#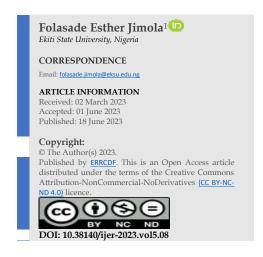 Undergraduate Students' Exploration of Instagram and TikTok in Learning Language Skills and Content: A Leverage to Digital Literacy

Folasade Esther Jimola[1] iD

Ekiti State University, Nigeria

CORRESPONDENCE

Email: folasade.jimola@eksu.edu.ng

Abstract: *The literacy needed to live efficiently and functionally in a knowledge-driven society goes beyond the ability to read, write and calculate to a more encompassing literacy such as digital literacy. Two social media platforms, Instagram and TikTok, lend themselves to digital literacies and practices needed to learn language skills and content with ease and fun. The study investigated undergraduate students' knowledge of and competence in using Instagram and TikTok as learning spaces for learning language skills and content. The study also examined the influence of age and gender on undergraduate students' competence to use Instagram and TikTok to learn language skills and content. Two major language departments in a university in Nigeria were involved in the study. Three hundred and fifty-two students constituted the sample for the study; 110 from Linguistics/Languages Department and 242 from English and Literary studies. Data were collected using a close-ended-self-constructed questionnaire and a checklist. The data were analysed using inferential statistics. The study revealed that undergraduate students possess adequate knowledge of Instagram and TikTok as learning spaces and are competent to harness the features of Instagram and TikTok to learn language skills and language content. The study also shows that age and gender influence undergraduate students' competence in using Instagram and TikTok. The study recommended that undergraduate students should harness the potential of Instagram and TikTok on activities that will enhance their linguistic repertoire.*

Keywords: Instagram, TikTok, digital literacy, language skills, language content.

1. Introduction

As each day goes by, the definitions of literacy keep changing especially to reflect the essential skills needed in the 21st century, such as problem-solving, collaboration, technological dexterity, creativity, and other soft skills. Also, there are some emerging literacies such as multiliteracies, information literacy, emotional literacy, health literacy, visual literacy, technology literacy, web literacy, cultural literacy, critical literacy, media literacy and digital literacy to newer conceptions like transliteracy, metaliteracy and multimodal literacy (Stordy, 2015). Literacy extends beyond the ability to read, write and calculate. It is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, evaluate, organise, communicate, and compute information using printed, written and visual materials of different ideas and contexts (The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation-UNESCO, 2018). Through literacy, goals are actualised, potentials and knowledge are developed, and individuals can partake in the development of society. Jodi and Elda (2019) enumerate types of literacy as computer, critical, information, digital, and visual.

Digital literacy is the ability to operate and navigate technological and communication devices (tablets, laptops, smartphones, smartwatches, and other nonconventional media) and/or network services to find, utilise and share pieces of information. Digital literacy means using digital

technology, communication devices and network in the digital environment and functioning efficiently in a knowledge-based society (Phuapan et al., 2015).

The ability of learners to make use of technological tools confidently, safely and effectively to access various social media platforms; create and edit images, audio and video; to use a web browser and internet search engines, among others, for information dissemination, interaction, communication, entertainment and education reflect students' digital literacy. The various social media platforms are well known and utilised by students, but research has shown that these social media platforms are accessed for non-academic purposes rather than academic purposes (Dada & Jimola, 2021). Tang and Chaw (2016) noted that students generally face no difficulties in using technology for everyday social and entertainment activities. However, it would be constructive to understand if the students can use technology effectively for learning as well.

To become proficient users of foreign languages demands constant exposure to the basic language skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing and language content. The mastery of these skills attests to the development of language proficiency. Language learners should be mindful of the fact that becoming proficient language learners does not mean speaking error-free grammar but demands consistent use of language skills to become confident and good users of the target language. Two of the various social network sites, Instagram and Tiktok, help language learners communicate their internalised notions and thoughts into a structured pattern through writing to their readers. Instagram and TikTok are learner-centred social media tools that focus on the process and as well product of writing and speaking skills. Daily, language learners make use of Instagram and TikTok to communicate, source information, make and maintain relationships, publicise and advertise their goods and services, and express their personal preferences.

Youths widely use Instagram and TikTok and spend a substantial part of their time on different social network sites (Dada & Jimola, 2021). The amount of time spent by these young people could be channelled into educational purposes. The same way they make use of Instagram and TikTok for non-academic tasks will be more rewarding if they can channel their social media practices to literacy practices and language development. Instagram and TikTok would enhance learners' literacy practices and language development when they write and speak on these sites. The assurance that followers and readers would read and respond to their pieces of writing on Instagram and viewers will view their content on TikTok would motivate them, make them produce more pieces and create more encouraging activities for authentic audiences.

Studies have been carried out on the use of Instagram and TikTok: Desa et al. (2019) examined students' perception of Instagram as a learning tool and how it affects students' writing performance, especially in the subject-verb-agreement aspect. Erarslan (2019) investigated if Instagram would be an educative platform for EFL learners. Mei and Aziz (2022) examined how students perceived the TikTok application as a tool for English language learning, while Nur (2021) investigated the usefulness of TikTok as an educational tool. These studies reveal that Instagram and TikTok are useful platforms that promote digital literacy and can potentially improve language development and literary practices.

Various studies have been conducted on undergraduate students' knowledge, attitude, preference and utilisation of social media platforms such as WhatsApp, YouTube and Twitter (Ayuni et al., 2017; Desa et al., 2019; Khlaif & Salha, 2021; Perifanou et al., 2021; Daniar et al., 2022; Mahmud, 2022; Duan, 2023). However, much has not been written on whether students leverage the potentialities of Instagram and TikTok as spaces for learning language skills and content. Yélamos-Guerra et al. (2022) affirmed that TikTok had not been adequately researched as part of educational innovation compared to other social media networks. Gonulal (2019) posited that in spite of the popularity of Instagram among young adults, only a few scientific studies had examined the roles and functions of Instagram in language learning contexts, while Desa et al. (2019) noted that less research on

English language learning is made on Instagram. Observation also shows that there have not been many studies on undergraduates' use of Instagram and TikTok as digital language learning tools.

Gender and age are significant variables in language learning. Studies have been carried out on the influence of gender and age on students' digital literacy skills. Maxwell and Maxwell (2014) examined gender differences in computer literacy levels among undergraduate students of a university; Alakpodia (2014) investigated gender differences in computer use skills among students; Abd-Aziz and Abd-Aziz (2020) conducted a study on the influence of gender differences on Instagram usage among higher institution students; Attuquayefio and Addo (2016) explored gender and age differences in intention to use ICT and ICT usage by students of higher educational institutions in Ghana. The findings of these studies are divergent, and there have been conflicting perceptions about its influence on the use of technology. To fill this gap, this study investigated undergraduate students' knowledge of and competence in using Instagram and TikTok as learning spaces for language skills and content.

1.1. Research hypotheses

The following hypotheses were generated to guide the study and fill in the literature gaps:
- **H0i:** there is no significant relationship between undergraduate students' knowledge of and competence to use Instagram and TikTok as learning spaces for language skills and language content.
- **H0ii:** age does not influence undergraduate students' competence in using Instagram and TikTok to learn language skills and content.
- **H0iii:** there is no significant difference in the male and female undergraduate students' competence in using Instagram and TikTok to learn language skills and content.

2. Literature Review

The review of related literature covers the following sub-themes: digital literacy; Instagram as a digital educational space; teaching of the four language skills through Instagram; TikTok as a digital educational space; and procedures for making self-recorded English Tiktok videos.

2.1 Digital literacy

Digital literacy is the basic skill or ability to use a computer confidently, safely and effectively; the ability to use office software such as word processors, email and presentation software; the ability to create and edit images, audio and video; and the ability to use a web browser and internet search engines (Royal Society, 2012, p.17). Since language learners are in the era of Information Communication and Technology, 21st-century students are expected to be conversant with the various skills of digital literacy, such as generating, searching, finding, assessing, analysing, exploring, harnessing and transmitting content(s) using the Internet and information technology for innovation, problem-solving, information dissemination, creativity, communication, decision making, research, critical thinking, collaboration and development of technology terminologies and operations. Phuapan et al. (2015) posit that digital literacy consists of six elements powered by technology to access, manage, integrate, evaluate, create and communicate information:
- Access: Identification of the data source, including the ability to acquire, collect, and retrieve such data for repetitive usage.
- Manage: Utilisation of resource which is correct and the easiest for assessment.
- Integrate: relating, inferring and interpreting the meaning of the information via the ICT tools.
- Evaluate: Assessing the timeliness and usefulness of the information.
- Create: Understanding and applying the benefits offered by suitable media-creating devices.
- Communicate: Contacting and interacting with other individuals in the digital environment.

2.2 Instagram: A digital educational space

Mahmud et al. (2022) posit that Instagram is a social media tool introduced in 2010. Perhaps because of its recent introduction to the field, Instagram has not received much research attention in terms of what it can offer in the learning/teaching process. Instagram has fascinating and attractive image display features, easy uploading, visualisation, and editing of images for better comprehension of the contents. According to Spencer (2012), cited in Handayani (2016), through Instagram, various digital activities can be explored: utilising digital storytelling, practising grammar on photo captions, doing photojournalism, creating photo prompts for themselves, finding metaphors within chosen photos, creating photo blogs, finding and documenting context within photos, doing an ethnographic study, sharing art, and exercising creative and artistic expression through taking their own pictures.

People who connect to the Instagram networking system and follow Instagram accounts are called followers. The asymmetric feature of Instagram allows Follower X to follow Y while Y need not follow X in return. Under the privacy settings, subscribers choose if their updates are open to the public or their followers only and as well determine who to see, comment or like their post. When the other users want to follow, they require approval from the user to be his/her follower. Instagram can take many functions: create accounts, post content (pictures or 15-second videos), apply filters, add captions, tag users, add locations, add hashtags, like content, add comments, browse and follow other accounts, check a feed generated by followed accounts, and explore (search for) hashtags/users (Ali, 2014 in Handayani, 2016). "Instagram is a free, online photo-sharing application and social network platform that was acquired by Facebook in 2012. Each post by a user appears on their followers' Instagram feeds and can also be viewed by the public when tagged using hashtags or geotags (Desa et al., 2019, p.342)."

Features of Instagram, according to Handayani (2016, p.322), are:

i. Instagram profile interface shows information about user profiles; biography, circular profile photo, number of posts, and users' follower/following count.
ii. Profile content provides viewers to scroll down the profile. Viewers may see all profile photos appear together. For a closer look, viewers have the option to click on any photo. The photo being chosen is displayed clearly.
iii. Instagram's photo content allows viewers to like the photo, leave a comment, or read previously posted comments. In this photo, content also displays how many people have "liked" the photo, the photo's caption, and comments appended below the caption.
iv. Navigational tools consist of five icons needed to navigate Instagram at the latter part of each page in the Instagram's screen: the home page, explore page, posting page, notification page, and user's profile page.

Handayani (2016) exemplifies language activities that can be harnessed through Instagram. They are speaking skill with activities such as: capturing field trip memories and preparing two minutes presentation about the trip; reviewing a famous person in history, such as literary giants and giving a description of the person, literary works, physical appearance and personality traits; role play that focuses on topics, culture and language use of the target language; pronunciation and self/peer correction could help EFL learners record their pronunciation practice-related videos where students can evaluate their performance directly. Another activity, according to Handayani (2016), is reading skills. It involves sharing reading recommendations where learners can share reading books, reveal what they have read, and discuss the content of students' book trailers. Writing skill is another activity that involves "caption it!" Photos can be pasted to prompt students to write a descriptive caption in the comment section, photo inspiration or thought-provoking content (Handayani, 2016). This fosters critical thinking as students develop ideas based on the picture or content using language development features like spelling, grammar, and sentence structure, bearing in mind that their posts

could go viral. According to Handayani (2016), the last activity is listening skill, which involves listening to the native speakers through songs, a conversation, a fragment of a film, and English quotations.

TikTok: A digital educational space

TikTok application, launched in September 2016, has become one of the fastest-growing platforms in the world, targeting youngsters to share their video content. TikTok videos last from a few seconds up to 60 seconds. Originally, the videos had a 15-second limit, but TikTok now allows people to repeat a 15-second loop four times, creating a 60-second video. Currently, the application is testing a new feature that allows users to upload videos of up to three minutes in length (Basch et al., 2021; Comendulli, 2022, cited in Khlaif and Salha, 2021). Young people prefer its interesting features like music, short duration, funny pictures, etc. TikTok allows users to record videos of themselves goofing off to music or spoken-word clips and then edit the footage with a variety of effects (Nur, 2021; Daniar, 2022). Although, Tiktok has its deficiencies: it does not provide a menu to upload or download learning documents, the maximum duration on TikTok is only 5 min, which makes Tik Tok short video teaching very limited, and it is video-based and cannot use files like PPT and word etc.; Tik Tok is not a specialised learning platform, and there is a big difference between short video learning and physical classroom learning (Lin et al., 2023; Duan, 2023).

TikTok is increasingly used to share creative skills and teach others about different topics, including crafting, cooking, sports, drawing, and vocational and technical training (Khlaif and Salha, 2021). TikTok has revolutionised how people socialise and communicate. TikTok video content is noted for enhancement of participatory, straightforward and interesting learning; boosting students' motivation to learn; conservation of time and energy efficiency for content creation; accessibility and flexibility of learning at any time and from any place through the use of a simple device like an Android device and tablet etc.

TikTok application is an effective learning medium which induces incidental and constructive learning. If harnessed, TikTok provides a forum for teaching and learning of foreign languages, idiomatic expressions in foreign languages, vocabularies, grammar, syntax, and development of language skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking skills especially teaching foreign language speaking proficiency through pronunciation, accent, intonation, tone and stress if used correctly in the context of an EFL classroom. TikTok allows students around the world to make friends, share their knowledge regarding English with each other, arrest their attention, make learning English more fun and help them understand and retain the information presented in the short video better Mei and Aziz (2022). Tan et al. (2022, p. 19) note that by using TikTok, "practising speaking will no longer be confined to the classroom, monitored by teachers, or only with their peers. Rather, it will be further developed in order to include practice sessions with native speakers of English beyond the classroom. This would improve the quality of practice that students will receive."

2.3 Procedures for making self-recorded English Tiktok videos

Xiuwen and Razali (2021, p.1446) highlight the procedures for making self-recorded English TikTok videos as follows:
Step 1. Conceptualising:
- Selecting one topic by exploring critical ideas towards some issues.
- Watching authentic samples on similar topics.
- Planning the content of the video and designing the presentation approach.
- Searching online for collecting relevant materials.

Step 2. Brainstorming
- Outlining the main ideas suggested at the conceptualisation stage.

- Generation of ideas, where students are required to establish the concept of short videos, such as the content of the video and the method of presenting the script for the short self-recorded video.

Step 3. Articulation
- Rehearsing before recording the short English video.
- Editing the videos for better linguistic accuracy and content attraction.
- Recording the oral English presentation and uploading it to the TikTok mobile video application after checking.

Step 4. Monitoring
- Listening to the self-recorded video before uploading it
- Monitoring the self-recorded video from the domains of content, organisation, pronunciation, grammar as well as language usage

Step 5. Evaluating
- Evaluating the self-recorded video in terms of video content, grammar accuracy, organisation, and language usage through self-reflection, teachers' and peers' assessment.
- Improving the self-recorded video in accordance with the assessment sheet provided by themselves, mates or teachers.

In a bid to undertake TikTok short video, Xiuwen and Razali (2021, p. 1448) provide a video assessment guide that will help undergraduate TikTokers come up with their TikTok videos for digital English communication competence:

A. Content Domain
- Content: Main ideas of the video should be clear.
- Organisation: Good organisational structure and good fluency are essential tools.
- Visual aids: Visual aids are pertinent to the topic.
- Originality: The content of the video should be innovative and attractive.

B. Linguistic Domain
- Vocabulary: The students could use diverse kinds of vocabulary specific to the topic. Students should pronounce it accurately and speak clearly and loudly.
- Sentence Structure**:** Students should construct sentences in correct grammar.

C. Physical Domain
- Poise: The student performs with confidence.
- Voice: The student's voice is in a mild tone -not too loud or soft.
- Gestures: The students could utilise effective gestures to support his/her speech vividly.
- Speed: The speed is of appropriateness: not too fast or too slow.

D. Technical Domain
- Sound, music, and camera shots: The camera is continuous and focuses on the selected topic. Time should be well controlled.
- Special effects: Sound and visual effects should make additions to the mood and content.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design, population and sample

The study employed the descriptive research design of the survey type. The population of the study comprised undergraduate students of a university in Ekiti State, Nigeria. A total sample of 352 undergraduate students studying languages in the Linguistics/Languages Department (110 respondents) and English and Literary Studies (242 respondents) were selected from the university using a purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling was employed to select undergraduate students who use phones that can access social network sites because some of the students do not

use phones that can perform the task. The age range of the respondents was between 16-26+ years. 184 (52.3%) participants were female, while 168 (47.7%) were male.

3.2. Instrumentation and procedure

Two research instruments, a closed-ended questionnaire and a checklist, were employed for data collection. The questionnaire comprised two sections: Section 1 showed the respondents' demographic information, while Section 2 focused on undergraduate students' knowledge of Instagram and TikTok as learning spaces for language skills and language content. The checklist was made up of two parts: Part A showed the demographic information of the respondents, while Part B centred on undergraduate students' competence to use Instagram and TikTok for learning language skills and language content. On the checklist, respondents were asked to tick the distinctive features of Instagram and TikTok that they are competent to demonstrate. The questionnaire was measured using a four-point-Likert-type scale (Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Strongly Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) while the checklist was measured using never', 'rarely', 'sometimes' and 'always' as applicable. To ensure adequate ethical consideration, the researcher sought the consent of respondents. Respondents were not coerced to participate in the study but voluntarily participated. The respondents were assured of their confidentiality and anonymity before they participated.

Experts in the Departments of Educational Technology, Languages, and Tests and Measurement ascertained the face and content validity of the instruments. To test the reliability of the instrument, the instruments were administered to 120 undergraduate students who were not part of the study. The instrument's reliability was determined through Cronbach's Alpha, and a reliability coefficient of 0.80 was obtained. Inferential statistics used included Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis (PPMC), Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), and t-test. All hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

4. Presentation of Results

The results of the study are presented below based on the data collected using the hypotheses generated.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between undergraduate students' knowledge of and competence to use Instagram and TikTok to learn language skills and content.

Table 1: Undergraduate students' knowledge of and competence in using Instagram and TikTok

Variables	R	p-value
Instagram and TikTok	1	.000
Knowledge	.938*	.000
Competence	.901*	.000

*Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The table shows Pearson correlation analysis of undergraduate students' knowledge of and competence to use Instagram and TikTok to learn language skills and content. The table reveals the relationship between undergraduate students' knowledge of and competence to use Instagram and TikTok for learning language skills and content. As shown in the table, there is a significant relationship between undergraduate students' knowledge of Instagram and TikTok (r= -0.938) and undergraduate students' competence to use undergraduate students' (r = -0.901) for learning language skills and language content because the p-value of 0.000 is less than 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 2: Age does not influence undergraduate students' competence in using Instagram and TikTok to learn language skills and content.

Table 2: *Influence of age on undergraduate students' competence to use Instagram and TikTok*

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	63268.564	2	31634.282	159.690	.000
Within Groups	69136.334	349	198.098		
Total	132404.898	351			

Table 2 shows an analysis of ANOVA on the influence of age on undergraduate students' competence to use Instagram and TikTok for learning language skills and language content. The table reveals the influence of age on undergraduate students' competence to use Instagram and TikTok for learning language skills and language content. The result indicated that (F =159.690, p = 0.00), which is significant at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected. Therefore, age influences undergraduate students' competence in using Instagram and TikTok for learning language skills and content. In order to locate the point of influence, Scheffe multiple comparisons were carried out, as presented in Table 3.

Table 3: *Age difference in undergraduate students' competence to use Instagram and TikTok*

(I) age	(J) age	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
16-20yrs	21-25yrs	-25.92538*	1.57417	.000
	26yrs above	-73.33871*	8.22377	.000
21-25yrs	16-20yrs	25.92538*	1.57417	.000
	26yrs above	-47.41333*	8.18005	.000
26yrs above	16-20yrs	73.33871*	8.22377	.000
	21-25yrs	47.41333*	8.18005	.000

*Significant at the 0.05 level

Table 3 shows Scheffe's multiple comparison of age differences in undergraduate students' competence to use Instagram and TikTok to learn language skills and content. The table reveals that undergraduate students' competence to use Instagram and TikTok for learning language skills and language content was significantly higher among 26 years above age group than 16-20 years and 21-25 years age groups, respectively, while the mean competence of the 21-25 years age group was significantly higher than 16-20 years age group.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the male and female undergraduate students' competence in using Instagram and TikTok for learning language skills and language content

Table 4: *Male and female EFL undergraduate students' competence in using Instagram and TikTok*

Sex	N	Mean	S.D	Df	T	p-value
Male	168	69.80	18.34			
Female	184	43.11	8.63	350	17.705	.000

Table 4 shows a t-test showing differences in the male and female EFL undergraduate students' competence in using Instagram and TikTok to learn language skills and content. The table reveals that (df =350, t =17.705, p = 0.000) is significant at 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected, indicating that males had mean competence (m=69.80, SD = 18.34) higher than females (M = 43.11, SD = 8.63). Therefore, there is a significant difference in the male and female FL undergraduate students' competence to use Instagram and TikTok to learn language skills and content.

5. Discussion

Findings from the study revealed that there is a significant relationship between undergraduate students' knowledge of Instagram and TikTok as learning spaces for language skills and language content and their competence in using Instagram and TikTok as learning tools for language skills and language content. This implies that the more undergraduate students are knowledgeable about Instagram and TikTok as platforms for learning language skills and language content, it could enhance their competence in the use of Instagram and TikTok as platforms for learning language skills and language content. This finding is supported by the findings of Mei and Aziz (2022) that TikTok platform is an effective tool for learning English as a Second Language, while Tan et al. (2022) affirmed that TikTok application is a well-known pedagogical strategy which promotes digital assignment; active learning; collaborative and team-based learning; experiential learning; and incidental and constructive learning. Also, Desa et al. (2019) corroborated the findings in their study that the use of Instagram motivates writing skills. It does not only give an advantage to the formation of the right subject-verb agreement form but to other aspects of language learning, like vocabulary enhancement using dictionary to complete Instagram writing-based activities. Ayuni et al. (2017) revealed that students have highly positive perceptions and views towards using Instagram to improve their writing skills. They opined that on Instagram, they can describe the photos they share by writing captions, write daily journal writing or microblogging, and post writing assignments like short stories and essays, and they believed that they could improve essay writing skills through Instagram. Also, Erarslan (2019) found that Instagram positively impacted students' language learning based on achievement scores. Yélamos-Guerra et al. (2022) posited in their study that the use of TikTok as an educational tool fosters students' development of digital competencies such as the production of short films, editing of film production, teamwork, documentation, making-off and enhances autonomy needed in this modern day.

The study shows that age influences undergraduate students' competence to use Instagram and TikTok for learning language skills and content. This implies that undergraduate students' competence in using Instagram and TikTok to learn language skills and content increases with age. This is in tandem with the findings of Perifanou et al. (2021), who revealed in their study that age has a significant difference in the frequency of Instagram use. In the study, the youngest groups (18–24, 25–35) expressed significantly higher values of frequency of use, and the other age group (36–45) revealed the lowest ones. However, Keržič et al. (2021) use quantitative data from a survey of 401 teachers from the University of Ljubljana in Slovenia to reveal any differences in instructional ICT use in terms of age. The results show that age is not a factor in instructional ICT use, but teachers differ with respect to certain personal ICT uses. Younger teachers use ICT for entertainment and for social networking significantly more than their older counterparts, but there are no significant differences in using ICT to obtain information and for communication (email, chat, video calls etc.) between the younger teachers and their older counterparts.

Findings from the study also indicate a significant difference in the male and female undergraduate students' competence to use Instagram and TikTok for learning language skills and content. Males had the competence to use Instagram and TikTok better than their female counterparts. The finding is supported by Maxwell and Maxwell (2014), who in their study indicated that there were gender differences in computer literacy among undergraduate students because data showed that 40% of the male students had computer experience than their female counterparts, and this suggests a gender difference. Also, Alakpodia (2014) investigated gender differences in computer use skills among students. The findings show that male students use computer applications more than female students, while female students had a higher frequency of computer usage for chat and e-mail messages. Abd-Aziz and Abd-Aziz (2020) confirm that males are more likely to post their personal

pictures on Instagram, disclose their personal information, and have public accounts, unlike females, who are more likely to have private accounts than males. On the contrary, Perifanou et al. (2021) recorded that female students expressed higher values of Instagram use than male students, meaning that more females value Instagram than males.

6. Implication for Practice

Students, lecturers, curriculum developers, and technology developers are beneficiaries of the findings of the study. Students can enhance their language repertoire and language course content by harnessing the potential of Instagram and TikTok. Lecturers can teach with fun and ease when they intersperse their lectures with Instagram and TikTok. Curriculum developers can give room for technological and communication platforms as spaces for teaching in the 21st century and as leverage to digital literacy. Technology developers can work on the deficiencies and limitations of the platforms to give the social media spaces a better outlook, not as entertainment and business spaces alone but also as learning and educative spaces.

7. Conclusion

The importance of digital literacy cannot be overemphasised. The relevance of digital literacy is felt in different fields and daily tasks such as education, information, telecommunication, communication, medicine, agriculture, industry, transportation, administration, health and law etc. Digital literacy can be enhanced through meaningful use of online pedagogical resources: social networks, digital applications and platforms using different technological devices. Instagram and TikTok are contemporary social media platforms which are mostly harnessed by youths for entertainment and business, with little or no recourse to them as veritable tools for language development and literacy empowerment. Becoming proficient users of foreign languages demands constant exposure to basic language skills and content. The embedded features in Instagram and TikTok are helpful promoters of second language acquisition and digital literacy in the 21st century. It is concluded that the knowledge of and competence in Instagram and TikTok possessed by undergraduate students should not be entertainment inclined only, rather, it must be harnessed to maximise language acquisition as well as solve varying challenges of the 21st century.

8. Limitations of the Study

This paper was constrained by a limited number of samples and the particularity of the course of study of the respondents (Languages). The study is a descriptive survey type research, which only described and investigated undergraduate students' knowledge of and competence to use Instagram and TikTok as learning tools for language skills and language content as a means to attain digital literacy. In spite of the constraints, this paper has added a new perspective to the existing literature. More research needs to be conducted on students' use of Instagram and TikTok in non-language departments, a quasi-experimental research design could be employed, and the purpose of other contemporary social learning spaces could be investigated.

9. Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- Both male and female undergraduate students should employ Instagram and TikTok for mastery of foreign languages, especially, by interacting with native speakers and experts in the field.
- Age is not a barrier to the use of Instagram and TikTok in academic spheres; hence the focus of students on Instagram and TikTok should not bother on entertainment alone, rather, educative content should be harnessed, recorded, uploaded and disseminated on these social media platforms.

- Undergraduate students should channel their knowledge of Instagram and TikTok into activities that will enhance their language performance and proficiency.
- Undergraduate students should transfer the knowledge, competence and expertise they have developed about Instagram and TikTok from theory to practically develop and improve their linguistic repertoire.

9. Conflict of Interest: Author declares no conflict of interest whatsoever.

References

Abd-Aziz, A., & Abd-Aziz, A. (2020). The influence of gender differences on Instagram usage among higher institution students. *International Journal of Modern Trends in Social Sciences*, *3*(14), 78-83. https://doi.org/10.35631/IJMTSS.314007

Alakpodia, O. N. (2014). Gender differences in computer use skill among students of School of Health Technology, Ufuoma, Delta State. *International Journal of Digital Library Services*, *4*(4), 1-11.

Attuquayefio, S.N. & Addo, H. (2016). Gender and Age Comparison of Information Communication and Technology Usage among Ghanaian Higher Education Students. *American Journal of Information Systems*, 4 (1), 1-6. https://doi.org/10.12691/ajis-4-1-1

Ayuni, A., Al-Amin, M. & Shaidatul, A. (2017). Students' perceptions and attitudes towards the use of Instagram in English language writing. *Malaysian Journal of Learning and Instruction (MJLI), Special issue on Graduate Students Research on Education*, 47-72. https://doi.org/10.32890/mjli.2017.7796

Dada, E.M. & Jimola, F.E. (2021). ESL learners' praxis of asynchronous and synchronous modes for spoken English: notions and optimisations. *Asian Journal of Language, Literature and Culture Studies, 4*(3), 31-42. http://www.sdiarticle4.com/review-history/68084

Daniar, S., Dian, F., & Ninik, N. (2022). Boosting the English vocabularies of young learners through Tik-Tok application in digital era. *Jurnal Sinestesia*, *12*(1), 58-65. https://doi.org/10.53696/27219283.125

Duan, C. (2023). Tik Tok: A new way of English learning. *Journal of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences, 8*, 127-133. https://doi.org/10.54097/ehss.v8i.4237

Desa,A., Embi, M., & Hashim, H. (2019). The effects of Instagram based activities in improving secondary school students' writing skill. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science, 3*(4), 339-363.

Erarslan, A. (2019). Instagram as an education platform for EFL learners. *The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*, *18*(3), 54-69. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1223776

Gonulal, T. (2019). The use of Instagram as a mobile-assisted language learning tool. *Contemporary Educational Technology*, 10(3), 309-323. https://doi.org/10.30935/cet.590108

Handayani, F. (2016). Instagram as a teaching tool? Really? Proceedings of the Fourth International Seminar on English Language and Teaching, *Igniting a Brighter Future of EFL Teaching and Learning in Multilingual Societies,* 320-327.

Jodi, P. & Elda, E.M. (2019). Defining literacy in the 21st Century: A guide to terminology and skills. *Texas Journal of Literacy Education, 1*(1), 60-69. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1110822

Keržič, D., Danko, M., Zorko, V., & Dečman, M. (2021). The effect of age on higher education teachers' ICT use. *Knowledge Management & ELearning*, *13*(2), 182–193. https://doi.org/10.34105/j.kmel.2021.13.010

Khlaif, Z. N., & Salha S. (2021). Using TikTok in education: a form of micro-learning or nano-learning? *Interdisciplinary Journal of Virtual Learning in Medical Sciences*, *12*(3), 213-218. https://doi.org/10.30476/ijvlms.2021.90211.1087

Lin, C. S., Irawan, R., & Permana, S.A. (2023). Problems faced by the EFL students in implementing TikTok as a speaking learning medium. *ASSEHR*, *695*, 287–295.

Mahmud, M., Ammade, S., Halim, A., & Amin, F. (2022). Students' voices of the use of Facebook and Instagram in teaching English in the university context. *International Journal of Language Education, 6*(2), 113-127. https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-494069-39-8_28

Mei, K. L., & Aziz, A. A. (2022). Students' perception on using TikTok application as an English learning tool. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, *11*(4), 166–190.

Nur, I., Syahirah, R., & Isma, N. (2021). Investigating the usefulness of TikTok as an educational tool. *International Journal of Practices in Teaching and Learning, 1*(2), 1-6.

Perifanou, M., Tzafilkou, K., & Economides, A.A. (2021). The role of Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube frequency of use in university students' digital skills components. *Educ. Sci., 11*, 766. https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci11120766

Phuapan, P., Viriyavejakul, C., & Pimdee, P. (2015). Digital Literacy Skill of Students in Public Higher Education Institutes. In *The Asian Conference on Technology in the Classroom* (pp. 1-10).

Royal Society, (2012). Shut down or restart? The way forward for computing in UK schools. https://royalsociety.org/-/media/education/computing-in-schools/2012-01-12-computing-in-schools.pdf

Stordy, P. (2015) Taxonomy of literacies. *Journal of Documentation, 71*(3), 456-476. https://doi.org/10.1108/JD-10-2013-0128

Tan, K.H., Rajendran, A., Muslim, N., Alias, J., & Yusof, N.A. (2022). The potential of TikTok's key features as a pedagogical strategy for ESL classrooms. *Sustainability, 14*, 1-22. https://doi.org/10.3390/su142416876

Tang, C.M. & Chaw, L.Y. (2016). Digital literacy: A prerequisite for effective learning in a blended learning environment? *The Electronic Journal of e-Learning,* 14(1), 54-65. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1099109

United Nations Educational Science Cultural Organizations (2018). Defining Literacy. GAML Fifth Meeting. Hamburg, Germany. https://gaml.uis.unesco.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2018/ 12/4.6.1_07_4.6-defining-literacy.pdf

Xiuwen, Z. & Razali, A. (2021). An overview of the utilisation of TikTok to improve oral English communication competence among EFL undergraduate students. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, *9*(7), 1439 - 1451. https://doi.org/10.13189/ujer.2021.090710

Yélamos-Guerra, M., García-Gámez, M., & Moreno-Ortiz, A. J. (2022). The use of TikTok in higher education as a motivating source for students. *Porta Linguarum 38*, 83-98. https://doi.org/10.30827/portalin.vi38.21684