

PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt / Egyptology

ENHANCING NON-SPECIALIST IRAQI STUDENTS' MOTIVATION AND THEIR ENGLISH LEARNING BY USING INSTAGRAM DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Yasien Mashhoot Taher. Enhancing Non-specialist Iraqi Students' Motivation and their English Learning by Using Instagram during Covid-19 Pandemic-- Palarch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology 17(7), 7989-7996. ISSN 1567-214x

Keywords: Instagram, Motivation, Non-specialist Students, Communication.

ABSTRACT:

Over the decade of new technologies, the image of language teaching and learning has undergone significant changes. Using numerous applications via computers and mobile phones like Face book, Instagram, Telegram, and Twitter has paved the way for EFL teachers to innovatively shaping their English language teaching and learning strategies and approaches in a diverse, interactive, and social environment. Instagram has a beneficial feature because it falls under the social networking group, and contact is the key source of networking. The great effect of using social media for enhancing students' English learning has proved by many researches, however, the researches about using Instagram for teaching Iraqi students are limited. This paper is performed to describe using Instagram for enhancing the non-specialist EFL Iraqi students' motivation and their English learning during Covid-19 Pandemic as well as increasing their involvement in engaging and communicating with peers. It investigated the participation of students in online discussions and their comment on using Instagram as the forum for English language learning activities. Fifty students from First-year, Department of Computer Engineering-University of Technology participated in this research. The results of the study showed that Instagram is undeniably an important platform for student interactions, particularly when discussing their task-related activities. The students involved seemed to be more inspired and they enjoy connecting and interacting with peers as Instagram has sparked their interest in English language learning.

INTRODUCTION

In the decade of new technologies, the image of English language teaching and learning has undergone significant variations. The way for EFL teachers has paved by using numerous applications via computers and mobile phones to innovatively shape their language teaching and learning strategies and approaches in a creative way. In addition, the way language instructors

perform their courses will adapt in an environment of continual changes due to immediate access to knowledge, and corresponding to the recent approaches students learn. Belardi (2013) Claimed that one of the best ways of ensuring learners succeed in class is to learn efficiently and with the right form of technology.

Additionally, students of today's world are complacent with a broad variety of ever-changing innovations in a diverse, interactive, and social environment. In reality, by introducing social media in the language classrooms, like Twitter, Instagram, Telegram and Facebook, students will be extremely encouraged to communicate socially with their classmates. Online networking, like Facebook, seemed to have provoked students' interest in learning English while reading and writing to submit their blogs as well as feedback during the interaction (Noraïen Mansor, 2016). Furthermore, Leach (2013) claimed that the increase of social network customers reveals that youth everywhere in the world are willing to link with their classmates as well as are very skilled to do so in personal contexts. More recently, the possible uses of cell phones, including smartphones for educational purposes, have been discussed explicitly in English language instruction. Researchers have argued about the varied applications available in smartphones, opening up a multitude of other options for educators and thus enough opportunities to improve the learning of students and to make studying a worthwhile experience for them (Godwin-Jones, 2011). A literature review has shown that many academics have highlighted the possible benefits of 'mobile learning,' thereby motivating this study's researcher to hop on the bandwagon based on using Instagram in language learning.

Instagram allows registered users to share personal content with one another and to build social networks. Instagram is a free online platform to upload and share photographs, make comments and upload videos. Instagram allows one to designate the location, mark on the images or videos the other users, post comments below the photo or video, check for new people and monitor the actions of "guests." The popularity of Instagram is rising every day, currently, it has 400 million daily and 600 million active monthly users, which can contribute to the appeal and value of Instagram as an educational platform

This study obviously aims to expose the students' experience of using the method to inspire them, as well as to improve their participation in engaging and communicating with their peers. It looked at the involvement of students in online discussions and suggestions on using Instagram as a forum for language learning, especially during Covid-19 Pandemic. It is hoped that educators will embrace technology and use social media networks to maximize participation in improving communication skills for students, especially during Covid-19 Pandemic.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Researches concerning using social media in the EFL classroom have been carried out broadly around the world. The studies include using resources like Twitter, Telegram as well as Instagram by cell phones in teaching language, known as mobile learning; Kukulska-Hulme (2009) examined the effectuality

of mobile phone usage for synchronous as well as asynchronous communication and the development of speaking and listening skills among students. The author concluded that mobile apps have been able to effectively support practices. Likewise, Lan, Sung & Chang (2009) believed that mobile devices make it easier for students to build collaborative learning environments. Additionally, they foster their ability to read. Borau et al. (2009) revealed the opportunities these tools provide to allow students to actively participate in the 'making' English language and further improve the communication skills of the students.

For their study, Lunden (2014) as well as Fritta Faulina Simatupang (2015) utilized Instagram and concluded that the use of internet technology has supported the English learning process. It matches the research performed by Sebah Al-Ali (2014) who argued that Instagram could be an important learning platform in English for foreign language classrooms. Sebah Al-Ali (2014) focused on integrating Instagram into a bridge language programme as an important learning tool. Photographs were taken and subtitles written for a project on holiday are included in the program. The outcomes showed that the idea was progressively received by the students and they were stimulated to be created during the writing process.

Bell (2013) achieved a related research using Instagram and reported that Instagram played a significant role in enhancing the learning topics where contact occurred in a system of sharing thoughts as well as beliefs in their Instagram subtitles. Additionally, he claimed that written communication helps build self-esteem and trust in everyday life. Salomon (2013) agreed and enhanced that Instagram gained the attention of an individual, as well as faith in digitally communicating ideas. Noraien Mansor & Normaliza Abd Rahim (2016) agreed with Bell (2013) and Salomon (2013) and showed that students engaged in experiences with Instagram seemed to gain trust in writing.

Pero Ali (2014) revealed that Instagram is such a beautiful application and one of the most successful social media applications. What makes it an effective app for learning English is for its users to learn in an entertaining and casual way. Instagram has a beneficial feature because it falls into the social networking group, and contact is the main source of networking.

Wiktor. K (2012) revealed that Instagram has several important resources that may well benefit from special intelligence and linguistic knowledge for educational purposes. This is a mental mechanism as with special intelligence whereby the mind tries to perceive specific kinds of arriving data via images, charts, plans, etc. In this process, the mind considers several different aspects as regards editing and viewing the picture. When a user uploads an image, and everyone can see it, it's linked with intelligence of linguistic. Furthermore, when teacher upload and exchange photos with his learners, and ask them to comment or offer different types of input, this will encourage his learners to use their language skills. Therefore, this study further examines multitasking students using smartphones through different tasks such as video recording, uploading the video to Instagram and communicating with their peers based on the assigned task and providing their impressions of the assigned activity.

This research shows the outcomes of a work that took place on 50 students from First-year, Department of Computer Engineering-University of Technology. The essential objective of current research is to explore the expectations of the students about the experience of the assigned task and the communication skills of the students through mobile learning. The research will also address the drawbacks of using Instagram in EFL classrooms, in addition to addressing the possible benefits.

QUESTIONS OF STUDY

The research focused on the following two investigative questions:

1. Does mobile application Instagram has any effectiveness in enhancing students' motivation?
2. Do the non-specialist Iraqi students consider Instagram application as an effective means that can facilitate their English language learning?

METHODOLOGY

This study was performed during the Pandemic Covid-19 at the second term of the scholastic year 2019– 2020. The study continued for 20 days from 1st to 20th April 2020. It involved 50 students from First-year, Department of Computer Engineering-University of Technology. They were divided into 5 groups (10 students each group) and each group was to set up their own Instagram account. Students were charged with creating and videoing a communication situation based on a given subject (Living in a digital age, Buying a computer, Input /Output devices, Flash memory and Magnetic storage). They were then told to upload their video to Instagram. Each group is to comment on all the presentations done by their peers mainly focusing on the clarity of the message being delivered. The lecturer participating just serves as an observer and facilitator for the groups. 10 days were given to students as a time frame to prepare their video and another 10 days to interact among themselves by giving comments on videos uploaded by each group and answer questions related to their experience interacting on Instagram. They were encouraged to interact every day.

To give extra support, 20 students belong to the study had randomly been nominated to online interviews via Instagram having 5 questions (See Appendix) in the last part of the study. The students had been requested to give their attitudes about utilizing Instagram to enhance those English language learning.

All the students have extensive experience in specifically Instagram online social networks as they own their personal Instagram for personal purposes and they are specialists in computer engineering. Their experience in posting their personal matters as such paves the way for smooth learning as the task provided. This research seeks to explain and evaluate the usage of Instagram inside EFL English language learning classroom. This also helps to elicit students' expectations about Instagram's approach in teaching English language.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 Number of Students' Participation

	Day 1	Day2	Day3	Day4	Day5	Day6	Day7	Day8	Day9	Day10
Group1	2	3	3	4	5	5	6	7	8	9
Group2	2	2	4	4	6	6	7	8	9	10
Group3	3	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	9	10
Group4	3	3	3	4	5	5	6	7	8	9
Group5	2	3	4	4	6	6	7	8	9	10
Total	12	14	18	21	23	29	34	39	43	48
Percentage	24%	28%	36%	42%	46%	58%	68%	78%	86%	96%

Answering the Study Question No 1

Does the mobile application Instagram has any effectiveness in enhancing students' motivation?

Table (1) above presents the results of the study, It shows students' participation. The data gathered from the students' participation during the 10 days period set prove a progressive effect whereby the majority of learners communicate by giving their comments on the video presentation uploaded by all the groups on the Instagram. The graphs below in the figures (1 & 2) display the posts frequency within 10 days.

As of Day 1, only 24% of the students participated but it increased up to 36%, 46% and 68% on Day 3, Day5 and Day7 respectively. The momentum of participation increases gradually and reached 96% on the last day of the assigned task. The most active participants were during the last two days as they were to unveil their opinions of their experience of use Instagram in process of learning. These results reveal the mobile application Instagram has great effectiveness in enhancing students' motivation.

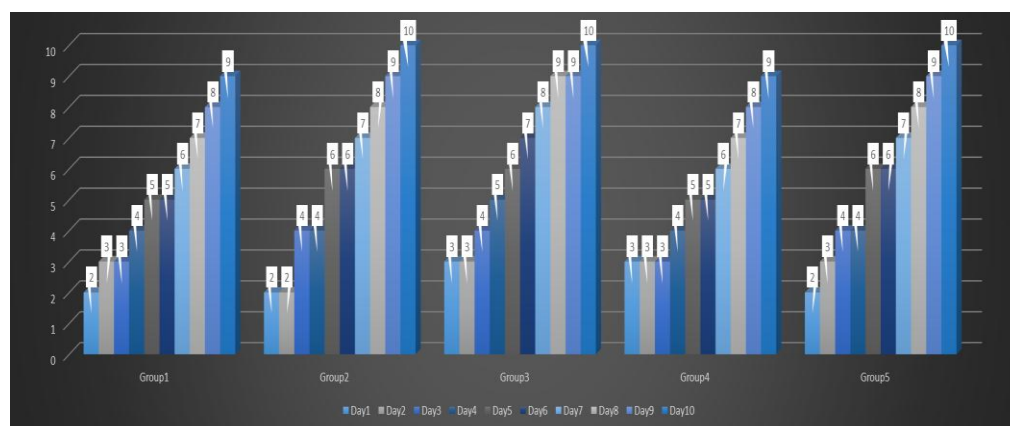


Figure 1 Number of Students' Participation

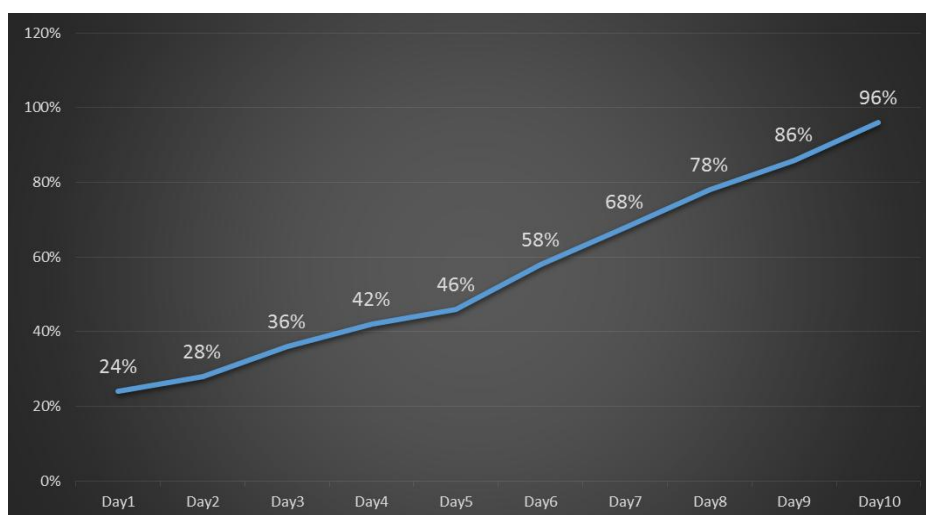


Figure 2 Percentage of Total Number for Students' Participation

Answering the Study Question No 2

Do the non-specialist Iraqi students consider Instagram application as an effective means that can facilitate their English language learning?

From online interviews via Instagram with the students, they enjoy getting involved and engaging with all the students who participated in the assignment. They claim that Instagram's use of language learning has encouraged them for participation and increased their level of confidence to communicate in English language. The research's outcomes were similar to Noraïen Mansor's study (2014), in which online communication including Facebook interactions had a significant effect on learners. It also fuelled their curiosity in learning English, as they practice reading and writing when sending their posts and feedback during the interaction. More importantly, they were bold and courageous enough to voice their opinions or response based on their friends' messages. Instagram is thus able to instill confidence in the students to communicate in English and successfully transmit their messages. Ali Salman & Mohd: Ika Destina. Helmi Helmi Abd. Rahim (2013) posted similar results stating that digital media is helping speakers and writers successfully deliver their messages.

The interviews presented another outcome which is the creation of learning communities found in Instagram groups. The groups on Instagram formed for the mission provide the learners with opportunities to work together and help each other. Such results are consistent with the Lao & Gonzales studies (2005), which suggested that the Internet offers learning opportunities as well as a space to draw on information within a learning environment. Furthermore, it is quite clear that e- learning is a dynamic situation in which learner-centric learning strategies provide occasions for important innovations and different methods of learning English.

The interview results reveal that the Instagram application considers as an effective means that can facilitate the non-specialist Iraqi students' English language learning.

From the researcher observing involved in the program, he has seen a great influence on the confidence level of the students, which has increased tremendously among the majority of the students in his class. This shows that mobile learning has indeed succeeded in promoting and boosting the confidence of students in participating and communicating in the given task through the Instagram application. Students who at the beginning of the program were unwilling to speak became more enthusiastic about participating towards the end of the duration given for the task. At the start of the activity, they managed to hide their shyness or silence. In addition, Communicative practices including group conversation via Instagram-managed to develop students' communication techniques where they've been shown to openly communicate and exchange thoughts with students in other groups. Students were also capable to conduct as well as sustain the debate despite being seen as agreeing and disagreeing along with explaining views but ultimately reaching consensus. The research subsequently proves that students get educational advantages from technology as learning turns out to be more spontaneous as well as comfortable. To discover its potential in English language learning, wireless technology and gadgets such as smartphones should be further explored. Nonetheless, there are several problems regarding the usage of Instagram at the workplace of the students, such as internet connectivity and network stability. As such, the instructors need to address these issues before beginning the activity.

CONCLUSION

No doubt Instagram is a useful instrument for student interactions, particularly when debating their task-related activities. Apart from communication skills, Students can develop their reading skills and writing skills. They will use Instagram as a communication tool and a broader part in the English language learning, including reading as well as writing skills. Mobile learning via Instagram, therefore, seems to be an ideal setting for such transactional learning. Instagram correspondence gave students the opportunity to engage in a dialogical process in which the learning advantages of reading, writing, questioning, arguing and clarifying were incorporated. For English teachers, Instagram represents a kind of alternative solution to maintaining the process of teaching during covid -19 pandemic. To conclude, this research is intended to present worthy visions into future studies in English language learning as well as mobile learning that is crucial in the digital age.

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