

INSTAGRAM AS AN EDUCATIONAL TOOL FOR A GROUP OF PARAGUAYAN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Guillermo Samuel Zaracho Mármol¹ - Valentina Canese²

Abstract

Education faces a new digital generation of students that is constantly exposed to information and informal learning. They browse daily through social networking sites, where they spend an important amount of time. This generation challenges the traditional system of teaching and learning at the school. Therefore, educational institutions need to seek techniques to improve the learning experience and expose students to useful knowledge during and after the lessons. Social media such as Instagram presents interesting features that could be useful for educational purposes. This study aims to find how Instagram can be used as an educational platform for EFL lessons. The study analyzes the perceptions of the students who participated in the use of Instagram as an educational tool for English lessons in a Paraguayan private high school. The qualitative data obtained from the participants through questionnaires and interviews, plus the data registered on Instagram during the academic year 2020 was analyzed to provide the outcome. The results showed that most students agreed that Instagram can be a useful educational tool. Students remarked that tools such as Instagram TV, the stories, short videos, quizzes, etc., fostered their learning process. They mentioned that the main negative aspect of this platform is the distraction it causes. According to the general results, Instagram is a useful tool for English lessons if used properly by the teacher.

Keywords: Adaptability, Didactics, Social Media, Educational tool, Instagram.

¹ Universidad Evangélica del Paraguay. Paraguay.
Correo electrónico: guillermozaracho@gmail.com

² Universidad Evangélica del Paraguay. Paraguay.
Correo electrónico: vcanese@uepgutenberg.edu.py

INSTAGRAM COMO HERRAMIENTA EDUCATIVA PARA UN GRUPO DE ESTUDIANTES PARAGUAYOS DE NIVEL MEDIO

Resumen

La educación se enfrenta a una nueva generación digital que está constantemente expuesta a la información y al aprendizaje informal. Navegan diariamente a través de los sitios de redes sociales, donde pasan una cantidad importante de tiempo. Esta generación desafía el sistema tradicional de enseñanza y aprendizaje en la escuela, por lo tanto, las instituciones educativas necesitan buscar técnicas para mejorar la experiencia de aprendizaje y exponer a los estudiantes a conocimientos útiles durante y después de las lecciones. Las redes sociales como Instagram presentan características interesantes que podrían ser útiles con fines educativos. Este estudio tiene como objetivo descubrir cómo se puede utilizar Instagram como plataforma educativa para lecciones de inglés como lengua extranjera. El estudio analiza las percepciones de los estudiantes que participaron en el uso de Instagram como una herramienta educativa para lecciones de inglés en una escuela secundaria privada paraguaya. Los datos cualitativos obtenidos de los participantes a través de cuestionarios y entrevistas, más los datos registrados en Instagram durante el año académico 2020; serán analizados para aportar el resultado. Los resultados mostraron que la mayoría de los estudiantes estuvieron de acuerdo en que Instagram puede ser una herramienta educativa útil. Destacaron herramientas como Instagram TV, las historias, videos cortos, cuestionarios, etc.; lo que ayudó su proceso de aprendizaje. Mencionaron que el principal aspecto negativo de esta plataforma es la distracción que provoca. Los resultados generales muestran que Instagram puede ser una herramienta digital útil y puede influir positivamente en el proceso de aprendizaje de los estudiantes.

Palabras claves: adaptabilidad, didáctica, redes sociales, herramienta educativa, Instagram.

0. Introduction

Research has shown that nowadays there is a different generation that is technologically native (Çelik & Gürcüoğlu, 2016; Yagci, 2014). This new generation of digital natives is called the “Google generation” among many other names and they are a new challenge in education. They are born in a world immersed in technology; a situation that makes them highly agile using electronic devices. Since they are familiar with a world with practically no boundaries for information, they are involuntarily overexposed to it and this generates disinterest in the classroom (Yagci, 2014). Thus, the traditional educational system is challenged (Arteaga Ramírez, 2014; Hoffmann & Ramirez, 2018; Selwyn, 2013); it needs to seek innovative educational methods for the Google generation. Research has shown that a lack of motivation has been a factor closely related to class desertion (Expósito, 2014)). This lack of interest has affected different subjects, and one of them is English as a foreign language (EFL).

Based on these issues presented, new strategies and methods have been developed to engage this generation in the learning process by integrating technology into the school curricula. This technology includes the use of social media for educational purposes (Abe & Jordan, 2013; Abney, Cook, Fox, & Stevens, 2019). There have been several studies that highlight how social media can work as an educational tool to improve the learning experience (Akhlar, Mydin, & Kasuma, 2017; Aloraini, 2018; Derakhshan & Hasanabbasi, 2015; Handayani, 2016; Plutino, 2017; Yunus, Salehi, & Chenzi, 2012, to mention a few), as well as how they can affect the education process both positively and negatively (Alsaied, 2017; Pilli, 2014; Slim & Hafedh, 2019; Yunus et al., 2012). Most of them showed excellent results for language learning; however, there are no studies about this topic registered in Paraguayan education.

In a Paraguayan context, the implementation of English lessons in public schools has been a topic of discussion for a long time (Ministerio de Educación y Cultura, 2017; Poder Legislativo, 2013). On the other hand, private schools offer English lessons as a part of their curricula from kindergarten. Therefore, Language teachers in Paraguay, -especially in private schools- face the challenges previously mentioned, and for this reason, they need to adapt to new tools to improve the learning experience. The purpose of the research study is to analyze how students perceive the use of Instagram as an educational tool.

1. A new generation of students

After different long observations, the generations of the last century were classified as Silent Generation, Baby Generation, X Generation (also called Post boomers), Y generation (also known as Echo Boomers or millennials), and the Z generation (or digital generation(A. Johnston, 2013; Çelik & Gürcüoğlu, 2016; Ivanova & Smrikarov, 2009; Kirschner & De Bruyckere, 2017; Wong, Gardiner, Lang, & Coulon, 2008). These generations have remarkable differences and some of the scholars previously mentioned consider that generational gaps might create conflict in different social areas.

Generation Z follows after millennials, which is the current generation of kids and adolescents. This generation is known for being born in the digital world and they consider technology and the internet as a part of life (A. Johnston, 2013; Ivanova & Smrikarov, 2009). Çelik and Gürcüoğlu (2016) consider that the current digital world where they were born has “separated them from all other generations” (p. 122).

An important point to remark is that despite all the changes experienced over the last century by these different generations, they were educated by practically the same educational system. This means that students learned at school with the same methods, same classroom arrangement, and the same pedagogical strategies. This situation is more stressed in Latin America, where the educational system has not advanced as globalism has (Arteaga Ramírez, 2014; Ni, 2005).

The digitalization of the world through e-tools and the internet has influenced the generation that was born and grew surrounded by this digital world. Due to this, they are called “internet kids” or “digital generation” (Çelik & Gürcüoğlu, 2016). Since they are born in an over-communicated world, these students have unlimited access to information.

Since this newborn generation represents a new type of student, teachers are forced to innovate and adapt their teaching strategies. This is not a new topic, because “the proliferation of technology is a major concern around the world among educators and researchers” (Alshabeb, Abdulrahman M.; Almaqrn, 2018). These researchers argue that digital natives are becoming more impatient with their teachers, due to the informal knowledge that learners acquire due to technology (2018, p. 216). It is also needed to consider that the digital world has empowered learners due to connected learning opportunities (Selwyn, 2013)

2. Social media as an educational tool

The scope of social media is wide. Over the last decade, social networking sites have expanded without limits. A study of over 1,600 students has shown that 62% percent of teenagers spend more than four hours of on-screen activity on social platforms daily (Rideout & Robb, 2019). This means a considerable amount of time that teenagers spend on entertainment, communication, or any other social activity such as sharing digital content with friends, playing games together, to name a few. In total, counting on-screen and off-screen activity, teenagers – between the age of 13 and 17- spend more than 9 hours daily on social platforms (Rideout & Robb, 2019). This in turn means that adolescents spend more than 30% of their daytime on social platforms.

Pilli (2014) explains this by discussing that social media is a mainstream activity that nowadays is used for “many large masses of different age groups for many purposes” and which has become the “new communication tool all over the world” (p. 91). In addition, mobile smartphones have facilitated access to social media anytime and anywhere. This ease to access social platforms increased students' interaction outside the classroom and facilitated collaborative learning (Mansor & Rahim, 2017).

3. Advantages and disadvantages of social media

3.1 Disadvantages of social media as an educational tool

The features of social media sites contribute perfectly to educational purposes. However, although many scholars only focus on the advantages of social media, few others highlighted the disadvantages of them as an educational platform (Aydin, 2012; Kamnoetsin, 2014; Yunus et al., 2012). Social media platforms are open environments where all students can see other’s work and for this reason, students sometimes are afraid and worried to make mistakes on the online platform (Kamnoetsin, 2014). Also, Kamnoetsin argues that the

distraction highly grows while using social media because students are more aware of their feed than the academic content they have to develop (2014, p. 35).

Besides, according to Aydin, the consequences of using social media can be even worse, students can misbehave, violate the privacy of other classmates, or can cyberbully another student (Aydin, 2012). This is highly probable because students with inappropriate intentions can easily post aggressive or offensive comments, download someone else's picture for cyberbullying, etc. What is more, for these reasons, educators need to constantly update the social network in order to control and avoid these behaviors, which means more work for the teacher (Aydin, 2012).

It is important to take into account that due to the over connectivity among teachers and students, the relationships may become inappropriate. This means that teachers and students can become friends, trespassing the formal relationship they must keep or even worse, students and teachers can fall in love with each other (Yunus, Salehi, Chenzi, 2012). These authors also explain that not all teachers or students have access to an electronic device or the internet. In the case of students, this might generate a feeling of exclusion (Yunus, Salehi, Chenzi, 2012). Last but not least, "it takes time to design, edit, and modify digital learning materials for teachers. Sometimes it is time-consuming and frustrating to search for the materials online" (Yunus, Salehi, Chenzi, 2012, p. 45).

3.2 Advantages of social media as an educational tool

Social media as an educational tool has many advantages. It promotes the learners' autonomy and offers many more opportunities to them (Šliogerienė, Masoodi, & Gulbinskienė, 2016). In fact, since the digital natives are constantly on social sites, they barely need the help of a teacher to operate on these social platforms. The discussion and assessment can go beyond the classroom (Yunus, Salehi, Chenzi, 2012) which improves the learning experience. There are countless methods to engage or evaluate students such as audiovisual material, blogs, forums, etc. (Yunus, Salehi, Chenzi, 2012).

Nowadays, the ease of access to social networking sites through mobile devices helps students to keep updated on the class (Erarslan, 2019). The visibility of students' works increases the self-correction or collaboration among them (Razak & Saeed, 2015). In other words, the use of social sites motivates group learning activities. With the scope of social media around the world, it is easier to learn about other cultures, languages, and more. Social platforms break boundaries among societies, cultures, socio-economic statuses, and even ethnicity or races. Indeed, a study has shown that using social media in an Arabic/Islamic context allowed sex-segregated women to have access to formal education (Alsaied, 2017).

Additionally, social media allows students to share thoughts and opinions in a personalized space through videos, pictures, texts, stories, and more. (Akhiar et al., 2017). Further, social sites can also positively influence students' motivation and perception of the class (Hamilton, 2010). These features make social platforms useful for educational purposes.

4. Social media vs. Educational platforms

During the last years, many social platforms exclusively for educational purposes were developed on the web, such as Edmodo, Kahoot, Class Dojo, Schoology, Moodle among others. They are built according to the necessities of both educators and students, and they have excellent features to work comfortably. These sites usually provide tools to

create and deliver content, control the process, and even auto assessment of the activities (Pilli, 2014). It is also easy to access them because most of these educational sites have mobile apps. Therefore, students can constantly check their tasks and assignments, and grades. Moreover, they can visualize the upcoming tasks as well as review the ones which were already done.

However, most of these features previously mentioned are possessed by social networking sites. Besides, social media enhances participation and communication between students and teachers. The spaces for discussions are more open and personalized for both parties, and instructors can know better the social context of their students by viewing their profiles (Pilli, 2014). What establishes social media as one step forward from educational sites is that they are “much trendier in all age groups of society” (Pilli, 2014, p. 95). In other words, people tend to be more engaged with social media than any other site, especially teenagers, who as seen before, spend many hours connected to these networks (Rideout & Robb, 2019). Therefore, it is possible to say the academic content published by the teacher will appear to students in their notifications and timeline, and since social media is “an integral part of students' daily life” (Pilli, 2014, p. 95) they will frequently be aware of the content and activities. That is to say, it will be easier for teachers and students to build an efficient learning environment. Thus, if social media is used appropriately by instructors, it can become a more efficient tool than learning management sites.

5. Instagram as an Educational Tool

Recent studies have shown how Instagram used for EFL learning has a positive impact on students (Akhlar et al., 2017; Al-Ali, 2014; Aloraini, 2018; Erarslan, 2019; Handayani, 2016; Mansor & Rahim, 2017). Handayani (2016) explains how Instagram can be used to develop the four language skills in students (reading, writing, listening, and speaking). What is more, the familiarity of students with Instagram helps to develop the learning activities in a smoother manner (Al-Ali, 2014).

Instructors can share daily posts to reinforce the content developed in the classroom and also to keep developing language (Erarslan, 2019). Pictures with text can be posted by educators to practice the reading skills and students can write comments in the target language to practice writing. Additionally, teachers can post videos of native speakers to develop their listening skills and students can upload speaking activities in their stories or can send them privately to the teacher through videos or audios. Thus, Instagram provides many opportunities for students to be exposed to the language and/or produce it.

6. Context of Paraguayan education

6.1 Scope of social media in Paraguay

According to the research of the BID (Interamerican Bank of Development by its acronym in Spanish), Paraguay is one of the most addicted countries to social media (Peréz, 2019). This study shows that 83% of the population in Paraguay is active in social media, a percentage wider than in big countries such as Brazil and Argentina. More recent national investigations carried by the DGEEC have shown that the Paraguayan population is hyper-connected, 87% of the inhabitants have access to the internet and 85% of them use it for social media (MITIC, 2019; Peréz, 2019). That is to say, the scope of social media in Paraguay is wide.

6.2 Connectivity of students

Studies show that in Paraguay there are more cellphones with access to the internet than inhabitants (ADN Paraguay, 2016). This research was carried out by the organization “We are social”, which states that during 2016 there were more than 7 million active smartphones all over the country, meanwhile, the last census states that Paraguay has 6.8 million inhabitants approximately (Kemp, 2018). Furthermore, recent research by the same organization has shown that the statistics have slightly increased during the last years (Kemp, 2018). This means that more people have access to the internet nowadays through smartphones.

A national survey carried out by the organization “First Analysis” during 2017 exposed that 87% percent of the Paraguayan population has a smartphone. It is interesting that from the 87% of people who have a smartphone, 97% are teenagers from 13 to 17 years (Agencia IP, 2017). This means that most of the people who have access to the internet are adolescents who are in the age of high school. These statistics are very favorable for teachers because they can use a wide number of e-tools for their classes, including social sites.

6.3 Language learning in Paraguay

Besides learning Spanish and Guaraní, students have English as a Foreign Language. There are approximately 190 public schools that have English in their curricula from Grade 1 and on (ABC, 2012; ADN Paraguayo, 2017). Further, there were various attempts to add English since preschool to the national curricula in all public schools with the law 5031/13 (see appendix) (Ministerio de Educación y Cultura, 2017; Poder Legislativo, 2013). However, due to the lack of Language teachers, these attempts did not succeed. Furthermore, schools that include EFL in their curriculum usually give a very limited time to teachers in which they not only have to make students learn the language but also fulfill the requirements of the Ministry of Education (UNESCO, 2015). These factors do not allow English teachers to teach the language properly.

Currently, EFL is not included officially in primary, elementary, and middle school curricula yet. Nonetheless, since High School, foreign language is an official subject (Ministerio de Educación y Ciencias, 2014) and most schools select the English language. According to the curriculum of the Ministry of Education, students have two hours per week for foreign language in the first and second year, and three hours per week in the last year of high school (2014). Therefore, as mentioned before, this time is not enough neither for teachers nor students to develop the language learning process properly because it is needed constant exposure to learning a language (Wright, Boun, & García, 2015).

7. Reasons to use social media for EFL in Paraguayan education

Language learning has not obtained good results over the last decades. In public schools, after three years of learning English, students are not able to understand and perceive the language efficiently (unless they studied somewhere else) (López, 2013), mainly due to the lack of exposure to the language. Regarding non-bilingual private schools, most students have had English since elementary school. However, after finishing school, they are not able to comprehend or speak the language properly either. Many university students claim that the English they learned in High School was deficient and barely useful (López, 2013).

This can be changed by exposing students to the language daily through a means of communication they use every day. Looking from this perspective, students check their social platforms every day, therefore these social sites will be great to deliver language content for them as to have interaction with the target language through these sites. There is where educators need to look for manners to take advantage of these platforms.

The motivation for students is also an obstacle to learn a new language. This could be due to different reasons: how the lesson is delivered, the relevance of the subject for students' lives, the lack of interest or support, and more (López, 2013). Then, social sites are a great opportunity for educators to change the way the lessons are taught and increase engagement in their classes. Considering all the factors mentioned in this study, using Instagram for educational purposes could be a solution to increase the success of language classes in Paraguayan education.

8. Methods

The main objective of the study was to analyze HOW Instagram and its features can be used for educational purposes. Thus, to analyze the use of Instagram, the study worked on three specific objectives: 1) to define the features that convert Instagram into an appropriate tool for education; 2) to determine the advantages and disadvantages of Instagram as an educational tool; 3) and, to examine the perceptions of students about Instagram for educational purposes.

The current study follows an action research approach because the teacher is analyzing his own teaching environment and questioning what can be improved (Burns, 2009; Cresswell, 2014). This research study offers new alternatives for EFL teaching and learning. The researcher provided a possible tool to improve the EFL learning experience in non-bilingual Paraguayan schools. The researcher then becomes both investigator and participant because there is a deliberate intervention in the problematic situation (Burns, 2009). This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach, with data registered from Instagram, and participants' responses which are analyzed to address the study's purpose. The research design is a pre-experimental case study because "the researcher studies a single group and provides an intervention during the experiment" (Cresswell, 2014, p. 219). In this study, the students are the group that the researcher –the teacher- intervened with the use of Instagram as an educational tool.

The study took place in a pre-K-12 private Christian school in Zeballos Cue, Asunción. In total, the school has approximately 400 students. The school incorporates EFL in the curricula beginning in preschool. Students have two 40-minute periods of English per week. So, the challenge for the teacher is to look for methods and strategies to improve EFL learning in that short period of time. The participants selected for this study are high school students from grades 10 (six students) and 11 (fifteen students), twenty-one in total. The participants voluntarily gave their perspectives after using Instagram as an educational tool to learn English.

The data was gathered through an open-ended questionnaire where students wrote their perceptions about the use of Instagram as an educational tool. Students from 14 to 18 years old answered these questions, they are in high school and can deal with abstract concepts according to Piaget's formal operational stage (McLeod, 2010) to provide a well-developed response.

Qualitative information was also collected by the teacher from the registered activities on Instagram. During the academic year 2020, Instagram was used as an educational tool by

the teacher to share the lesson of the day, to evaluate through quizzes, and to provide more information about certain topics to students. The students also used the platform to interact with the content shared by the teacher, thus generating the data that was analyzed by the author of this study. This data includes stories, where they share their questions or take some short quizzes; also, private messages, where they ask some personal questions regarding some topic related to the subject and the comment section of Instagram TV. This will help to describe how Instagram was used as an educational platform.

In addition, group interviews were done with two groups of students. In the first group, five students from grade 11 took part and in the second group, two students from grade 10 participated. In both cases the participants were volunteers. They answered questions that were recorded through a Zoom Call. This added the data collected through the open-ended questionnaires, and the interviews are also intended to reduce the subjectivity in the answers from the questionnaire as well as the bias. All the data collected was transcribed and analyzed through qualitative data analysis using coding and categorization to address the study's main purpose. The data was theory-driven and was arranged in different categories according to its frequency. In other words, the categories are frequency-based. The main categories identified include: a) Instagram's useful features for education; b) advantages of Instagram as an educational tool; c) disadvantages of Instagram as an Educational tool; and, d) students' perceptions about Instagram as an educational tool.

9. Results

9.1 Instagram's useful features for education

Students described that the most useful features were Instagram TV where they could watch the videos anytime and all the times they needed and also, they were able to leave comments regarding the lessons. The second feature they remarked on was the stories because it was interactive and anonymous. They could leave questions or access to the lesson of the day from them. In addition, they had short quizzes to evaluate their knowledge or vocabulary. They had activities such as fill-in-the-gaps or select-the-correct-answer. All of these activities were done with the interactive stickers provided by the app. Besides Instagram TV and the stories, students also mentioned that 1-minute short videos on the feed were very useful to learn about pronunciation or grammar. They were short, precise and interesting. These 3 features were the most highlighted by the students.

9.2 Advantages of Instagram as an educational tool

All the students (21 in total) responded to the questionnaire stating what they considered the advantages of Instagram as an Educational Tool. Most participants (20 of them) responded that the ease to access videos about the classes was a very positive aspect. They also stated that it was not necessary to download the video because they could watch it online.

Instagram has some positive aspects that can be used for education. It is an innovative manner to learn and/or foster English learning. Through the stories and videos, students could interact with the language in a less formal setting. They developed listening and writing skills by watching the videos and writing comments. It also depends on the management and use of the app by the instructor. Students mentioned that the teacher had good management of the Instagram account. They gave similar answers such as "I think he used it very well", "It was good" or "Excellent."

Instagram has many characteristics that can be useful for educational purposes. The participants were asked to identify these features and many of them agreed that the stories were the most interesting feature for learning, whereas others remarked that the use of short quizzes in the stories was very dynamic, interesting and adequate. Other participants mentioned the accessibility of the app, the innovative use for education, the help that it provided for the tasks, the extra content related to topics previously explained by the teacher, and the interest the platform generates to do the assignments.

9.3 Disadvantages of Instagram as an educational tool

Some participants highlighted some aspects that can influence negatively and can complicate the learning process. The cost of the internet connection is a complication derived from the use of this platform, especially considering that many students do not have Wi-Fi, and have to pay for a limited internet connection. Besides, since Instagram is a social media platform with mainly audiovisual content, it consumes a lot of internet data while browsing through it.

The lack of internet connection causes difficulties in the development of the lessons because not all students could be updated on the activities. Therefore, this is a disadvantage that Instagram has over other social platforms that are free of charge, such as WhatsApp, which can be used for similar purposes. In the group interviews, the participants did not mention the cost of the internet as a problem, perhaps because they did not face this complication during the year.

Students were asked to mention some characteristics that do not help to use Instagram for educational purposes and most of them agreed that the app can be a distractor since they do not only follow the class's account, but also other accounts including entertainment, famous people, etc.; so, they get distracted easily with other content and information. They mentioned that the fact that Instagram is designed for social interaction and entertainment is an important disadvantage and complication when used for educational purposes.

Other disadvantages that students mentioned were the management of the account and that Instagram is a platform that lacks some educational features, for instance, an option to upload the assignments to be corrected by the teacher. Concerning the management of the account, students mentioned some actions that the instructor could have used. One of them was the use of live videos to have lessons and interact with students in real-time. Instagram has that feature and students can comment on the live broadcasting from the account as well as participate with video with a duo broadcast.

9.4 Students' overall perceptions about Instagram as an educational tool

The students gave very positive responses towards Instagram after using it during the year 2020. In question one, "What do you think about Instagram as an educational tool", they expressed very optimistic answers. Some expressions that they used to describe it were "innovative", "exclusive for young people", "very useful", "dynamic", and more. Its efficacy, engagement, and simplicity were some other characteristics that participants remarked on. On the other hand, few participants expressed a neutral opinion on this topic. Concerning the interview, one participant mentioned that "it could have been more helpful by sharing English content more often." In general terms, after the analysis of the participants' responses in the open-ended questionnaire, group interviews, and analysis of activities on Instagram, it can be said that it had a very positive acceptance from the students in this study regarding its use for educational purposes.

10. Discussion

The results show that some aspects mentioned by prior studies are accurate. For example, the fact that Instagram is a tool used by most teenagers (Rideout & Robb, 2019) can be seen in the participants' responses. They repeatedly stated that Instagram was easy to use for them because it is a platform they concur day to day. This quality was also described by Al-Ali (2014) as "young learners' familiarity with Instagram can be seen as an advantage as it can lessen possible stress caused by integrating unfamiliar tools into learning activities" (p. 3). In addition, Erarslan (2019) mentioned that since Instagram is a part of the daily student's lives it could be effectively used for education (p. 65). Besides the students mentioned that Instagram can be "a good supplementary tool" beyond the classroom, a characteristic stated before by the research of Akhlar, Mydin and Kasuma (2017).

Akhlar, Mydin and Kasuma (2017) mentioned that social media "allows students to share thoughts and opinions in a personalized manner through different tools of the app" (p. 52). The results of this study reflect something very similar. Participants constantly remarked on how it was easy to interact with the instructor and classmates. Pilli (2014) explained the same saying that social media fosters participation and communication between students and teachers (p. 94).

Both short and long videos were accepted optimistically by the students. They liked explanatory videos where they could see how to develop the lessons step by step and also short videos, which were about specific topics related to the class. This attribute was previously stated by Erarslan (2019) as a very useful one for different language activities. Aloraini (2018) highlighted that Instagram has many features that can help to give feedback, but the account need not have a large number of students to complicate it. This study worked with two different accounts for two groups with less than 30 students, and the participants commented that fast feedback from the teacher was a nice aspect while using the app.

Concerning the negative aspects of this platform for educational uses, Kamnoetsin (2014) wrote that social media can be a distractor for students. The participants of this study remarked exactly the same. The negative aspect of using Instagram is the distraction it can cause because students follow various entertainment accounts. Furthermore, another negative side of the app is that some students did not have an unlimited internet connection, which implies an extra cost for them because Instagram is a social networking site that consumes much internet data due to the audiovisual content. This aspect was mentioned by Yunus, Salehi, and Chenzi (2012) in their study, adding that this can generate a feeling of exclusion in the student.

Regarding Paraguayan education, most participants agreed -during the interviews- that it needs to be improved as stated previously (Goetz et al., 2014; Palacios de Asta, 2016). When they were asked if Instagram would be a useful tool to help to improve the learning process, students mentioned that this platform could be beneficial to foster digital education in the country. However, they also mentioned that to make it work, teachers have to know how to use the app.

The results also show that most students perceived a positive influence in their language learning. They indicated that Instagram helped them to learn some aspects of the language such as grammar and pronunciation. Even though the platform was used more for input in this study, these results were expected because other authors mentioned that

Instagram encouraged students to develop these language skills (Akhiar, Mydin, Kasuma, 2017; Al-Ali, 2014; Aloraini, 2018; Erarslan, 2019; Handayani, 2016; Mansor & Rahim, 2017).

11. Conclusion

The study was carried out in an educational environment with 21 students from two different grades who used Instagram as an educational platform during the year 2020. Regarding the features of Instagram, after its use during the year 2020 and based on the responses of students about this platform, some features that help Instagram to become a useful educational tool are the Instagram TV (IGTV), Instagram Stories, Direct Messages (“DM”), Interactive stickers (in stories), and the possibility to upload short 1-minute videos about specific topics. The results showed that students liked the use of these qualities in the development of EFL lessons. The participants highlighted the dynamism, interactivity, and accessibility that these characteristics allowed.

In relation to the disadvantages, the results of this study expose that distraction is the strongest disadvantage that this social networking site presents while using it for education. Students can easily be distracted by other content that they have in their feed, for instance: memes, entertainment, famous people stories, trending topics, and more. The data suggest that distraction is a factor that cannot be handled by instructors, and it is directly related to the users, in this case, the students. In addition, another disadvantage is the cost of Instagram use. It is an app that consumes a lot of internet connection because of its audiovisual content. Therefore, if students have limited internet connectivity, they will have complications using this app for education.

One of the main advantages is the accessibility of the app because most students use it daily. Besides, students are familiarized with the app and they do not have many complications while using it. Another advantage that the results showed was the interactivity this app allows. Students can easily interact with the teachers and with each other. Students do not need to contact the educator through personal means of communication, they can do it through the “DM” of the Instagram account. Furthermore, with the feature of short videos, the instructor can constantly share short content related to the target language to expose students to it. Students can learn beyond the classroom and develop their language skills.

In conclusion, Instagram may positively influence EFL learning by properly using its tools and capabilities. However, the teacher needs to know how to use the platform to its full potential. It is important to consider some steps and guidelines so that Instagram can be used as a successful educational platform. First, the instructor needs to create a private account only for his/her students to avoid strange interaction with the account. Most students have to voluntarily agree to use the app for educational purposes. It is important for teachers to constantly upload content for the students, to interact and engage them as much as possible. Further research on the use of social media is recommended to explore the potential and limitations of these as educational tools.

12. References

- A. Johnston, K. (2013). A guide to educating different generations in South Africa. *Issues in Informing Science and Information Technology*, 10, 261–273. <https://doi.org/10.28945/1810>
- ABC. (2012). 190 escuelas públicas impartirán clases de inglés a partir del primer grado. Retrieved April 22, 2020, from <https://www.abc.com.py/nacionales/190->

escuelas-publicas-impartiran-clases-de-ingles-a-partir-del-primer-grado-358360.html

- Abe, P., & Jordan, N. A. (2013). Integrating social media into the classroom curriculum. *About Campus*, 18(1), 16–20. <https://doi.org/10.1002/abc.21107>
- Abney, A. K., Cook, L. A., Fox, A. K., & Stevens, J. (2019). Intercollegiate Social Media Education Ecosystem. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 41(3), 254–269. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0273475318786026>
- ADN Paraguay. (2016, August 1). Hay más celulares que habitantes en Paraguay - ADN Paraguayo. Retrieved June 4, 2020, from <https://www.adndigital.com.py/hay-mas-celulares-que-habitantes-en-paraguay/>
- ADN Paraguayo. (2017, February 11). Analizan fortalecer el inglés en el Paraguay - ADN Paraguayo. Retrieved June 4, 2020, from <https://www.adndigital.com.py/analizan-fortalecer-el-ingles-en-el-paraguay/>
- Agencia IP. (2017, August 25). El 87% de los paraguayos tiene acceso a internet | Agencia IP Retrieved June 4, 2020, from <https://www.ip.gov.py/ip/el-87-de-los-paraguayos-tiene-acceso-a-internet/>
- Akhiar, A., Mydin, A. A., & Kasuma, S. (2017). Students' perceptions and attitudes towards the use of Instagram in English language writing. *Malaysian Journal of Learning and Instruction*, (Specialissue), 47–72.
- Al-Ali, S. (2014). Embracing the selfie craze: exploring the possible use of Instagram as a language learning tool. *Issues and Trends in Educational Technology*, 2(2), 1–16.
- Aloraini, N. (2018). Investigating Instagram as an EFL Learning Tool. *Arab World English Journal*, 4(4), 174–184. <https://doi.org/10.24093/awej/call4.13>
- Alsaied, H. I. K. K. (2017). Perceived effectiveness of social media as an English language learning tool. *Arab World English Journal (AWEJ)*, 8(1), 79–93.
- Alshabeb, Abdulrahman M.; Almaqrn, R. K. (2018). A study of EFL Saudi students' use of mobile social media applications for learning. *Arab World English Journal (AWEJ)*, (4), 214–226. <https://doi.org/https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/call4.17>
- ALshenqeeti, H. (2018). Technology in the language classroom: how social media is changing the way EFL is taught. *Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Special Issue on CALL*, 5(4), 55–68. Retrieved from <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/call4.5>
- Arteaga Ramírez, L. (2014). La filosofía y el reto de la educación latinoamericana. *IXTLI: Revista Latinoamericana de Filosofía de La Educación*, 1(2), 175–186.
- Aydin, S. (2012). A review of research on Facebook as an educational environment. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 60(6), 1093–1106. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11423-012-9260-7>
- Burns, A. (2009). Doing action research in English language teaching: A guide for practitioners. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203863466>
- Çelik, S., & Gürcüoğlu, E. A. (2016). Generations and their relations in social processes. *Security Strategy and Political Studies*, 1(1), 117–127.
- Chartrand, R. (2012). Social networking for language learners: Creating meaningful output with Web 2.0 tools. *Knowledge Management & E-Learning: An International Journal*, 4(1), 97–101. <https://doi.org/10.34105/j.kmel.2012.04.009>
- Choi, J. K. (2005). The linguistic situation in urban Paraguay: A tendency toward Spanish-Guaraní bilingualism? *Spanish in Context*, 2(2), 175–201. <https://doi.org/10.1075/sic.2.2.04cho>

- Cresswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). California: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Derakhshan, A., & Hasanabbasi, S. (2015). Social networks for language learning. *Theory and practice in language studies*, 5(5), 1090.
<https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.0505.25>
- Erarslan, A. (2019). Instagram as an education platform for EFL learners. *Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology - TOJET*, 18(3), 54–69.
- Expósito, P. V. (2014). *The role of motivation and engagement in english language learning through facebook and moocs*. *Actas del II Congreso Internacional Nebrija en Lingüística Aplicada a la Enseñanza de Lenguas*. Madrid, Nebrija Prodedia. Retrieved from http://www.nebrija.com/la_universidad/servicios/pdf-publicaciones/ActasNebrija_SegundoCongreso.pdf
- Fernández, J. A. (2017). Tic en la profesionalización docente: necesidades formativas y de contexto identificadas en un curso de didáctica universitaria. *Universidad Nacional de Asunción*.
- Goetz, K., Demellenne, D., Díaz, J. J., Rodolfo, E., Giménez, L., Machado, A., ... Perazzo, I. (2014). La educación en su entorno: Sistema educativo y políticas públicas en Paraguay. (L. Ortiz, Ed.). *Asunción: Ediciones y Arte S.A.* Retrieved from <http://biblioteca.clacso.edu.ar/Paraguay/cadep/20160714114128/9.pdf>
- Handayani, F. (2016). Instagram as a teaching tool? Really? *Proceedings of the fourth international seminar on English language and teaching (ISELT-4)*, 320–327.
- Hoffmann, M. M., & Ramirez, A. Y. F. (2018). Students' attitudes toward teacher use of technology in classrooms. *21st Century Learning & Multicultural Education Students'*, 51–57.
- Ivanova, A., & Smrikarov, A. (2009). The new generations of students and the future of e-learning in higher education. *International Conference on E-Learning and Knowledge Society*, 17–25. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0305-750X\(00\)00109-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0305-750X(00)00109-1)
- Kamnoetsin, T. (2014). Social media use: a critical analysis of Facebook's impact on collegiate EFL students' English writing in Thailand. *Seton Hall University*. Retrieved from <http://scholarship.shu.edu/dissertations/2059>
- Kemp, S. (2018, January 18). Digital in 2018: World's internet users pass the 4 billion mark - We Are Social. Retrieved June 4, 2020, from <https://wearesocial.com/blog/2018/01/global-digital-report-2018>
- Kirschner, P. A., & De Bruyckere, P. (2017). The myths of the digital native and the multitasker. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 67, 135–142.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2017.06.001>
- Lamy, Marie; Mangenot, F. (2013). Social media-based language learning: insights from research and practice. In M.-N. ourou K. (2013). *S. N. for language education*. (Vol. 53). P. M. P. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107415324.00>. Lamy (Ed.), *Social Networking for language education*. (pp. 197–213). Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137023384>
- López, A. (2013). Nuevas tendencias en la auditoría. *Contaduría y Administración*, (203), 37–44.
- Mansor, N., & Rahim, N. A. (2017). Instagram in ESL classrooms. *Man In India*, 97(20), 107–114.
- McLeod, S. (2010). Formal operational stage | Simply Psychology. Retrieved October 16, 2020, from <https://www.simplypsychology.org/formal-operational.html>

- Ministerio de Educación y Ciencias. (2014). Actualización curricular del Bachillerato Científico: Educación media. Retrieved from https://www.mec.gov.py/cms_v2/adjuntos/8337
- Ministerio de Educación y Cultura. (2017). MEC busca elevar el nivel de enseñanza del idioma inglés en el Paraguay. Retrieved April 22, 2020, from <https://www.ip.gov.py/ip/mec-busca-elevar-la-ensenanza-del-idioma-ingles-en-el-paraguay/>
- MITIC. (2019). El 97.2% de la población paraguaya usa internet para mensajería instantánea :: Ministerio de Tecnologías de la Información y Comunicación - MITIC. Retrieved June 4, 2020, from <https://www.mitic.gov.py/noticias/el-972-de-la-poblacion-paraguaya-usa-internet-para-mensajeria-instantanea>
- Ni, F. (2005). Filosofía de la educación latinoamericana ", 26(93), 111–129.
- Peréz, J. (2019, July). Paraguayos hiperconectados: acceso a internet llega a 65% | DGEEC, Dirección general de estadística, encuestas y censos, Instagram, Redes Sociales, WhatsApp, Facebook. Retrieved June 4, 2020, from <https://www.ultimahora.com/paraguayos-hiperconectados-acceso-internet-llega-65-n2831620.html>
- Pilli, O. (2014). LMS vs. SNS: can social networking sites act as learning management systems? *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*, 4(5), 90–97. Retrieved from http://www.aijcrnet.com/journals/Vol_4_No_5_May_2014/9.pdf
- Plutino, A. (2017). Teachers as awakeners: a collaborative approach in language learning and social media. In *Innovative language teaching and learning at university: enhancing employability* (pp. 115–125). Southampton. <https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2017.innoconf2016.661>
- Poder Legislativo. (2013). *Ley N° 5031: Que implementa el idioma inglés en la malla curricular desde el preescolar hasta el tercero de la media*. Retrieved from <http://bacn.gov.py/archivos/2676/20141023080844.pdf>
- Razak, N. A., & Saeed, M. A. (2015). EFL Arab learners' peer revision of writing in a Facebook group: Contributions to written texts and sense of online community. *English Language Teaching*, 8(12), 11. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v8n12p11>
- Rideout, V., & Robb, M. (2019). The common sense census: media use by tweens and teens. *Common Sense Media*. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107415324.004>
- Selwyn, N. (2013). The 'new' connectivities of digital education. In M. Apple, S. Ball, & L. Gandin (Eds.), *The Routledge International Handbook of Innovation Education* (pp. 90–98). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203387146>
- Slim, H., & Hafedh, M. (2019). Social media impact on language learning for specific purposes: A study in English for business administration. *Teaching English with Technology*, 19(1), 56–71.
- Šliogerienė, J., Masoodi, M., & Gulbinskienė, D. (2016). Facebook as a tool in university English language education. In *Acta Paedagogica Vilnensia* (pp. 1392–5016). <https://doi.org/10.15388/ActPaed.2016.36.I0070>
- UNESCO. (2015). *Revisión Nacional 2015 de la Educación para Todos*. Asunción.
- Wong, M., Gardiner, E., Lang, W., & Coulon, L. (2008). Generational differences in personality and motivation: Do they exist and what are the implications for the workplace? *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 23(8), 878–890. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02683940810904376>
- Wright, W. E., Boun, S., & García, O. (2015). *The Handbook of Bilingual and Multilingual Education*. Wiley Blackwell.

- Yagci, T. (2014). Mobile social media challenges digital natives in EFL learning. *Journal of Educational and Instructional Studies in the World*, 4(4), 49–53. Retrieved from <http://www.wjeis.org/FileUpload/ds217232/File/08b.yagci.pdf>
- Yunus, M. M., Salehi, H., & Chenzi, C. (2012). Integrating social networking tools into ESL writing classroom: Strengths and weaknesses. *English Language Teaching*, 5(8), 42–48. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v5n8p42>