Unveiling The Effectiveness of Instagram to Enhance Descriptive Text Writing

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Abstract

This study investigates the effectiveness of Instagram as a tool for improving students' descriptive text writing skills. Conducted at SMPN 1 Cimaung from July 24 to August 10, 2023, the research involved 30 eighth-grade students. Using a pre-experimental design with a single group, the study assessed the impact of Instagram on students' writing performance through tests and questionnaires. The findings reveal a significant improvement in students' writing skills, with the t-test showing a higher value than the t-table (3.764 > 2.045). Additionally, 90% of students reported enjoying learning English, and 80% favored using Instagram for writing. These results suggest that Instagram is an effective tool for enhancing writing skills and engaging students in learning. This study not only adds to the growing body of research on digital tools in education but also provides practical insights into the integration of social media into language learning.

Keywords: Instagram, Descriptive Text, Writing Skills

1. Introduction

In today's digital age, social media has become an integral part of daily life, shaping the way individuals communicate, share information, and learn. The rise of social media platforms has not only transformed social interactions but also created new opportunities for educational innovation. Among these platforms, Instagram stands out as a popular choice for young people due to its visual appeal and user-friendly interface, making it a potential tool for enhancing educational experiences. The platform's ability to combine visual and textual content enables educators to deliver information in a more engaging and relatable manner, which can lead to improved learning outcomes. For instance, research by Widarti et al. (2024) found that using Instagram-based learning media improved student motivation and learning outcomes in reaction rate topics.

Educators are increasingly exploring ways to integrate social media into the classroom to create more engaging and relevant learning environments. By tapping into students' existing interests and habits, educators can leverage platforms like Instagram to foster creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking. The challenge lies in effectively incorporating these digital tools into the curriculum in a way that enhances learning outcomes while maintaining educational rigor. This requires a strategic approach that considers the unique features of each platform and

aligns them with pedagogical objectives. Research by Erarslan (2019) indicates that Instagram can be used to enhance English learning as a supplementary tool to formal teaching by exposing students to the language in an informal setting.

1.1. Writing Skill

Writing is a fundamental skill in language education, crucial for academic success and effective communication (Walsh, 2010). Among the various types of writing, descriptive writing holds significant importance as it enables students to convey vivid imagery and details, allowing readers to visualize the subject matter (Oshima & Hogue, 2007). Descriptive writing is not only about listing attributes but involves creating a picture in the reader's mind, which requires a nuanced understanding of language and expression. However, many students face challenges in developing writing proficiency, particularly in crafting descriptive texts. This difficulty is often compounded for students learning English as a foreign language (EFL), who may struggle with organizing their thoughts and expressing ideas clearly (Hyland, 2016).

Despite its importance, writing is frequently perceived as a challenging skill to master. Traditional teaching methods often rely heavily on textbooks and written exercises, which can lead to disengagement and a lack of motivation among students (Harmer, 2007; Rahayu & Sandi, 2018). This calls for innovative approaches that can make learning more relevant and engaging for students. By integrating modern technologies and interactive platforms, educators can create a more dynamic and stimulating learning environment that caters to the diverse needs of students.

1.2. The Role of Technology in Language Learning

The rapid advancement of technology has transformed the educational landscape, offering new opportunities for enhancing language learning. Social media platforms, in particular, have emerged as powerful tools for engaging students in interactive and collaborative learning experiences (McLoughlin & Lee, 2007). Platforms like Instagram are widely used by young people and offer features that can be leveraged for educational purposes, such as visual storytelling and multimedia content creation (Al-Ali, 2014). These features provide a rich context for language practice, allowing students to experiment with language in a more authentic and meaningful way.

Research has shown that integrating technology into the language learning process can lead to improved student engagement and learning outcomes. Digital tools provide students with opportunities to practice language skills in authentic contexts, enabling them to develop both linguistic and digital literacy skills (Blake, 2016). The use of technology also supports differentiated instruction, allowing educators to tailor learning experiences to individual student needs and preferences. This adaptability makes technology an invaluable resource in the modern classroom, where diversity and inclusivity are key considerations.

1.3. Instagram as an Educational Tool

Instagram, as one of the most popular social media platforms, offers unique features that make it an ideal tool for teaching descriptive writing. Its visual and textual capabilities allow students to associate images with descriptive language, enhancing their ability to create vivid and engaging content (Handayani, 2016). By visualizing concepts and ideas, students can develop a deeper understanding of how descriptive language functions and its impact on the reader.

Instagram's interface encourages creativity and self-expression, which can motivate students to actively participate in writing activities (Thomas et al., 2020).

Several studies have explored the potential of Instagram as a learning tool. Erarslan (2019) found that using Instagram in EFL classrooms can significantly improve students' language skills, as it provides a platform for authentic communication and interaction. Similarly, Handayani (2016) highlighted the positive impact of Instagram on students' motivation and engagement, noting that it can transform traditional writing exercises into dynamic and interactive experiences. By utilizing Instagram, educators can bridge the gap between students' everyday experiences and academic learning, making education more relevant and meaningful.

1.4. Addressing Challenges in Descriptive Writing

Descriptive writing requires students to convey detailed and sensory information, making it a complex skill to master. EFL learners often struggle with using appropriate vocabulary, organizing their ideas, and maintaining coherence in their writing (Hyland, 2016; Rahayu & Rosmawati, 2019; Rahayu &Yulianda, 2023). These challenges are often exacerbated by limited exposure to descriptive language and a lack of practice in expressing nuanced ideas. Additionally, traditional teaching methods may not effectively address these challenges, leading to students' frustration and disengagement.

The integration of Instagram into the writing curriculum addresses these challenges by providing a visually rich and interactive platform for learning. By associating images with descriptive language, students can better understand how to use sensory details to create vivid descriptions (Thomas et al., 2020). This approach not only enhances students' comprehension but also encourages them to experiment with different expressions and styles. Instagram also encourages peer feedback and collaboration, allowing students to learn from one another and refine their writing skills through social interaction (Vygotsky, 1978).

2. Method

2.1. Research Design

This research employed a pre-experimental design to evaluate the impact of Instagram on students' descriptive writing skills. The study involved a single group of participants who underwent a pre-test, received treatment, and then completed a post-test. This design is exploratory, allowing for the examination of causal relationships between the independent and dependent variables (Phakiti, 2014). Pre-experimental designs are particularly useful in educational settings where random assignment is not feasible, providing initial insights into the potential effectiveness of instructional interventions (Mangal & Mangal, 2013). Although this design has limitations in terms of control and generalizability, it offers valuable preliminary data that can inform future research and instructional strategies.

2.2. Participants

The study was conducted at SMPN 1 Cimaung, involving 30 second-grade students (18 females and 12 males) selected randomly from a single class. The participants shared similar characteristics, ensuring the validity of the findings (Creswell, 2002). This homogeneity helps minimize confounding variables and enhances the reliability of the results. The selection criteria included students' access to smartphones and familiarity with Instagram, as these factors were

essential for their participation in the study. The sample size, though limited, was deemed sufficient for an exploratory investigation into the use of Instagram in writing instruction.

2.3. Instruments

Data collection involved two primary instruments: tests and questionnaires. The tests measured students' writing performance before and after the intervention, while the questionnaires assessed their attitudes toward using Instagram as a learning tool. The writing tests were designed to evaluate students' ability to produce descriptive texts, focusing on key aspects such as vocabulary, coherence, and creativity (Weigle, 2014). These tests provided quantitative data that allowed for objective comparisons between pre- and post-intervention performance. The questionnaire included closed-ended questions to capture a comprehensive view of students' perceptions and experiences.

2.4. Procedure

1. **Pre-test**: Students completed a writing test to assess their initial descriptive writing skills. The pre-test provided a baseline measure of students' abilities, allowing for a comparison with their post-intervention performance. This step was crucial in identifying the initial proficiency level of the participants and setting a benchmark for evaluating progress.

2. **Treatment**: Students participated in a series of lessons incorporating Instagram to write descriptive texts, utilizing images and captions to enhance their writing. The treatment phase included guided practice, peer feedback, and opportunities for students to experiment with different writing styles and techniques. This phase emphasized active learning and encouraged students to apply theoretical concepts in practical scenarios.

3. **Post-test**: Students completed a second writing test to evaluate improvements in their skills. The post-test was similar in format to the pre-test, ensuring consistency in the assessment process. The results provided quantifiable evidence of the intervention's impact on students' writing abilities.

4. **Questionnaire**: Students provided feedback on their learning experience and the use of Instagram in writing instruction. The questionnaire responses were used to identify patterns and themes in students' perceptions, highlighting areas of success and potential improvement. This feedback was instrumental in refining the instructional approach and addressing any challenges encountered during the study.

2.5. Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using a dependent t-test to compare pre-test and post-test scores, determining the statistical significance of the results. The t-test is a robust statistical tool that evaluates whether the observed differences in scores are due to the intervention or random chance. The questionnaire responses were analyzed to gauge students' perceptions of the learning method. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the quantitative data, while thematic analysis was employed to interpret the qualitative feedback from the questionnaires (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3.   Results and Discussion

3.1 Result

To evaluate the impact of Instagram on students' descriptive writing skills, a detailed analysis of the pre-test and post-test scores was conducted. Table 3.1 presents the individual scores of students before and after the intervention, highlighting the changes in their writing performance. This data allows us to examine the effectiveness of Instagram as an educational tool by comparing the progress each student made during the study period. The table captures the range of improvements and challenges faced by students, offering a clear picture of how integrating Instagram into the curriculum influenced their writing skills. By analyzing these scores, we gain valuable insights into the potential of social media to enhance learning outcomes and foster engagement among students.

Table 1 Data Taken from the Test

No	Subject	Pre-test	Post-test	D scores	D^2
1	Student 1	75	65	10	100
2	Student 2	70	70	0	0
3	Student 3	60	85	-25	625
4	Student 4	70	75	-5	25
5	Student 5	60	75	-15	225
6	Student 6	55	80	-25	625
7	Student 7	70	75	-5	25
8	Student 8	75	75	0	0
9	Student 9	70	65	5	25
10	Student 10	65	75	-10	100
11	Student 11	75	70	5	25
12	Student 12	80	85	-5	25
13	Student 13	70	70	0	0
14	Student 14	60	85	-25	625
15	Student 15	65	90	-25	625
16	Student 16	85	65	20	400
17	Student 17	50	75	-25	625
18	Student 18	65	90	-25	625
19	Student 19	65	90	-25	625
20	Student 20	75	65	10	100
21	Student 21	50	85	-35	1225
22	Student 22	60	100	-40	1600

23	Student 23	80	95	-15	**225**
24	Student 24	65	80	-15	**225**
25	Student 25	85	60	25	**625**
26	Student 26	55	85	-30	**900**
27	Student 27	75	75	0	**0**
28	Student 28	55	85	-30	**900**
29	Student 29	65	75	-10	**100**
30	Student 30	55	90	-35	**1225**
		$\sum X_1 =$ 2005 **X=66.83**	**$\sum X_2 =$ 2355** **X=78.5**	**$\sum D = -350$**	**$\sum D^2 =$ 12450**

The use of Instagram as a treatment to enhance students' descriptive writing skills shows varied results when comparing pre-test and post-test scores. Initially, students' pre-test scores ranged from 50 to 85, with an average of around 66.83. After implementing Instagram as a teaching tool, the post-test scores improved for many students, with scores ranging from 60 to 100 and an average of approximately 78.5. This indicates a general improvement in writing skills after using Instagram, as most students showed higher post-test scores compared to their pre-test results. For instance, Student 1 improved from a pre-test score of 75 to a post-test score of 65, showing a positive change of 10 points. Similarly, Student 30 demonstrated significant progress, with their score increasing from 55 in the pre-test to 90 in the post-test, a 35-point improvement.

The analysis of test scores revealed a significant improvement in students' descriptive writing skills. The mean score increased from 66.83 (pre-test) to 78.5 (post-test), with a t-value of -3.76, indicating a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.05$). These findings align with previous research highlighting the effectiveness of visual aids in language learning (Faizi, El Afia, & Chiheb, 2013). The improvement in students' scores suggests that Instagram can serve as an effective medium for developing writing skills, offering students a platform to practice and refine their abilities. By engaging students in a familiar and interactive environment, Instagram facilitates learning in a way that resonates with their interests and preferences, thereby enhancing motivation and participation.

In addition to the quantitative analysis of writing skills, the study also explored students' attitudes and perceptions toward using Instagram as a learning tool through a structured questionnaire. Table 3.2 presents the responses to a series of questions aimed at understanding the students' enjoyment of learning English, their motivation to write, and their perceptions of Instagram's role in enhancing their writing skills. The data collected offers valuable insights into how students perceive the integration of social media into their learning process and its impact on their engagement and enthusiasm. By examining these responses, we can better understand the motivational factors that contribute to the effectiveness of Instagram as an educational tool and identify areas for improvement in instructional strategies.

Table 2 Data Taken from the Questionnaire

No	Questions	Yes	No
1.	Do you enjoy learning English?	27 (90 %)	3(10%)
2.	Do you like writing English?	14 (46%)	16 (54%)
3.	Have you ever written descriptive text in English?	3 (10%)	27 (90%)
4.	In your opinion, can writing be used as a place to express ideas?	25 (83%)	5 (17%)
5.	Do you like using Instagram?	26 (86%)	4 (14%)
6.	Is Instagram an application that can provide information?	15 (50%)	15 (50%)
7.	Does using Instagram motivate you to write descriptive text?	20 (66%)	10 (34%)
8.	Does using Instagram make learning to write easier?	18 (60%)	12 (40%)
9.	After using Instagram, are you more excited to learn English?	20 (66%)	10 (34%)
10.	Do you like this learning method?	24 (80%)	6 (20%)

The data from the questionnaire reveals insights into students' attitudes and perceptions regarding the use of Instagram as a tool to enhance their descriptive writing skills in English. A significant portion of the students, 90%, reported enjoying learning English, but only 46% expressed a liking for writing in English, suggesting a potential area for engagement improvement. This discrepancy indicates that while students are generally interested in the language, the writing component may require additional support and motivation to foster a positive attitude.

Notably, a mere 10% of students had previously written descriptive texts in English, indicating limited prior exposure or practice in this specific writing style. This lack of experience underscores the importance of providing targeted instruction and practice opportunities to help students develop their skills. Despite this, 83% of respondents believe that writing can serve as a platform for expressing ideas, highlighting an opportunity to harness this belief to encourage writing activities.

Furthermore, 86% of the students reported enjoying the use of Instagram, a factor that could be leveraged to bridge their interests in social media and language learning. The platform's popularity among students suggests that its integration into the curriculum could enhance engagement and motivation, making learning more appealing and relevant.

The responses also suggest that Instagram holds promise as a tool to motivate and facilitate English writing among students. Sixty-six percent of the students felt motivated to write descriptive text through Instagram, and 60% believed that Instagram made learning to write easier. The integration of Instagram into their learning process seems to have positively impacted students' enthusiasm, with 66% reporting increased excitement towards learning English after using the platform. Additionally, 80% of the students appreciated this innovative learning method, indicating that Instagram not only aligns with their preferences but also enhances their engagement with the learning material. These findings suggest that incorporating Instagram into

educational practices could effectively support students in developing their descriptive writing skills while maintaining high levels of interest and motivation.

3.2 Discussion

The use of Instagram in writing instruction addresses several challenges associated with traditional teaching methods. By leveraging Instagram's visual features, students can better understand and apply descriptive language, improving their writing skills (Thomas et al., 2020). The platform's visual nature allows students to associate words with images, thereby enhancing comprehension and retention. Additionally, the interactive nature of Instagram fosters a more engaging learning environment, encouraging students to participate actively in the learning process (McLoughlin & Lee, 2007). The platform's social features facilitate peer interaction and feedback, creating opportunities for collaborative learning and skill development.

The study's findings align with the principles of social constructivism, which emphasize the importance of social interaction and collaboration in learning (Vygotsky, 1978). By integrating Instagram into the curriculum, educators can create a learning environment that mirrors real-world communication and interaction, thereby preparing students for future challenges. This approach not only enhances writing skills but also promotes digital literacy, a critical competency in the modern world.

However, it is essential to consider the potential drawbacks of social media in education, such as distractions and privacy concerns (De Leyn, De Wolf, Vanden Abeele, & De Marez, 2022). Educators must implement strategies to mitigate these risks, ensuring that social media is used effectively and responsibly in the classroom. This may involve establishing clear guidelines and expectations for social media use, as well as educating students about online safety and etiquette. Future research should explore the long-term effects of social media-based instruction and investigate its applicability to other language skills and contexts. By continuing to explore the potential of digital tools in education, educators can create more dynamic and effective learning experiences for students.

4. Conclusion

This study demonstrates the effectiveness of Instagram as a tool for enhancing students' descriptive writing skills. The integration of Instagram into the writing curriculum resulted in significant improvements in students' performance and increased engagement and motivation. These findings suggest that social media platforms like Instagram can be valuable assets in language education, offering innovative approaches to teaching and learning. The visual and interactive nature of Instagram allows students to engage with content in a more meaningful way, facilitating the development of both language and digital skills.

While the study provides valuable insights into the use of Instagram in writing instruction, it also highlights the need for further research to address potential limitations and explore new avenues for integrating technology into language learning. Future research should examine the impact of social media on other aspects of language learning, such as reading comprehension and vocabulary acquisition. Additionally, longitudinal studies are needed to assess the sustainability of the observed improvements and to identify best practices for incorporating social media into the language curriculum. By embracing digital tools, educators can enhance the learning experience and equip students with the skills needed for success in a rapidly evolving world.

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