

# INSTAGRAM ENGLISH MICROLESSONS A new genre for non-formal EFL learning<sup>1</sup>

GLORIA CAPPELLI, NICOLETTA SIMI  
UNIVERSITÀ DI PISA

**Abstract** – Academic interest in *Instagram*'s role as an informal language learning platform has grown over the past few years. This study systematically analyses *Instagram* accounts specifically dedicated to teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL), aiming to identify common features that establish them as a genre and to provide a descriptive framework for further empirical research into the learning outcomes of this type of language exposure. This qualitative investigation examines the characteristics of 6 institutional and 21 non-institutional English language teaching accounts. Using categories from traditional classroom language instruction as the analytical framework (non-formal, contents and topics, teachers and learners and methodology and modes of presentation), this study compares informal *Instagram* teaching to traditional formal EFL education. Additionally, it contrasts the strategies employed by institutional accounts with those used by private, micro-celebrity teachers.

**Keywords:** informal English language learning; *Instagram* ELT; social media; multimodality.

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, the emergence of social media, the progress in mobile and web-based technology and the socio-cultural impact of global events such as the COVID-19 pandemic have reshaped the language learning and teaching landscape. They have modified learners' interest in face-to-face vs. online education and their awareness of the affordances of social media platforms for foreign language learning that offer dynamic and interactive spaces beyond traditional educational settings (Dos Santos 2022; Teng *et al.* 2022).

For instance, *Instagram* effectively integrates multimodal content, textual communication and social interaction. It is the third most widely used medium by Generation Z users, non-formal, people born between 1997 and 2012, alongside TikTok and Snapchat (Statista 2024)<sup>2</sup> and, according to GWI,

<sup>1</sup> The article is the result of joint research. Section 1 was written jointly by the authors. Gloria Cappelli wrote sections 2, 3, 4, and 5. Nicoletta Simi wrote sections 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1276021/instagram-snapchat-tiktok-gen-z-users/> (2.4.2024).

already in 2022,<sup>3</sup> it was the most used by Generation Alpha users (non-formal, people born after 2013). For this reason, over the past few years, a growing number of studies have focused on its potential for English language teaching and learning, thus contributing to the lively debate about the role of social media in formal, non-formal and informal education in general and foreign language learning in particular (Erarslan 2019; Gonulal 2019; Lailiyah, Setiyaningsih 2020; Teng *et al.* 2022).

Some studies have explicitly focused on *Tiktok* or *Instagram* teachers' and education influencers' accounts from a variety of perspectives. Vizcaíno-Verdú and Abidin (2023) have discussed the way in which influential teachers' identity is built on social media through micro-celebrification practices. Aslan's (2024) analysis has tackled their multimodal meaning-making practices, and Tommaso (2024) has explored the recurrent rhetorical patterns and linguistic features for achieving pedagogical and promotional communicative purposes. Canani and Zulli (2022) have investigated the impact of the content they produce when integrated into classroom practice, while others have studied the effects on learners' motivation (Simsek 2023, Meirbekov *et al.* 2024). However, to the best of our knowledge, no study has systematically analysed this type of English as a foreign language (EFL) resource on *Instagram* as a genre per se by looking at the pedagogic approach adopted, the contents offered and the skills focused on. This contribution aims to fill this gap in the literature through a qualitative investigation of these aspects in 27 *Instagram* accounts specifically aimed at teaching English to establish whether a set of recognizable features can be identified which justify their description as a distinctive genre in the panorama of the digital resources for non-formal English language learning.

Informal language learning has been typically defined as implicit and incidental learning resulting from exposure to materials not specifically designed to foster language acquisition (Toffoli *et al.* 2023). However, it has become increasingly evident that many variables are involved in language learning outside formal education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, including but not limited to learners' intentionality and the type of input to which they are exposed. The many labels used to refer to language learning beyond the traditional contexts (e.g. *Extramural English*, *Informal Digital Learning of English*, *Online Informal Learning of English*, *Informal Second Language Learning*) bear witness to the complexity of the discussion.

The type of *Instagram* content discussed in this study is specifically designed for English language learning and, therefore, lacks the predominantly unintentional, unaware, or semiconscious nature of the "prototypical" informal language learning outcome which might result from watching a movie in English or listening to English music just for fun. As Sundqvist (2024, p. 2)

<sup>3</sup> <https://ecommercedb.com/insights/chart/12590> (2.4.2024).

writes, *Instagram* ELT posts and reels are “pedagogical in nature, although technically, they are examples of informal learning”. For this reason, for the sake of the present discussion, we will adopt Dressman’s (2020) inclusive definition of informal language learning as “all activities undertaken by learners outside a formally organised program of language instruction” (Dressman 2020, p. 4). We consider being exposed to *Instagram* ELT content as one of the many contemporary forms that informal language learning can assume. However, the specific nature of the accounts investigated points to a relevant involvement of at least some form of intentionality, generic interest or linguistic curiosity on the part of the users, having English teaching as their focus. For this reason, we will use the more neutral label “non-formal” to discuss such multimodal input that learners intentionally consume outside of formal education and that engages attentive processes of metalinguistic awareness and noticing (Schmidt 1995), thus leading to prevalently explicit learning. Given the increasing popularity of this form of learning, it seems fair to assume that intentionality cannot be considered a distinctive feature of formal language learning exclusively, but rather, “intention to learn the language is not necessary, but may be present in IDLE” (Informal Digital Learning of English; Kusyk 2023, p. 57).

Several research questions guided our data collection and analysis. Firstly, we aimed to investigate the differences and similarities between English teaching in traditional formal settings and the instructional content for non-formal language learning on *Instagram*. To achieve this, we systematically deconstructed the teaching and learning process into methodology, participants and topics covered, analysing each component individually to determine whether they can contribute to defining *Instagram* ELT as a distinct genre. Secondly, we tried to determine if these dimensions vary between the accounts of “micro-celebrities” and well-established ELT institutions and companies (e.g. comparing accounts such as @britishcouncilenglishonline with those of popular education influencers).

The paper is divided into five parts. Section 2 provides an overview of the most recent literature on *Instagram* as an ELT and EFL learning platform. Section 3 presents the study’s methodology. Section 4 is dedicated to analysing the collected materials, while Section 5 offers some concluding remarks.

## 2. *Instagram* and non-formal English language learning

Social media have revolutionised information sharing by introducing interactivity, moving beyond the unidirectionality of the “broadcast age” (Manning 2014), when knowledge was passed from news outlets to their audience and feedback was (if any) delayed and impersonal. In a way, social media have broken the fourth wall and have allowed fast interaction between

all actors involved in communication. Their portability, affordability and accessibility have favoured their global spread. Their popularity among the younger generations has inspired many educators and researchers to study their potential for teaching and learning purposes, including their affordances for foreign language instruction. Studies on *Instagram* for English language learning have mainly been produced within the broader research domain of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL), which has attracted increasing attention over the past decade (Crompton, Burke 2018; Kamasak *et al.* 2021; Karakaya, Bozkurt 2022; Lei *et al.* 2022; Teng *et al.* 2022) and has been investigated in its potential for learning across locations and contexts, including informal language learning (Barrot 2022; Guo, Lee 2023; Lee 2022; Reinders *et al.* 2022; Stockwell 2022).

The pedagogic affordances offered by image-based social media platforms such as *Instagram* and *TikTok* are now widely recognised (Lee 2023). *Instagram* posts and reels (non-formal, short videos) are “multimodal ensembles”, that is, digital products which combine “a plurality of signs in different modes into a particular configuration to form a coherent arrangement” (Kress 2010 p. 162). They blend photographic and graphic elements, videos, music and sound effects, written and spoken language and elements typical of social media and digital communication, such as emojis, hashtags and geotags (Wagner 2021). Wagner (2021, p. 155) defines *Instagram* as a “multimodal microblogging genre” which requires learners to have multimodal literacy skills because, to benefit from this type of informal ELT materials, they must be able “to analyse each constituent semiotic resource (*working intramodally*) as well as the aggregate whole (*working intermodally*)”.

Aslan (2024) has analysed the multimodal composition of micro-celebrity English teachers’ reels in one of the few available genre-oriented analyses of *Instagram* for non-formal ELT adopting the conceptual framework of relational pedagogy, which focuses on the relationships between material, social and individual dimensions of learning and meaning-making. He has shown how ELT influencers create opportunities for input noticing and intake and for interaction and participation through “a transductive process from the verbal to visual modes” (Aslan 2024, p. 8) and “intertextuality and resemiotisation” (Aslan 2024, p. 11), that is, by combining carefully selected and culturally meaningful written text, spoken text, body language and images or sounds to make linguistic or cultural concepts understandable and memorable (Bonsignori, Cappelli 2020).

Another affordance for non-formal language learning is the mobility of social media platforms (Lee 2023). *Instagram*’s accounts’ creative potential favours learners’ engagement and captures their attention beyond the confined spaces of a classroom or the pages of a textbook. They can be accessed from any location where users have Internet access, thus multiplying the

opportunities for exposure to authentic language input (Teng *et al.* 2022). This favours the personalisation of the learning experience, with positive effects on the outcome since the latter depends on the learner's intentionality to engage with the resources the environment makes available (Van Lier 2007).

Autonomy development and motivation increase are, indeed, frequently mentioned in studies investigating teachers' and learners' perceptions of the use of *Instagram* in EFL (Aslan 2024; Gonulal 2019; Kern 2021; Min, Hashim 2022; Zheng *et al.* 2018). Teng *et al.* (2022) point out that *Instagram* provides many opportunities for multimodal social interaction centred on a particular topic or activity offered by the platform. *Instagram* learners-followers can interact with teachers-Instagrammers and other users via private messages, comments, as well as other means such as answering polls or liking content. Such interactions contribute to a collective knowledge-sharing environment that enhances the overall learning experience and leads to the emergence of real virtual communities formed by people sharing similar interests and desires (Erarslan 2019). Interestingly, some participants report being self-conscious and somewhat anxious when interacting on *Instagram*, fearing being judged by more proficient users, but this often leads to more accurate and well-polished language use (Lailiyah, Setiyaningsih 2020; Misnawati *et al.* 2022).

By providing a "window" to observe authentic language use and cultural practices of native speakers and more expert users of the language (Reinhardt 2019, 2020), *Instagram* creates a positive feeling of "upward social comparison", which is a well-known drive for behaviour and choices (Meier, Johnson 2022). Being exposed to what is perceived by learners as "authentic" English is often associated with a perception of "language learning gains and positive affective outcomes" (Lai *et al.* 2018). It provides opportunities for noticing differences between the forms taught in class and those encountered in context, which can enhance incidental learning (Richards 2015). In addition, interacting with other users gives learners the impression that they are having meaningful exchanges in the foreign language, which are more stimulating than those they might have had in artificial formal instruction settings (Lailiyah, Setiyaningsih 2020) and more interesting than the activities and the language they might have found in coursebooks (Nasution 2023; Meirbekov *et al.* 2024).

Most studies focusing on EFL and *Instagram* present teachers' and learners' perceived efficacy of incorporating its use in formal and informal language learning or are discussions of qualitative attitude surveys or structured and semi-structured interviews about exposure to English via social media (Gonulal 2019; Junior 2020; Lailiyah, Setiyaningsih 2020; Mahmud *et al.* 2022; Nasution 2023; Suryanti Tambunan *et al.* 2022). Overall, the surveys show that *Instagram* EFL is perceived as effective in improving all language skills, especially vocabulary and grammar. Many report that *Instagram* helps

them discover new expressions and phrases, learn idioms or lexical items typical of registers other than those represented in classroom material and use humour appropriately (Alotaibi 2023; Rezaie, Chalak 2021). It also promotes learners' creativity and motivation (Nasution 2023). Unfortunately, very few studies present empirical, experimental or quasi-experimental investigations of the actual learning outcome.

Some studies have also highlighted the challenges of using *Instagram* for learning English (Rezaie, Chalak 2021). Some learners see a limitation in the absence of structure and of a syllabus. Moreover, some complain that *Instagram* content is usually not specified for proficiency levels or registers. Therefore, it is difficult to understand whether certain expressions are appropriate for specific contexts of use or the level one sets out to attain. Abbreviations and, in general, the synthetic style used in captions and posts might be detrimental to learners' academic writing skills. If one excludes the most reputable institutional and commercial accounts, there is generally no control over the content published, which might occasionally include spelling, grammar and even pronunciation mistakes (Rezaie, Chalak 2021). Another aspect that might represent a weakness of *Instagram* as a platform for ELT is that communicative skills (e.g. speaking) are not easy to practice. Most accounts help develop receptive abilities (e.g. reading and listening) or present vocabulary and grammar rules, thus potentially resulting in an unbalanced development of the four language skills. Finally, some people have pointed out the possible risks of using mobile devices, including privacy issues, easily getting distracted by too many stimuli and the danger of technology addiction (Metruk 2022).

### 3. Research questions and methodology

Verifying the actual rather than the perceived impact of non-formal learning is somewhat difficult since, as Sundqvist (2024, p. 6) writes, it “occurs outside educational institutions”, so “it obviously cannot be ‘controlled’ and, thus, poses challenges in terms of methods”. Nevertheless, we believe that understanding the features of the sources of such learning might help better interpret possible correlations between self-reported exposure and linguistic development.

No established frameworks for analysing *Instagram*-mediated ELT content could be identified in the existing literature. For this reason, we decided to assume the main dimensions of traditional formal ELT as a heuristic viewpoint, providing a solid descriptive frame of reference. To give structure to our analysis of a still unexplored domain, we decided to organise our investigation focusing on three major categories of foreign language instruction: participants (non-formal, teachers and learners), contents (non-

formal, topics and skills) and methodology and mode of presentation. We then tried to identify and describe the main features of these components in a selection of ELT *Instagram* accounts. In addition, since some studies reported that non-formal resources are felt as less trustworthy than traditional materials (Lai *et al.* 2018; Rezaie, Chalak 2021), we tried to verify whether such features varied across different types of accounts. More specifically, we compared reputable and official institutions' accounts (e.g. @britishcouncilenglishonline) and non-institutional accounts (e.g. @ash\_britishenglish) to assess whether users' concerns were justified. For the purpose of the present discussion, we considered "institutional" the accounts of both public institutions such as the British Council or the BBC and of entities such as Cambridge English or Oxford English, which, although having a commercial aim as well, play a vital role in defining the standard of British English usage and can be considered authoritative and trustworthy.

We followed 8 "institutional" accounts and 51 "non-institutional" accounts for 12 weeks. The disparity in number is due to the availability of accounts in the two categories, with private accounts being much more numerous than reputable entities' accounts. We then selected six institutional and 21 non-institutional accounts and qualitatively analysed the posts published between February and April 2024 using the abovementioned three categories. Tables 2 and 3 in the Annexes section provide the list of all the *Instagram* accounts followed and the accounts whose content was included in the study, respectively.

The reasons for exclusion were a) failure to focus on ELT (e.g. @britishcouncil, @stage\_door\_johnny), b) featuring lessons specifically meant for specific L1 learners and having as the primary language used in the posts a language other than English (e.g. @english\_with\_manuela, @antonios.english, both addressing Italian speaking followers), c) not being personal accounts but rather collections of *Instagram* ELT materials from other sources (e.g. @english\_squad, @english.ingeneral), d) being prevalently and explicitly for profit and commercial accounts (e.g. @toefl\_official, @english\_al\_fresco), e) the teacher not being a native speaker of English (e.g. @english.with.arezou) and f) the account having less than 80.000 followers (e.g. @lola\_speak). These criteria were chosen with the sole purpose of selecting accounts that were comparable in an otherwise extremely vast and diverse offer. Inclusion and exclusion involve neither judgment as to the quality of the accounts excluded nor any specific stance relative to L1 vs. L2 English language teachers or native-speakerism in general. Section 4 describes and discusses the general trends observed and compares them across different types of accounts.

## 4. Data and discussion

*Instagram* accounts have a recognisable structure. They typically include the account's username, a profile picture (non-formal, either a photo or a logo that appears next to the username in all posts and interactions), a "bio" in which the account owners introduce themselves or describe the purpose of the account, together with the number of published posts, followers and accounts followed. The profile picture acts as an active link if "Stories" (non-formal, short-lived photos or videos that disappear after 24 hours) are available. Otherwise, it features links to share the profile. The bio can include links to external resources. A series of buttons allows users to follow, message and email the account or see similar profile recommendations. Below the bio, some accounts include "Highlights", collections of stories that are featured permanently. They showcase the best or most important Stories. The main content of an *Instagram* page is the grid of posts. Posts can be photos, videos, carousels (non-formal, multiple images or videos in one post), or IGTV (non-formal, longer videos). Each post can be accompanied by a caption, hashtags and tags of other users. Followers can either scroll the main grid of posts or look only at the available reels. They can usually leave comments. All the accounts analysed allow followers to do so.



Figure 1  
Example of an *Instagram* ELT account.



Accounts vary with respect to Highlights. All institutional accounts include several sections, which they use to organise their content into easily accessible categories. Most non-institutional accounts (80%) also include Highlights. Although some categories (e.g. vocabulary, idioms, grammar) are common across all *Instagram* ELT accounts that use this feature, they differ in interesting ways. Non-institutional accounts often include an “about me” category, with stories that explain how they came to teach English or tell followers more about them. The stories most commonly focus on their professional qualifications. Still, they can be very personal too and, occasionally, they introduce private events or non-ELT related aspects of the micro-celebrity teacher’s life. Personal information is not found on the institutional accounts, but @cambridgeenglish has a Highlight category dedicated to “the team”. In this collection of Stories, the people behind the account are introduced as they answer a question about their favourite resources for learning English. These posts create a personal connection between followers and the “accounts”. On the other hand, reputable entities such as Cambridge University Press do not need to prove their undisputed qualities as sources of ELT materials, while private individuals do, which explains the need to provide qualifications. Nevertheless, quite interestingly, Cambridge English and Oxford English accounts also include Highlights about the cities and their famous Universities. At the same time, this contributes to the narrative of these historical institutions as the home of “true English” and provides support for the quality of the materials offered via social media platforms.

By including stories of their academic and professional career, *Instagram* micro-celebrity teachers also become positive models and trigger upward envy, possibly motivating learners to follow a similar path towards mastering English. This is especially true of non-native speakers of English, whose *Instagram* teaching histories thus become professional success stories.

Except for @bbclearningenglish, all institutional accounts include self-promotional Highlights featuring courses or language programmes offered or professional opportunities (e.g. internship positions at Pearson). Some non-institutional accounts also promote books, one-to-one tutoring or other pay services. The commercial and self-promotional nature of these private accounts is quite marked.

Overall, institutional accounts publish more static posts than reels, whereas the opposite is true for non-institutional accounts. Some are exceptions: @pearsonlanguages predominantly posts videos and @english\_vocabulary and @idiom.land, which specialise in vocabulary, only post static images. Figure 2 presents the distribution of reels and static posts in the accounts included in the study.

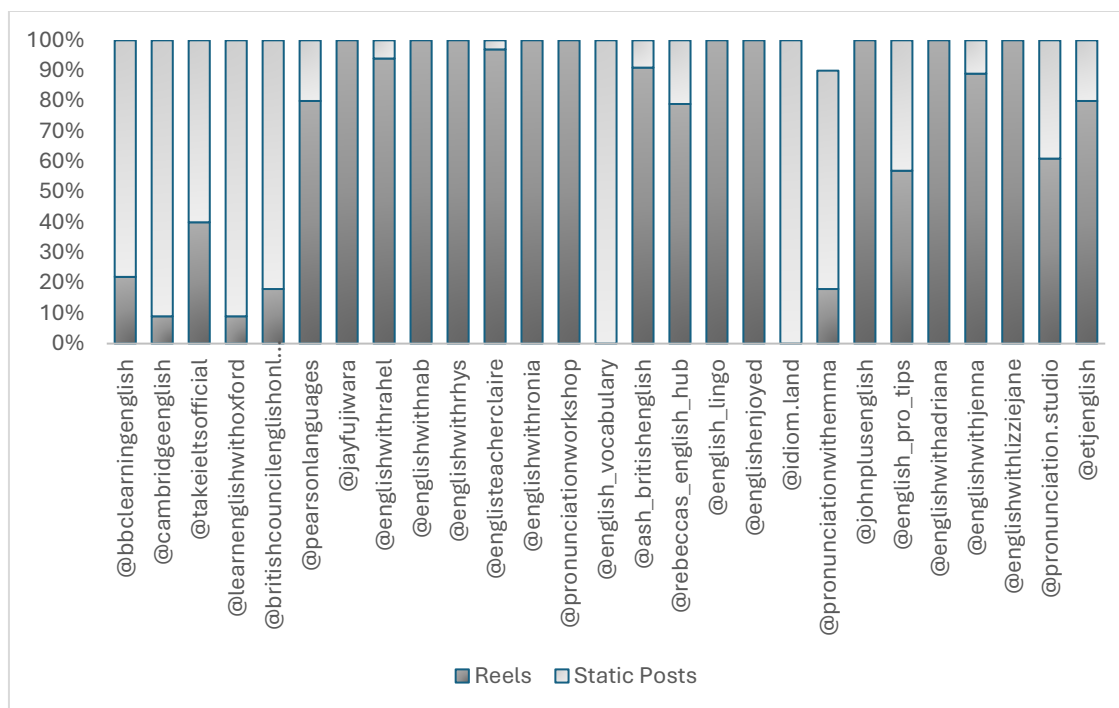


Figure 2.  
Frequency of reels vs. static posts across accounts.

#### 4.1. Contents: Topics and skills

The quantity and the contents of the posts vary greatly across accounts. Some add content daily; others post every other day, weekly, or less frequently. However, the qualitative analysis of the accounts included in the study has revealed some trends in terms of topics. Most posts focus on one concept, be it one or more lexical items, a grammar rule, the pronunciation of a word or a specific sound, or some cultural aspect of the English-speaking world. Accordingly, the content published between February and April 2024 can be classified into seven major categories: *vocabulary*, *grammar*, *pronunciation*, *use of English*, *culture*, *tips* and *other*. The macro-categories *culture*, *use of English* and *other* are quite heterogeneous. We classified posts as *culture* if they focused on the culture of English-speaking countries, ranging from books and literature to movies, public holidays and famous people's quotes. We tagged posts as *use of English* if they focused on issues of register, contextual appropriacy, differences in the varieties and other aspects related to the pragmatics of communication in English as a foreign language. Finally, the *other* category includes posts of a very diverse nature, ranging from self-promotion to personal posts, to the occasional post meant to stimulate discussion or written production (non-formal, on complex skills), to the importance of English for career purposes. Figures 3 and 4 present the distribution of topics across accounts.

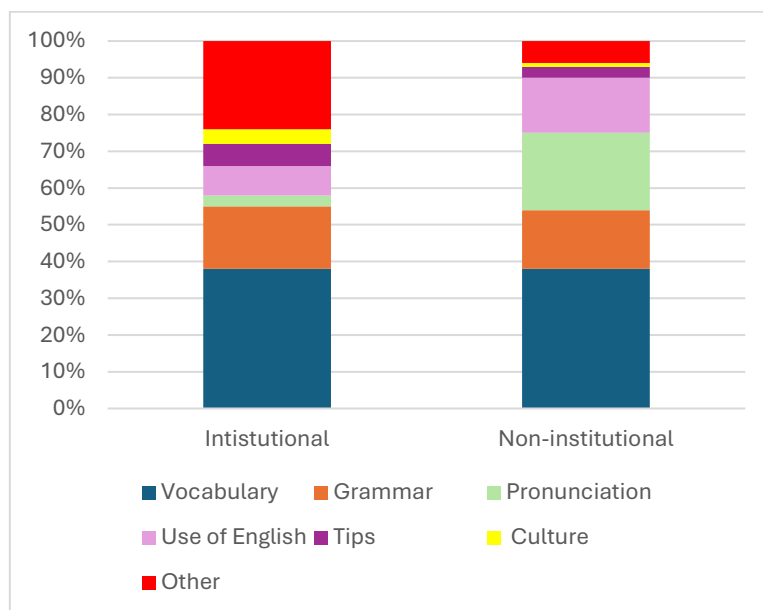


Figure 3. Average distribution of different types of content within the two types of accounts.

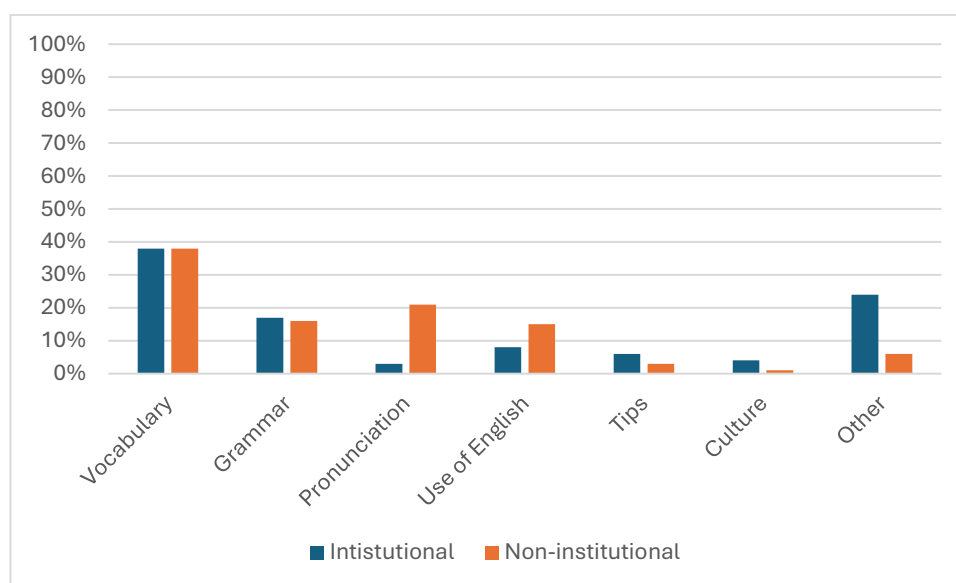


Figure 4. Comparison of average content distribution between accounts.

Both institutional and non-institutional accounts provide abundant lexical and morpho-syntactic input: vocabulary and grammar are equally represented in the two groups. Vocabulary posts introduce new words or phrases. Static posts usually present a word, an expression or an idiom associated with an image of the referent or with a definition and an example sentence. The presentation of vocabulary in reels has very diverse formats, ranging from people using vocabulary in context or explicitly explaining the meaning of a certain word or

idioms. Many posts present and explain idiomatic expressions, proverbs or the cultural nuances associated with a lexical item, sometimes in the form of more or less interactive quizzes or games and puzzles. Figure 5 offers examples.



Figure 5

Vocabulary posts by (from the left) @englishwithrys (first column), @english\_lingo (second column), @learningenglishwithoxford (third column, top), @bbclearningenglish (third column, bottom), @cambridgeenglish (fourth column, top), @idiom.land (fourth column, bottom).

Similarly, grammar posts can include explanations of grammar rules, debunk common mistakes and show how to use specific grammatical structures correctly. As in the case of vocabulary posts, they can be reels in which somebody explains, sometimes simulating a classroom setting, or, more frequently, static posts in the form of multiple-choice quizzes.

This shows that, despite the innovative platform, the type of input provided aligns with that generally offered by traditional textbooks and classroom materials. In the case of well-established entities' accounts, the reason for this might also be the nature of the materials produced. Creating static posts is faster and easier than making videos with professional actors. Still, they have the limitations of any other written document when it comes to conveying information and they are much more suitable for activities that only involve a receptive or structured fruition of the input. *Instagram*, however, offers many affordances to provide a diversified presentation of the input. Non-institutional accounts seem more committed to exploiting its multimodal potential and, therefore, more productive when designing creative multimodal content. Yet, they also opt for more explicit vocabulary and grammar lessons than other input types.

Pronunciation posts are typically in video format. A speaker explains how to pronounce complex sounds or words with examples. In one case, @pronunciation.studio, posts are very technical and even show the articulatory

position of sounds.<sup>4</sup> Most frequently, though, posts in this category adopt a folk linguistics approach and pronunciation is rendered in written format with letter combinations typically pronounced like those to be learnt, as in Figure 6.



Figure 6  
Speak fast (@englishwithnab).

Tips usually focus on strategies for effective language learning, including advice on study techniques and maintaining motivation, but also recommendations for apps and external resources that can (allegedly) maximise learning. These posts are usually sponsored (in non-institutional accounts) or collaborations (in institutional accounts).

Use of English and Culture posts are very interesting categories. The former includes information about register-appropriate expressions or situational language (e.g. “how to” posts or simple dialogues “at the airport”, “at the restaurant”, etc.). They also offer alternatives to express basic concepts in a diversified way. Moreover, they include posts about the differences between English standards. Culture posts range from short reels about popular destinations (e.g. *Welcome to London*, @takeieltofficial) to micro-documentaries about various topics (e.g. *Shakespeare and the Globe Theatre*, *It’s Tea O’Clock*, @britishcouncilenglishonline; *What is Britain*, @ash\_britishenglish) and videos where seminal literary works are narrated (e.g. *The Story of Hamlet*, @britishcouncilenglishonline).

Institutional and non-institutional accounts differ in terms of the average distribution of these categories of posts. More specifically, pronunciation and

<sup>4</sup> For an example of the pronunciation of the voiced alveolar approximant sound of English /r/ see <https://www.instagram.com/p/C6VkSlkICUp/> (2.4.2024).

issues related to the use of English in context are more widespread in non-institutional feeds (and this is in line with the production of more reels). In contrast, posts related to the English-speaking world's culture and tips for improving specific skills or developing specific abilities are more common in institutional accounts. The latter also publish posts on a greater variety of issues of a very diverse nature, including international certificates, testimonials by learners around the globe, interviews with celebrities and inspirational and humorous posts that are not inherently geared towards ELT. These differences can be easily explained by the fact that some of these accounts are connected to international examination boards or publishing businesses. Therefore, they provide followers with useful information about their particular “services”. On the other hand, accounts such as @bbclearningenglish or @britishcouncilenglishonline also have the “mission” to represent a lingua-culture and teaching English becomes just one of the components of the cultural world they present and promote. It should be mentioned that some intra-group variability is present, as Table 1 shows. A more thorough and extended quantitative investigation would be necessary to reach more generalisable conclusions.

Instagram account	Vocab.	Gram.	Pron.	Use of Eng.	Tips	Cult.	Other
<i>Institutional accounts</i>							
@bbclearningenglish	56%	26%	4%	5%	0%	0%	9%
@cambridgeenglish	34%	13%	5%	11%	0%	0%	38%
@takeieltsofficial	26%	14%	2%	7%	11%	7%	33%
@learnenglishwithoxford	55%	23%	2%	6%	0%	2%	13%
@britishcouncilenglishonline	42%	26%	0%	9%	5%	10%	8%
@pearsonlanguages	13%	2%	8%	8%	19%	5%	46%
<i>Non-institutional accounts</i>							
@jayfujiwara	14%	43%	14%	29%	0%	0%	0%
@englishwithrahel	49%	3%	3%	34%	11%	0%	0%
@englishwithnab	38%	23%	8%	31%	0%	0%	0%
@englishwithrhys	43%	36%	11%	7%	4%	0%	0%
@englishteacherclaire	58%	24%	3%	12%	3%	0%	0%
@englishwithronia	31%	48%	10%	10%	1%	0%	0%
@pronunciationworkshop	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
@english_vocabulary	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
@ash_britishenglish	67%	10%	6%	8%	0%	4%	6%
@rebeccas_english_hub	45%	15%	18%	7%	2%	2%	12%
@english_lingo	71%	14%	2%	12%	2%	0%	0%
@englishenjoyed	26%	5%	32%	26%	0%	5%	5%
@idiom.land	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
@pronunciationwithemma	0%	0%	64%	0%	0%	0%	36%
@johnplusenglish	87%	0%	9%	4%	0%	0%	0%
@english_pro_tips	45%	8%	8%	4%	0%	0%	34%
@englishwithadriana	17%	17%	8%	33%	17%	0%	8%
@englishwithjenna	22%	33%	33%	11%	0%	0%	0%
@englishwithlizziejane	75%	13%	0%	13%	0%	0%	0%
@pronunciation.studio	0%	0%	94%	0%	0%	0%	6%
@etjenglish	0%	0%	60%	20%	20%	0%	0%

Table 1  
Distribution of content type across accounts.

Four out of six institutional accounts promote British English and British culture in general, while @takeieltssofficial and @pearsonlanguages insist more on the instrumental and international nature of English as a global language. However, whereas the former does so by simply posting about differences between British and American English that might be useful for the IELTS exam, the latter's feed features many posts by non-native speakers of English and about the role of English in global mobility and relocation, thus adopting a general view of the language as a lingua franca. The non-institutional accounts generally refer to either British English or American English standards and specify which one. Some have as a selling point the promise to help followers learn to speak "true" British English (e.g. @ash\_britishenglish) or "as a real American" (e.g. @englishwithnab).

Occasionally, some posts focus on specific skills, such as reading or listening comprehension or provide prompts for writing and speaking. This happens mostly on institutional accounts' feeds, especially those connected with international examinations. These accounts also offer most tips, usually about performing better in exams (e.g. IELTS, Pearson English Test). However, some non-institutional accounts also provide tips on expanding one's knowledge of English through movies or books or through some third-party app that sponsors them. As is evident, the nature of the content posted is influenced by the nature of the platform. It is undoubtedly easier to provide content that does not require much feedback (e.g. the meaning of a word, a grammar rule) or for which feedback is easy to give (e.g. multiple-choice quizzes about specific aspects). Providing opportunities for speaking or writing requires interaction with an interlocutor, which is certainly more challenging to implement on a platform that primarily relies on asynchronous content production and fruition.

#### **4.2. Participants: Teachers and learners**

For the present study, we considered the content source to be *teachers*, be it a real, identifiable person or an Instagram account, and followers to be the *learners*. We analysed the type of content delivery and the way in which learners-followers receive and interact with it, with the teacher account, and with each other. To investigate participants' interaction, we looked at images/videos and their captions and comments.

Knowledge can be passed on in different ways in static posts. Content is presented via single images or carousels. It is often graphically more appealing and creative than content in standard printed materials. It is also understandably more synthetic in terms of the amount of text provided. However, *Instagram* static posts and reference books or printed reference materials often share the same type of information delivery: rules, expressions and words are presented, paraphrased, exemplified and illustrated when appropriate.

Reels exploit the full potential of multimodality. Post-production editing allows teachers to integrate their delivery with additional tools for improving explanations. This potentially results in more effective teaching and better learning. Reels highlighting common mistakes or criticising other *Instagram* teachers' posts which contain inaccuracies represent an interesting product. They are only marginally geared towards ELT. On the one hand, these videos aim to shed light on foreign speakers' frequent errors and, at the same time, they serve as a platform to showcase the account owner's professionalism. By presenting themselves as reliable and capable teachers, creators aim to establish credibility within the *Instagram* ELT community.

Different *Instagram* teacher types can be identified, which we chose to label as *explainers*, *enactors* and *popularisers* based on their preferred strategies for input presentation. *Explainers* sometimes reproduce traditional language teaching forms and settings, talking directly to the followers, explaining rules, exemplifying concepts, practising pronunciation, etc. Explanations can sometimes be delivered at meaningful locations, such as the aquarium to introduce the difference between *fish* and *fishes* (Figure 8). Static posts tend to fall into this category and they are occasionally used to teach complex skills, such as reading or writing. Figures 7 and 8 exemplify this type of teaching action.

**BRITISH COUNCIL**

### My last holiday

My last holiday was a five-day trip to Prague in the Czech Republic. I know Prague well **because** I lived there when I was at university, more than ten years ago.

Instead of staying in a hotel, I stayed with one of my old friends. **It was so much fun, and a little bit like my old life. I wanted to do all the same things I did in my university days, so** I visited the university. It has changed a lot and looks more modern. I also went to the supermarket near my old house. **I loved seeing all the different foods.** I was really happy to find my favourite cheese and chocolate biscuits **but** they were a bit more expensive than I remember!

**We did some touristy things too.** We walked up **beautiful** Petrin Hill and around the castle. The views of the city are **amazing** up there. We walked across the **historic** Charles Bridge. My friend's flat is very near the TV Tower **so** we saw the famous baby statues climbing up it. Those things haven't changed, of course.

### Top Tips for writing

1. **Try to make your writing interesting for the reader. To do this, you can make it personal with your own memories and experiences.**
2. **Use adjectives to add detail to your descriptions.**
3. **Write clear and simple sentences** and organise your ideas in short paragraphs. Give each paragraph a different topic.
4. **Use so, but, and, because and other linking words.**

LearnEnglish

Figure 7.

Static post by @britishcouncilenglishonline explaining how to write a text.





Figure 8

*Instagram* teachers explaining (top, left to right: @jaifujiwara, @englissteacherclaire, @pronunciationworkshop, @ash\_britishenglish; bottom: @englishwithrahel).

*Enactors* present concepts via short sketches in which dialogues are performed as if they were learners of English, examiners, or language users in different situations and from different varieties. Followers can learn by example, inferring relevant structures and words with the help of subtitling or other verbal and non-verbal graphic elements. Figures 9-11 show some examples.

Finally, some videos present different kinds of information (usually cultural knowledge) as short documentaries. We have called these types of *Instagram* teachers *popularisers*. Some static posts have the same function. For example, they might report a quote by a famous person (e.g. Bob Marley's "Life is stronger than death", @bbclearningenglis). Through the caption, followers will learn about the Anglophone World's culture or language (e.g. how to form comparatives). Figure 12 features three examples from @bbclearningenglish.

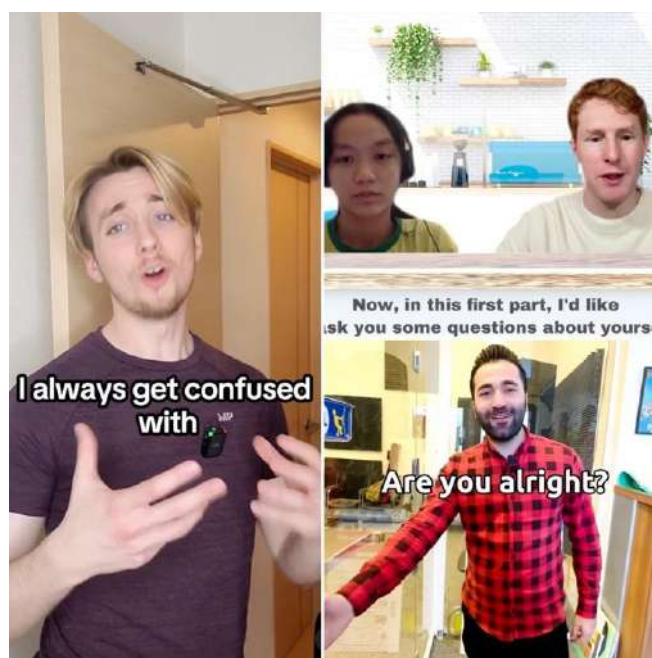


Figure 9

@ash\_britishenglish pretending to be a learner confused by specific grammar rules (left), @englishwithrahel enacting welcoming a colleague (right, bottom), @english\_pro\_tips enacting the beginning of the speaking test for a language certificate exam (right, top).



Figure 10.

@englishwithrahel enacting a dialogue at a restaurant with expressions for different proficiency levels (left), @english\_lingo enacting a dialogue with his daughter Sophia meant to teach the concept of littering (right, top), @englishwithnab enacting a “variety battle” with his double to present words that differ in BrE and AmE.

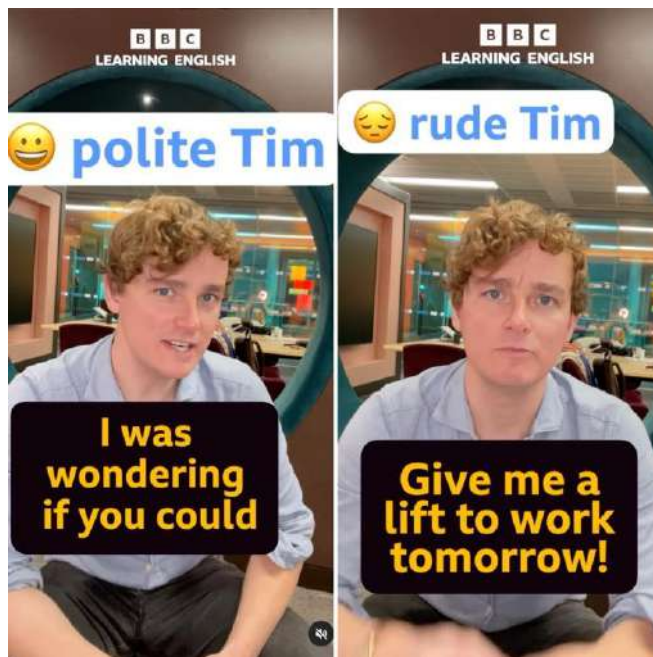


Figure 11  
 @bbclearningenglish with Tim enacting dialogues to exemplify appropriate ways to make a request.



Figure 12.  
 Bob Marley’s quote containing the comparative form of the adjective *strong* (top), *Hamlet* narrated in a short video (left, bottom), a short video about different tea-drinking habits (right, bottom).

The analysis of captions accompanying static posts reveals that the teacher's role is carried out through several common strategies across accounts. Captions can be *descriptive* and provide a title for the image or video (e.g. “Present Perfect Tense” in association with a video in which the rules and use of the tense are explained) or include the transcription of the spoken component of a video. They can be *explanatory* and provide further insight into the topic of the picture or video to help learners understand better (see Figure 13).

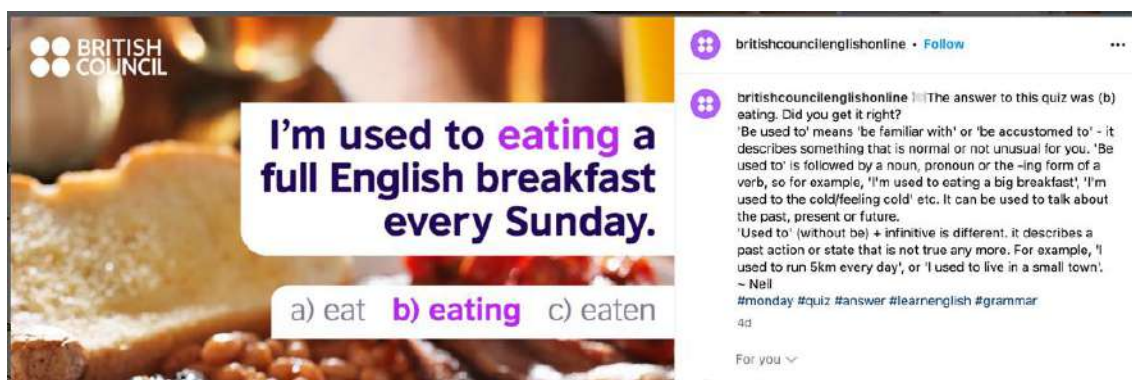


Figure 13

Explanatory caption which explains the correct answer and the meaning of the expressions in the post (by @britishcouncilenglishonline).

Captions can include a question to assess whether the rule presented in the image has been learnt. This can be a multiple-choice or open question. In such a case, they are *complementary* to the visual component because they integrate and complete the teaching act. Most captions, though, are *interactive* or at least include an element of interactivity. Interactive captions include forms of direct address to followers. They can explain something and then ask them to leave a comment that answers a question, offers a personal opinion or anecdote, or expands on the post's topic. Or they can be complementary to the post and directly involve the reader, thus forming a more complex multimodal ensemble and micro-lesson. Figure 14 is an example. “Kate” discusses how you can improve English by watching movies and the caption by “Neil” prompts followers to share their personal experiences with English movies and then directs them towards the clip and other external resources.

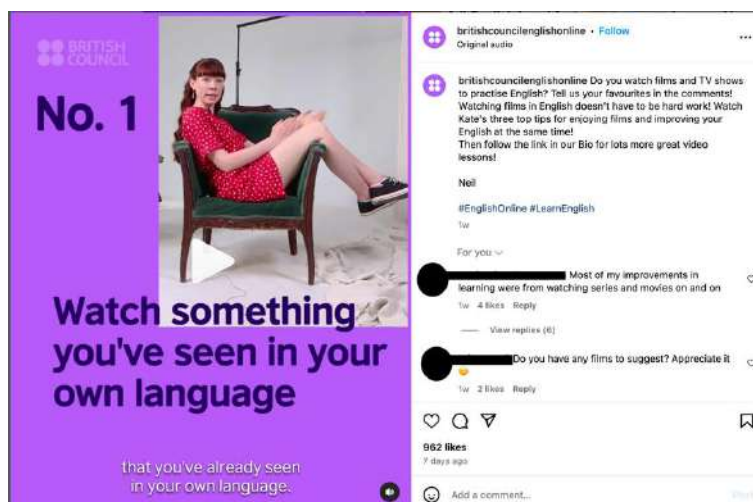


Figure 14

Example of complementary + interactive caption (@britishcouncilenglishonline).

Comments can be compared to a virtual classroom space where interaction between the participants in the learning event happens. The analysis of a small selection of posts (non-formal 10 per account) revealed that the majority of the first-level comments (non-formal, those produced as a direct reply to the post and not to other users' comments) are learners-followers' answers to questions asked either in the visual / video component of the post or in the caption (80%), followed by expressions of appreciation for the content (8%), questions for clarification (5%), or criticism (2%). Some comments (5%) are not strictly related to the pedagogic nature of the post and either focus on the people on video (e.g. commenting on their appearance) or are spam comments advertising products or promoting some propaganda.

Second-level comments generally include feedback (90%), further explanations and details (7%), appreciation and support (2%) and some non-relevant replies, usually spam (1%). Peer-to-peer feedback is more frequent than teacher-learner feedback, especially once a few comments have been posted or after some time since publishing the "lesson". Very often, remarks and feedback come from other ELT accounts, usually less influential ones, who try this way to make themselves known and increase the number of their followers. The most influential accounts usually only provide feedback for the first few comments and then move on. Accounts related to businesses frequently use feedback to promote their services and direct followers towards their courses or other external resources. Overall, in the accounts analysed, peer interaction seems to be more productive and often more useful and to the point than interaction with the teachers.

### 4.3. Methodology and modes of presentation

All posts are multimodal ensembles, combining verbal and non-verbal elements. This is not a novelty in ELT per se. However, *Instagram* ELT exploits the integration of multiple semiotic resources to maximise input noticing. Moreover, the platform's technical features shape the input presentation by forcing creators to design short and effective “bite-sized language teaching” materials (Aslan 2024).

Static posts exploit different font combinations, colour patterns and the juxtaposition of verbal and non-verbal elements to draw learners' attention to what each post wants to teach. In this sense, they do not differ much from flashcards and other traditional multimodal strategies adopted in the language classroom or printed materials. Some posts focusing on vocabulary items, expressions or idioms pair the lexical label with a picture of the referent or with an image representative of its meaning or the context in which it would be used. The major difference between traditional printed materials or flashcards and *Instagram* posts is that the latter usually present one concept at a time, out of context and simultaneously provides information about different aspects (e.g. pronunciation, spelling, meaning, phonetic transcription, an example of its usage and referent's images). Each piece of knowledge becomes, therefore, easily noticeable and accessible and each post is a micro-lesson in itself. The most interesting aspect of static ELT posts seems to be the interaction with captions. They often enter into a complementary relationship with the visual component and guide the follower along a specific learning path by asking them to use the rule or expressions in the comments, find out more about it by following a link or providing more examples of similar words, phrases or contexts of use. Many static posts, moreover, are slides containing multiple choice questions or “language challenges” organised as a series of slides in a carousel, with the correct answers provided in the caption or as feedback to comments.

As can be expected, reels are the type of posts that exploit the platform's affordances the most. Videos by explainers, enactors and popularisers share some common features, but they also have unique modes of presentation. *Instagram* teachers can be on camera or use voice-over. Most non-institutional accounts belong to micro-celebrity teachers who are the protagonists of their reels. Institutional accounts only feature a few reels with actual people, generally enactors or popularisers. In line with Aslan's (2024) findings, most reels were found to exploit transduction and transformation: meaning construal is the result of the presentation of concepts through different alternative semiotic resources encoding the same type of information (e.g. written and spoken language, gestures and images) and changes within the same mode (e.g. using prose and poetry to present the same idea).

Explainers' reels exist in very diverse formats. In their most basic form, the *Instagram* teacher is on camera and talks directly to followers. As mentioned in section 4.2, some reproduce a traditional teaching setting, as in Figure 15.



Figure 15

@jayfujiwara teaching form of lexical verbs after auxiliaries.

However, even in these cases, they can be quite creative, inventing songs and even posting new reels that join the original video and followers' videos, as in Figure 16. Here, @jayfujiwara is teaching the use of auxiliaries and a follower is playing his soundtrack for the original reel.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> @jayfujiwara's original reel: <https://tinyurl.com/jayfujiwara1> (2.4.2024) and the second reel with the follower's soundtrack video <https://tinyurl.com/jayfujiwara2> (2.4.2024).

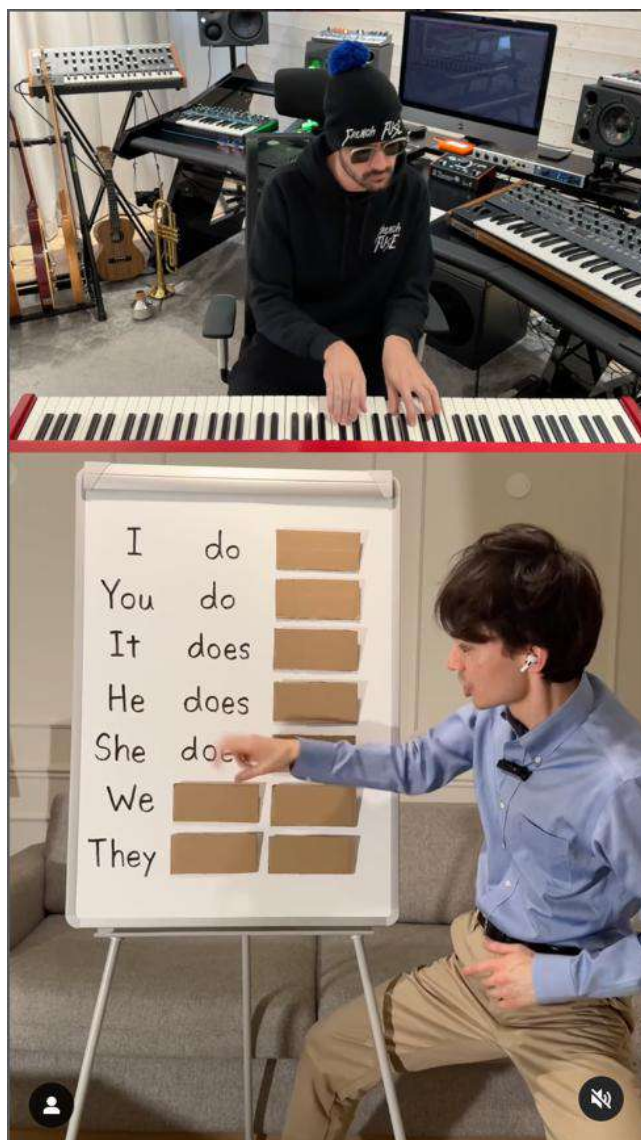


Figure 16  
@jayfujiwara and @frenchfusemusic's reel.

Besides the video recording of the teacher speaking and often using iconic gestures to increase conceptual accessibility (Bonsignori, Cappelli 2020), reels may include graphic elements and realia to highlight important concepts or enhance and integrate the speaker's words and explanations. This is especially common with vocabulary lessons, where a combination of spoken and written language is often associated with images of the referents. Other graphic elements are also used, such as a flashing stop sign to mark wrong usage and phonetic transcriptions of specific sounds (either actual IPA symbols or folk linguistics transcriptions), as in the examples shown in Figure 17.



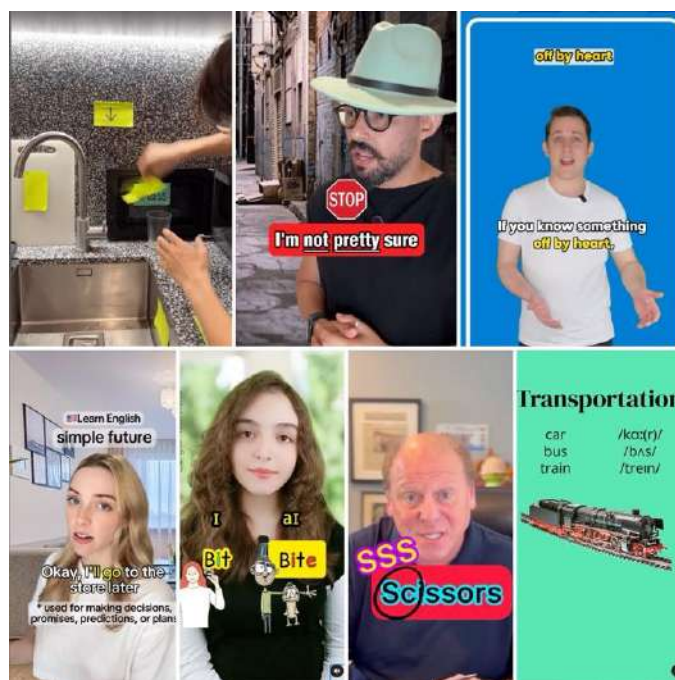


Figure 17

Use of multiple semiotic resources and transduction in explainers' reels (top, left to right: @jayfujiwara, @englishwithnab, @englishwithrhys; bottom, left to right: @englishteacherclaire, @englishwithronia, @pronunciationworkshop, @learningenglishwithoxford).

These videos and static posts reproduce the Presentation – Practice – Production (PPP) methodology, although only in a partial form. The presentation phase is predominant. Posts including quizzes or polls in the visual component or captions can be equated to the practice stage of a lesson: learners try their hands at the newly acquired rules or expressions. Occasionally, production is prompted as an invitation to write something in the comments or to post videos with attempts to use what has just been learnt. However, this is rare and what is generally lacking is the possibility of receiving thorough and constructive feedback, especially for spoken production. Some reels simulate practice/production by allowing some time for followers to complete a sentence or pronounce a word and then the *Instagram* teacher provides the “solution”. Alternatively, the teacher plays a part and then the video allows the follower some time to read the following turn.<sup>6</sup> These cases represent an attempt to create what Aslan (2024, p. 7) defines as “a simulation-based pattern of participation framework”. Institutional accounts post more content meant to stimulate production than non-institutional accounts, probably because speaking and writing skills play an important part

<sup>6</sup> Examples can be found by following these links: <https://tinyurl.com/cambridgeenglish1> (2.4.2024); <https://tinyurl.com/pearsonlanguages1> (2.4.2024); <https://tinyurl.com/cambridgeenglish2> (2.4.2024); <https://tinyurl.com/tofluency1> (2.4.2024); <https://tinyurl.com/ashbritishenglish3> (2.4.2024).

in the international certificate exams they are associated with. This might indicate that they are not meant as an independent source of informal EFL but as a supplement to traditional preparation courses. Some posts stimulate meta-linguistic or strategic reflection on the learning process (see Figure 18). However, although the caption reads, “Are you a grammar enthusiast? Or perhaps you’re an avid 📖 word collector? 😊 Maybe you’re a bit of both – but which is more important when you’re trying to learn and use a new language? 🗣️ Join the debate!”, no feedback is provided in the comments.



Figure 18

Post by @bbclearningenglish meant to prompt written argumentative text production.

Enactors act as if in a specific situation or occasionally simulate dialogue with other people by “reduplicating” their image. The dialogues may aim to teach certain words or structures or show what is appropriate. Like explainers’ videos, all reels have subtitles and the relevant elements are usually highlighted in different colours or font sizes to ensure that learners understand the aim of the micro-lesson. They are often humorous. Body language plays an especially important role in these short sketches.<sup>7</sup> Enactors’ reels are difficult to classify according to the traditional teaching models because followers are expected to learn by example. They represent an inductive, usage-based form of teaching, where rules must be inferred from examples of language in action. There is no space for practice and production is only occasionally prompted by captions.

<sup>7</sup> Some examples of enactor’s reels are the following: <https://tinyurl.com/englishteacherclaire2> (2.4.2024); <https://tinyurl.com/rebeccasenglishhub1> (2.4.2024); <https://tinyurl.com/englishlingo1> (2.4.2024); <https://tinyurl.com/bbclearningenglish2> (2.4.2024).

Overall, they share the transductive nature of explainers' videos and their use of resemiotisation, as verbal to visual modes are intertwined or used as alternative but parallel means to establish "a form-meaning relationship between the linguistic unit and its visual representation" (Aslan 2024, p.8).

Popularisers' reels are uncommon and, in our sample, only available on institutional ELT accounts, except for a post about Britain by @ash\_britishenglish. They are, nevertheless, quite interesting because they are primarily meant to disseminate cultural knowledge and, in a way, build the brand popularity of English and the Anglophone culture. Popularisation videos often involve intertextuality (non-formal, connecting specific teaching content with other culturally relevant texts). Thus, a video about Shakespearean expressions still in use today provides the opportunity to learn about the great playwright,<sup>8</sup> while another video discusses video games and the subtitles allow followers to learn relevant vocabulary and practice listening comprehension.<sup>9</sup> Other reels offer a narration of the plot of famous literary works such as Shakespeare's most famous plays.<sup>10</sup> These reels, like others by explainers that include clips of famous movies or TV series exemplifying the use of certain expressions, present contexts in which language is used more authentically and which can, therefore, enhance the learning process significantly and support motivation.

## 5. Concluding remarks

Formal instruction of language follows a structured syllabus, usually relies on a specific methodology (e.g. Presentation, Practice, Production – PPP) and reliable reference material (e.g. textbooks, grammar books) and aims at developing the four skills in a balanced way. Moreover, it involves interaction with teachers and peers at all stages of the teaching/learning process. Feedback and formal assessment are typical measures of learners' progress. In other words, "traditional" settings offer a structured learning environment with teacher guidance. Learning English via *Instagram* differs from this model in many ways, the most evident being the opportunity for individuals to explore content based on personal interests whenever they wish and for as long as they like and the lack of a structured learning path design (non-formal, sequences of lessons aimed at gradually building learners' proficiency). Each post constitutes a micro-lesson and its graphically pleasant or entertaining nature has the potential to capture the attention of learners effectively, as surveys seem to indicate.

<sup>8</sup> <https://tinyurl.com/learningenglishwithoxford> (2.4.2024).

<sup>9</sup> <https://tinyurl.com/britishcouncilenglishonline3> (2.4.2024).

<sup>10</sup> <https://tinyurl.com/britishcouncilenglishonline4> (2.4.2024).

In terms of contents and topics, *Instagram* EFL materials are predominantly dedicated to vocabulary and grammar, that is, to knowledge of useful expressions, lexical labels and rules, presented through an approach resembling the PPP model, but in which opportunities for production are widely lacking (unless followers join pay courses or one-to-one tutoring).

Many posts are more reminiscent of situational rather than communicative language teaching methodologies. As for participants, even when competent, engaging and reliable, *Instagram* teachers frequently fail to consistently provide the most crucial element in the educational relationship, which is feedback. Although feedback can be provided in the comments, it tends to be lacking in most of our data. In contrast, peer-to-peer feedback appears to be the most valuable form of assessment available on the platform and often the only one. It should be noted that, since only native speakers of English were included in this analysis, no mistakes could be found in the content proposed. Nevertheless, some explanations in non-institutional accounts were quite naïve and more about folk linguistics than the result of meta-linguistic awareness.<sup>11</sup> For this reason, although a valuable and interesting platform for learning vocabulary, useful expressions, improving listening and reading abilities and learning (or rather revising) grammar rules, the platform does not appear to provide sufficient support for a balanced development of the four skills. Rather, it seems to be an ideal addition to traditional foreign language instruction or a good space for expanding and maintaining skills acquired more traditionally.

The modes of presentation of EFL content are the most interesting feature of *Instagram* ELT since teachers creatively exploit the platform's affordances, enhancing input noticeability and potentially keeping learners' attention. Moreover, by featuring authentic material and offering opportunities to connect with native speakers of English and other users worldwide, they raise interest in the Anglophone lingua-culture and increase motivation to learn English. Institutional accounts seem to be especially invested in promoting the cultural side of ELT, which is the major difference we could observe between the two types of accounts. Overall, institutional accounts appear to adopt a more traditional approach to lexical and morpho-syntactic content presentation and to avoid folk linguistics in favour of well-researched explanations and illustrations. They also provide more opportunities for global skill development, awareness of language learning strategies and knowledge of the English-speaking world. Our investigation did not, however, reveal any significant difference in the reliability and accuracy of the teaching imparted by the institutional and non-institutional accounts included in the sample.

<sup>11</sup> An example is the explanation of the present perfect vs. simple past usage in American English: <https://tinyurl.com/englishwithjenna> (2.4.2024).

The present study has the limitations of most qualitative studies carried out on small data sets. Nevertheless, it can offer an operational framework for further research into non-formal EFL learning and social media. Each of the identified components should be further investigated qualitatively and quantitatively to understand better the input offered via this extramural exposure to English. While the present study provides insights into the generic features of *Instagram* ELT accounts, it is important to acknowledge that we were unable to thoroughly discuss the linguistic input provided in greater detail (e.g. what morpho-syntactic aspects are most commonly presented, the ratio of academic vs informal vocabulary, which semantic fields are privileged, etc.), since it would have exceeded the limits of the present article. Despite this, we believe that such an overview would yield significant contributions to the field. Future research should, therefore, focus on the nature and quality of the input offered on the platform, as such investigation could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the implications for students' learning outcomes. Moreover, future empirical studies could focus on assessing the impact of different types of *Instagram* material. The analysis presented in this study will hopefully offer a frame of reference for isolating the role of multiple aspects and variables in English language learning through *Instagram*.

**Bionotes:**

Gloria Cappelli is Associate Professor of English Language and Linguistics at the University of Pisa. Her research focuses on semantics and pragmatics, ESP and multimodal discourse and second and foreign language acquisition in learners with and without dyslexia. She has published in national and international journals and collected volumes. She has authored and edited books on English verbs of cognitive attitude, lexical semantics, tourism communication and the impact of dyslexia on language skills.

Nicoletta Simi is a Research Fellow (RTDa) at the Department of Philology, Literature and Linguistics at the University of Pisa. Before her current post, she was a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Department of Psychology of the University of Tübingen, Germany. She holds a PhD in English linguistics from the University of Pisa. Her interests involve the development of a comprehensive understanding of key phenomena at stake in reading comprehension processes. She gives further attention to the underlying general processes such as cognitive processing speed, working memory and motivational / anxiety aspects of language use.

**Authors' addresses:** [gloria.cappelli@unipi.it](mailto:gloria.cappelli@unipi.it); [nicoletta.simi@unipi.it](mailto:nicoletta.simi@unipi.it)

**Acknowledgements:** This research was financed by the Italian Ministry for the University (PRIN 2020 no. 2020NNJTW3).

## References

- Alotaibi M.S. 2023, *Exploring the Impact of Using Instagram to Develop Saudi EFL Learners' Vocabulary*, in "Journal Corner of Education, Linguistics, and Literature" 2 [4], pp. 280-294.
- Aslan E. 2024, *Bite-sized language teaching in the digital wild: Relational pedagogy and micro-celebrity English teachers on Instagram*, in "System" 121, 103238, n.p.
- Barrot J.S. 2022, *Social media as a language learning environment: a systematic review of the literature (2008-2019)*, in "Computer assisted language learning" 35 [9], pp. 2534-2562.
- Bonsignori V. and Cappelli G. 2020, *Specialized and culture-bound knowledge dissemination through spoken tourism discourse: multimodal strategies in guided tours and documentaries*, in "Lingue e Linguaggi" 40, pp. 213-239.
- Canani M. and Zulli T. 2022, *ELT and Social Media: Integrating TikTok into Class Practice*, in Abbamonte L. and Cavaliere F. (eds.), *Updating Discourse/s on Method/s*, "mediAzioni" 34, pp. A165-A183.
- Crompton H. and Burke D. 2018, *The use of mobile learning in higher education: A systematic review*, in "Computers & Education" 123, pp. 53-64.
- Dos Santos L.M. 2022, *Online learning after the COVID-19 pandemic: Learners' motivations*, in "Frontiers in Education" 7, 879091, n.p.
- Dressman M. 2020, *Introduction*, in Dressman M. and Sadler R.W. (eds.), *The Handbook of Informal Language Learning*, Wiley Blackwell, Hoboken, NJ, pp. 1-12.
- Erarşlan A. 2019, *Instagram as an education platform for EFL learners*, in "TOJET: Turkish Online Journal of Education and Technology" 18, pp. 54-69.
- Gonulal T. 2019, *The use of Instagram as a mobile-assisted language learning tool*, in "Contemporary Educational Technology" 10 [3], pp. 309-323.
- Guo X. and Lee J.S. 2023, *A systematic review of Informal Digital Learning of English: An ecological systems theory perspective*, in "System", 103097, n.p.
- Junior, R. C. G. 2020, *Instanarratives: Stories of foreign language learning on Instagram*, "System" 94, 102330, n.p.
- Kamasak R., Özbilgin M., Atay D. and Kar A. 2021, *The effectiveness of mobile-assisted language learning (MALL): A review of the extant literature*, in Moura A.S., Cordeiro M.N.D.S. and Reis P. (eds.), *Handbook of research on determining the reliability of online assessment and distance learning*, IG Global, London, pp. 194-212.
- Karakaya K. and Bozkurt A. 2022, *Mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) research trends and patterns through bibliometric analysis: Empowering language learners through ubiquitous educational technologies*, in "System" 110, 102925, n.p.
- Kern R. 2021, *Twenty-five years of digital literacies in CALL*, in "Language Learning and Technology" 25 [3], pp. 132-150.
- Kress G. 2010, *Multimodality: A Social Semiotic Approach to Contemporary Communication*, Routledge, London.
- Kusyk M. 2023, *Does informal mean implicit?*, in Toffoli D., Sockett G. and Kusyk M. (eds.), *Language learning and leisure: Informal language learning in the digital age*, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin, pp. 43-68.
- Lai C., Hu X. and Lyu B. 2018, *Understanding the nature of learners' out-of-class language learning experience with technology*, in "Computer Assisted Language Learning" 31 [1-2], pp. 114-143.
- Lailiyah M. and Setiyaningsih L. 2020, *Students' perception of online communication language learning through Instagram*, in "EnJourMe (English Journal of Merdeka): Culture, Language, and Teaching of English" 5 [2], pp. 188-195.

- Lee J.S. 2022, *Informal digital learning of English: Research to practice*, Routledge, New York, NY.
- Lee Y.J. 2023, *Language learning affordances of Instagram and TikTok*, in “Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching” 17 [2], pp. 408-423.
- Lei X., Fathi J., Noorbakhs S. and Rahimi, M. 2022, *The impact of mobile-assisted language learning on English as a foreign language learners’ vocabulary learning attitudes and self-regulatory capacity*, in “Frontiers in psychology” 13, 872922, n.p.
- Lier L.V. 2007, *Action-based teaching, autonomy and identity*, in “International Journal of Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching” 1 [1], pp. 46-65.
- Mahmud M., Ammade S., Halim A. and Amin F.H. 2022, *Students’ Voices of the Use of Facebook and Instagram in Teaching English in the University Context*, in “International Journal of Language Education” 6 [2], 113-127.
- Manning J. 2014, *Definition and classes of social media*, in Harvey K. (ed.), *Encyclopedia of social media and politics*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, pp. 1158-1162.
- Meier A. and Johnson B.K. 2022, *Social comparison and envy on social media: A critical review*, in “Current opinion in psychology” 45, 101302, n.p.
- Meirbekov A., Nyshanova S., Meirbekov A., Kazykhankyzy L., Burayeva Z. and Abzhekenova B. 2024, *Digitisation of English language education: Instagram and TikTok online educational blogs and courses vs. traditional academic education. How to increase student motivation?* in “Education and Information Technologies” 29, pp. 13635-13662.
- Metruk R. 2022, *Smartphone English language learning challenges: a systematic literature review*, in “Sage Open” 12 [1], pp.1-15.
- Min T.S. and Hashim H. 2022, *Boosting students’ motivation in learning descriptive writing through Instagram*, in “Creative Education” 13 [3], pp. 913-928.
- Misnawati M., Yusriadi Y. and Tahir S.Z.B. 2022, *MALL in learning English through social networking tools: students’ perceptions on Instagram feed-based task and peer feedback*, in “Computer-Assisted Language Learning Electronic Journal” 23 [2], pp. 198-216.
- Nasution A.K.P. 2023, *Instagram in English Language Learning: A Systematic Literature Review*, in “JLLLT - Journal of Linguistics, Literature, and Language Teaching” 3 [1], pp. 33-52.
- Reinders H., Lai C. and Sundqvist P. (eds.) 2022, *The Routledge handbook of language learning and teaching beyond the classroom*, Routledge, London.
- Reinhardt J. 2019, *social media in second and foreign language teaching and learning: Blogs, wikis, and social networking*, in “Language Teaching” 52 [1], pp. 1-39.
- Reinhardt J. 2020, *Metaphors for social media-enhanced foreign language teaching and learning*, in “Foreign Language Annals” 53 [2], pp. 234-242.
- Richards, J. C. 2015, *The changing face of language learning: Learning beyond the classroom*, “RELC Journal”, 46 [1], pp. 5-22.
- Rezaie F. and Chalak A. 2021, *A SWOT analysis of Instagram English teaching pages*, in “Journal of Foreign Language Teaching and Translation Studies” 6 [3], pp. 25-44.
- Schmidt R. 1995, *Consciousness and foreign language learning: A tutorial on the role of attention and awareness in learning*. In Schmidt R. (ed.), *Attention and Awareness in Foreign Language Learning*, University of Hawai’i Press, Honolulu, pp. 1-63.
- Simsek T. 2023, *Social Media and Literacy Education: An Evaluation of Turkish Teaching Accounts on Instagram*, in “International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies” 11 [1], pp. 139-148.
- Stockwell G. 2022, *Mobile assisted language learning: Concepts, contexts and challenges*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

- Sundqvist P. 2024, *Extramural English as an individual difference variable in L2 research: Methodology matters*, in “Annual Review of Applied Linguistics” 44, pp. 1-13.
- Suryanti Tambunan A.R., Sari W.S. and Rasmitadila R. 2022, *Students’ Perceptions of Social Networking Sites for English Language Learning: A Study in an Indonesian Higher Education Context*, in “World Journal of English Language” 12 [8], pp. 86-90.
- Teng C., Heydarnejad T., Hasan M.K., Omar A. and Sarabani L. 2022, *Mobile assisted language learning in learning English through social networking tools: An account of Instagram feed-based tasks on learning grammar and attitude among English as a foreign language learners*, in “Frontiers in Psychology” 13. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1012004> (2.4.2024).
- Toffoli D., Sockett G. and Kusyk M. (eds.) 2023, *Language learning and leisure: Informal language learning in the digital age*, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin.
- Tommaso L. 2024, *A genre-oriented analysis of TikTok instructional discourse*, in “Translation and Translanguaging in Multilingual Contexts” 10 [1], 6-27.
- Vizcaíno-Verdú A. and Abidin C. 2023, *TeachTok: Teachers of TikTok, micro-celebrification, and fun learning communities*, in “Teaching and Teacher Education” 123, 103978, n.p.
- Wagner K. 2021, *Using Instagram for language learning*, in “Second language research & practice” 2 [1], pp. 154-164.
- Zheng C., Liang J.C., Li M. and Tsai CC. 2018, *The relationship between English language learners’ motivation and online self-regulation: A structural equation modelling approach*, in “System” 76, pp. 144-157.



## Annexes

<b>Institutional accounts</b>			
<b>Instagram account</b>	<b>N. of followers</b>	<b>Instagram account</b>	<b>N. of followers</b>
@bbclearningenglish	4.4 M	@britishcouncil	231 K
@cambridgeenglish	747 K	@toefl_official	205 K
@takeieltssofficial	276 K	@britishcouncilenglishonline	196 K
@learnenglishwithoxford	267 K	@pearsonlanguages	106 K
<b>Non-institutional accounts</b>			
<b>Instagram account</b>	<b>N. of followers</b>	<b>Instagram account</b>	<b>N. of followers</b>
@jayfujiwara	7.3 M	@englishwithshei	512 K
@english.ingeneral	4 M	@englishenjoyed	503 K
@english_grammar.vocab	3.5 M	@english_squad__	488 K
@englishwithrahel	1.7 M	@idiom.land	439 K
@antonios.english	1.6 M	@englishwithus4	425 K
@englishwithnab	1.6 M	@activeenglish_programs	311 K
@phrasalidiomatic	1.6 M	@omg.classes	277 K
@teacherprix	1.6 M	@pronunciationwithemma	250 K
@daniellalewicz	1.2 M	@english.with.arezou	210 K
@englishwithrhys	1.2 M	@johnplusenglish	189 K
@english_veronika	1.1 M	@english_pro_tips	174 K
@ielts.lessson	1.1 M	@englishwithadriana	162 K
@ZenfluentMaria	1.1 M	@englisharound	150 K
@stage_door_johnny	998 K	@english_with_manuela	144 K
@engliseteacherclaire	711 K	@englishwithjenna	114 K
@englishwithronia	785 K	@englishwithlizziejane	113 K
@shawenglishonline	691 K	@english_helenrox	109 K
@abraham.piper	682 K	@inenglishwithlove	98.8 K
@pronunciationworkshop	673 K	@pronunciation.studio	86.7 K
@fluentjoy_app	666 K	@etjenglish	85.5 K
@english_vocabulary	662 K	@tofluency	81.7 K
@hadar.accentsway	656 K	@listeningtime.english	71.6 K
@ash_britishenglish	649 K	@english_al_fresco	44.6 K
@rebeccas_english_hub	610 K	@lingojet_english	21 K
@english_lingo	525 K	@lola_speak	16.7 K

Table 2  
Instagram accounts followed between January and March 2024.

<b>Institutional accounts</b>			
<b><i>Instagram</i> account</b>	<b>N. of followers</b>	<b><i>Instagram</i> account</b>	<b>N. of followers</b>
@bbclearningenglish	4.4 M	@learnenglishwithoxford	268 K
@cambridgeenglish	747 K	@britishcouncilenglishonline	196 K
@takeieltssofficial	276 K	@pearsonlanguages	106 K
<b>Non-institutional accounts</b>			
<b><i>Instagram</i> account</b>	<b>N. of followers</b>	<b><i>Instagram</i> account</b>	<b>N. of followers</b>
@jayfujiwara	7.3 M	@englishenjoyed	503 K
@englishwithrahel	1.7 M	@idiom.land	439 K
@englishwithnab	1.6 M	@pronunciationwithemma	250 K
@englishwithrhys	1.2 M	@johnplusenglish	189 K
@englishteacherclaire	711 K	@english_pro_tips	174 K
@englishwithronia	785 K	@englishwithadriana	162 K
@pronunciationworkshop	673 K	@englishwithjenna	114 K
@english_vocabulary	662 K	@englishwithlizziejane	113 K
@ash_britishenglish	649 K	@pronunciation.studio	86.7 K
@rebeccas_english_hub	610 K	@etjenglish	85.5 K
@english_lingo	525 K		

Table 3  
*Instagram* accounts analysed qualitatively.