EFL STUDENTS’ PERCEPTIONS ON THE USE OF INSTAGRAM TO FOSTER LEARNER AUTONOMY IN SPEAKING

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Abstract: To perceive the 21\textsuperscript{st} century and digital literacy issue, Instagram could be one of the solutions to engage learners’ autonomy in the learning process, especially in speaking performances. However, few studies are concerned with the relationship between speaking performance and learner autonomy. Therefore, this current study intends to know the non-English major students’ perceptions of the utilization of Instagram as digital literacy, their learning autonomy toward Instagram, and their speaking performances in utilizing Instagram. This research used a qualitative approach. The data were obtained through interviews and observations to gather richer and deeper information about the issues. Data were analyzed in three stages: reduction, display, and verification. The study results revealed that understanding the use of digital literacy was basic knowledge for students. It was because the students, as the users of those literacies, could be left behind in their daily activities. Moreover, students believed that blending digital literacy had positive impacts, including increased communication abilities, autonomy awareness, and readiness for future technology needs in the learning process and academic setting. The Instagram account was not just ordinary social media, it was not only an influential medium that carried engagement and interactivity among users but also covered interesting ways of serving as a powerful medium for self-expression. As a result, for students, the utilization of Instagram achieved a benefit in enhancing their learners’ autonomy in the aspects of learners’ confidence and creativity.

Keywords: EFL students, digital literacy, learner autonomy, speaking

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INTRODUCTION

In the twenty-first century, the millennial generation has become accustomed to accessing the internet via a smartphone or laptop. They can more easily connect one device to another using these devices. In terms of education, it can assist students to become more universal than mastering 21st-century skills. 21st-century talents let learners access, value, employ, operate, and contribute to the prosperity of information and media they currently consume at their fingertips (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Therefore, learners now can help their future lives as leaders with different talents to handle problems (Meurs & Noordegraaf, 2022) by acquiring 21st-century competencies, especially, for educational purposes (Niu et al., 2021).

Literacy is one skill that must be improved. Literacy is an essential talent used particularly in the twenty-first century (Mirra, 2020; Tight, 2021). In terms of literacy and 21st-century skills, digital literacy is the most appropriate phenomenon (Cartelli, 2013)
because the students are accustomed to using media literacy. In this context, "media literacy" refers to the method of delivering messages (print, graphics, animation, audio, video, Web sites, and so on) (De Abreu & Mihailidis, 2013). As it is well-developed, the teachers can implement the aid of media literacy in classroom practices, thus, the learners not only obtain materials from the textbooks but also other supported technology-based.

To perceive the 21st century and digital literacy issue, Instagram could be one of the solutions to engage learners’ autonomy in the learning process. Instagram is a social network created from place-to-place partaking pictures and fifteen-second videos that can be sent to other social media sets (Blair & Serafini, 2014). Instagram has some crucial tools that could help educational determinations connected to superior intelligence, linguistic intelligence (Yuliyanto et al., 2020) as well as visual and auditory tools (Ünal, 2022). Besides, Instagram can employ autonomous learners (Haryana et al., 2023) who have been described as those who are enthusiastically and productively tangled. Instagram may not be a site specifically designed for language acquisition, but its visual and interactive elements, together with its large and varied user base, make it a useful tool for students looking for independence in their learning outcomes (Obeso et al., 2023), specifically speaking practice.

When it comes to learner autonomy in speaking, digital literacy is the capacity of a student to use digital tools and resources to improve their speaking abilities in an efficient and self-reliant manner (Pu, 2009). It entails incorporating digital technology with language instruction to enable students to take charge of their education, particularly when it comes to honing their oral communication abilities (Kulkuska-Hulme et al., 2017). Therefore, utilizing digital tools and resources to enable learners to take control of their speaking skill development is known as digital literacy in learner autonomy for speaking (Yu & Zadorozhny, 2022). This approach enables learners to have individualized, adaptable, and self-directed language learning experiences.

Respectively, learner autonomy can be an indicator of their positive outlooks on the way to themselves as learners and to language learning activities (Benson & Voller, 2014). Likewise, the learners will be ready for the development of preparation, guiding, and estimating the learning procedure they face (Benson, 2008). Furthermore, Benson (2008) confirms that learners’ perspective on autonomy is mainly worried about learning, in a much wider logic, and its connection to their lives elsewhere in the classroom. Being autonomous in language learning is not an unfamiliar matter. Autonomy may be defined as a person's ability to govern their learning (Raya & Vieira, 2020). In this sense, learners are the ones who have to control whatever relates to learning language and its input of language development. Somehow, there are still misconceptions concerning the concept’s nature and its implementation in classroom activities (Raya & Vieira, 2020) that the students assume to learn by themselves without guidance from the teachers. Conversely, Lamb and Reinders (2018) affirms that the practicality of pedagogy for autonomy depends significantly on educators' perspectives on teaching and learning and their flexibility in making judgments about teaching and learning procedures.

One of the skills encountered by students is speaking. In terms of learning a language, speaking is the most difficult skill to execute for students (Pawlak et al., 2011). Therefore, the availability of Instagram is an appealing medium for language learners looking to improve their speaking abilities (Rania & Assia, 2022) because of its distinctive features and user-generated material. The platform's interactive, visual, and genuine features complement the objectives of developing a dynamic and engaging language learning environment (Lee, 2022). The rationale for integrating Instagram into language learning, specifically for speaking skills, is grounded in some key considerations including visual and
authentic learning, everyday language exposure, diverse language content, and interactive features that are suitable for speaking practices.

Furthermore, the problem of learning language is arising due to the student’s confidence in performing speaking in the classroom (Getie, 2020). Their shyness shows up when they know that speaking English is not as easy as they think. For doing a basic thing, at least, they must pronounce the specific words correctly. Moreover, most students come from the same background where their environment does not support them in improving their English language skills. Therefore, using Instagram is also a way to motivate students to speak confidently (Devi et al., 2020; Wulandari, 2019; Yustisia et al., 2020).

The investigation of learner autonomy in English as a Foreign Language has been conducted in different contexts, such as English Language MOOC (Ding & Shen, 2019), vocabulary development (Almusharraf, 2020), review on English language learners (Chong, 2022), and autonomy support (Basri, 2020). Additionally, using the Instagram platform to evolve students’ capabilities and competencies in the English language for speaking skills are also carried on (Devi et al., 2020; Wulandari, 2019; Yustisia et al., 2020). While there had been research exploring the improvement of speaking using Instagram within certain teaching methods of learning, the researchers found that few studies were concerned with relationship between the speaking performance and learner autonomy.

This is the gap that we would like to fill through this present study. Therefore, this current study intends to know the non-English major students’ perception of the utilization of Instagram as digital literacy, learning autonomy toward Instagram, and students’ speaking performances in utilizing Instagram. The following are the research questions: The researchers seek to explore the perceptions of non-English major students regarding the role of Instagram in developing digital literacy skills. They aim to understand how these students demonstrate learning autonomy in their use of Instagram as a learning tool and investigate the ways in which the utilization of Instagram impacts their speaking performances.

METHOD
Research design
This research used the qualitative approach to find out the research questions. A type of qualitative approach (Straman, 2013), a case study is appropriate in identifying and describing the problems of this research. According to Ary et al. (2010), a case study gives an in-depth explanation that is rich and holistic by investigating a single unit only. The unit here has many definitions. Often, a case study is used in a small area or a limited number of individuals as the subject (Zainal, 2007). Ary et al. (2010) further explained that a single unit here can be an individual, a group, a site, a class, a policy, a program, a process, an institution, or a community in which numbers are not a matter. The researchers believe that case study plays an important role in this research; case study makes it more noticeable when it is related to education (Zainal, 2007).

Participants of the Study
The participants were the first semester non-English major students, at one of the Islamic private universities in Lamongan. The participants were chosen because the teacher instructed them to upload individual assignments about “their interest in the preferred field of study as well as the self-purpose that they intended to achieve in the future”, as the
requirement for fulfilling the English as General Course task. The rationale includes considerations such as providing these students with an opportunity to express their interests and future goals in the English language. By asking students to turn in papers on their hobbies and future goals, the teacher appears to be trying to find out not just how well the students can communicate in English but also why they want to study and pursue certain careers.

**Data Collection**

To gather richer and deeper information about the issues, the data were obtained through two procedures. The first procedure was the interview including four interview questions based on the research questions mentioned in Table 1.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Interview Questions</th>
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| 1. | RQ-1               | a. What do you know about the notion of digital literacy that is implemented in educational settings?  
    |                    | b. What is the benefit of using digital literacy in learning a language?  |
| 2. | RQ-2               | How is your perception related to the demonstration of learning autonomy in using Instagram as a tool for learning the English language? |
| 3. | RQ-3               | In what elements that using Instagram can impact your speaking skills? |

Only three students were chosen to take part in this interview session. The second procedure was observing the video recording uploaded by the students on Instagram to know the students’ speaking. In assessing students’ performances, the teachers use rubrics assessment that cover the elements of speaking proficiency: pronunciation, vocabulary, organization, non-verbal communication, and task completion.

**Data Analysis**

The data analysis in a detailed is presented in the form of text. This present study applies the data analysis proposed by Miles et al. (2013) including the three stages. First, data reduction is how the data is reduced based on the needs of data analysis. To uncover important themes gathered from participants must be methodically analyzed and summarized. The data reduction process begins with coding based on recurrent themes, feelings, or viewpoints of Instagram as digital literacy that the participants shared. Second, the chosen data is displayed with the categorization of relatedness theme describing the main aspects of students’ perceptions of the use of Instagram and its relation to learning autonomy encountered by the students as well as the impact on speaking performances. Second, the chosen data is displayed based on the three research questions. Last, all the analyzed data is concluded to make a data verification.

**FINDINGS**

The results of this present study are chronologically listed following three dimensions: students’ perception of the utilization of Instagram as digital literacy, students’ perception of learning autonomy toward Instagram, and students' speaking performances in utilizing
Instagram. Along with the results, it is supported by the relevant previous studies theories following the presented data and detailed discussion part in the last section of this chapter.

Students’ Perception of the Utilization of Instagram as Digital Literacy

In classroom activities, students’ perception was also required for learning climates. To gain trusted data on students’ perceptions, interview sections were conducted that relied on the learners’ opinions toward the utilization of digital literacy and its practices. Based on the interview, the researchers were going to elucidate the detailed points in terms of learners’ schemata, the practices, and the impact on the learning process. In general, schemata refers to the representation of background information to make sense of the set of events (Zacks, 2020).

Comprehensively, the information regarding the perceptions was obtained from the results of the interview. Some students were selected to be interviewed and asked their personal opinions based on three basic questions on the general knowledge of digital literacy terms, as follows:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Students Responses</th>
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<tr>
<td>“What do you know about the notion of digital literacy that is implemented in educational settings?”</td>
<td>“In my personal opinion, the first is digital is something related to any digital media or devices, such as smartphones, PCs, and others. Digital literacy refers to the individuals’ attitude and achievement in using digital technology and tools for accessing and communicating with others in society effectively.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Well, digital literacy is not only we can operate the computer, but also, we have to be digitally literate humans. It means that we must master digital skill needs for the future.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Not only that, digital literacy also has a close connection to the ability of reading and writing, and it has a relation to the educational purposes.”</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Based on the results of the interview in the first question, each student had their perception in responding to the idea of digital literacy. Understanding the use of digital literacy was a basic knowledge for students. It was because the students as the users of those literacies could not be left behind in their daily activities. The free and unlimited access to digital became the focal point of why students had to be digitally literate, and natively digital, as confirmed by Jones and Hafner (2012). While they were surfing in a digital world, the basic literacy of being able to read and write had to be considered since neither all materials nor resources were safely downloaded, nor securely visited. As mentioned, digital literacy is the student’s responsibility to be aware through their attitudes as well as values in using digital tools, however, teachers would not let them undergo without guidance and norms regarding the development of education (Raya & Vieira, 2020). Therefore, the students would not track their pathways. Furthermore, some students said that digital literacy was beneficial for them, as quoted:

“Digital literacy contributes to the aid to perceive and adopt valuable things such as new information about sports, education, tourism, and so forth.”

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In this case, schemata in learners’ thoughts, were necessary to be the main materials that made them reveal what they were thinking about. In most cases, the interaction of teachers and students was to be the engagement in the teaching and learning process (Meyers et al., 2013). It always begins with a greeting from teachers, continues by giving materials to learners, and ends with the closing. However, nowadays, delivering materials does not always in the traditional way. Teachers could apply some digital aids, for instance, using WhatsApp, video, PowerPoint tools, etc., to encourage learners to follow the learning (Sudarsana et al., 2020). Therefore, it should be actively displayed in students’ activities.

The practices in the usage of digital literacy, such as doing the assignments via i.e., an Instagram account. Digital literacy interactions also occurred outside classroom discourse which was helpful for both teachers and learners as the instructional media (Meyers et al., 2013). Furthermore, students believed that the blending of digital literacy has positive impacts on the learning process. Comprehending and mastering the materials will be gained while they use the sophisticated technology. Students can choose freely what digital literacy is appropriate for their needs yet, teachers’ intervention takes a role dominantly in the classroom interaction to mediate the students’ input. To sum up, contextualizing within particular experiences of learning and life becomes the major point of learners’ perception (Benson, 2008).

**Students’ Perception of Learning Autonomy Toward the Instagram**

With recently innovative digital tools, every student has the authority and opportunity to access plentiful information at their thumbs on cell phones or laptops. Therefore, this study also aimed to discuss how the students value the concept of learner autonomy in utilizing the Instagram account as the learning media. Here are the students’ responses:

“Well, autonomy is something that is still related to the authority of someone. Suppose this is the case when talking about learner autonomy in using Instagram. In that case, it is about how the learner can control her/his self, including time management, priority, choices of news or topic presented by that social media.”

This student’s response seemed simple, but they knew a little bit about how to play a good role in learner autonomy. The Instagram account is not just ordinary social media, it is an influential media covered in interesting ways of presenting social, cultural, life, etc. (Leaver et al., 2020). In addition, another student confirmed as following:

“I use Instagram usually for my personal preferences to view any updated events, I rarely use that for the need of learning. However, after my teacher assisted me in becoming aware of self-improvement skills, especially English as a foreign language, I wondered if it could be true and I tried to search for more accounts discussing how to learn English is so much there. Without any assistance, I am directly aware that my autonomy toward learning English has improved so well. I use my time wisely.”

Instagram functionally could notice interesting events for its users. Students, themselves, also felt the same way, while scrolling the pages through a particular topic, i.e., learning English, this automatic Instagram account would save it as history – to be relevant
searching next. At least, students knew it as well, the features, functions, and needs for their self-improvement.

In this sense, Instagram, as one of the media literacies was provided as the medium of conveying messages, crafting the messages, and the impacts the media messages to the viewers (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Many media literacy, i.e., social media, spread over to net generations offering the site for sharing experiences and events. One of the social media was Instagram Indonesia which has become the biggest market in the world with 700 million active users (Tempo.com, 2017). At this moment, that less or more, Instagram’s deployment could capture all the precious experiences and events of its users.

In association with Instagram, teachers exploited a trend of its usage, to be modified in the realization of the learning process. To boost students’ motivation, teachers gave assignments to learners to upload their speaking performance under the theme of ‘study interest.’ Their high enthusiasm in performing speaking practice could be seen in that, teachers attempted to put forward students’ learning autonomy which they controlled over their manifestation of learning. Even, though learner autonomy was not explicitly included in the curriculum objective (Lamb & Reinders, 2018), the realm did not state such things. Holec (Palfreyman & Smith, 2003) highlighted that learner autonomy emphasizes the ability to take charge of a person’s learning on his/her own.

Students Speaking Performances in Utilizing Instagram

The most conspicuous phenomenon that attracted the writers’ concern was tangible which was performed by the students of non-English major programs. Specifically, the students were in major management, therefore, the questions provided by teachers were also connected to the management field. To begin the performances, the students had to prepare the appropriate response based on their personal opinions about three things including:

1. “Why are you interested in taking a major in management?”
2. “What is one of your favorite fields or areas that make you sure you can be the management’s expertise?”
3. “What is the future after accomplishing the management course?”

Before uploading their speaking performances, the teacher had already shared the guidelines in the WhatsApp Group. Moreover, students were believed to have an Instagram account as media to share catchy pictures or videos. Interestingly, their English teachers asked them to do a task via an Instagram account to upload their speaking performances which was the theme of ‘study interest’.
One of the students said:

“I am not fluent and confident in speaking English because English is quite difficult for me in terms of grammar, and pronunciation. But I tried my best to post my task on Instagram. I learned to speak clearly and understandably. This is still the practice after all.”

From the student’s point of view, the teacher knew that students’ capability in English was average. That is why the teacher intended to push them to practice more in speaking and performing through videos that were uploaded on social media of Instagram. For students, the utilization of Instagram achieved a benefit in enhancing their learners’ autonomy in the aspects of learners’ confidence and creativity.

Speaking competence examination of students entailed a thorough analysis of several linguistic and communicative components. First, the correctness and clarity of the pronunciation were assessed, with an emphasis on pinpointing problem areas and offering specific exercises. Most of the students’ pronunciation was good, at least, they had an idea of how to practice before performing. Somehow, it was found that some students were still incorrectly pronouncing the words although it was a common academic word. To respond to this, the student confirmed:

“My English is just so-so because I rarely practice it. I speak English only for the task or presentation turn. Also, my accent is influenced by my Javanese language and it makes me not confident in speaking English.”

The honest confirmation from students had been reflected that learning English needed to be very native-like. The influence of their mother tongue, the Javanese language, became the reason why they felt ashamed of performing the English language. In addition, other students also agreed:

“My daily environment doesn’t engage me to have more practice in learning English, specifically, for basic conversation. I only can understand it very little.”
Second, vocabulary evaluation recognized good word choice and offered methods for increasing one’s language range. Throughout the task, students could determine the appropriate vocabulary to be used in their performance, the student stated that:

“The task from the teacher is to help me enrich my vocabulary related to economic terms that are useful for my English language improvement.”

Third, coherence in spoken content arrangement was examined and offered on coherent device usage and structure. Giving guidelines for accomplishing the assignment was very helpful for students in doing step-by-step work. It was seen from their performance organization that included the introduction, main body, and closing statement. Considering nonverbal communication, most students showed their positive signs and matched emotions and gestures with spoken information based on the task given. Finally, they also completed tasks by fulfilling all the required guidelines and uploading their speaking video to their Instagram account.

DISCUSSION
Below, the important findings were summarized, along with some preliminary conclusions. Recently, the advancement of technology has encouraged the global thoughts of students. The procurement of technology is as balanced as the role of digital literacy which unconsciously becomes part of people’s routines (Foster, 2022). Regarding the utilization of digital literacy, the students were familiar with that notion as well as the kinds of digital literacy functioning for human needs in this digital era. Most of these students yielded a different idea of the use of digital literacy. They were aware of being digital natives, with more adaptable and advanced ways of learning language sophisticatedly. This was aligned with previous studies (Niu et al., 2021; Voogt et al., 2013). Moreover, discussing the context of learning autonomy was relevant due to the existence of Instagram to encourage students to learn the English language. This argument was in line with Haryana et al. (2023) that the students had possessed much effort for their autonomy in online learning, specifically, the experiences in choosing the English language that fulfilled their needs of self-learning.

In responding to speaking performances, it was seen that students’ confidence could be shown through their performance before taking the video. However, it also confirmed that students’ lack of confidence could be captured as well. Therefore, they were required to be engaged more in speaking activities purposing to boost their speaking confidence, as the studies were done by (Tifani et al., 2020; Yanti & Sada, 2023). Positively, as a matter of proficiency and creativity, students could improve in terms of planning speaking, and video components (gesture, light, plot, setting, and others). The result of students’ proficiency had been explored by (Wulandari, 2019), concerning Instagram vlog activity. All in all, the aid of Instagram affects more to learners’ speaking performances.

CONCLUSION
In conclusion, the use of Instagram as part of digital literacy in enhancing learner autonomy gives good benefits for the students’ autonomy. This is proved by the improvement in their confidence and creativity in performing their speaking. By uploading the video through Instagram, the students are more confident in performing their speaking skills since they can practice several times before they take and upload the video. Further, their creativity is also improved by thinking about “How could I make this video nice?” They will think critically and creatively to plan their performance not only about their speaking but also
about all components of the video for a better result. Since the use of Instagram has a good influence on the students’ autonomy, it will be good if the teachers have more awareness of utilizing Instagram or any other similar media as part of their learning process not only as digital literacy but also as technology awareness nowadays. Teachers should be up-to-date with many new platforms as their teaching media to promote and facilitate student’s meaningful learning experiences.

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