



From feed to speech: Instagram as an enhancer of oral production in Portuguese-Spanish bilinguals

Do feed à fala: o Instagram como potencializador da produção oral em bilíngues português-espanhol

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ABSTRACT: Within the context of Psycholinguistics Applied to Education (Maia, 2018), this article investigates the impacts of Instagram use on the development of oral production among Portuguese-Spanish bilinguals, with an emphasis on Global Oral Proficiency (GOP), as well as these learners' perceptions of this educational experience mediated by digital technology. The research focuses on understanding how the pedagogical use of this social network can enhance oral skills in a second language (L2), considering the learners' active role and the integration of digital tools—especially Instagram—into teaching practice. To provide a theoretical foundation for the study, the Theory of Meaningful Learning (TML) (Ausubel, 2003) and the Task-Based Approach (Willis, 1996) were adopted, both of which emphasize the importance of engaging students in contextualized, motivating activities centered on the meaning attributed to the content. The study was conducted with 42 participants from the Federal Institute of Rio Grande do Norte—Natal Historic Center Campus, organized into two groups: the experimental group (EG), which used Instagram for classroom tasks, and the active control group (ACG), which performed tasks on the same theme as the EG but without using the social media platform. The study adopted a quantitative-qualitative methodological approach (Dörnyei, 2007), using pre- and post-tests to assess participants' oral production performance and, specifically in the EG, exploring their perceptions through the analysis of word clouds generated from their responses. The results indicate a statistically significant improvement in the oral production skills of participants in the GE group compared to those in the ACG group following the Instagram intervention. Furthermore, the perceptions of the learners who used the platform were predominantly positive. Based on this, we emphasize the relevance of Instagram as an effective tool for promoting meaningful pedagogical practice aligned with the needs and interests of contemporary students.

KEYWORDS: Global Oral Proficiency. Instagram. Spanish as an L2. Meaningful Learning. Task-Based Approach.

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RESUMO: No contexto da Psicolinguística Aplicada à Educação (Maia, 2018), este artigo investiga os impactos do uso do Instagram no desenvolvimento da produção oral de bilíngues português-espanhol, com ênfase na Proficiência Oral Global (GOP), bem como as percepções desses aprendizes sobre essa experiência educacional mediada por uma tecnologia digital. O foco da pesquisa está em compreender como o uso pedagógico dessa rede social pode potencializar as habilidades orais em uma segunda língua (L2), considerando o protagonismo dos aprendizes e a integração de ferramentas digitais à prática docente, especialmente do Instagram. Para fundamentar teoricamente a proposta, foram adotadas a Teoria da Aprendizagem Significativa (TML) (Ausubel, 2003) e a Abordagem Baseada em Tarefas (Willis, 1996), que sustentam a importância de envolver os estudantes em atividades contextualizadas, motivadoras e centradas no sentido atribuído aos conteúdos. O estudo foi realizado com 42 participantes do Instituto Federal do Rio Grande do Norte — Campus Natal Centro Histórico, organizados em dois grupos: o grupo experimental (EG), que utilizou o Instagram nas tarefas realizadas em sala de aula, e o grupo controle ativo (ACG), que realizou tarefas com a mesma temática do EG, mas sem o uso da rede social. A pesquisa adotou uma abordagem metodológica quanti-qualitativa (Dörnyei, 2007), aplicando pré e pós-testes para avaliar o desempenho na produção oral dos participantes e, especificamente no EG, explorando suas percepções por meio da análise de nuvens de palavras geradas a partir de suas respostas. Os resultados indicam uma melhoria estatisticamente significativa na GOP dos participantes do EG em relação aos do ACG após a intervenção com o Instagram. Além disso, as percepções dos aprendizes que utilizaram a plataforma foram predominantemente positivas. Com base nisso, ressalta-se a relevância do Instagram como uma ferramenta eficaz para promover uma prática pedagógica significativa e alinhada às necessidades e aos interesses dos estudantes contemporâneos.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Proficiência Oral Global. Instagram. Espanhol como L2. Aprendizagem Significativa. Abordagem Baseada em Tarefas.

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1 Introduction

Digital Information and Communication Technologies (DICT) have redefined contemporary learning processes, particularly in the teaching of a second language

(L2)¹ to bilingual² learners. Within this context, Instagram stands out for combining multimodal elements that enable the enactment of diverse social practices of language use in the classroom. Nevertheless, its incorporation into the Brazilian school context raises questions regarding its impact on oral production, particularly with respect to students' Global Oral Proficiency (GOP). This conception of proficiency encompasses the appropriate use of the L2 in authentic communicative situations, taking into account syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic aspects of oral production (Dutra, 2018). Therefore, investigating the platform's potentialities and limitations may contribute to the development of more meaningful pedagogical practices that are responsive to contemporary demands.

In this regard, Pereira et al. (2019), in a systematic review, indicate that scientific production concerning the use of Instagram in the classroom is limited to North America, Oceania, and Europe. The authors also highlight the absence of empirically validated successful models for implementing the social media platform as a pedagogical tool. Conversely, studies focused on Spanish language teaching, such as those conducted by De Carriconde et al. (2021) and Brixner and Alencar (2023) in Brazil, explore some of the platform's potentialities in the L2 learning process. However, these studies adopt a relatively superficial approach: the former presents proposals without implementing them, whereas the latter uses the social media platform solely to disseminate experiences from the project developed in the study, with particular emphasis on sharing grammatical and cultural information related to the Hispanic world.

¹ Drawing on the discussions advanced by Spinassé (2006) and Ellis (2003), an L2 is understood as any language learned in addition to one's first language, irrespective of the chronological order in which this learning process occurs. Based on these studies, this concept is distinguished from the notion of a foreign language insofar as it encompasses authentic situations of social interaction and communication in which language use is integrated into individuals' lived experiences.

² This study adopts Grosjean's (2013) conception of bilingualism, according to which bilingual individuals flexibly mobilize two languages, alternating between or combining them in accordance with the communicative demands of each context, without this necessarily entailing equivalent levels of proficiency in both languages.

In light of these gaps and limitations, which restrict the use of the tool to the dissemination of information, an experimental study was conducted to investigate the effects of using the social media platform on the development of L2 oral production among Portuguese–Spanish bilingual learners at the Federal Institute of Rio Grande do Norte (IFRN), Natal Centro Histórico Campus. The experiment, implemented through a pedagogical intervention, was grounded in Meaningful Learning Theory (MLT) (Ausubel, 2003), which posits the need to establish connections between new content and students' prior experiences, as well as in Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) (Willis, 1996), a pedagogical framework that proposes the systematic completion of tasks through previously defined stages.

Methodologically, this study is situated within the field of Psycholinguistics Applied to Education. From this perspective, Finger, Brentano, and Fontes (2018) argue that Psycholinguistics contributes to an understanding of L2 learning by investigating the dynamic interaction between languages in learners' brains, an assumption that underpins the present study. In line with this view, Maia (2018) emphasizes the relevance of fostering closer links between Psycholinguistics and Education in order to enhance additional language teaching and learning processes within the Brazilian context.

To meet the objectives of this study, a mixed-methods approach was adopted (Dörnyei, 2007), involving 42 participants assigned to an experimental group (EG), which used Instagram as a learning tool, and an active control group (ACG), which completed the same activities without using the platform. The experiment lasted four weeks, with a pre-test administered at the beginning and a post-test at the end in order to assess Global Oral Proficiency.

This article presents an excerpt from a master's research project developed within the Graduate Program in Language Studies at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte (UFRN). Its purpose was to investigate the effects of the pedagogical use of Instagram on the oral production of learners of Spanish as an L2. It should also

be noted that this study was approved by the UFRN Research Ethics Committee (REC) (Opinion No. 73130123.5.0000.5537) and by IFRN (Opinion No. 73130123.5.3001.0225).

Regarding its organization, this article is divided into four main sections. The first presents the theoretical framework, focusing on bilingualism and Global Oral Proficiency as an aspect of L2 oral production, meaningful learning, and TBLT. The second describes the methodology through a series of subsections. The third discusses the quantitative and qualitative findings, while the fourth provides final considerations concerning the study's contributions, limitations, and future directions for research on the use of digital technologies in language teaching.

2 Who is a bilingual?

According to Kroll, Bobb, and Hoshino (2014), studies on bilingualism have undergone substantial changes over the years. One of the primary reasons for this evolution lies in evidence indicating that both languages of a bilingual individual remain simultaneously active in the mind, even when the context requires the use of only one of them—a phenomenon referred to as language co-activation (Kroll *et al.*, 2015; Kroll; Navarro-Torres, 2018).

Accordingly, this article adopts Grosjean's (2013) conception of bilingualism, which characterizes bilingual individuals as those who draw on two languages in accordance with the demands and specific purposes of each context. These studies further indicate that bilinguals may not use their two languages uniformly and, in most cases, do not possess equivalent proficiency in both. This challenges the traditionally widespread view according to which a bilingual individual would constitute a double monolingual³.

³This term derives from Saer's (1922) studies, which characterize bilingual individuals as those who speak both languages proficiently, and was subsequently endorsed by Bloomfield (1935, p. 56), who argues that the ideal bilingual should possess "native-like control of two languages."

Thus, considering that bilingual speakers' varying levels of linguistic performance are shaped by communicative practices across diverse contexts of actual language use, Maher (2007) underscores the importance of recognizing that:

[...] the bilingual individual—not the idealized one, but the real one—does not display identical behaviors in Language X and Language Y. Depending on the topic, modality, and discourse genre at issue, as well as on the needs arising from their personal history and the demands of their speech community, they may perform better in one language than in the other—or even be able to perform certain communicative practices in only one of them (Maher, 2007, p. 73, authors' translation⁴).

Perani and Abutalebi (2005) argue that bilingualism manifests itself in heterogeneous ways because communicative demands vary according to individuals' experiences. Some bilinguals acquire both languages during childhood, whereas others learn an L2 at later stages of life. In certain cases, the first language (L1) predominates in the home environment, while the second language is used primarily in broader social contexts. Given this diversity, it becomes essential to examine the linguistic characteristics of speech, oral production, each bilingual individual's lived experiences, and the sociocultural context in which they are embedded (Beatty-Martínez et al., 2020).

Finger (2016) contends that differences in bilinguals' levels of linguistic competence arise because each individual acquires their languages at different points in life, for distinct purposes, and in diverse contexts, resulting in variations in lexical repertoire across the L1 and L2. From this perspective, bilingual proficiency is dynamic and varies according to both the frequency and the communicative function of each language. Consequently, the author argues that monolingual competence should not

⁴[...] o bilíngue — não o idealizado, mas o de verdade — não exibe comportamentos idênticos na língua X e na língua Y. A depender do tópico, da modalidade, do gênero discursivo em questão, a depender das necessidades impostas por sua história pessoal e pelas exigências de sua comunidade de fala, ele é capaz de se desempenhar melhor em uma língua do que na outra — e até mesmo de se desempenhar em apenas uma delas em certas práticas comunicativas (Maher, 2007, p. 73).

serve as the benchmark against which bilingual knowledge is assessed. Similarly, Megale (2019) maintains that bilinguals' competences in their L1 and L2 are not equivalent and that L2 use cannot be fully dissociated from the L1. The author further argues that bilingual individuals operate from a third space, in which their linguistic identity is continuously constructed, making each bilingual experience unique and shaped by specific communicative needs. Therefore, even when bilinguals share similar contexts and purposes of language use, they are unlikely to exhibit identical levels of cognitive processing or communicative competence.

3 Aspects of oral production: a focus on global oral proficiency

Oral production constitutes a complex process involving different cognitive operations responsible for the formulation and expression of speech. Levelt (1989) developed a model to explain oral production in the L1, taking cognitive, linguistic, and motor aspects into account; this model subsequently enabled advances in the understanding of L2 speech acquisition. According to the author, speech encompasses processes ranging from communicative intention to the formulation and articulation of the message, requiring speakers to act simultaneously as information processors and interlocutors. This process unfolds in stages, beginning with message formulation, which involves grammatical and phonological encoding, and culminating in speech articulation. According to Levelt (1989), the initial stage of oral production is based on access to declarative knowledge ("knowing that"), which encompasses factual and contextual information, and procedural knowledge ("knowing how"), which is related to practical language skills.

Dörnyei and Kormos (1998, p. 355) advocate, in their studies, for an analytical perspective that extends L1 oral production processes to L2 production, thereby enabling the exploration of new ways of understanding how bilingual individuals generate language. The authors state that:

[...] L2 models of speech production differ from monolingual ones both qualitatively and quantitatively. For L2 speakers, depending on their level of proficiency, some formulation and articulation processes are consciously attended to (i.e., nonautomatic) and are therefore (at least in certain aspects) serial, slowing down language processing (Dornyei; Kormos, 1998, p. 355).

Based on this assumption, it is understood that L2 learners initially produce more controlled oral output, particularly during the early stages of their development, owing to the need to retrieve, in a structured manner, the linguistic items required for communication. Although Levelt's (1989) model focuses on monolingual production, it served as a reference for Poulishse and Bongaerts (1994), who developed L2 oral production models for bilingual individuals. Poulishse and Bongaerts's (1994) Lexical Access Model examines the organization of the lexical network, language switching, and processes of morphological and phonological encoding in the L2. Caldas (2018) considers this model to be the most comprehensive, as it refines and expands earlier concepts in order to provide a more robust account of L2 oral production. The model addresses morphological and phonological encoding, lexical storage within a single network, the simultaneous activation of words from different languages (code-switching), permanent co-activation, and cross-linguistic transfer, thereby underscoring the complexity of bilingual processing.

Although gains in accuracy and fluency in L2 oral production represent important indicators of proficiency, it is essential to recognize that an excessive focus on these aspects may constrain the development of full communicative competence. Accordingly, exclusive attention to grammatical accuracy and production speed does not necessarily ensure appropriate and effective language use. According to Brumfit (2000), this historical emphasis may, in fact, limit learners' communicative potential. More recent research, such as that conducted by Dutra (2018), proposes assessment through Global Oral Proficiency (GOP), which integrates fluency, grammatical accuracy, and appropriateness in relation to the communicative context.

Building upon Dutra's (2018) proposal, GOP is understood to differ from common conceptions of proficiency that focus primarily on grammatical accuracy and fluency, as it foregrounds the linguistic factors essential to appropriate L2 production in response to specific communicative demands, while taking syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic aspects into account. Fluency, for instance, is related to the ability to speak continuously in a language (Skehan, 1996), without necessarily implying the correct use of linguistic elements to convey the intended message. Thus, the ease and speed with which learners express themselves orally do not guarantee the appropriate use of linguistic structures. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, GOP refers to speakers' overall oral ability, encompassing fluency, grammatical accuracy, lexical appropriateness, clarity of pronunciation, and the ability to interact across different communicative contexts.

4 Meaningful Learning and Task-Based Language Teaching

Since the second half of the twentieth century, active learning methodologies have gained prominence in Brazil for advocating a learner-centered approach to education (Valente, 2014). In contemporary educational contexts, these approaches have been reinterpreted to address social, digital, and collaborative demands, thereby broadening their scope to include more interactive, multimodal, and contextually grounded practices (Bacich; Neto; Trevisani, 2015). Consequently, they value creativity, autonomy, and learners' active engagement in problem-solving and knowledge construction.

Within this framework, Ausubel's (2003) Meaningful Learning Theory (MLT) may be understood as aligned with active learning methodologies, insofar as it presupposes learners' active participation in constructing knowledge. For Ausubel, learning becomes more effective when new knowledge is meaningfully related to students' prior knowledge and lived experiences, enabling them to construct meaning in contextualized and reflective ways. From this perspective, students no longer

occupy a passive role; rather, they become active agents in their own learning process, while teachers organize relevant instructional materials and pedagogical strategies that foster such cognitive integration.

According to Tavares (2004), three conditions are necessary for meaningful learning to occur: the content must be logically organized and clearly presented; learners must possess prior knowledge that can be related to new information; and they must be willing to integrate and reconceptualize that knowledge. This process involves anchoring, interaction, and linkage, which connect, integrate, and consolidate new knowledge within the existing cognitive structure. The author argues that assimilation depends on three central components: anchoring, which consists of selectively relating new content to ideas already present in the cognitive structure—namely, subsumers; interaction, through which new information is integrated with existing knowledge; and linkage, or synapse, which consolidates this connection.

When this perspective is applied to the teaching of Spanish as an L2 to Portuguese–Spanish bilingual learners, instructional content and tasks must engage with learners’ experiences, sociocultural practices, and lived realities, thereby supporting the construction of contextually meaningful understandings. Topics that are closely connected to students’ everyday lives are therefore likely to enhance learning, as they enable more meaningful relationships between new knowledge and existing understandings.

In the present study, Meaningful Learning Theory provides the theoretical basis for the design of pedagogical interventions, whereas Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) operationalizes its principles in the teaching and learning of Spanish as an L2. From this perspective, TBLT promotes the functional use of linguistic and extralinguistic resources in the completion of communicative tasks, rather than limiting instruction to the isolated teaching of grammatical structures (Ellis, 2005).

For Willis (1996), the TBLT task cycle comprises three principal phases: pre-task, task, and post-task. During the pre-task phase, the teacher introduces the topic and

provides detailed instructions, enabling students to activate relevant vocabulary and linguistic structures. In the task phase, learners carry out the task, prepare an oral or written report, and share their findings with their peers. Finally, in the post-task phase, attention is directed to the analysis and practice of the linguistic forms used, reinforcing learning through feedback and reflection.

Finally, the conception of task adopted in this study for the teaching of Spanish as an L2 is grounded in Nunan's (2004) assumptions, according to which a task is a communicative activity that engages learners in processes of comprehension, manipulation, production, and interaction in the target language. From this perspective, the primary focus of a task does not lie exclusively in the practice of isolated grammatical structures, but rather in the construction and negotiation of meaning in contextualized and socially situated situations of language use. Nunan (2004) further maintains that a task should constitute a relatively complete communicative unit, approximating authentic interactional practices and fostering genuine experiences of L2 use. Accordingly, by engaging in tasks, learners are encouraged to mobilize prior knowledge, make decisions, solve problems, interact collaboratively, and actively construct meaning.

5 Methodology

This study is situated within the field of Psycholinguistics Applied to Education and adopts a quasi-experimental research design, incorporating pre- and post-intervention measures and non-randomized groups. Participants were organized into pre-existing classes, which were assigned to either the experimental group (EG) or the active control group (ACG), without individual random allocation. As Gerhardt and Silveira (2009) note, experimental research seeks to examine the effects of an independent variable on a given phenomenon by comparing different intervention conditions.

Data analysis was conducted through a mixed-methods approach (Dörnyei, 2007), which enables the integration of quantitative and qualitative evidence in the investigation of complex phenomena. Quantitative data were obtained by comparing the results of EG and ACG participants in Global Oral Proficiency (GOP) assessments administered before and after the intervention. Qualitative data, in turn, were derived from EG participants' perceptions of Instagram as a learning tool. Integrating these datasets enabled a more comprehensive understanding of the intervention's potential effects by relating observed outcomes in oral performance to students' perceptions.

The study was guided by the following research questions: (i) What effects does the use of Instagram have on the L2 oral production of Portuguese–Spanish bilingual students at IFRN? and (ii) What are their perceptions of using the social media platform in the classroom? Accordingly, the overarching objective was to investigate the extent to which Instagram affects the oral production of Portuguese–Spanish bilingual individuals. The specific objectives were: (i) to analyze the impact of Instagram on the GOP of Portuguese–Spanish bilingual students at IFRN; and (ii) to examine Portuguese–Spanish bilinguals' perceptions of Instagram as a pedagogically mediated tool.

To operationalize these questions, the independent variables in this quasi-experimental design were group (a nominal categorical variable with two levels: ACG and EG) and time point (a nominal categorical variable with two levels: pre-test and post-test), whereas the continuous numerical dependent variable was GOP. Drawing on Caldas (2018), who investigated the use of a social media platform in L2 teaching, the hypothesis was that EG participants would demonstrate significantly greater gains in oral production, as measured by GOP through comparisons between pre- and post-test results, than ACG participants.

5.1 Participant characteristics

The present study was conducted with three Integrated Secondary Education classes at the Natal Centro Histórico Campus of the Federal Institute of Rio Grande do Norte (IFRN). Participants were enrolled in the Multimedia Technical Program (two group classes) and the Leisure Technical Program (one group class). The active control group (ACG), comprising part of Multimedia Class 1 and the Leisure class, participated in conventional instructional activities without the use of social media. The remaining students from Multimedia Class 1, together with Multimedia Class 2, received the Instagram-based intervention.

Initially, 60 students were recruited. Of these, 18 were excluded because they did not complete either the pre-test or the post-test, resulting in a final sample of 42 participants: 18 in the ACG and 24 in the experimental group (EG). The sample profile indicated that most participants identified as female ($n = 30$), whereas 10 identified as male and 2 identified as non-binary. No participant chose to withhold this information. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 21 years ($M = 19.09$; $SD = 0.86$).

5.2 Data collection instruments

Before the intervention, both groups completed a pre-test comprising items from the DELE examination to assess oral expression and determine whether the sample was homogeneous with regard to proficiency. The active control group (ACG) carried out face-to-face, communication-focused tasks grounded in Meaningful Learning Theory (MLT), whereas the experimental group (EG) used Instagram to create posts, videos, and stories.

Following the pedagogical intervention, both groups completed a post-test focused on oral production. The post-test consisted of a different version of the DELE examination, comparable in difficulty to that used in the pre-test. Both assessments

corresponded to the A1 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)⁵.

In addition, EG participants created word clouds using Mentimeter, highlighting positive and negative aspects of using Instagram in the classroom. This activity fostered interaction and discussion regarding the benefits and challenges associated with using the social media platform in L2 learning.

5.3 Tasks: pedagogical intervention

Participants in the experimental group (EG) completed four Instagram-mediated tasks, each designed to foster distinct dimensions of oral production in Spanish. The first task, entitled *Consejero Amoroso* (Love Adviser), required students to offer advice to celebrities whose highly publicized romantic breakups were receiving media attention at the time the study was conducted. Through this activity, learners mobilized oral communicative skills related to expressing opinions, making recommendations, constructing arguments, and employing persuasive strategies, while also practicing linguistic structures associated with the imperative mood and advice-giving constructions. The second task, *Mi Primer Empleo* (My First Job), involved simulated job interviews recorded as short-form videos in the *Reels* format. This activity sought to develop learners' ability to introduce themselves, describe their experiences, and engage in other relevant communicative practices.

In the third task, entitled *Influencer*, participants created carousel-format posts to promote a family business or a commercial establishment of their choice. The purpose was to encourage oral production focused on describing, recommending, and promoting products or services, thereby fostering the development of argumentative and persuasive competences commonly associated with digital promotional genres. Finally, in the task *Aprovecha al IFRN* (Make the Most of IFRN), students recorded

⁵ Available at: https://exámenes.cervantes.es/sites/default/files/DELE_A1_v2020_Modelo0.pdf, and: https://exámenes.cervantes.es/sites/default/files/DELE_A2_v2020_Modelo0.pdf.

videos offering guidance and advice to prospective students at the institution, drawing on their own academic experiences. This activity emphasized the production of more extended and organized discourse, involving the narration of experiences, the sharing of recommendations, and the adaptation of language to the intended interlocutor.

In all tasks, participants produced explanatory captions for each video created, whether in the *Reels* or *Stories* format. This expanded opportunities for language use in multimodal contexts and supported the integration of oral production, writing, and digital interaction. Throughout the implementation of the activities, the teacher monitored the groups, provided guidance, clarified questions, and facilitated the systematization of the linguistic content required to complete the tasks. It should be noted that the active control group (ACG) completed the same tasks and pursued the same communicative objectives; however, the activities were carried out without the use of Instagram.

5.4 Data analysis procedures

To ensure the validity and reliability of the quantitative data, a counterbalancing procedure was implemented for the oral-production tasks administered at the pre-test and post-test stages. The tasks were selected from A1-level DELE examinations and aligned with the descriptors of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (MCER). In the active control group (CGA), half of the participants completed Task A in the pre-test and Task B in the post-test, whereas the remaining participants followed the reverse sequence. In the experimental group (GE), each class completed one task in the pre-test and the alternate task in the post-test. This procedure was intended to minimize potential effects arising from familiarity with a specific task and to ensure a more balanced comparison across assessment time points.

Global Oral Proficiency (GOP) was measured using the Global Oral Proficiency Assessment Scale for Learners (AVPOG), adapted from the oral performance

descriptors of the A1-level DELE examination and converted into a scoring scale ranging from 0 to 5 points. Before the assessment process, the three raters — all Spanish-language teachers with experience in L2 instruction — participated in a training and scale-calibration session. During this session, they discussed the assessment criteria and analyzed samples of oral productions in order to enhance consistency in score assignment.

The oral productions were audio-recorded, anonymized through randomly assigned numerical codes, and distributed to the raters without any identification of the participants, their group membership, or the data-collection time point. After the scores had been assigned, the data were subjected to inferential statistical analysis to examine potential differences between groups and assessment time points. To this end, the performance of the EG and ACG in the pre- and post-intervention assessments was compared to determine whether the use of Instagram produced statistically significant effects on the development of learners' oral production, in terms of GOP, relative to instructional and learning conditions that did not involve the platform.

For the qualitative analysis, the study sought to identify EG participants' perceptions of using Instagram in the classroom. At the end of the intervention, learners in this group were invited to complete a brief reflective activity in which they were asked to provide three words representing positive aspects and three words representing negative aspects of their experience throughout the four-week intervention. To ensure greater objectivity in data collection and facilitate data organization, participants were instructed to provide only isolated words, avoiding complete sentences, justifications, or multiword expressions.

Data were collected through the digital platform Mentimeter, which allows participants to submit responses simultaneously and anonymously. After receiving a specific access code, students entered their words directly into the system without individual identification. This procedure facilitated the free expression of opinions and reduced potential influences arising from the presence of the researcher or peers. The

responses were subsequently organized and examined using the word-cloud tool provided by the platform itself.

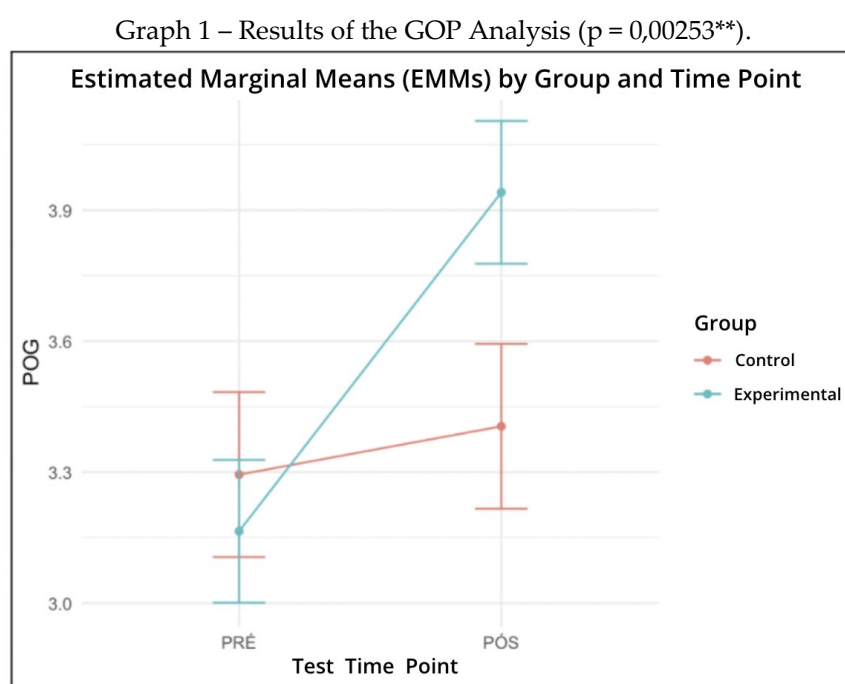
6 Differences in global oral proficiency outcomes across both groups

To investigate the potential effects of the pedagogical use of Instagram on participants' Global Oral Proficiency (GOP), the reliability of the pre- and post-test ratings assigned to the oral productions was initially assessed. For this purpose, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated based on the scores assigned by three independent raters, all of whom were Spanish-language teachers with experience in L2 instruction and prior familiarity with the AVPOG. The resulting coefficient ($\alpha = .90$) indicated a high level of internal consistency among the ratings, demonstrating strong agreement in score assignment and, consequently, satisfactory reliability of the measure employed.

Following the reliability assessment, statistical analyses were conducted in RStudio using the R programming language. Given the quasi-experimental design of the study, a linear mixed-effects model was fitted to examine the effects of the independent variables — group (EG and ACG) and assessment time point (pre-test and post-test) — on the dependent variable, namely GOP scores. This procedure made it possible to examine both the main effects of each variable and their potential interaction; that is, to determine whether changes in oral performance over time differed between participants who used Instagram and those who completed the same tasks without the platform.

In addition, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to compare nested models in order to assess the statistical contribution of the factors included in the model and identify which variables more consistently accounted for the observed variation in GOP scores. Accordingly, the analysis sought to determine whether Instagram use in the EG was associated with significantly greater gains in oral proficiency than the activities completed by the ACG.

The results presented in Graph 1 showed that the interaction between group and assessment time point was statistically significant, improving model fit and demonstrating that the effect of one factor depended on the other. The likelihood-ratio test confirmed that differences in GOP across groups and time points were unlikely to have occurred by chance ($\chi^2(1) = 9,12$, $p = 0,00253$). The intervention implemented in the EG had a significant effect on GOP improvement, particularly at the post-test stage, suggesting that this approach was more effective than that employed in the control group. The interaction between group type and assessment time point was therefore essential for understanding the observed variation in oral proficiency.



Source: Mata (2025).

Graph 1 presents the mean scores for each assessment time point, together with error bars representing confidence intervals. These bars illustrate data variability around the means, providing a more precise estimate for each group at each time point. In the case of the EG, the reduced overlap between the pre-test and post-test error bars visually suggests a positive effect of the intervention. For a more detailed

examination of these trends, Table 1 presents the data obtained from post hoc pairwise comparisons of estimated marginal means using *t*-tests.

Table 1 – Pairwise Comparisons Based on Estimated Marginal Means of GOP.

Contrast	Estimate	SE	Df	t.radio	Significance
Control Pre-test – Experimental Pre-test	0.13	0.25	62.9	0.52	0.95
Control Pre-test – Control Post-test	0.11	0.16	44.1	0.68	0.90
Experimental Pre-test – Experimental Post-test	0.77	0.14	44.1	5.54	<.0001
Control Post-test – Experimental Post-test	-0.53	0.25	62.9	-2.14	0.15

Source: Mata (2025).

The comparison of estimated marginal means enabled an examination of ACG and EG outcomes across the different assessment time points. As shown in Table 1, the difference between the ACG and the EG at pre-test was only 0,13 points and was not statistically significant ($t(62,9) = 0,52$, $p = 0,95$). This finding indicates that, prior to the intervention, both groups displayed comparable levels of GOP. Conversely, the EG demonstrated a statistically significant improvement of 0,77 points from pre-test to post-test ($t(44,1) = 5,54$, $p < 0,0001$), providing evidence of a positive effect associated with the Instagram-based intervention. The ACG, in contrast, did not show a statistically significant improvement between the pre-test and post-test.

In summary, the findings indicate that the ACG maintained stable performance throughout the study, with no statistically significant changes. The EG, by contrast, showed a substantial improvement in GOP, indicating a positive effect of the social media-based intervention. In this respect, the absence of a statistically significant difference between the ACG's pre- and post-test scores suggests that the conventional instructional activities were not sufficiently effective in promoting significant gains in this outcome. Thus, the findings support the study hypothesis with respect to this variable.

The following section presents transcriptions of the pre-test and post-test oral productions of one randomly selected participant from the experimental group (EG). This participant was selected because the interaction between group and assessment

time point had a significant effect on the increase in Global Oral Proficiency (GOP) relative to the active control group (ACG):

P41 Experimental (Pre-test) — Yo no trabajo, pero estullo mucho depois de la escuela | Estoy estudiando para el próximo ENEM y estudio un poco. Mi semana es muy simples, es escuela, estudio y en el findes veo películas y juego videogames y leo⁶. *GOP: 2,0*

P41 Experimental (Pós) — Soy *. Tengo dieciocho años, soy brasileño. Vivo en Natal, en Ponta Negra, en un piso. No trabajo, estudo multimedios en el IFRN. Soy una persona creativa y no hablo mucho. Ayudo mis amigos y hablo inglés y portugués, y un poco de español⁷. *GOP: 4,3*

In the pre-test excerpt, P41's performance reveals limitations that compromise the completion of the oral task and justify the score of 2.0 in Global Oral Proficiency. Although the participant is able to address aspects of their daily routine, the production demonstrates limited control of the linguistic resources required to formulate a more precise, cohesive, and appropriate message in Spanish.

Dörnyei and Kormos (1998) argue that L2 oral production requires the simultaneous coordination of planning, lexical retrieval, grammatical encoding, and monitoring processes. In the pre-test excerpt, the recurrence of inappropriate choices suggests that these processes had not yet become sufficiently automatized. This is evident, for instance, in the alternation between comprehensible elements and structures that depart from Spanish conventions, thereby compromising the accuracy and overall clarity of the speech.

⁶ I do not work, but I study a lot after school. I am preparing for the upcoming ENEM examination, so I spend some time studying. My week is quite simple: I go to school and study, and on weekends I watch movies, play video games, and read (Translation provided without reproducing the student's errors in order to enable readers to understand the intended meaning).

⁷ I am *. I am eighteen years old and Brazilian. I live in Ponta Negra, Natal, in an apartment. I do not work; I study Multimedia at IFRN. I am a creative person, although I do not speak very much. I help my friends, and I speak English and Portuguese, as well as a little Spanish (Translation provided without reproducing the student's errors in order to enable readers to understand the intended meaning).

From the perspective of fluency and discourse organization, the excerpt consists of short, juxtaposed utterances with limited development. As Brumfit (2000) and Skehan (1996) maintain, fluency does not refer merely to the quantity of words produced, but also to the ability to sustain communication with relative continuity and to organize linguistic resources in a functional manner. In P41 Experimental's case, the production is brief, marked by pauses and pronunciation difficulties, and displays a limited degree of elaboration. It also lacks connectors that would establish clearer relationships among the pieces of information, thus restricting its cohesion.

For Dutra's (2018) understanding of GOP as the articulation of fluency, accuracy, lexical repertoire, intelligibility, and communicative appropriateness, the participant's performance remains at an initial stage. P41 Experimental is able to convey partial information about their routine; however, this is achieved with recurrent difficulties in accuracy, limited discursive elaboration, and restricted control of L2 resources. Therefore, the score of 2.0 is consistent with a performance in which the communicative purpose is only partially achieved and in which oral production still requires greater systematization and contextualized practice in Spanish.

By contrast, in the post-test production, P41 Experimental demonstrates a substantially more consistent performance than that observed in the pre-test, supporting the score of 4.3 on the GOP scale. This improvement does not result solely from a longer production; rather, it is primarily reflected in clearer discourse organization, greater control of basic L2 structures, and a more appropriate completion of the communicative task. This development may be interpreted in light of Dörnyei and Kormos (1998), as P41 Experimental demonstrates a greater ability in the post-test to retrieve and mobilize lexical units related to self-presentation, housing, studies, and the languages they speak.

The presence of elements that resemble Portuguese may be interpreted through Poulisse and Bongaerts's (1994) discussion of language co-activation in bilingual production. In the post-test, however, this influence appears in a more localized and

less disruptive manner than in the pre-test. This interpretation is consistent with Grosjean (2013) and Megale (2019), who conceptualize bilingualism as a dynamic and functional repertoire in which L2 command may vary according to experiences of use and communicative demands. In this regard, P41 Experimental demonstrates a greater capacity to mobilize Spanish in order to fulfill a specific communicative purpose, even though their repertoire remains under development.

P41 Experimental's improvement may also be understood through Dutra's (2018) conception of GOP. In the post-test, the participant demonstrates greater appropriateness in relation to the communicative purpose, fewer pauses while speaking, fewer pronunciation difficulties, a more diverse lexical repertoire, greater accuracy, and improved organization of information. The production is not free from deviations; nevertheless, it effectively accomplishes the purpose of self-introduction and the provision of relevant personal information.

Finally, P41 Experimental's development by the end of the intervention suggests that participation in contextualized tasks guided by communicative purposes contributed to the improvement of their oral production in Spanish as an L2, particularly with regard to GOP. Consistent with the principles of Ausubel's (2003) Meaningful Learning Theory and Willis's (1996) Task-Based Language Teaching, the tasks enabled the learner to establish connections between the linguistic content addressed and situations closely related to their everyday life.

7 Perceptions of Instagram use in the classroom

As previously mentioned, in order to examine the perceptions of participants in the experimental group (EG), an in-person meeting was held during which they were invited to submit their reflections through Mentimeter. Participants were asked to provide three words representing positive aspects of the experience and three additional words representing negative aspects. With regard to the positive aspects, a

total of 96 words were submitted to the platform. Figure 1 illustrates the overall distribution of the positive points identified by the participants.

Figure 1 – Positive Aspects.



Source: Mata (2025).

Figure 1 reveals the predominance of favorable evaluations among EG participants regarding the use of Instagram in the proposed activities. Terms such as “interactive” (*interativo*), “dynamic” (*dinâmico*), and “creative” (*criativo*) suggest that the platform was perceived as a resource capable of fostering participation, collaboration, and the creation of original content in Spanish. Similarly, the words “fun” (*divertido*), and “entertaining” (*engraçado*), point to a positive affective dimension of the experience, whereas “group work” (*trabalho em grupo*), and “connection” (*aproximação*) indicate that the social media-mediated tasks may have expanded interactions among students.

These perceptions are relevant because Ausubel (2003) emphasizes that meaningful learning depends not only on the organization of content but also on learners’ willingness to establish substantive relationships between new knowledge and their prior cognitive structure. In this respect, the interactive, creative, and familiar nature of the participants’ digital practices may have contributed to the construction of meaning in relation to the tasks and to the development of L2 oral production.

The recurrence of the expression “working with media” (trabalho com mídia) indicates that some students associated the Instagram activities with digital communication practices found in professional contexts. This perception is consistent with Prensky (2006), who recognizes the presence of digital technologies in the everyday lives of many young people. Nevertheless, this relationship should not be understood as uniform, since levels of familiarity, access, and digital competence may vary across students. Even so, the findings suggest that incorporating Instagram into pedagogical tasks enabled the mobilization of skills related to digital content production, communication in online environments, and the functional use of Spanish in contextualized situations. By bringing tasks closer to communicative practices found in different social and professional spheres, the proposal created conditions for learners to attribute greater relevance to the content addressed.

Regarding the negative aspects, 89 words were submitted through Mentimeter. Figure 2 presents the overall distribution of the points mentioned by participants.

Figure 2 – Negative Aspects.



Source: Mata (2025).

In Figure 2, the most recurrent terms, such as “shyness” (timidez), “exposure” (exposição), and “limited time” (pouco tempo) suggest that, for some participants, the use of Instagram was accompanied by discomfort associated with the visibility of their

productions and the time available to complete the tasks. Likewise, words such as “group work” (trabalho em grupo), “challenges” (desafios), and “repetitive” (repetitivo) point to aspects that required greater attention throughout the intervention. In this case, “repetitive” (repetitivo) appears to be related more to the continued use of the same platform across the activities than to the design of the tasks themselves, which involved distinct proposals. In addition, the occurrence of terms such as “anxiety” (ansiedade) and “embarrassment” (vergonha) indicates that digital exposure, particularly in L2 oral-production activities, may activate affective dimensions capable of influencing learners’ oral performance.

These findings indicate that the integration of digital technologies into L2 teaching should be planned through methodologically diverse approaches that are attentive to the affective and contextual conditions surrounding learning. Consistent with Ausubel (2003), meaningful learning does not result exclusively from the presentation of potentially meaningful content, but also from learners’ predisposition to establish relationships between new knowledge and prior experiences. Accordingly, the complementary integration of digital and analogue resources, together with the alternation between individual, collaborative, face-to-face, and technology-mediated activities, may reduce the perception of continuous exposure and prevent the fatigue associated with the recurrent use of a single platform.

Terms such as “addictive” (viciante), “distraction” (dispersão) and “I do not like social media” (não gosto de redes sociais) reflect some participants’ difficulties in maintaining concentration due to the nature of social media environments. This underscores the need for a balanced approach capable of maximizing Instagram’s pedagogical benefits. Ethical concerns, including “hate speech” (mensagens de ódio), “fake news” and “toxic” (tóxico) further highlight the importance of promoting safe and responsible navigation on digital platforms, in alignment with the Brazilian National Common Core Curriculum (BNCC) and principles of digital ethics. These negative observations may inform improvements in pedagogical practices, making the

use of social media more effective and inclusive, with a focus on Meaningful Learning Theory and Task-Based Language Teaching.

8 Conclusion

The study reported herein investigated the effects of the pedagogical use of Instagram on oral production in Spanish as an L2, with particular emphasis on Global Oral Proficiency (GOP) and learners' perceptions of the platform-mediated learning experience. The study involved 42 students enrolled in Integrated Technical Secondary Education at the Federal Institute of Rio Grande do Norte, Natal Centro Histórico Campus. Participants were assigned to an experimental group (EG), which used Instagram, and an active control group (ACG), which did not use social media. Quantitative findings indicated that, following the intervention, the EG demonstrated significantly better GOP performance than the ACG.

Concurrently, the qualitative data revealed a predominance of favorable perceptions regarding the pedagogical use of Instagram, particularly in relation to engagement, creativity, interaction, and the closer alignment between the proposed tasks and the digital practices already embedded in participants' everyday lives. Nevertheless, less favorable perceptions were also identified, primarily associated with the public exposure of students' productions, shyness, anxiety, and difficulties arising from the recurrent use of the same digital tool.

These findings suggest that the incorporation of social media into educational settings constitutes a multifaceted phenomenon, capable of creating both favorable conditions for participation and meaningful use of the target language, as well as challenges related to the affective and subjective dimensions of the learning process. Thus, the combined analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data suggests that Instagram may constitute a pedagogically relevant resource for the development of L2 oral production, provided that its use is integrated into instructional proposals that

effectively balance the benefits of digital technologies with learners' pedagogical and affective needs.

This study presents certain limitations. The first concerns the sample size, which comprised 42 participants distributed between the EG and the ACG. Although this number enabled the proposed statistical analyses to be conducted and significant differences between the groups to be identified, larger samples could increase the statistical power of the analyses, reduce the likelihood of estimation errors, and strengthen the robustness of the findings. In this regard, future research could involve a larger number of participants from different institutions and educational contexts, thereby enabling greater sample diversity and strengthening the external validity of the findings.

The second limitation concerns the time available for task implementation, which required the recurrent use of Instagram throughout the four-week intervention. This aspect appears to have influenced some of the participants' qualitative perceptions, particularly those related to the notion of "repetitiveness." It is important to note that this perception was not necessarily associated with the nature of the proposed tasks, which addressed different themes and communicative objectives, but rather with the continuous use of the same digital platform as the primary medium through which the activities were carried out.

Accordingly, future studies may explore different forms of integrating digital technologies into L2 teaching in order to prevent a single tool from concentrating all intervention tasks. One possibility would be to alternate Instagram-based work with activities conducted in other digital environments, such as podcasts, blogs, learning platforms, or messaging applications, thereby expanding opportunities for interaction and linguistic production. Another alternative would be to combine digitally mediated moments with analogue tasks, such as debates, role-playing activities, discussion circles, and oral presentations.

Furthermore, it is important to emphasize that this study does not seek to endorse a neoliberal discourse that frames digital technologies as universal or redemptive solutions for learning, nor does it seek to legitimize the platformization or mediatization of educational processes at the expense of pedagogical practices that emerge within the school environment. Its central objective is to foster critical reflection on the integration of such technologies through a responsible, meaningful, and contextualized approach, ensuring that these tools contribute to individuals' emancipation rather than to the perpetuation of inequalities. This study aligns with Freire's (2014) perspective by reinforcing that genuine social transformation in education occurs when human beings become protagonists of their own learning processes; that is, when digital technology serves education — particularly L2 teaching and learning — rather than the reverse.

Translated into English by the authors.

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Appendix – Learners' global oral proficiency assessment scale

DELE A1: Oral Expression and Interaction (Adapted)	
5 ()	The learner has a sufficiently broad repertoire to communicate with a certain degree of effectiveness and make their intended meaning clear. They are able to express facts, wishes, preferences, emotional states, or evaluations (e.g., <i>I like [me gusta]...</i>, <i>I want [quiero]...</i>, <i>I think that [creo que]...</i>, <i>because [porque]...</i>). Their discourse is reasonably continuous and is linked through basic cohesive devices (e.g., <i>because</i>, <i>but</i>, adverbs, and demonstratives). The learner demonstrates control of basic grammatical rules for constructing simple sentences, although some errors may occur.

4 ()	The learner demonstrates control of basic grammatical rules, including indicative tenses, agreement, articles, possessives, and basic periphrastic constructions, although errors and/or occasional pauses may occur. The learner is generally easy to understand, although they may display a noticeable foreign accent and occasional articulation difficulties. Nevertheless, they provide the required information.
3 ()	The learner communicates through groups of words and short utterances that enable them to provide limited information in discontinuous discourse and/or discourse minimally connected through expressions such as <i>and</i> (<i>y</i>) and <i>also</i> (<i>también</i>). Frequent reformulations or repetitions are observed.
2 ()	The learner uses a limited number of simple grammatical constructions, including the present indicative, copular verbs for identification, location, and attribution of qualities, as well as basic agreement structures. However, they produce pauses or errors and may display influence from other languages. Understanding may require some effort on the part of the interlocutor.
1 ()	The learner communicates through a small number of isolated words or disconnected utterances, including infinitive or present-tense verb forms, lack of grammatical agreement, prolonged and frequent pauses or silences, numerous errors, or a high proportion of words from other languages. Only some fragments can be understood.
0 ()	Complete silence or false starts involving the production of only a few words, or indications that the learner does not understand. Communication is impossible.