

Exploring Instagram as a Pedagogical Tool for Teaching English to EFL Learners

Explorar Instagram como herramienta pedagógica para la enseñanza del inglés a estudiantes de EFL

Cristhian Elias Moreira Moreira¹ cristhian.moreira@educacion.gob.ec <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-2784-8679>

Marlon Rubén Barcia Moreira² marlon.barcia@unesum.edu.ec <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6170-195X>

Shirley Leonor Espinoza Merchán³ shirleyl.espinoza@educacion.gob.ec <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-0286-8520>

Aída Andrea Palma Palma⁴ andrea.palma@educacion.gob.ec <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-6900-3869>

Leisker Gabriel Cusme Vélez⁵ leisker.cusme@educacion.gob.ec <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8039-3518>

Resumen

Esta investigación examina el uso de Instagram como herramienta pedagógica para la enseñanza del inglés como segunda lengua, enfocándose en su impacto en la motivación, la adquisición de vocabulario y el compromiso del estudiante. El estudio se desarrolló en la Universidad Estatal del Sur de Manabí con cien estudiantes de Tecnología de la Información y la Comunicación, quienes participaron en una intervención de seis semanas en la que Instagram se utilizó como plataforma complementaria de aprendizaje. Durante este periodo, los alumnos interactuaron con publicaciones, hashtags y tareas diseñadas para reforzar el uso del inglés, especialmente en vocabulario, expresiones idiomáticas y estructuras gramaticales. Se empleó un diseño de investigación descriptivo con un cuestionario estructurado como instrumento principal para

¹ Licenciado en Ciencias de la Educación mención Inglés – Francés. Magíster en Enseñanza del Idioma Inglés. Universidad Estatal del Sur Manabí. Ecuador.

² Licenciado en Ciencias de la Educación mención Inglés – Francés. Magíster en Enseñanza del Idioma Inglés. Universidad Estatal del Sur Manabí. Ecuador.

³ Licenciada en Asignaturas Secretariales. Magíster en Educación. Unidad Educativa Olga Vallejo de Briones. Ecuador

⁴ Licenciada en Ciencias de la Educación mención Inglés-Francés. Magíster en Enseñanza del Idioma Inglés. Unidad Educativa Olga Vallejo de Briones. Ecuador

⁵ Ingeniero Industrial. Magister en Educación. Unidad Educativa Fiscal Abdón Calderon. Ecuador.

Recepción:12-03-2025 / Revisión:17-04-2025 / Aprobación: 16-05-2025/ Publicación: 27-06-2025

recopilar datos. Los resultados evidenciaron que el 85% de los estudiantes encontró las actividades en Instagram más atractivas que las clases tradicionales, el 78% reportó una mejor retención del vocabulario y el 70% expresó mayor confianza al usar el idioma en contextos informales. Estos hallazgos indican que Instagram puede fomentar la autonomía del estudiante, ampliar la exposición al inglés auténtico y fortalecer la alfabetización digital. En conclusión, el estudio sostiene que Instagram, si se utiliza con objetivos pedagógicos claros, puede complementar eficazmente los métodos tradicionales de enseñanza del inglés. Además, subraya la importancia de preparar a los docentes en el uso didáctico de las redes sociales para asegurar una integración efectiva y significativa en el aula.

Abstract

This research examines the utilization of Instagram as a pedagogical tool in teaching English to students, with a focus on its impact on learner engagement, vocabulary acquisition, and motivation. This research aims to study how Instagram can be effectively integrated into EFL instruction to support language learning through visual, interactive, and culturally relevant content. A descriptive research design was employed using a structured questionnaire as the primary data collection instrument. The survey was conducted among one hundred Information and Communication Technology students at Universidad Estatal del Sur de Manabí, following a six-week instructional period in which Instagram was used as a supplementary learning platform. Students engaged with curated posts, hashtags, and comment-based tasks designed to reinforce vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and sentence structure in English. The results showed that 85% of participants found Instagram-based activities more engaging than traditional classroom exercises. Additionally, 78% revealed improved vocabulary retention, and 70% felt more confident using English in informal contexts. The results suggest that Instagram motivates students' autonomy, increases exposure to authentic language use, and enhances digital literacy. This investigation concludes that Instagram can be a valuable complement to traditional EFL teaching methods when aligned with clear instructional goals. The integration promotes a more dynamic and student-centered approach to language instruction while highlighting the need for teacher training in the pedagogical use of social media.

Recepción: 12-03-2025 / Revisión: 17-04-2025 / Aprobación: 16-05-2025 / Publicación: 27-06-2025

Palabras clave: Instrucciones de EFL, instagram, compromiso del estudiante, pedagogía digital, vocabulario.

Keywords: EFL instructions, digital pedagogy, Instagram, learner engagement, vocabulary

Introducción

In the digital era, social media platforms have become a necessity in the daily lives of learners, setting how they communicate, consume content, and interact with information. According to these platforms, Instagram stands out for its visual appeal, user-friendly interface, and capacity for multimodal communication. As educational institutions increasingly pursue creative methods to enhance language training, utilizing platforms such as Instagram offers promising potential, especially in the context of English as a Second Language (EFL) education.

The conventional methods of teaching English frequently inadequately handle the many learning methods and practical communication requirements of EFL learners. Social media, however, introduces an opportunity to create more engaging, authentic, and student-centered learning experiences. Instagram, with its mix of images, videos, captions, and interactive features such as polls and stories, offers a dynamic environment where language input and output can take place in a natural and meaningful way.

The justification for this study is derived from the increasing corpus of research that supports the integration of technology into language learning, as well as the observed enthusiasm among students for social media-based activities. While platforms such as YouTube and Facebook have been studied extensively, Instagram has been comparatively underexplored in the academic literature as a tool for language instruction. Understanding its pedagogical affordances could open new avenues for EFL teaching strategies, particularly in promoting vocabulary development, visual literacy, and communicative competence.

Therefore, the aim of this study is to discover the potential of Instagram as a pedagogical tool for teaching English to EFL learners. Specifically, it emphasizes to study of how Instagram can be integrated into EFL instruction to strengthen learner engagement, support language development,

Recepción: 12-03-2025 / Revisión: 17-04-2025 / Aprobación: 16-05-2025 / Publicación: 27-06-2025

and promote a more reciprocal and contextualized learning experience. Additionally, this research is derived from the research project "Herramientas tecnológicas bajo el modelo SAMR: caso de estudio Universidad Estatal del Sur de Manabí". Finally, this study looks into the potential of Instagram as a pedagogical tool for teaching English to EFL Learners at Universidad Estatal del Sur de Manabí.

Systematic Literature Review

According to Nasution, A. K. P. (2023) Instagram is a versatile platform that offers visual and interactive capabilities to enrich the student learning experience. This study examines 24 articles to evaluate Instagram's impact on English language acquisition, highlighting its efficacy in enhancing vocabulary, writing proficiency, and student involvement.

Furthermore, Ashtiani, F. T., Jafarigohar, M., Divsar, H., & Farnia, M. (2024) recognize that Instagram has obtained substantial attention in scientific research inquiry due to its prevalence among English language learners. This research presents a systematic review and meta-analysis of empirical studies, demonstrating the positive impact of Instagram on EFL/EFL learners' vocabulary and writing skills.

Additionally, Carvalho, V. H. R., Amorim, D. G., Amorim, R. J. R., & Bitencourt, R. B. (2021) state that the Instagram social network can be used as a pedagogical tool that enables active and contextualized learning. This article seeks how Instagram can be utilized to strengthen contextualized learning, advocating critical and reflective educational experiences.

Also, Alotaibi, H. (2023) mentions that Instagram plays an important role in English language learning. The platform is a multifaceted communication tool and provides visual and interactive features to enhance the student learning experience. This research studies the efficacy of Instagram in improving vocabulary acquisition among Saudi EFL learners, showing significant improvements.

In the same way, Bojorquez Robles, L. P., & Curisinche Rojas, D. H. (2025) this systematic literature review investigates the function of microlearning through social media platforms,

Recepción: 12-03-2025 / Revisión: 17-04-2025 / Aprobación: 16-05-2025 / Publicación: 27-06-2025

including Instagram, in higher education. It argues how microcontent can improve student engagement and motivation, while also setting challenges such as designing effective educational content and the limitations in teaching complex concepts.

In addition, Lozano, L. L., & López, E. C. (2024) in their article they mentioned that their main purpose was to establish the impact of an action plan from technological mediation by using social networks, such as Instagram. According to their results, Instagram can help to set an action plan to teach English through social networks.

In fact, Shaikh, A., Ali, S., & Al-Maamari, R. (2022) this study refer to the fact that the positive impact of social media in learning and teaching through bibliometric citation analysis. It recognizes prominent journals, authors, and research trends over the last four years, based on 50 top articles selected from the Scopus database.

Similarly, Lira-Gonzales, M. L., Wa Chao Chao, K., & David, J. (2023) their findings indicate that the advent of new technologies has transformed the environment of digital writing, and there is a deficiency of thorough literature studies that facilitate a better comprehension of these impacts.

In the same way, Singh, B. K. A., Hameed, B. S., Md Yunus, M., Hashim, H., & Hashim, H. U. (2021) The platform of Instagram in English lessons would provide great contributions to society as parents could also benefit from this platform as they would see how the progress their children are doing. The findings showed the results of learners gaining an interest in writing and enhancing their list of vocabularies. To summarize the above, Instawrite is a great platform for learners to enhance both their writing and vocabulary.

Equally, Carrión (2022) refers to the fact that social networks play an important role in the development of oral productive skills. According to his study, he has proved that the utilization of social networks, such as Instagram has a positive impact on learning and oral production.

Recepción: 12-03-2025 / Revisión: 17-04-2025 / Aprobación: 16-05-2025 / Publicación: 27-06-2025

Similarly, Shafirova, L., & Sá, M. H. A. E. (2024) in this study the author emphasizes that Instagram provides students the opportunity to post videos and reels, facilitating engagement with English speakers. Consequently, they engage in contact with the English language.

According to Oktapiani, I. U., Ilham, I., Humaira, H., Bafadal, F., Adebayo, M., & Fasih, P. (2024), they assert that English-subtitled videos are a prevalent and accessible multimedia format that can enhance language learning by offering authentic input and scaffolding comprehension.

In the same way, Alkamel, M. (2024) claims that platforms such as Instagram can augment various English language skills, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The study also discusses the advantages of using social media for language learning, such as providing opportunities for authentic communication, facilitating collaborative learning, and increasing learner motivation and engagement.

Moreover, Chen, Y., & Shu, D. (2024) ensure that the integration of technologies and social media into second/foreign language education has recently gained momentum in different contexts. Given their nature, social media have been empirically identified to improve different aspects of L2 teaching and learning. However, their facilitative role in enhancing EFL/EFL students' language skills and academic engagement has been limitedly explored.

Also, Suber MA, A. (2024) the study examined if these social media connections offer genuine opportunities for English language practice and learning for English language learners (ELLs). Through data collected via surveys and questionnaires and the analysis of online interactions, the study delved into the ways in which social media serves as a bridge for fans to exchange ideas and build a sense of community across diverse cultures. It also demonstrated these platforms can be a safe environment when implementing proper safety measures.

Furthermore, Allehyani, B., Almashy, A., Jamshed, M., & Banu, S. (2025) point out that the integration of AI with social media platforms is significantly influencing English language skills, reshaping how users engage with and learn the language. The study implies that integrating AI with social media platforms like Instagram can improve substantially English reading

Recepción:12-03-2025 / Revisión:17-04-2025 / Aprobación: 16-05-2025/ Publicación: 27-06-2025

comprehension, suggesting a beneficial shift towards technology-driven learning methods in education.

In the same way, Maierová, E. (2024) states that her findings show that Instagram can be used effectively in ESAP courses mainly due to its popularity, visual appeal of posts, and, most importantly, as a platform that serves as a powerful marketing tool. The results indicate that the implementation of Instagram activities was positively perceived by most students, with high levels of agreement regarding the relevance, engagement, and creativity of the tasks. The study highlights the potential benefits of using Instagram in ESAP, providing insights into effective language learning through authentic, business-related tasks.

Materials and methods

This study employed a quantitative methodology to examine the impact of social networks on English language acquisition. Data was gathered from 100 English learners at Universidad Estatal del Sur de Manabi using standardized questionnaires designed to assess students' frequency of social network usage, perceived learning improvements, and degree of engagement.

The gathered data was examined using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques to discern trends and relationships between social network engagement and language acquisition outcomes. The analysis concentrated on assessing students' motivation, communication skills, and general linguistic proficiency. To thoroughly comprehend social networks as educational tools, potential hazards such as distractions and inadequate structured instruction were also evaluated.

Formulating a lesson plan

The research period encompassed the second semester of the 2024/2025 school year. Each class had 16 meetings. The ensuing steps were as follows: The English scholars created a TikTok account. They subsequently requested students to join the TikTok page. Upon joining the TikTok page, the English professors began posting homework that students were obligated to complete and submit by a certain deadline.

Results

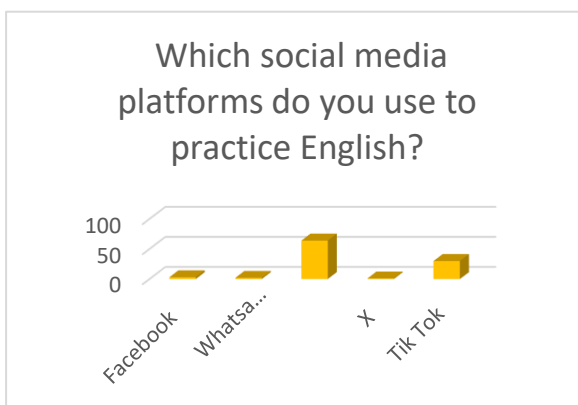
Question 1. Which social media platforms do you use to practice English?

Chart. 1. Which social media platforms do you use to practice English?

Which social media platforms do you use to practice English?	
Facebook	3
Whatsaap	2
Instagram	64
X	1
Tik Tok	30
Total	100

Source: Unesum Students
Made by: Authors

Figure 1. Which social media platforms do you use to practice English?



Source: Unesum Students
Made by: Authors

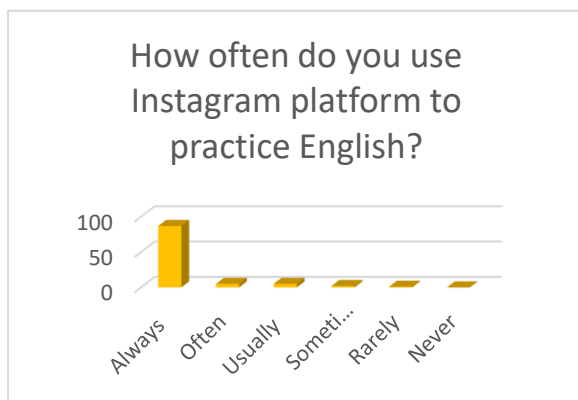
Question 2. How often do you use the Instagram platform to practice English?

Chart. 2. How often do you use the Instagram platform to practice English?

2. How often do you use Instagram platform to practice English?	
Always	87
Often	5
Usually	5
Sometimes	2
Rarely	1
Never	0
Total	100

Source: Unesum Students
Made by: Authors

Figure 2. How often do you use the Instagram platform to practice English?



Source: Unesum Students
Made by: Authors

Recepción:12-03-2025 / Revisión:17-04-2025 / Aprobación: 16-05-2025/ Publicación: 27-06-2025

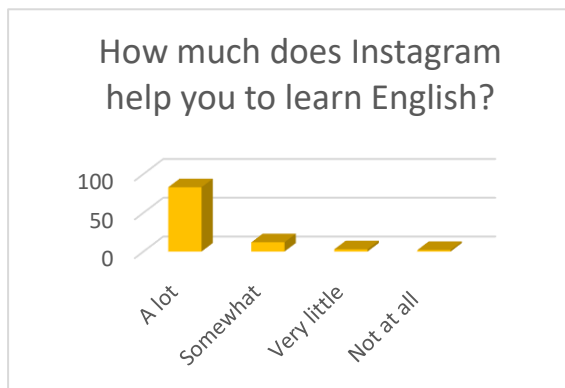
Question 3. How much does Instagram help you to learn English?

Chart. 3. How much does Instagram help you to learn English?

3. How much does Instagram help you to learn English?	
A lot	83
Somewhat	12
Very little	3
Not at all	2
Total	100

Source: Unesum Students
Made by: Authors

Figure 3. How much does Instagram help you to learn English?



Source: Unesum Students
Made by: Authors

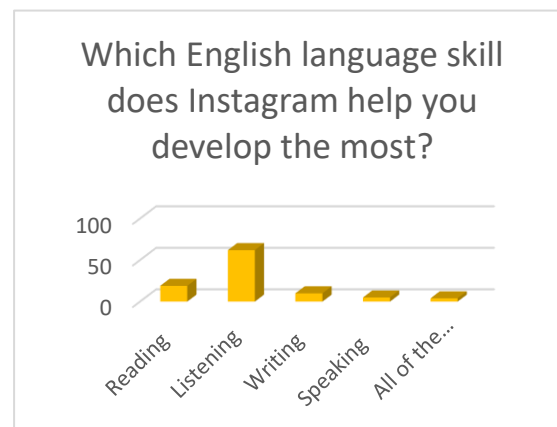
Question 4. Which English language skill does Instagram help you develop the most?

Chart. 4. Which English language skill does Instagram help you develop the most?

4. Which English language skill does Instagram help you develop the most?	
Reading	19
Listening	62
Writing	10
Speaking	5
All of the above	4
Total	100

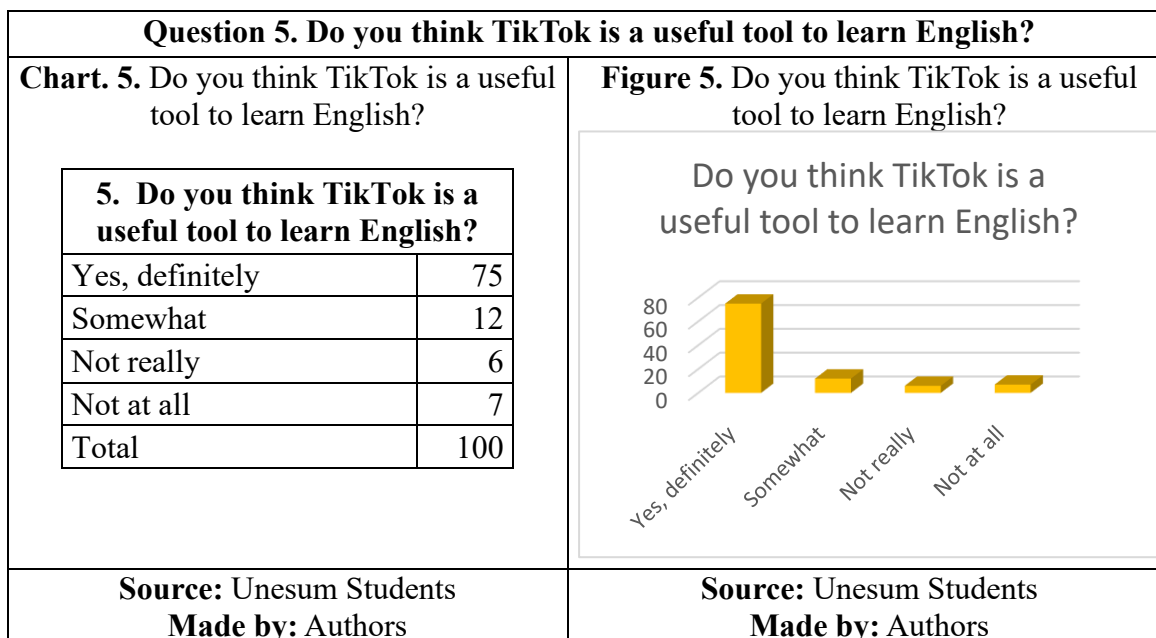
Source: Unesum Students
Made by: Authors

Figure 4. Which English language skill does Instagram help you develop the most?



Source: Unesum Students
Made by: Authors

Recepción:12-03-2025 / Revisión:17-04-2025 / Aprobación: 16-05-2025/ Publicación: 27-06-2025



Question #1 indicates that **Instagram** (39%) is the foremost social platform for English practice, perhaps due to its engaging short-form video content that aids in language acquisition. Facebook occupies the second position with 31%, signifying that students utilize engagement in discussion groups, posts, and interactive learning communities. WhatsApp functions as a communication platform for group learning and direct messaging, comprising 15%. Tit Tok (10%) is employed less frequently, presumably due to its focus on visual content rather than text-based interaction. X (formerly Twitter) is the least utilized platform at 5%, maybe due to its affiliation with political issues. The data reveals that students choose dynamic and interactive platforms that provide immersive and engaging language exposure.

In question #2, the findings reveal that a substantial majority of students frequently employ Instagram for English practice, with 70% regularly engaging in these activities. A minority employs them regularly (9%) and conventionally (10%), signifying a consistent albeit somewhat sporadic usage. A small percentage of students engage with social media for English practice rarely (3%), infrequently (5%), or not at all (3%). These data indicate that social media is integral to language acquisition, as the majority of students integrate social networks into their daily activities.

Recepción: 12-03-2025 / Revisión: 17-04-2025 / Aprobación: 16-05-2025 / Publicación: 27-06-2025

In question #3, the results reveal that a considerable majority of students (83%) assert that Instagram significantly aids them in learning English, underscoring its effectiveness as a language-learning resource. Furthermore, 10% regard them as moderately advantageous, while a small percentage views their support as negligible (4%) or absent (3%). These findings demonstrate that social media platforms are essential for language acquisition, offering students engaging and accessible learning opportunities.

Furthermore, in question #4, the findings reveal that reading (58%) is the most proficient English skill cultivated through Instagram, likely due to exposure to posts, articles, and captions. Listening (20%) demonstrates that audiovisual resources improve comprehension abilities. Writing (10%) and speaking (7%) are hardly employed, presumably owing to the informal nature of social media dialogues, which do not prioritize systematic verbal articulation. Only 5% of students indicate an improvement in all skills.

In question #5, the results reveal that a significant majority of students (81%) regard as Instagram effective for learning English, while 10% perceive it as slightly useful. A small percentage views them as not especially (5%) or not at all (4%) practical. The statistics reveal that most students recognize TikTok as an effective and accessible tool for language learning.

Conclusions

The research on employing Instagram for English instruction has produced significant findings that underscore the effectiveness of social media, particularly Instagram, as an educational instrument. Through comprehensive quantitative analysis, the research can deduce the subsequent conclusions:

The primary objective of this research was to evaluate the effectiveness of employing Instagram as an educational tool for instruction among students at Universidad Estatal del Sur de Manabí.

The majority of students at Universidad Estatal del Sur de Manabí utilize Instagram regularly to acquire English language skills.

Recepción:12-03-2025 / Revisión:17-04-2025 / Aprobación: 16-05-2025/ Publicación: 27-06-2025

Social networks, like Instagram, can significantly enhance certain skills, including reading and listening well.

References

- Alkamel, M. (2024). Social Media in Teaching English for EFL Students: A Review of Challenges and Suggestions. *International Journal of English Teaching and Learning*, 2(1), 8-17.
- Allehyani, B., Almashy, A., Jamshed, M., & Banu, S. (2025). Measuring the Impact of Meta-AI on English Reading Comprehension Score Enhancement: A Study Within Social Media Application. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 15(2), 615-623.
- Bojorquez Robles, L. P., & Curisinche Rojas, D. H. (2025). Microlearning en redes sociales en la educación superior: una revisión de la literatura. *Revista InveCom*, 5(1).
- Carrión Jaramillo, A. A. (2023). *Social networks influence the development of oral productive skills* (Bachelor's thesis, Riobamba).
- Carvalho, V. H. R., Amorim, D. G., Amorim, R. J. R., & Bitencourt, R. B. (2021). Considerations on the Use of Instagram as a Pedagogical Tool under the View of Contextualized Education. *Creative Education*, 12(7), 1679-1691.
- Chen, Y., & Shu, D. (2024). The Facilitative Role of Social Media in EFL/EFL Students' Language Skills and Academic Engagement: A Theoretical Analysis. *Language Related Research*, 15(3), 225-244.
- Lira-Gonzales, M. L., Wa Chao Chao, K., & David, J. (2023). Technologies in English as a second/foreign language writing classes. *Folios*, (58), 171-187.
- Maierová, E. (2024). Instagram in teaching English for specific academic purposes. *Advanced Education*, 75-91.
- Nasution, A. K. P. (2023). Instagram in English language learning: A systematic literature review. *Journal of Linguistics, Literature, and Language Teaching (JLLLT)*, 3(1), 33-52.

Recepción: 12-03-2025 / Revisión: 17-04-2025 / Aprobación: 16-05-2025 / Publicación: 27-06-2025

- Oktapiani, I. U., Ilham, I., Humaira, H., Bafadal, F., Adebayo, M., & Fasih, P. (2024). The effectiveness of English-subtitled videos in enhancing speaking, listening and vocabulary skills: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Languages and Language Teaching*, 12(1), 56-71.
- Suber MA, A. (2024). Exploring Language and Community Through Social Media: How Culturally Diverse English Language Learners Use Social Media Apps to Connect, Find Community and Communicate with Korean Entertainment Fandoms.
- Shaikh, A., Ali, S., & Al-Maamari, R. (2022). The Impact of Social Media in Learning and Teaching: A Bibliometric-based Citation Analysis. *arXiv preprint arXiv:2209.11284*.
- Shafirova, L., & Sá, M. H. A. E. (2024). Students making videos on social media: exploring the potential of online videos for language learning. *Texto Livre*, 17, e51663.
- Singh, B. K. A., Hameed, B. S., Md Yunus, M., Hashim, H., & Hashim, H. U. (2021). Instawrite: Instagram as a Platform for Improving EFL Vocabulary among Learners in International Schools. *International journal of academic research in business and social sciences*, 11(12), 249-259.
- Tayari Ashtiani, F., Jafarigohar, M., Divsar, H., & Farnia, M. (2024). A Systematic Review of Instagram as a Mobile Assisted Language Learning Tool in English as a Second/Foreign Language. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Learning*, 16(33), 316-340.