



The University Students' Perceptions on Instagram's Translation Feature in Enhancing English Vocabulary Learning

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Article Info	Abstract
Article History Received: 2025-09-10 Revised: 2025-10-15 Published: 2025-11-10 Keywords: <i>Challenges; Instagram Translation Feature; Students' Perceptions; Vocabulary Learning.</i>	This study explored university students' perceptions of Instagram's translation feature in improving their English vocabulary learning. The research focused on two main questions: (1) how students view the usefulness of the feature, and (2) what difficulties they experience while using it. The purpose of this study was to investigate students' opinions about the feature's role in vocabulary learning and to identify the main challenges they encounter. A qualitative descriptive method was employed, involving 29 English Education students from Sriwijaya University selected through purposive sampling. The findings showed that students had varied perceptions toward Instagram's translation feature. The highest average score appeared in the ease-of-use aspect (77.6%), suggesting that students found the feature simple and convenient to operate. In contrast, their perceptions of usefulness (52.6%) and contribution to vocabulary development (51.1%) were mostly neutral. This indicates that, although the feature helps students quickly grasp word meanings, they remain uncertain about its role in improving long-term vocabulary mastery. Several obstacles were also reported, including inaccurate or incomplete translations, technical issues, and untranslatable short captions. These results imply that while the translation feature is practical and supports incidental learning, it should not be viewed as a primary tool for learning English vocabulary. In conclusion, Instagram's translation feature works most effectively as a supplementary aid when used alongside dictionaries, teacher support, and self-directed learning practices.

Artikel Info	Abstrak
Sejarah Artikel Diterima: 2025-09-10 Direvisi: 2025-10-16 Dipublikasi: 2025-11-10 Kata kunci: <i>Tantangan; Fitur Terjemahan Instagram; Persepsi Siswa; Pembelajaran Kosakata.</i>	Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi persepsi mahasiswa terhadap fitur terjemahan Instagram dalam meningkatkan pembelajaran kosakata bahasa Inggris mereka. Penelitian ini berfokus pada dua pertanyaan utama: (1) bagaimana mahasiswa memandang kegunaan fitur tersebut, dan (2) kesulitan apa yang mereka alami saat menggunakannya. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk menyelidiki pendapat mahasiswa tentang peran fitur tersebut dalam pembelajaran kosakata dan mengidentifikasi tantangan utama yang mereka hadapi. Metode deskriptif kualitatif digunakan, melibatkan 29 mahasiswa Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris dari Universitas Sriwijaya yang dipilih melalui purposive sampling. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa memiliki persepsi yang beragam terhadap fitur terjemahan Instagram. Skor rata-rata tertinggi muncul pada aspek kemudahan penggunaan (77,6%), yang menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa menganggap fitur tersebut sederhana dan nyaman untuk dioperasikan. Sebaliknya, persepsi mereka tentang kegunaan (52,6%) dan kontribusinya terhadap pengembangan kosakata (51,1%) sebagian besar netral. Hal ini menunjukkan bahwa, meskipun fitur tersebut membantu mahasiswa memahami arti kata dengan cepat, mereka masih ragu tentang perannya dalam meningkatkan penguasaan kosakata jangka panjang. Beberapa kendala juga dilaporkan, termasuk terjemahan yang tidak akurat atau tidak lengkap, masalah teknis, dan teks pendek yang tidak dapat diterjemahkan. Hasil ini menyiratkan bahwa meskipun fitur terjemahan praktis dan mendukung pembelajaran insidental, fitur ini tidak boleh dianggap sebagai alat utama untuk mempelajari kosakata bahasa Inggris. Kesimpulannya, fitur terjemahan Instagram bekerja paling efektif sebagai alat bantu tambahan jika digunakan bersama kamus, dukungan guru, dan praktik belajar mandiri.

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, social media has become an important part of modern education, especially in language learning. Various social media platforms such as Twitter, YouTube, Instagram,

and Facebook are widely used in English language learning to provide real-time interaction, visual support, and access to language learning communities (Munandar, 2024). Among these, Instagram has become one

of the most widely used platforms in education due to its user-friendly and engaging features that support both exploration and learning (Pasha et al., 2023). Many students and teachers find Instagram useful for practicing English and discovering new vocabulary in a more flexible and interactive way. It is often used both in formal learning and during students' personal time, making it a practical tool for daily language exposure.

Vocabulary forms the foundation of English language skills, as it supports learners in speaking, writing, reading, and listening (Rasyid et al., 2021). Students who have trouble with vocabulary may find it hard to remember words, say words correctly, understand meanings, make good sentences, and speak without worrying about mistakes (Damanik et al., 2023). However, many university students face challenges in mastering vocabulary. One study found that many students struggle to remember and use new words correctly, especially when dealing with prepositions, verbs, and pronouns (Harselina et al., 2024). These difficulties are often caused by poor learning strategies, lack of exposure to English outside the classroom, and low motivation. As a result, students may perform poorly in reading, writing, and speaking tasks, leading to limited academic progress. Similarly, Laoli et al. (2025) reported that students face problems with memorization due to complicated spelling, pronunciation, and the challenge of understanding words with multiple meanings. Irregular forms like idioms and phrasal verbs are also hard to master. Without regular review and meaningful usage, students tend to forget what they have learned, and their ability to use vocabulary effectively decreases. These challenges limit students' ability to express themselves clearly, understand academic texts, and participate confidently in English communication. Understanding these issues is essential for finding better ways to support vocabulary learning and improve language skills among university students.

As students continue to face challenges in vocabulary learning, technology has become a helpful resource in language learning. One platform that stands out is Instagram, which many learners use to explore English vocabulary in an enjoyable and flexible way. They often come across new words while scrolling through captions, stories, or comments, which helps them learn in a casual but meaningful context. According to Pasha et al. (2023), Instagram's interactive and visual features make it one of the

most effective platforms for language exposure. Several studies indicate that Instagram improves English language proficiency, especially in vocabulary, writing, and communication (Erarslan, 2019; Nasution, 2023). The platform helps learners by increasing their exposure to the language and engaging them cognitively, behaviorally, and emotionally (Teh & Thien, 2024). Because Instagram is widely used by young adults and is part of their daily routines, it serves as a useful addition to traditional language learning (Erarslan, 2019). Features like Instagram Stories are considered particularly effective for language acquisition (Teh & Thien, 2024). Research also highlights Instagram's role in teaching specific language elements, such as collocations and colligations in English for Specific Purposes (Nasution, 2023). Furthermore, Instagram has been shown to boost motivation and aid vocabulary retention, as seen in a study on Turkish language learning for Kazakh speakers (Aşar, 2024).

Instagram's translation feature is a built-in tool that automatically translates captions and comments into various languages, allowing users to overcome language barriers and access content globally. By simply clicking the "See Translation" button, the feature utilizes machine translation technology to convert text from the source language to the user's preferred language. This functionality provides learners with opportunities to encounter new vocabulary in authentic contexts, as they can compare original posts with translations to enhance their language comprehension. In English learning contexts, students often use this feature to analyze sentence structures and identify lexical errors. Previous studies have shown both the advantages and challenges of Instagram's translation feature. Antika (2022) found that English-to-Indonesian translations on Instagram were generally accurate in delivering the intended meaning, with most changes happening in sentence structure. On the other hand, Wiwekananda and Utami (2024) reported that Instagram's translations of news captions had many word choice mistakes, making up 50% of the total errors. Sujianti et al. (2020) looked at the translation methods used in Instagram's mobile app and found that literal translation was the most common (48.8%), followed by borrowing (25.6%) and transposition (22.1%). These results show that Instagram's machine translation can help users understand messages, but it still has problems with word accuracy and often depends too much on direct translation

methods.

This study focuses on how English Education students at Sriwijaya University use and view the translation feature on Instagram as part of their vocabulary learning. As a platform that many people use, Instagram provides chances for incidental learning through its translation tool, helping users discover and understand new words in real-life situations. By looking at students who use Instagram for both school and personal purposes, this research aims to explore the advantages and difficulties of using the translation feature to support vocabulary growth. The results are expected to offer insights into how modern digital tools can work alongside traditional language learning methods and help students reach their educational goals.

II. METHOD

1. Research Design

This study uses a qualitative descriptive research design. According to Creswell & Creswell (2017), qualitative research is a method for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals give to a social or human problem. It focuses on collecting data in a natural setting and interpreting the data based on the participants' perceptions. In line with this, Sandelowski (2000) explains that qualitative descriptive research is especially useful when researchers aim to provide clear and direct descriptions of experiences. This approach stays close to the data and avoids heavy interpretation or complex theory. It allows the researcher to describe what participants say in their own words and present the findings in a way that is easy to understand. In the context of this study, a qualitative descriptive design allows the researcher to capture rich, detailed, and contextually grounded insights related to students' experiences and challenges with using translation features.

2. Population and Sample

This research was conducted at the English Education Department of Sriwijaya University, involving students from different semester levels. Based on pre-survey conducted, 48 students were selected as the population. They were selected because they had experience using Instagram both in their daily activities and academic contexts. In conclusions, all participants were familiar with using social media, particularly Instagram, which is relevant to the focus of

this research on Instagram's translation feature.

To select the participants, the researcher employed purposive sampling. This approach was chosen because the study specifically required students who had experience using Instagram's translation feature. By focusing only on students who met this criterion, the researcher ensured that the data collected was directly relevant to the research objectives. Purposive sampling is commonly applied in qualitative studies since it allows researchers to select participants who can provide meaningful information related to the phenomenon under investigation. According to Nyimbili & Nyimbili (2024), purposive sampling is widely used in research across different paradigms because it enables the researcher to identify an appropriate sample without bias, thereby strengthening the reliability and trustworthiness of the findings.

As the results, the researcher had 29 samples consisting of 9 students from semester 2, 10 students from semester 4, and 10 students from semester 6. The remaining 19 students were then selected as pilot test participants to ensure the validity and reliability of the research instruments. Specifically, 5 students from semester 2, 8 students from semester 4, and 6 students from semester 6. This number was based on the suggestion that a sample of around 10 participants is generally enough to evaluate whether the instructions are clear, the items are understandable, and the layout is acceptable (Hertzog, 2008). The participant distributions can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Participant Distributions

No	Semester	Total Population	Pilot Test Participant	Main Study Participant
1.	Semester 2	14	5	9
2.	Semester 4	18	8	10
3.	Semester 6	16	6	10
Total		48	19	29

This study used two main data collection techniques questionnaires and interviews.

The questionnaire employed a five-point Likert scale (from strongly disagree to strongly agree) to capture students' perceptions of Instagram's translation feature. It consisted of 12 items adapted from previous studies on social media and language learning, modified to focus on Instagram and vocabulary acquisition. The items addressed aspects such as usefulness, frequency of use,

ease of use, motivation, and vocabulary learning support. Some items were translated from Bahasa Indonesia into English, and a Table of Specification (ToS) was created to align items with their indicators.

Interviews were conducted to complement and deepen the questionnaire findings by exploring students' experiences and reasons behind their responses. A semi-structured format was used, combining prepared questions with the flexibility for follow-ups. Eight interview questions, aligned with the questionnaire's aspects, were validated by experts. Interviews were held face-to-face or via Zoom to accommodate participants' preferences, ensuring clear communication and a comfortable environment. A ToS was also prepared for the interview questions.

This combination of methods allowed for both quantitative measurement of perceptions and qualitative insights into students' vocabulary learning through Instagram's translation feature.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Research Results

1. Findings

RQ 1: Students' Perceptions in Using Instagram's Translation Feature

Findings from Questionnaire

The data were collected through a questionnaire consisting of 12 valid items. These items were grouped into three categories of students' perception: (1) usefulness of Instagram's translation feature, (2) ease of use, and (3) contribution to vocabulary learning. The results were analyzed descriptively using the percentage.

2. Usefulness of Instagram's Translation Feature (Q1, Q2, Q4, Q5, Q8)

a) Q1: I have noticed that Instagram's translation feature often shows correct word forms in English.

The first statement asked whether students noticed that Instagram's translation feature often shows correct word forms in English. A total of 0% strongly disagree, 10.3% disagree, 34.5% chose neutral, 44.8% agree, and 10.3% strongly agree. These findings show that most students agree that the feature often shows correct word forms, although some were uncertain and a smaller number disagree.

b) Q2: I have found Instagram's translations to be clear and unambiguous.

The second statement asked whether Instagram's translations are clear and unambiguous. A total of 0% strongly disagree, 13.8% disagree, 37.9% neutral, 41.4% agree, and 6.9% strongly agree. These results indicate that many students agree the translations are clear, while a large number remain neutral and some disagree.

c) Q4: Instagram's translation feature has helped me understand the meanings of English words in posts.

The fourth statement asked whether Instagram's translation feature has helped students understand the meanings of English words in posts. A total of 0% strongly disagree, 0% disagree, 17.2% neutral, 62.1% agree, and 20.7% strongly agree. These results indicate that the majority of students feel the feature is useful for understanding English words in posts.

d) Q5: I find Instagram's translation feature more helpful for everyday vocabulary learning than other tools I have used.

The fifth statement asked whether Instagram's translation feature is more helpful for everyday vocabulary learning than other tools. A total of 3.4% strongly disagree, 17.2% disagree, 55.2% neutral, 20.7% agree, and 3.4% strongly agree. These findings show that many students select neutral, some agree, and others disagree, which suggests mixed perceptions when comparing Instagram with other tools.

e) Q8: I find English captions or content on Instagram easier to understand when using the translation feature.

The eighth statement asked whether students find English captions or content on Instagram easier to understand when using the translation feature. A total of 0% strongly disagree, 3.4% disagree, 44.8% neutral, 37.9% agree, and 13.8% strongly agree. These results suggest that many students agree, while a similar number remain neutral.

3. Ease of Use (Q3, Q7)

- a) Q3: The language used in Instagram's translations has been easy for me to understand.

The third statement asked whether the language used in Instagram's translations has been easy to understand. A total of 0% strongly disagree, 0% disagree, 13.8% neutral, 72.4% agree, and 13.8% strongly agree. These results clearly show that most students find the translations easy to understand.

- b) Q7: I often find new English words when using Instagram's translation feature.

The seventh statement asked whether students often find new English words when using Instagram's translation feature. A total of 3.4% strongly disagree, 3.4% disagree, 24.1% neutral, 51.7% agree, and 17.2% strongly agree. These findings show that most students agree they discover new words through the feature, while only a small number disagree.

4. Contribution to Vocabulary Learning (Q6, Q9, Q10, Q11, Q12)

- a) Q6: I have used Instagram's translation feature to help me understand and use English vocabulary in daily situations.

The sixth statement asked whether students use Instagram's translation feature to help them understand and use English vocabulary in daily situations. A total of 0% strongly disagree, 3.4% disagree, 44.8% neutral, 41.4% agree, and 10.3% strongly agree. These results show that many students agree with this statement, but a large portion remain neutral.

- b) Q9: I often see the same words I learned from Instagram translations in other posts.

The ninth statement asked whether students often see the same words they learn from Instagram translations in other posts. A total of 0% strongly disagree, 3.4% disagree, 27.6% neutral, 55.2% agree, and 13.8% strongly agree. These results show that most students experience repeated vocabulary exposure through Instagram posts.

- c) Q10: Instagram's translation feature helps me remember new English words.

The tenth statement asked whether Instagram's translation feature helps students remember new English words. A total of 0% strongly disagree, 0% disagree, 34.5% neutral, 55.2% agree, and 10.3% strongly agree. These findings show that most students believe the feature supports their memory of new vocabulary.

- d) Q11: I often save translated posts on Instagram to review later.

The eleventh statement asked whether students often save translated posts on Instagram to review later. A total of 0% strongly disagree, 31% disagree, 41.4% neutral, 17.2% agree, and 10.3% strongly agree. These results indicate that many students do not use the saving feature, while some do.

- e) Q12: I have created English captions or comments based on what I learned from Instagram translations.

The final statement asked whether students create English captions or comments based on what they learn from Instagram translations. A total of 0% strongly disagree, 17.2% disagree, 41.4% neutral, 37.9% agree, and 3.4% strongly agree. These findings show that some students apply new vocabulary in writing, but many either disagree or select neutral.

Overall, the questionnaire findings show that students generally view Instagram's translation feature as useful, easy to use, and helpful in vocabulary learning. In terms of usefulness, most students agree that the feature often provides correct word forms, gives clear translations, and helps them understand the meanings of English words in posts. However, many students stayed neutral when comparing Instagram with other tools, which suggests that its superiority over other resources is still uncertain. For ease of use, most students reported that the translations are simple and easy to understand, and many of them also discovered new English words when using the feature. Regarding contribution to vocabulary learning, the results indicate that the feature helps students understand and sometimes use vocabulary in daily situations. It also supports repeated exposure to the same

words and assists with remembering new vocabulary. Nevertheless, fewer students used long-term strategies such as saving translated posts or creating captions based on translations. Taken together, these results suggest that Instagram's translation feature plays a positive role in supporting comprehension and vocabulary discovery, but its influence on active language production remains limited. The detailed summary of the percentage data can be found in Appendix L.

5. Findings from Interviews

a) Usefulness of Instagram Translation (I4 & I5)

Students reported that Instagram's translation feature was very helpful for understanding unfamiliar words. They explained that they often used the feature when they encountered a difficult word in an English caption. S1 stated:

"How often I use this feature? Just like when I don't understand about the what? Like when I trap in one word. Or maybe there is a hard word that I couldn't understand, And so I just, tap the feature, like, see the translation. And then after that, I know it."

This statement indicates that S1 uses the feature as a quick solution when encountering difficult vocabulary. The phrase "trap in one word" reflects the difficulty in continuing reading without knowing the meaning. Using the feature allows her to quickly access the meaning, reducing frustration and keeping the reading flow. This finding supports the questionnaire results, particularly item Q4, where the majority of students (62.1% agree, 20.7% strongly agree) stated that the feature helps them understand the meanings of English words in posts.

S2 expressed a similar view and said that she usually used the feature to make sure about the meaning of captions:

"I usually use it for understand a caption, and to be sure about the meaning of what they try to say and post."

This shows that S2 relies on the feature not only for understanding but also for confirming her interpretation of

the text. This also strengthens the result of item Q2, where many students agreed that Instagram's translations are clear and unambiguous.

Another reason students consider the feature useful is because it saves time compared to dictionaries. S1 explained:

"If we use dictionary, we have to type first and open the apps or the books. But if we just use this feature, we just have to change. We just have to tap the the features like see the translation. So the the meaning just appear in our Bahasa."

This statement demonstrates the practical advantage of Instagram's translation feature over dictionaries, which require extra effort to type or open separate apps. S2 also mentioned the speed of the feature:

"It's not detailed as dictionary, but it's more faster just to know the meaning while scrolling the social media."

These findings are consistent with questionnaire item Q5, where some students agreed that Instagram is more helpful for everyday vocabulary learning than other tools, although many remained neutral. Finally, students noted that using the feature builds confidence when engaging with English content. S2 said:

"I feel more confident reading English content now because I can quickly check the meaning."

This indicates that quick access to meaning reduces anxiety and encourages students to read more English captions, which indirectly supports vocabulary exposure. This relates to questionnaire item Q8, where many students agreed that captions are easier to understand when using the translation feature.

b) Ease of use (I1 & I2)

Students described Instagram's translation feature as easy and practical. S1 explained her experience:

"How often I use this feature? Just like when I don't understand about the what? Like when I trap in one word. Or maybe there is a hard word that I couldn't understand, And so I just, tap the feature, like, see the translation. And then after that, I know it."

This indicates that using the feature does not require any complicated steps. A single tap is enough to see the translation, making it efficient for daily use. This supports questionnaire item Q3, where most students agreed that the language used in Instagram's translations is easy to understand.

S3 also emphasized the convenience:

"I think it will be easier to use Instagram feature because they translate it directly."

The phrase "translate it directly" suggests that students appreciate the integrated nature of the feature, which does not require switching apps or copying text. This connects with questionnaire item Q7, in which more than half of the students reported finding new English words when using the feature.

S2 supported this point by saying:

"I only use the translation feature sometimes. Maybe a few time when I see a new word, I don't know. I usually use it for understand a caption, and to be sure about the meaning of what they try to say and post."

This shows that the feature is used selectively when needed, but its simplicity encourages students to rely on it instead of external tools. These comments confirm the questionnaire findings, especially Q1 and Q2, which showed that most students considered Instagram's translations clear and helpful in providing correct word forms.

c) Contribution of Instagram Translation to Vocabulary Learning (I3 & I8)

The interviews revealed that Instagram's translation feature supports vocabulary learning in multiple ways. S1 explained:

"Sometimes after seeing the translation, I can remember the word and use it again later."

This indicates that immediate exposure to both the English word and its translation helps memory retention. This finding directly supports questionnaire item Q10, where 55.2% of students agreed that the feature helps them remember new words.

Similarly, S3 added another point related to applying new words in context:

"If we meet a new word that we can't even remember how to say it and what the meaning, I will read it more. And then just imagine that word, how to use it in a sentence."

This suggests an active learning process, where the student attempts to internalize the word and think about how to apply it in context. This is consistent with questionnaire item Q12, where some students reported creating captions or comments based on new vocabulary from translations.

The feature also encourages curiosity and further exploration. S2 mentioned:

"If I'm still curious, I'll search more the information to see it in the phrase or expression."

This shows that the feature can trigger deeper learning beyond just knowing the meaning. It also resonates with questionnaire item Q9, where students noted they often encountered the same translated words in other posts, reinforcing learning through repeated exposure.

Finally, students reported that they sometimes apply new words in their own sentences. S1 said:

"Like I have said before, if the word or the vocabulary is really hard, like it is, it is hard for a foreigner like us. so it's really helped me to understand that the new word, even though I can also use that the new word, in my daily life, like or I do imitating from this word, I can make a new sentence for myself, or I can use it when I talk to my friends or to my. Yeah, who can be to anyone."

This indicates that students do not stop at understanding. They try to apply new words in their communication, which is a strong indicator of vocabulary acquisition. This finding supports questionnaire item Q6, where many students reported that they use Instagram translations to understand and use vocabulary in daily situations.

d) RQ2: Challenges in using Instagram Translation Feature (I6 & I7)

Although Instagram's translation feature helps students in learning new

vocabulary, it also presents several challenges. The main problems reported by the participants were related to the accuracy and completeness of translations. Some words were translated incorrectly, while in other cases the translation was incomplete or even failed to appear at all. These issues made students cautious and encouraged them to double-check the meaning using other tools.

These challenges mainly concerned accuracy, completeness, technical problems, and the absence of translations in specific situations. The first challenge was inaccurate or misleading translations. S1 described his experience with the phrase digital diary:

"...Digital diary I think, is the translation in Bahasa. It's produk susu digital, but I think the correct one it is about digital story because diary is like our notes, our, we write some, some story like that. Yeah. So this one, the sentence is confusing, but I know, I know the meaning, the correct meaning. Digital diary."

This statement shows how the translation feature produced an inaccurate result that was not related to the actual meaning. The phrase digital diary was translated as *produk susu digital* in Bahasa Indonesia, which is completely incorrect. The student realized that the intended meaning should be closer to digital story, because diary refers to written notes or records. This case highlights how the feature sometimes produces lexical and grammatical mistakes that confuse learners. When the translation output is misleading, students cannot rely on it to learn the correct literal meaning of a word. The second challenge was incomplete or untranslated words. S1 mentioned:

"also some words are left untranslated. So like there is, some word that is not complete translated with another word."

The same student further described:

"the translation was incomplete and miss some important words... the translation made no sense because it didn't translate the caption correctly."

These quotes show that the translation feature sometimes skipped

certain words or failed to provide a full sentence translation. When key words were missing, the overall meaning of the caption became unclear. This made it difficult for students to focus on the literal vocabulary they wanted to learn, as the incomplete output did not give them a reliable reference. Another difficulty was when the translation failed to appear at all. S2 shared:

"Also, there's time when the translation doesn't show up and it's still English when I click the translation."

This technical limitation interrupted the learning process. Instead of receiving instant help, the student had to find other tools to understand the words. This situation reduced the practicality of Instagram as a learning aid, since students could not depend on it in every situation. A different type of challenge came from comments that were short or mistyped. S3 explained:

"sometimes I found that there is a comment only have three words, then there is no translation feature in it. Because not a sentence that have any comment, only three words, two words, or maybe one word that mistyping. So, it's hard to me to understand, but when I just check the Google, it's just mistyping."

This statement highlights another technical limitation. The translation feature does not always work on very short comments or those containing spelling errors. As a result, students could not access the meaning directly and had to verify the words through other platforms such as Google.

In summary, the findings reveal four main challenges in using Instagram's translation feature for literal vocabulary learning: (1) inaccurate or misleading translations, (2) incomplete translations, (3) technical failures, and (4) untranslated short phrases. These challenges suggest that while the feature is helpful, students cannot fully rely on it. To ensure accuracy in vocabulary learning, they often need to combine Instagram's translation with other resources. The complete coding table for the interview data is presented in Appendix I.

B. Discussion

The first research question is how students at Sriwijaya University perceive the role of Instagram's translation feature in enhancing vocabulary learning. This question aimed to explore students' perceptions of the usefulness, ease of use, and contribution of the translation feature to vocabulary learning. The expectation was to identify whether students view this feature as supportive in their daily English learning.

The first theme is usefulness. The results showed that students had neutral opinions about Instagram's translation feature. Some participants said it helped them understand new words and saved time compared to using a dictionary. However, others mentioned that the translations were often wrong or incomplete. Because of this, some students preferred to check the meaning again using other tools like Google Translate or dictionaries. This mixed opinion means that the feature can help students quickly understand what they read, but it is not always reliable for accurate meaning. The finding connects to Krashen's Input Hypothesis, which says that learners need clear and understandable input to learn a language. When the translation is accurate, it helps students understand real English content and feel more confident when reading captions. But when the translation is wrong, it causes confusion and makes students lose trust in the feature. According to Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, the translation feature can act as a support tool (scaffolding) that helps students learn within their zone of proximal development. Still, this depends on how accurate the translation is. Similar to Manystighosa et al. (2022), this study found that students saw the feature as helpful for quick understanding. However, not all students agreed, since many still doubted its accuracy.

The second theme is ease of use. This was the only aspect that most students viewed positively. They said the translation feature was simple and convenient, as it only takes one click and does not require leaving the Instagram app. This finding relates to Mayer's Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning, which explains that when unnecessary mental effort is reduced, learners can process information more effectively. Since Instagram combines text, images, and translation in one place, students can focus on understanding

the content instead of dealing with complicated steps. Instagram's multimodal design also supports what Suganyadevi and V (2025) describe as dual-channel processing, where using both visual and verbal inputs helps improve memory and understanding. Likewise, Febriyanti and Salsabila (2022) found that students liked the automatic translation feature because it was easy to access, even though the translation quality was not always perfect.

The third theme is contribution to vocabulary learning, which received a neutral response from participants. Some students said that using the translation feature helped them notice and remember new words, especially when the same words appeared in several posts. However, others mentioned that they usually read the translation only once and quickly forgot the words because the process felt automatic and passive. This shows that the feature mainly supports incidental learning, where students learn new words unintentionally through exposure, but it does not strongly encourage intentional learning or long-term memory. This finding partly supports Zarfsaz and Yeganehpour (2021), who highlighted that repeated encounters are important for remembering vocabulary. It also connects to Schmitt's Vocabulary Learning Strategies, in which students use determination strategies like checking word meanings but rarely apply cognitive or metacognitive strategies such as practicing or reviewing the words later. In contrast, this finding differs from the behaviorist perspective discussed by Arisnaini (2022), which emphasizes the importance of repetition and reinforcement in learning. The students in this study did not engage in repeated practice; instead, they relied on instant understanding through machine translation. Therefore, the translation feature helps with basic comprehension and word recognition but does not greatly improve vocabulary mastery or active language use.

The second research question is what challenges university students face when using Instagram's translation feature for vocabulary learning. This question aimed to uncover the main difficulties students encountered and to compare them with previous findings. Four key challenges emerged: inaccurate or misleading translations, incomplete translations, technical failures, and untranslated short

phrases.

The first challenge is inaccurate or misleading translations. One clear example comes from the phrase digital diary. In this case, the context was that a student encountered an English caption on Instagram containing the phrase digital diary. The original caption referred to a type of personal online record or story written and shared in a digital format. However, when the student clicked the "See Translation" button, Instagram translated digital diary into the Indonesian phrase produk susu digital. This output was completely unrelated to the intended meaning. The student then explained that the correct meaning should be closer to catatan digital or digital story, because diary usually refers to personal notes or daily records. This case shows that Instagram's translation feature may generate lexical errors that confuse learners, leading them to reinterpret the meaning themselves instead of relying fully on the automatic translation. This reflects the limitation of Neural Machine Translation (NMT), which, as Briggs (2018) and Lo (2024) pointed out, often struggles with lexical and contextual accuracy. These errors reduce trust in the feature and show that it cannot fully replace dictionaries.

The second challenge is incomplete translations. Some translations skipped words or produced only partial results, which confused learners. This problem is similar to findings by Nadilla and Lubis (2022), who observed missing words and reduced clarity in Instagram translations. Such incomplete translations disrupt comprehension and weaken the tool's reliability for consistent vocabulary learning.

The third challenge is technical failures. Students experienced situations where the translation feature failed to display any result. This technical limitation reduces the practicality of the tool. Gupta et al. (2023) discussed related issues of user dissatisfaction when translation outputs are unavailable or uncontrollable. The present findings confirm that such failures hinder learning and force students to rely on external tools.

The fourth challenge is untranslated short phrases. Participants noted that very short or mistyped comments were often not translated at all. This is in line with Wiwekananda and Utami (2024), who found that translation tools struggle with non-standard input. These cases limit learners' exposure to authentic but

informal vocabulary that appears frequently in social media contexts.

Overall, the challenges reported by students align with previous research that highlighted the accuracy and reliability issues of Instagram's translation feature (Fakih et al., 2024; Wiwekananda & Utami, 2024). While the tool provides fast access to meaning, its shortcomings suggest that learners must critically evaluate outputs and combine them with other resources. Compared with behaviorist views that stress reliable repetition, the unpredictable errors of machine translation show that learners cannot simply depend on one tool. Instead, as Novak & Makhlay (2024) argued, language learning must integrate motivation, critical thinking, and a balance between formal and informal resources.

Based on the discussion of both research questions, this study concludes that Instagram's translation feature is a useful but limited tool for learning vocabulary. It offers quick access to word meanings and supports incidental learning because it is easy to use and convenient. However, the results also show that its usefulness and contribution to vocabulary growth are neutral, mainly due to inaccurate translations, incomplete results, and technical problems. As a result, the feature cannot be considered a fully dependable source for developing vocabulary knowledge. Consistent with previous studies, this research suggests that Instagram's translation feature works best as a supporting tool, not as a replacement for dictionaries or formal learning. Its main advantage is that it encourages students to engage more often with English content in their daily lives, helping to increase exposure and motivation. For better learning outcomes, students are encouraged to combine the use of this feature with more traditional strategies, such as using dictionaries, practicing new words, and seeking teacher guidance.

IV. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

A. Conclusion

This study explored university students' perceptions and challenges in using Instagram's translation feature to learn English vocabulary. The results revealed three main themes: usefulness, ease of use, and contribution to vocabulary learning. Overall, students showed mixed opinions about the feature. The ease-of-use aspect received the

highest rating, meaning that students found the feature simple, practical, and easy to access. In contrast, their views on usefulness and contribution to vocabulary learning were mostly neutral. Many students agreed that the feature helps them quickly understand English captions and recognize new words, but they were still uncertain about its accuracy and long-term effectiveness in improving vocabulary mastery. In addition, students faced four main challenges: inaccurate or misleading translations, incomplete results, technical problems, and untranslated short captions. These problems show that, although the feature is useful for quick understanding, it cannot be fully trusted as a main learning tool. To sum up, Instagram's translation feature can help students learn new words incidentally and increase their exposure to English in everyday contexts. However, its function is limited. It is most effective when used as a supportive tool together with dictionaries, teacher assistance, and independent vocabulary practice.

B. Suggestion

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, several suggestions are offered for students, teachers, and future researchers.

1. Students

Students are advised to use Instagram's translation feature only as a supplementary tool, not as their main source for learning vocabulary. Since translations can sometimes be inaccurate or incomplete, they should double-check new words using dictionaries or other reliable sources. In addition, students are encouraged to practice using new vocabulary by writing captions, sentences, or short texts, as this can help reinforce their understanding and improve long-term retention.

2. Teachers and Language Practitioners

Teachers can help students use Instagram's translation feature more critically and effectively. In the classroom, teachers may design activities such as comparing translations with dictionary meanings, spotting translation errors, and discussing the correct interpretations of words or phrases. These activities can not only enhance students' vocabulary knowledge but also develop their critical awareness of how digital translation tools

function and what limitations they may have.

3. Future Researchers

Future research could examine how Instagram's translation feature influences long-term vocabulary retention and the active use of new words. Researchers may also explore how learners at different proficiency levels experience and benefit from this feature or compare it with other translation tools. In addition, expanding future studies to include grammar, idiomatic expressions, and cultural elements would offer a more comprehensive understanding of how social media platforms contribute to language learning as a whole.

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