the most demanding segments of English. It is obvious that vocabulary is considered the most difficult one. Albeit different techniques, for instance, Word Formation or Grouping Vocabulary, are applicable, demonstration of “C” level vocabulary is exceptionally challenging. Students are expected to have a wide range of vocabulary and awareness that simplifying sentences through the use of basic words will lead to failure in English exams, which are the main goal of the followers.



The third bar chart shows the options which the followers use to improve their vocabulary at “C” levels. 74% voted for stories, as these are not exposed to everyone; it is the teacher who has the insight into them. 21% approve of comments, which confirms their degree of confidence, given that this option is revealed to anyone. Only 5% supported chatgroups. This indicates that they are prone to the lack of confidence and it is the sense of community which stimulates them to participate.



#### 4. DISCUSSION

It is obvious that the research corroborates prior study which proved high effectiveness of Instagram on learning English vocabulary. Likewise, the premise that Instagram has an influence on improving vocabulary at “C” levels is confirmed in this conducted research. The results reveal an enormous interest in enhancing vocabulary at “C” levels on Instagram. The students interact relying on numerous tools, use various techniques and adopt new words and expressions, practising them through the context that is meaningful for them. However, they have a different approach to learning considering the fact that they are aware of the complexity of vocabulary required at these two highest levels. Therefore, the majority of them are confident to do the tasks solely in stories, as the teacher is the only one who has the access to the answers. The second commonly used space for interaction is comments. The followers belonging to this group have confidence to share their ideas with others, not exclusively with teachers. Finally, there is a small number of those who voted for “other”, which is usually DM (direct message) or closed groups. They evidently have a tendency to prioritise the sense of community in the process of acquiring vocabulary at advanced and proficiency levels.

#### 5. CONCLUSION

Opportunities offered on social media are immense and invaluable, particularly taking into consideration the fact that majority of content is free. In this modernised era social networks have become an indispensable asset regarding education, and the amount of heterogeneity in the opportunities given is massive. Not only do people entertain, but they also develop social skills, connect worldwide, run businesses and learn. However, Instagram among other platforms, has been elevated to the degree which reinforces its new task – educating its users. As “C” level requires complexity, in general, an impediment to improving vocabulary can be an erroneous belief that cognitive approach is not fundamental. Accordingly, selection of the Instagram accounts should come under close scrutiny in order to avoid discrepancy between necessary techniques for improving vocabulary at “C” levels and the wish to rapidly acquire new words. The influence of Instagram is undiminished and this phenomenon is presumed to thrive in the future. It is obvious that as a consequence of digital revolution, teaching methods have dramatically changed and online learning dominantly replaced traditional classrooms. Therefore, the recommendation of the author is that offline English teachers should include learning on social media in curriculum and introduce it in their classrooms. This can serve as extra material for practising English and strengthening communication skills.

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