



# The Implementation of Instagram in Mobile-assisted Language Learning for EFL students: A Gender-Based Analysis

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigated the implementation of Instagram as a Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) tool in EFL learning and examined gender differences in students' learning experiences. This study employed a mixed-methods design with an explanatory sequential approach. The participants were 20 tenth-grade students at MAN 1 Kota Makassar, consisting of 10 male and 10 female students. Data were collected through classroom observation, questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings showed that Instagram supported students' reading, writing, listening, and speaking activities through captions, posts, comments, reels, videos, and speaking tasks. Female students obtained higher mean scores and showed greater participation and confidence than male students. This study concludes that Instagram can be an effective MALL tool when used through structured and inclusive EFL learning activities.

## KEYWORDS

Instagram;  
Mobile-assisted language learning;  
EFL Learning;  
Gender Differences;  
Senior High School Students.

## ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengkaji implementasi Instagram sebagai media Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) dalam pembelajaran EFL serta menganalisis perbedaan pengalaman belajar siswa berdasarkan gender. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain mixed-methods dengan pendekatan explanatory sequential. Partisipan penelitian terdiri atas 20 siswa kelas X MAN 1 Kota Makassar, yaitu 10 siswa laki-laki dan 10 siswa perempuan. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi kelas, kuesioner, dan wawancara semi-terstruktur. Data kuantitatif dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif, sedangkan data kualitatif dianalisis melalui reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Instagram mendukung aktivitas membaca, menulis, menyimak, dan berbicara melalui caption, postingan, komentar, reels, video, dan tugas berbicara. Siswa perempuan memperoleh skor rata-rata lebih tinggi serta menunjukkan partisipasi dan kepercayaan diri yang lebih kuat dibandingkan siswa laki-laki. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa Instagram dapat menjadi media MALL yang efektif apabila digunakan melalui kegiatan EFL yang terstruktur dan inklusif.

## KATAKUNCI

Instagram;  
Mobile-assisted language learning;  
Pembelajaran EFL;  
Perbedaan gender;  
Siswa sekolah menengah atas.

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## 1. Introduction

The rapid development of digital technology has transformed the way English is taught and learned in contemporary educational contexts. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, technology provides learners with broader access to authentic materials, flexible learning opportunities, and interactive communication beyond the limitations of the classroom. This condition is particularly relevant for today's students, who are closely connected to mobile devices and social media in their daily lives. As a result, English learning is no longer limited to textbooks and classroom instruction but can also take place through digital platforms that support communication, creativity, and learner engagement. In this context, technology-based learning is considered important because it helps students access real-life language use, practice language skills more frequently, and develop learning experiences that are more meaningful and relevant to their digital habits.

One approach that supports the integration of mobile technology in language learning is Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL). MALL refers to the use of mobile devices to support language learning in a flexible, interactive, and autonomous way. Chinnery (2006, pp. 9–16) explains that mobile devices can enhance language learning by allowing learners to access learning materials anytime and anywhere. Similarly, Kukulska-Hulme (2009, pp. 157–165) emphasizes that mobile learning supports flexibility, personalization, and learning in real-life contexts. These characteristics make MALL suitable for EFL learners because it enables them to practice English not only during formal classroom activities but also through everyday digital interactions. Stockwell (2010, pp. 95–110) also shows that mobile phones can support vocabulary learning and increase students' engagement because mobile-based activities are closely connected to students' daily routines.

Among various digital platforms, Instagram has become one of the social media applications that can be used as a learning tool in EFL contexts. Instagram provides features such as captions, comments, stories, reels, videos, and posts that can support different language learning activities. Through these features, students can read English captions, write comments or captions, listen to English videos, and create short speaking videos. Al-Ali (2020, pp. 45–56) found that Instagram can support students' writing skills and self-expression in EFL learning. In addition, Al-Garawi (2019, pp. 1010–1020) reported that Instagram can help students develop reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills in a flexible and enjoyable way. These findings indicate that Instagram is not merely a platform for entertainment but also has potential as a medium for language learning when it is used with clear learning purposes and structured classroom activities. The use of Instagram in EFL learning is also supported by its ability to provide authentic and engaging language input. Instagram exposes students to real English expressions

through captions, videos, comments, and digital interactions. Kelly-Holmes (2016) explains that digital media can provide authentic language exposure and support informal learning environments. In a similar direction, Dizon (2021, pp. 45–60) reported that Instagram stories can support incidental vocabulary learning, while Handayani (2021, pp. 1156–1170) highlighted the role of Instagram in developing creativity and digital storytelling in EFL learning. These studies suggest that Instagram can create a learning environment where students do not only receive language input but also produce language output through creative and meaningful activities. Therefore, Instagram can be considered a relevant alternative to support EFL learning, especially for students who are already familiar with mobile technology and social media.

Previous studies have also shown that social media and mobile-assisted learning can improve students' motivation, engagement, and language learning outcomes. Teng (2022, pp. 1–25) found that Mobile-Assisted Language Learning can significantly improve learners' language performance when it is implemented through appropriate learning tasks. Barrot (2021, pp. 120–142) further argues that social media platforms offer opportunities for collaborative learning, learner engagement, and linguistic development. In the Indonesian context, Saputra et al. (2023, pp. 210–218) found that Instagram-based learning increased students' motivation and engagement in EFL classrooms. Nasution (2023, pp. 45–60) also concluded that Instagram supports vocabulary development, writing skills, and learner motivation. These findings strengthen the argument that Instagram can be integrated into English learning as a familiar, accessible, and interactive digital platform.

However, the effectiveness of Instagram as a learning tool may not be experienced in the same way by all students. One important factor that may influence students' learning experiences is gender. Male and female students may have different learning preferences, participation patterns, motivational factors, and communication styles when using Instagram for English learning. Alzamil (2020, pp. 258–276) found that female EFL learners tended to show more active attitudes toward Instagram as a language learning tool. Raza et al. (2021a, pp. 120–134) also state that gender can influence students' perceptions and learning experiences in social media-based EFL learning. Furthermore, Raza et al. (2021b, pp. 1015–1032) explain that gender differences in social media-based learning can be seen through learning preferences, participation patterns, motivational factors, and communication styles. These differences are important to consider because they may affect how students participate in Instagram-based learning activities and how they benefit from the platform.

Although several studies have discussed the use of Instagram and social media in EFL learning, research that specifically examines Instagram as a MALL tool from a gender-based perspective in the Indonesian senior high school context remains limited. Most

previous studies have focused more on the general effectiveness of Instagram in improving language skills, motivation, or vocabulary development. Less attention has been given to how male and female students experience Instagram-based learning differently, particularly in relation to reading, writing, listening, and speaking activities. This gap indicates the need for further research that does not only examine the implementation of Instagram in EFL learning but also explores how gender differences influence students' engagement and learning experiences.

Based on this background, the present study investigates the implementation of Instagram in Mobile-Assisted Language Learning for EFL students at MAN 1 Kota Makassar. This study focuses on how Instagram is used to support students' English learning activities in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. It also examines how gender differences affect students' learning experiences when using Instagram as a learning medium. By addressing these objectives, this study is expected to contribute theoretically to the development of MALL and technology-based EFL learning studies. Practically, the findings may help English teachers design more inclusive and engaging learning activities that consider students' different characteristics, especially gender-related differences in learning preferences, participation, motivation, and communication.

## **2. Method**

### **2.1 Research Design**

This study employed a mixed-methods design with an explanatory sequential approach. Quantitative data were collected first through a questionnaire, followed by qualitative data from classroom observation and semi-structured interviews. This design was used to examine the implementation of Instagram in Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) and to explain gender differences in students' EFL learning experiences.

### **2.2 Research Site and Participants**

The study was conducted at MAN 1 Kota Makassar, South Sulawesi, during English learning activities using Instagram as a learning medium. The participants were 20 tenth-grade students, consisting of 10 male and 10 female students. They were selected through purposive sampling because they were actively involved in Instagram-based English learning activities.

### **2.3 Instruments and Data Collection**

The data were collected using three instruments: classroom observation checklist, student questionnaire, and semi-structured interview. The observation checklist was used to record students' activities in using Instagram for reading, writing, listening, and

speaking. The questionnaire used a Likert scale to identify students' responses toward Instagram-based EFL learning and to compare male and female students' experiences. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain deeper information about students' participation, motivation, confidence, and difficulties when using Instagram for English learning.

#### **2.4. Data Analysis and Trustworthiness**

The quantitative data from the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including total scores, percentages, and mean scores. The mean scores of male and female students were compared to identify gender differences in Instagram-based EFL learning. Meanwhile, the qualitative data from observation and interviews were analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings from the questionnaire, observation, and interviews were then integrated to provide a comprehensive explanation. To strengthen the trustworthiness of the data, this study used multiple data sources, allowing the researcher to confirm the findings through questionnaire results, classroom observation, and interview responses.

### **3. Results and Discussion**

This section presents the findings and discussion based on the research objectives. The first part discusses how Instagram was implemented as a Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) tool in EFL learning. The second part discusses how gender differences affected students' learning experiences when using Instagram.

#### **3.1. The implementation of Instagram in EFL learning**

The findings showed that Instagram supported students' English learning activities in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. In reading activities, students used Instagram to read English captions, posts, and short reading challenges. These activities helped students recognize new vocabulary, understand simple grammar, and learn English expressions commonly used in digital communication. The use of captions and posts made reading activities more interesting because students were exposed to short and familiar texts. This finding supports Chinnery (2006, pp. 9–16), who states that mobile learning provides flexible access to language materials. It is also in line with Kukulska-Hulme (2009, pp. 157–165), who explains that mobile learning connects language learning with real-life contexts.

In writing activities, Instagram was used through caption-writing and short written posts. Students practiced expressing their ideas in English by creating captions based on pictures or classroom tasks. The findings showed that Instagram made writing activities more meaningful because students did not only write for classroom

exercises but also practiced English in a digital context that was familiar to them. This result supports Al-Ali (2020, pp. 45–56), who found that Instagram can improve students' writing skills and self-expression in EFL learning. It is also related to Handayani (2021, pp. 1156–1170), who argues that Instagram can support creativity and digital storytelling in English learning.

In listening activities, students used Instagram reels and videos to listen to English pronunciation, vocabulary, and expressions. The audio-visual features of Instagram helped students understand spoken English more easily because they could connect the audio with visual context. Students also considered reels and short videos more enjoyable than conventional listening activities. This finding is consistent with Al-Garawi (2019, pp. 1010–1020), who reported that Instagram can support students' English skills in a flexible and enjoyable way. It also supports Dizon (2021, pp. 45–60), who found that Instagram stories can support vocabulary learning through exposure to digital content.

In speaking activities, Instagram was used through short video-recording tasks. Students practiced pronunciation, fluency, and confidence by recording themselves speaking in English. However, speaking was also the most challenging activity for some students because they felt shy, nervous, or afraid of making mistakes in front of the camera. Although these difficulties appeared among both male and female students, the findings showed that female students were generally more willing to participate in speaking activities. This indicates that Instagram can support speaking practice, but students still need teacher guidance, clear examples, and positive feedback. This finding is relevant to Barrot (2021, pp. 120–142), who explains that social media can support language learning when it is integrated through meaningful and structured learning activities. Overall, Instagram functioned as a MALL tool by providing authentic materials, interactive learning activities, flexible access, and a familiar learning environment. These findings support Teng (2022, pp. 1–25), who found that Mobile-Assisted Language Learning can improve language learning when supported by appropriate tasks. The findings also confirm Saputra et al. (2023, pp. 210–218) and Nasution (2023, pp. 45–60), who reported that Instagram-based learning can increase students' motivation, engagement, vocabulary development, and writing practice.

### **3.2. Gender differences in Instagram-based EFL learning**

The second research objective focused on how gender differences affected students' learning experiences when using Instagram. The questionnaire results showed that female students obtained higher mean scores than male students in all four English skills. The comparison is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Gender Differences in Using Instagram for EFL Learning**

English Skills	Male Mean Score	Female Mean Score
Reading	3.1	4.6
Writing	2.9	4.5
Listening	3.1	4.6
Speaking	2.9	4.2

As presented in Table 1, female students showed higher mean scores in reading, writing, listening, and speaking activities. In reading, female students obtained a mean score of 4.6, while male students obtained 3.1. This indicates that female students were more engaged in reading captions, posts, and other written content on Instagram. In writing, female students obtained 4.5, while male students obtained 2.9. This shows that female students were more active in creating English captions and expressing ideas through written content. In listening, female students obtained 4.6, while male students obtained 3.1, indicating stronger responses toward English videos and reels. In speaking, female students obtained 4.2, while male students obtained 2.9, showing that female students were generally more confident in recording speaking videos.

The interview findings supported the questionnaire results. Female students were perceived as more active, expressive, and confident in Instagram-based learning activities. They tended to enjoy creating captions, writing comments, and making short speaking videos. In contrast, male students tended to use Instagram more for watching and listening to content rather than creating their own content. Some male students also reported that they felt embarrassed or less confident when recording speaking videos. This finding shows that gender differences affected not only students' scores but also their participation and learning behavior. These findings are consistent with Alzamil (2020, pp. 258–276), who found that female EFL learners tended to show more active attitudes toward Instagram as a language learning tool. The findings also support Raza et al. (2021a, pp. 120–134), who explain that gender can influence students' perceptions and experiences in social media-based EFL learning. In this study, female students were more active in productive activities such as writing captions and creating speaking videos, while male students were more comfortable with receptive activities such as watching videos and listening to English content.

Furthermore, the finding regarding the heightened anxiety experienced by male students when recording English speaking videos requires a more comprehensive interpretation. This phenomenon appears to be more than a mere difference in learning style preferences; rather, it is a manifestation of the intersection between foreign language anxiety and the pressure of performing in a digital public space (social media performance anxiety). To address these psychological dynamics, the implementation of Instagram as a MALL tool necessitates inclusive instructional scaffolding. As a

concrete strategy, educators could design collaborative tasks that bridge students' receptive and productive tendencies. For instance, those who are comfortable in front of the camera could act as visual content creators (producing Reels or videos), while more reserved students could be encouraged to practice their productive skills through analytical tasks, such as observing their peers' content and providing written arguments or peer-reviews in the comment section. Additionally, to alleviate anxiety while safeguarding students' digital privacy, teachers are strongly encouraged to utilize features like 'Close Friends' or mandate the use of class-specific private accounts. This approach would not only foster a more equitable balance of participation across genders but also ensure the cultivation of a psychologically safe language learning ecosystem.

The gender differences found in this study can be understood through learning preferences, participation patterns, motivational factors, and communication styles. Female students showed stronger preferences for reading, writing, and self-expression activities. They were also more active in creating content and participating in speaking tasks. Meanwhile, male students preferred visual and audio-visual content, especially reels and videos. They participated more as content viewers than content creators. This supports Raza et al. (2021b, pp. 1015–1032), who state that gender differences in social media-based language learning can be seen through differences in learning preferences, participation, motivation, and communication styles.

However, these findings do not mean that one gender is better than the other in learning English through Instagram. Rather, the results show that male and female students may engage with Instagram in different ways. Female students tended to be more expressive and confident in creating English content, while male students tended to prefer observing, watching, and listening. Therefore, teachers need to design Instagram-based learning activities that accommodate both productive and receptive learning styles. For example, caption-writing tasks can be combined with video-watching activities, while speaking video tasks can be supported with examples, preparation time, and encouraging feedback.

In summary, Instagram supported EFL learning by helping students practice reading, writing, listening, and speaking through familiar digital features. At the same time, gender differences influenced how students participated in and responded to Instagram-based learning. Female students were generally more active, expressive, and confident, while male students were more comfortable with watching and listening activities. These findings indicate that Instagram can be an effective MALL tool when it is used purposefully and when teachers design inclusive activities that consider students' different learning preferences, participation patterns, motivation, and

confidence levels.

## **4. Conclusion**

This study concludes that Instagram can be implemented as a Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) tool to support EFL learning. The findings show that Instagram helped students practice reading, writing, listening, and speaking through captions, posts, comments, reels, videos, and speaking video tasks. Instagram provided authentic materials, encouraged interaction, increased students' motivation and engagement, and offered flexible learning opportunities beyond the classroom. Therefore, Instagram is not only useful as a social media platform but can also function as a meaningful digital medium for English learning when it is used with clear instructional purposes. The study also found that gender differences influenced students' learning experiences when using Instagram. Female students showed higher mean scores than male students in reading, writing, listening, and speaking activities. They were generally more active, expressive, and confident in creating English content, especially captions and speaking videos. Meanwhile, male students tended to be more comfortable with watching and listening to Instagram content rather than creating their own content. These findings indicate that students may engage with Instagram-based learning in different ways depending on their learning preferences, participation patterns, motivation, and communication styles.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning and technology-based EFL learning by showing how Instagram can support four English language skills while also revealing the role of gender in students' digital learning experiences. Practically, the findings suggest that English teachers need to design Instagram-based activities that balance receptive and productive skills, such as combining caption reading, caption writing, video watching, and speaking tasks. Teachers also need to provide guidance, examples, preparation time, and positive feedback, especially for students who lack confidence in speaking or content creation. From a policy perspective, schools may consider supporting the responsible and structured use of social media as part of digital learning innovation, while ensuring that learning activities remain inclusive and accessible for both male and female students.

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