



Unlocking The Charms of The Turkish Language: Exploring @speakinturkish on Instagram

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Abstract

In conjunction with the rapid evolution of technology, education and learning are also undergoing development into diverse forms and channels. Social media, especially Instagram, is utilized by individuals of all ages, both young and old, as an integral aspect of daily life. Beyond its entertainment function, social media serves as a tool for education. On Instagram, numerous accounts dedicated to teaching the Turkish language can be found, among which @speakinturkish stands out as one of the most followed and interactive. This study aims to thoroughly examine the account's active role in Turkish language education, examine its posts and reels, assess their impact on followers, and uncover their contributions to literacy education. To achieve this, a combination of document analysis and discourse analysis methodologies was employed. The investigation encompassed an evaluation of various aspects, including page layout, content composition, posting frequency, approaches to Turkish language instruction, and pedagogical methodologies employed. Additionally, the study delved into the account's interaction with its followers, considering metrics such as likes, comments, and response frequency. This discourse encompassed discussions on the influence exerted by the commented accounts on their followers. Given the escalating prominence of technological integration, the research anticipates valuable insights that will enrich the language education and literacy.

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of technology is reshaping the landscape of education and learning. Traditional classroom-based methods are no longer the sole means of acquiring knowledge; instead, education and learning can now take place through a variety of channels and digital media, thanks to the internet. E-learning presents a completely new learning environment for students, requiring different skills to be successful (Jethro et al, 2012). Current data reveals that the global internet user base has surged to 5.16 billion individuals, encompassing a staggering 64.4% of the world's population (wearesocial, 2023). Furthermore, a remarkable 4.76 billion people are active on social media platforms, constituting 60% of the global population (wearesocial, 2023).

The Digital 2023 Report underscores the fact that over 95% of the world's population is connected via smartphones (wearesocial, 2023). This highlights the enduring prominence of mobile devices as the preferred choice for digital engagement, with individuals spending more than five hours a day on average interacting with their smartphones. Additionally, the average internet user of working age now dedicates 2.5 hours daily to engaging with various social media platforms. Moreover, after the COVID 19 pandemic, many people were forced to learn remotely to follow stay-at-home orders around the world. Most educators and students choose to use video-based devices and platforms to continue their education via the internet (Vargo,D., et al).

Currently, Technology is the main factor influencing education. Schools are expected to use technology to improve students' education, but challenges in its use have been identified (Johnson et al. 2016). The first is external factors for teachers such as availability of equipment, access to resources, training, and support. If students and teachers do not have computer access and a fast internet connection, then implementing online teaching is impossible (Winter et al. 2021).

This huge amount of time spends by people every day, is a chance to move the educating and learning process through social media. Social media be a great tool to allow communication, interaction, and unity due to their interactive nature (Akar, 2010). Social networks empower educators in enhancing their teaching methods by using active, creative, and collaborative learning experiences. They facilitate increased interaction among students, as well as between students and teachers, encompassing both the exchange of knowledge and the development of research, inquiry, and critical thinking skills (Gülbahar et al., 2010). The ubiquity of social media, reaching millions of users, coupled with its adaptability to various technological advancements, renders it a noteworthy asset across diverse domains (Avşar, 2022). Furthermore, online learning environments offer the added advantage of enabling continuous interaction and real-time feedback, accessible 24/7. The potential payoffs of designing, developing, and employing

good online learning solutions are great, and they include improved efficiency, effectiveness, and enjoyment of the learning experience (Shute,V, et al).

Instagram has emerged as one of the most popular social media platforms, boasting a staggering two billion monthly active users. People share all sorts of stunning visuals to share their lives and their stories (Anuar et al., 2020). According to a report by wearesocial in 2023, people across the globe dedicate over 12 hours each month to their Instagram activities. Instagram has firmly established itself as the go-to platform for individuals to share their photos and videos related to their passions and interests. Notably, the introduction of the Reels feature has garnered significant attention, allowing users to effortlessly share short videos with a global audience. This feature has gained widespread popularity due to its capacity to provide a wealth of entertainment, including humorous content, tutorials, and even educational materials.

Numerous emerging Instagram profiles are dedicated to disseminating informative and educational content through Reels. In this era of lifelong learning, traditional educational institutions like schools, colleges, and universities no longer monopolize the pursuit of knowledge. Learning has transformed into a readily accessible desire, achievable from the comfort of one's home or workplace, as highlighted by Lauder et al. in 2006.

According to Putri (2022), the use of social media, especially Instagram, greatly influences students' vocabulary because this application is very familiar to everyone. From this sample we can also see that they often use this application to increase their vocabulary (Putri.E, 2022). In research conducted by Al-Ali (2014), the results of Instagram integration in English as Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms were found as a potential mobile learning tool. This research also reports that Instagram provides a unique opportunity to create a more individualized learning experience for language learners. Apart from that, Instagram has proven to be quite effective in forming a strong sense of togetherness among students. Then, learning activities via Instagram accounts receive positive perceptions from students. They consider this activity fun and easy to access anytime and anywhere (Sari F.M, 2019).

Instagram boasts a plethora of educational tutorial accounts, particularly in the domain of language learning, some amassing hundreds of thousands of followers. Likewise, there is a substantial presence of accounts dedicated to teaching the Turkish language. Those seeking insights into Turkish language and culture can readily tap into this valuable resource by following these social media accounts. In the post-pandemic period, Turkish language learning methods, which were originally based on face-to-face meetings, have begun to explore the use of the internet in distance learning methods for Turkish. Although there is debate, distance learning or online education is a positive development in the field of Turkish language education and teaching (Aydin,E, 2021).

@speakinturkish is one of them. It focused on teaching Turkish language on all aspects, reading, listening, writing, and speaking. This article then will examine how this account teach Turkish using all feature of Instagram. Additionally, the study delved into the account's interaction with its followers, considering metrics such as likes, comments, and response frequency.

RESEARCH METHODS

In this study, @speakinturkish Instagram accounts were examined in terms of literacy education. For this reason, the teaching methods, and techniques to teach Turkish are explained in detail. Additionally, the number of likes and comments, interaction with followers are also examined. The sample of the study are the content posted between January – August 2023. A total of 132 reels videos were examined.

Document analysis and discourse analysis were used to analyze the written materials containing information about the subject to be investigated (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). Discourse analysis, employed as a research approach within extensive social and cultural investigations, focuses on understanding the meaning generated through spoken and written communication (Çelik & Ekşi, 2013). Research conducted an analysis of @speakinturkish Instagram accounts, examining elements such as page design, content, posting frequency, language utilization, instructional techniques for Turkish language teaching, and user engagement.

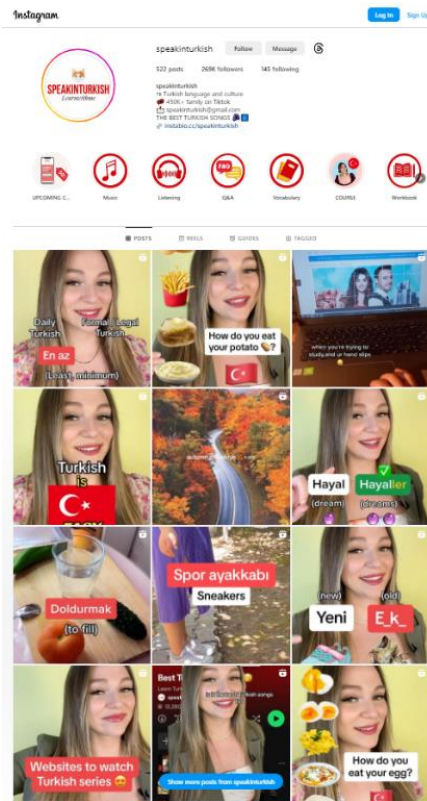
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The @speakinturkish Instagram account made its debut on the platform in March 2021, with a dedicated focus on sharing content related to learning the Turkish language. Since created, the account has primarily centered its efforts on creating engaging Reels videos, with only a limited number of photo posts.

The account is owned and managed by Funda, a native Turkish speaker with a background in teaching. Funda is in her twenties and resides in Istanbul, Turkey. Notably, she has authored Turkish grammar and question bank books, showcasing her expertise in the subject matter.

As of the latest update, @speakinturkish has amassed an impressive following of 269,000 followers, and a total of 522 posts.

Figure 1. @speakinturkish Instagram account



Source: Instagram @speakinturkish, 2023

Table 1. Statistical data of @speakinturkish

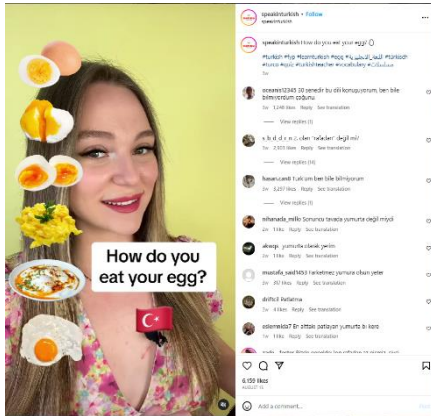
	Sharing Frequency	Likes Average (On each post)	Comments Average (On each post)
January	18	2777	112
February	12	2543	132
March	22	3654	289
April	21	3876	293
May	18	2245	157
June	10	2765	184
July	17	2678	175
August	14	2987	184
TOTAL	132	2337	176

Table 1 illustrates the sharing frequency, average likes, and average comments for the account. On average, this account shares 16 posts each month, roughly one post every two days. The typical number of likes per post falls within the range of 2000 to 3000. Additionally, some exceptional posts have garnered an impressive 100k to 200k likes because it went viral.

The @speakinturkish account primarily focuses on creating Reels videos that aim to teach Turkish to individuals interested in learning the language. All its content, including Reels videos, photos, and Instagram stories, is presented in English. The account provides contents on various

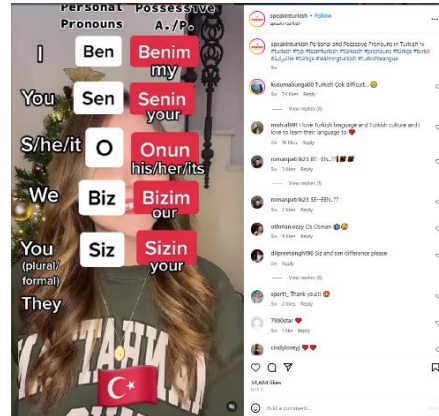
aspects of Turkish, such as vocabulary, grammar, speaking skills, spelling rules, suffix-root knowledge, as well as examples of idioms and proverbs, in addition to guidance for Turkish exams.

Figure 2. Vocabulary Videos



Source: Instagram @speakturkish, 2023

Figure 3. Grammar Videos



Source: Instagram @speakturkish, 2023

Examined the content, it becomes evident that the content caters not only to students or exam candidates but also appeals to anyone interested in the subject. The posts contain valuable content that is relevant to everyday life, making it accessible and beneficial to a wide audience. It is worth noting that the use of a humorous tone in the content, often accompanied by videos, has proven to be particularly effective in attracting a substantial number of views. This indicates the followers' interest in humor-infused content.

The videos on the page typically involve explanations of various topics, along with answering questions from the audience. The featured sections cover a range of subjects, including introductions, the meanings of proverbs and idioms, word, and sentence explanations, distinguishing between suffixes and stems, TV commercials, and compilations of messages from followers.

Figure 4. Learning Alternatives



Source: Instagram @speakturkish, 2023

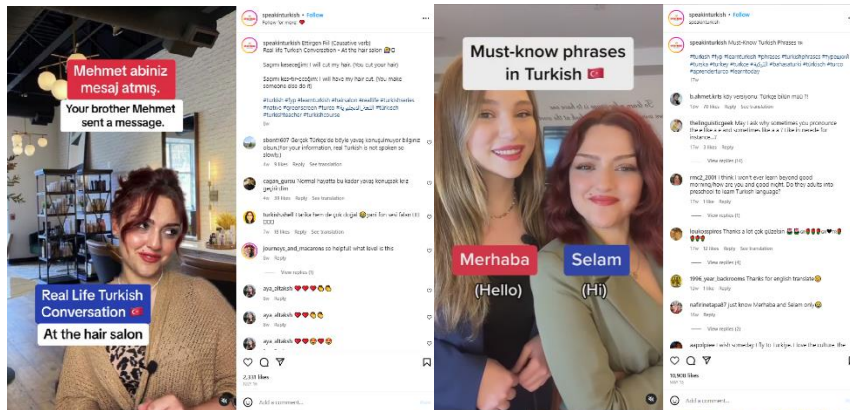
Figure 5. Turkish Movie Recommendation



Source: Instagram @speakturkish, 2023

The interaction on the account was counted by seeing its likes and comments. @speakinturkish mostly share videos about vocabulary, such as nouns, pronouns, and verbs. It also shares videos about grammar, greetings, and other real-life conversation in the market, salon, or restaurant. Videos that share vocabulary has the highest number of likes and comments.

Figure 6. Daily Conversation at Salon (left side) and Greetings (right side)



Source: Instagram @speakinturkish, 2023

In the comments section, a diverse range of interactions can be observed. People who thanked the account for helping them identify exam questions, followers expressing their love for the Turkish language, and those expressing gratitude for their exam success are among the contributors. Additionally, there are those who wish to discuss various topics, reach out through different social media channels, pose questions seeking clarification, and even individuals who claim errors in the video explanations.

The account owner, diligently and responsively, strives to address all comments to the best of their ability. Notably, there is a notable uptick in comments, especially on sample question solutions, where candidates frequently ask questions and provide feedback on the usefulness of the shared content. It is seen that @speakinturkish actively engages with the comments, and this interactive approach significantly contributes to the growing number of followers and comments on the page.

This study examined various aspects of the @speakinturkish Instagram account, including numerical data, account characteristics, methods of teaching Turkish, and user interactions. The findings of the study revealed the following result:

Upon analyzing the numerical data of Instagram accounts dedicated to teaching Turkish, it was observed that there is no significant correlation between the number of followers and the number of likes and comments on these accounts. In other words, the size of the follower base does not necessarily correspond to higher engagement in terms of likes and comments (Simsek,

2023). This suggests that factors beyond follower count may play a more significant role in driving user engagement and interaction on educational Instagram accounts like @speakinturkish.

The account provides contents on various aspects of Turkish, such as vocabulary, grammar, speaking skills, spelling rules, suffix-root knowledge, as well as examples of idioms and proverbs, in addition to guidance for Turkish exams. As highlighted in the study by Avcı and Topçu (2021), daily spoken language is undeniably influenced by the words and concepts prevalent in social media platforms. Furthermore, Taş and Uğurlu (2019) conducted an extensive review of related research and determined that the inclination of new-generation students towards web-based learning and technology is conducive to the process of second language acquisition.

In the context of Instagram accounts like @speakinturkish, where visual content is prominent, it's worth noting that concise explanations of Turkish language rules are often provided in written form within the visuals. This practice not only serves to enhance understanding of these rules but also contributes to the development of reading comprehension skills among the audience.

The engagement and interaction observed in @speakinturkish, it plays a pivotal role in facilitating the process of learning Turkish and rectifying known language errors. As highlighted in the research conducted by Taş and Uğurlu (2019), social media platforms have been shown to make a valuable contribution to the field of language education.

Followers of @speakinturkish can establish continuous communication with the account holders, utilizing features such as likes, comments, and direct messages, around the clock, seven days a week. Their interactions take various forms, including posing questions to confirm their understanding, requesting clarifications, and expressing gratitude for the assistance provided.

In alignment with the findings of Drahošová and Balco (2017), whose research emphasized the significant role of social media in information exchange and communication, this study corroborates the notion that these platforms serve as valuable hubs for such interactions. Notably, comments left on the analyzed accounts frequently attest to the positive impact of followers who use these platforms to enhance their Turkish language proficiency, thus contributing to the correct application of Turkish rules and fostering a deeper understanding of the language.

Feyzioğlu (2016) have conducted studies that yielded results indicating the positive impact of these educational pages in terms of diversifying course materials and enhancing the quality of teaching. These findings emphasize the valuable role played by such online platforms in enriching the educational experience for learners of the Turkish language.

CONCLUSIONS

This study underscores the effectiveness of using Instagram as a platform for teaching and learning. The interactions observed on the account provide evidence that followers not only read and comprehend the shared content but also actively engage with it through comments. Furthermore, it demonstrates that effective learning can take place in an enjoyable and engaging manner. Importantly, the study suggests that the videos shared by the account contribute to the development of the four fundamental language skills in Turkish: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This indicates that the account's content is well-rounded and supports holistic language acquisition.

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