Exploring Social Media to Improve Students' Writing Skills at Tertiary Level

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Abstract

In the digital era, integrating social media into language learning has become increasingly important to address students' writing challenges and align instructional practices with their technological realities. This study aims to explore how social media can be used to improve students' writing skills at the tertiary level. A qualitative descriptive research design was employed to examine students' experiences in using social media. The participants were 54 university students enrolled in the Short Functional Text course at Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, with 25 students purposively selected for semi-structured interviews. Data were collected through online questionnaires and interviews, while triangulation was applied to ensure validity. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify social media platforms used, reasons for usage, as well as perceived advantages and disadvantages. The findings indicate that students most frequently used Instagram, TikTok, Twitter/X, WhatsApp, and Duolingo. These platforms were chosen due to ease of access, practicality, and the availability of abundant learning content. The main benefits included improved writing skills, increased confidence, flexible learning opportunities, access to reliable resources, and enhanced vocabulary. However, students also faced challenges such as distractions, poor internet connection, low confidence in English ability, and decreased grammar and spelling accuracy.

Keywords: Social Media, Writing Skills, Tertiary Education, EFL Students

Introduction

The rapid advancement of digital technology has significantly transformed educational practices, particularly in language learning. In today's digital era, social media has become an inseparable part of students' daily lives and offers promising potential as a contextual and authentic learning medium (Al-Maroof et al., 2021). Social media refers to online-based interactive technologies that enable users to create, share, and exchange information, ideas, and expressions within digital communities and networks. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, and TikTok are no longer limited to social interaction and entertainment; they increasingly function as spaces for learning and academic engagement (Susanti et al., 2020). Bisri

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(2024) notes that social media exposes students to diverse types of texts and written interactions, which can contribute positively to the development of writing skills.

In educational contexts, students are continuously engaged with written language through posts, comments, online discussions, and private messaging. This constant exposure provides opportunities for authentic writing practice in meaningful communication settings (Wang et al., 2024). Rahmawati and Cahyono (2022) emphasize that social media has strong potential as a language learning tool because it allows learners to interact actively, express ideas freely, and collaborate with peers. Moreover, learning through familiar digital platforms tends to increase students' motivation and participation, making writing activities more engaging and less intimidating (Sethi et al., 2024). The integration of social media into language learning is therefore highly relevant to the characteristics of digital-native students who are accustomed to technology-mediated communication.

Despite these opportunities, writing remains one of the most challenging skills for EFL learners. Writing requires mastery of multiple components, including grammar, vocabulary, coherence, and idea organization. Harmer (2004) describes writing as a complex cognitive process that demands linguistic accuracy, structural clarity, and effective message delivery. Many students struggle to generate ideas, choose appropriate diction, and construct grammatically acceptable sentences. Warschauer (2010) argues that digital platforms can provide authentic writing environments where learners engage in real communication, receive feedback, and gradually improve their writing competence. Similarly Rosalina et al (2024) highlight that social media offers a familiar and interactive learning environment that helps students overcome writing difficulties by enabling continuous practice, peer interaction, and exposure to varied writing models.

Previous research by Maulida and Norliani (2025) shows that social media is useful in English language learning, with YouTube being the platform most frequently used by students. Social media helps improve vocabulary and pronunciation, although there are still obstacles such as internet connection, privacy, and exposure to inappropriate content. Furthermore, Noviany et al (2024) found that students use social media to communicate and discuss in foreign languages, and most respondents acknowledged that the use of social media has a positive impact on their formal writing skills, especially through practice and interaction in online groups. Another study by Masluha et al (2025) also shows that the use of social media combined with structured peer interaction significantly improves students' English writing skills.

Although these studies have confirmed the benefits of social media in improving language and writing skills, most studies still focus on students' perceptions, frequency of platform use, or general influence on language skills. These studies have not yet thoroughly examined how social media can be systematically integrated into writing instruction design. In addition, there is still limited research that places social media as an authentic publishing space involving a real audience as part of a structured pedagogical strategy at the college level.

Thus, there is a research gap in terms of the lack of studies that integrate social media as part of a systematic instructional strategy in academic writing learning in higher education. Many writing learning practices are still centered on lecturers and rely on conventional assignments that do not provide authentic and collaborative writing experiences.

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Therefore, this study, entitled "Exploring Social Media to Improve Student Writing Skills at the University Level," aims to explore how social media can be used as an instructional medium that provides authentic writing experiences, encourages active participation, and supports collaboration among students. Through social media-based activities, students will be involved in the complete writing process, from planning, drafting, revising, to publishing, as well as receiving feedback from peers and real audiences. This approach is expected to increase student motivation, engagement, and writing quality in a more comprehensive manner.

This research is expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions to the development of innovative writing teaching strategies that are relevant to the characteristics of students as digital natives, as well as to serve as a reference for educators in designing more effective and meaningful writing learning in the digital era.

Method

This study uses a qualitative descriptive design to explore students' experiences in using social media to improve their writing skills. This design was chosen because the study focuses on students' perceptions, reasons, benefits, and challenges in utilizing social media as a learning medium.

The study was conducted in September–October 2025 at Muhammadiyah University Surakarta. The research subjects were first-semester students who took the Short Functional Text course.

A total of 54 students completed the questionnaire, and 25 of them were purposively selected to participate in interviews based on their activeness and willingness. The data consisted of students' responses regarding the use of social media in improving writing skills. Primary data were obtained through closed questionnaires and semi-structured interviews.

The questionnaire was used to collect general information about the platform, frequency of use, benefits, and challenges, while the interviews explored the students' experiences and perceptions in more depth (Sugiyono, 2018)

Data validity was maintained through triangulation techniques by comparing the results of the questionnaire and interviews. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis through a process of organizing, coding, grouping, and identifying themes. The main themes included: (1) platforms used, (2) reasons for use, (3) benefits, and (4) challenges of using social media to improve writing skills.

Results and Discussion

Result

The Kind of Social Media Platforms which used by Students to Improve their Writing Skills

Instagram

Based on the closed questionnaire, the researcher found that 31.5% of students use Instagram to improve their writing skills, making it the most frequently used platform in this study.

MDP   : Instagram

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ADXW : Instagram

MAF : Instagram

These findings supported by the result of the interview.

MDP22 : "For now, it's like Instagram. …"

VA20 : "If I had to choose a social media platform that I use frequently, it would be Instagram. …"

FAS6 : "Maybe, Instagram…"

Based on both closed questionnaires and interviews, students rely on Instagram because it provide accessible English content through captions, reels, quotes, and infographic-based learning materials. Many of them also engage in writing activities such as commenting in English, creating captions, or saving educational posts. The platform's visual and interactive nature allows students to practice writing in a more informal and enjoyable way while being exposed to authentic language input.

TikTok

The findings reveal that 29.6% of the students use TikTok to enhance their writing skills based on the closed questionnaire.

SAPP : TikTok

JH : TikTok

AVR : TikTok

These findings supported by the result of the interview.

AAZA13 : "I usually open TikTok .."

MIB14 : "I often watch TikTok"

Based on closed questionnaire and interview, TikTok is widely used because it offers short, engaging, and easy-to-understand English learning content, including grammar explanations, vocabulary lists, and storytelling videos. Students appreciate the platform's ability to simplify complex writing concepts through short video formats. Several respondents mentioned that they sometimes rewrite sentences or take notes from TikTok videos, making it a practical tool for writing practice.

Twitter (X)

According to the questionnaire, 20.4% of students use Twitter to improve their writing skills.

AZJ : X

AAF : Twitter

NHR : X

These findings supported by the result of the interview.

NH15 : "I use Twitter (X)"

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AA8 : "Usually use Twitter (X)"

MEDE10 : "Twitter (X) sih.."

Based on both closed questionnaire and interview, Twitter encourages concise and expressive writing, allowing students to practice constructing sentences within limited character spaces. Many participants reported reading and writing Alternate Universe (AU) stories, posting reflections, or interacting with other users in English. The platform provides a creative environment where students can observe different writing styles and experiment with informal or narrative forms of English.

WhatsApp

The data indicate that 18.5% of students use WhatsApp for writing practice. Based on the closed questionnaire:

KSYP : WhatsApp

MIA : WhatsApp

WTA : WhatsApp

These findings supported by the result of the interview:

AKD4 : "..usually social media such as WhatsApp.."

ASA2 : "I often use WhatsApp"

Based on both closed questionnaire and interview, WhatsApp is used mainly for real-time communication in English, such as chatting with friends or interacting in group discussions. Students feel that WhatsApp supports natural writing practice because it allows them to use English in everyday conversations. The simplicity and accessibility of the platform make it suitable for continuous, spontaneous writing activities.

Duolingo

Based on the closed questionnaire, 11.1% of participants use Duolingo to improve their writing skills.

DKNW : Duolingo

AF : Duolingo

NI : Duolingo

These findings supported by the result of the interview.

AF18 : "I usually use Duolingo."

Based on both closed questionnaire and interview, Duolingo helps students practice grammar, vocabulary, and sentence construction through structured exercises. Although it is not a social media platform, students include it in their writing practice because it supports foundational language skills that they can apply in their writing. The app's interactive and gamified approach motivates students to practice regularly.

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Other Platforms (YouTube, Telegram, Wattpad, Kamusku, and others)

In addition to the major platforms, the findings show that 7.4% of students use YouTube, 5.6% use Telegram, 3.7% use Wattpad, 3.7% use Kamusku, and 1.8% use other platforms to improve their writing skills.

Based on the closed questionnaire:

ANZ : Wattpad

HARP : My dictionary

These findings supported by the result of the interview:

FN12 : "..Youtube.."

FF11 : "I usually use YouTube.."

YouTube is used for watching writing tutorials and grammar lessons; Telegram is used to store or access English learning materials; Wattpad serves as a platform for writing or reading stories; while Kamusku is used to support vocabulary development. The presence of these additional platforms indicates that students combine multiple digital resources to enhance their writing skills in various ways.

The Reasons Students use These Social Media Platforms

Social Media Platforms are Ease of Access and Convenience

The findings indicate that students frequently choose social media because it is easily accessible and convenient in various situations. Both questionnaire and interview results support the idea that social media allows flexible learning, enabling participants to practice writing anytime and anywhere.

One student emphasized the comfort and simplicity of accessing social media by saying:

AIRH1 : "It is easy to access, and I can even use it while lying down…"

ASA2: "because it is easy to reach and can be opened anywhere, and other people can correct it which helps me learn more."

PAW3: *"easy to access and frequently used."*

Additional interview data also supports this theme. For example,

AKD4: *"because it is easier to reach. I use applications that most people use, so it feels simpler."*

SID5: "because it is easier to use."

AA25: *"It is frequently used, so it becomes easy to access."*

Overall, the bilingual statements above reflect a consistent theme: students perceive social media as accessible, convenient, and integrated naturally into their daily routines, which encourages them to use these platforms to support their writing development.

Social Media Platforms Can Improve Students' Writing Skills

The findings from both the questionnaire and interviews show that students believe social media plays a meaningful role in helping them improve their writing skills. Many participants

explained that the clarity of explanations, the availability of detailed information, and the flexibility of learning through social media make writing practice easier and more engaging. Based on the closed questionnaire, one respondent highlighted how the clarity of content directly supports their writing development:

DKNW7: "The explanations are easy to understand and more detailed, the information is clear and simple, so it helps me improve my writing skills."

This indicates that students value platforms that present writing-related content in a simple, structured, and easily digestible format. Access to clear instructional materials contributes to their confidence in organizing ideas, selecting vocabulary, and constructing sentences more effectively.

Interview data further supports this finding. One interviewee explained that social media provides freedom for students to develop their writing in a way that suits their personal preferences:

AA25: "It is more effective in improving skills because we are free to create and arrange what we want."

This statement suggests that the flexibility offered by social media—such as choosing topics, formats, and writing styles empowers students to practice writing more creatively and independently. The sense of autonomy helps them become more motivated and confident in expressing ideas through written English. Overall, the bilingual excerpts above illustrate that students perceive social media as not only a source of information but also a supportive environment for strengthening their writing abilities. The combination of accessible explanations and creative freedom encourages students to actively engage in writing practice, ultimately contributing to their skill improvement.

Social Media Platforms are Simplicity and Practicality

Another theme that emerged from the findings is students' perception that social media is simple and practical to use for improving their writing skills. The convenience offered by these platforms allows students to learn efficiently without requiring many tools, making writing practice more accessible in various daily situations. Based on the closed questionnaire, one respondent emphasized the practicality of social media:

SAPP9 : "because it is more effective and more practical."

MEDE10: "because it is simpler and more flexible; it can be used during free time and for communication, and you only need a phone/device, unlike manual writing which requires many tools."

These statements indicate that students value social media because it reduces the barriers to practicing writing. They do not need notebooks, textbooks, or formal study settings, just a device with internet access.

Interview results also support this perspective. One interviewee explained:

FF11: "You don't need too many tools, just search and take notes on your phone. It's practical."

Similarly, another participant emphasized the convenience of learning anytime and anywhere:

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FN12: "It's practical, so we can study anywhere and at any time."

Overall, both questionnaire and interview data highlight that students perceive social media as a practical learning tool. Its simplicity, flexibility, and minimal equipment requirements make it easy for students to integrate writing practice into their everyday routines.

Social Media Platforms Have an Abundance of Helpful Content and Learning Pages

Another important theme that appeared in the findings is the abundance of English-learning content available on social media. Students explained that the variety of posts, pages, and creators who share learning materials significantly supports their writing development. The large quantity of accessible content makes it easier for learners to find explanations, examples, and writing references that suit their needs. Based on the closed questionnaire, one respondent highlighted how the availability of learning resources motivates them to use social media:

AAZA13: "because on social media there is an abundance of learning materials shared by many people that can be used for studying."

This indicates that students benefit from the diversity of educational content, ranging from vocabulary lists to writing tips, grammar explanations, and various examples of English usage. The constant flow of new posts allows students to learn continuously and stay exposed to different writing styles.

Interview data further reinforces this theme. One participant explained:

FN12: "because there are many English-language contents there that can help improve skills."

This statement suggests that students feel supported by the wide selection of English-related content available on the platforms they use. The presence of numerous creators and learning pages provides multiple perspectives and explanations, helping them understand writing more deeply. Overall, the findings show that the abundance of English-learning content on social media plays a significant role in enhancing students' writing skills. The constant availability of relevant materials makes social media a dynamic and resource-rich environment for language learning.

The Advantages of Social Media Platforms That Students Used to Improve Their Writing Skills

Social Media Platforms Improved Their Writing Skills

The findings reveal that one of the primary advantages students experience when using social media platforms is the improvement of their writing skills. Both questionnaire and interview responses consistently show that students feel their writing ability develops through exposure to various examples, explanations, and opportunities to practice within these platforms. Based on the closed questionnaire, one respondent explained that social media provides abundant sources and examples that directly support writing development:

AA25: "It can sharpen writing skills, and there are many sources, examples, and writing methods available to practice writing skills."

Another student expressed that social media makes learning more enjoyable, which helps maintain motivation in practicing writing:

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MIB14 : "…it is an enjoyable learning method because writing skills can be trained through any method."

These statements indicate that students view social media not only as a learning tool but also as a space that provides diverse, engaging materials that help them develop different aspects of writing such as vocabulary, sentence structure, and idea organization.

Interview results further support this theme. One participant clearly stated:

FF11 : "The advantage is that it definitely improves skills."

Another interviewee described how exposure to English texts on social media contributes to writing improvement:

NH15 : "I often read stories written in English, and when reading them we indirectly learn how the words are written. So when being dictated in English, I can immediately write it."

This illustrates that reading and observing written English content on social media contributes significantly to the development of writing skills. Students absorb spelling, vocabulary, and sentence patterns naturally through repeated exposure. Overall, the results demonstrate that students perceive social media as a valuable environment for improving their writing skills, offering abundant resources, enjoyable learning experiences, and constant exposure to authentic English writing.

Students are More Confident in Writing English

Another advantage students experience when using social media to improve their writing skills is an increase in confidence. As students engage more frequently with English content whether through reading, writing, commenting, or interacting they gradually become more comfortable expressing their ideas in written English. The consistent exposure and practice help reduce hesitation and build a stronger sense of self-assurance in their writing abilities.

Based on the closed questionnaire, one respondent stated clearly that the use of social media contributes to boosting confidence:

AVR16 : "It increases my confidence."

This indicates that students feel more capable and secure in their writing when they have constant opportunities to use English in real or semi-real communication environments provided by social media platforms.

The interview findings reinforce this theme. One participant explained that frequent use of English on social media makes their language use smoother and increases their overall confidence:

AKD4: "I become more fluent, and I feel more confident in using English in daily life."

This suggests that the confidence gained from writing on social media extends beyond the online environment and influences students' everyday English use. The repetition, exposure, and informal practice provided by these platforms help students overcome anxiety and gradually build stronger linguistic self-esteem. Overall, both questionnaire and interview results show that social media contributes significantly to enhancing students' confidence in their writing and general English communication.

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Students Can Use Social Media Anytime and Anywhere

Another advantage identified in the findings is the flexibility that social media offers, allowing students to practice their writing skills anytime and anywhere. Because social media platforms are easily accessible through mobile devices, students can engage with English content whenever they have free time whether during breaks, while commuting, or at home. This flexibility supports more frequent exposure to English, which naturally contributes to improved writing ability. Based on the closed questionnaire, one respondent highlighted this benefit by stating:

ASA2: "…with social media being easily accessible, we can learn anytime and anywhere."

This shows that students appreciate the convenience of learning without restrictions of place or time, making social media a practical tool for continuous language practice.

Interview results further support this theme. One participant described how social media allows them to read and engage with English content whenever opportunities arise:

NH15: "the advantage is that I can read anywhere; if I have free time, I can read, I can open it anytime."

The participant's statement demonstrates how the portability and accessibility of social media encourage spontaneous learning moments. Students do not need a formal study environment; instead, learning becomes integrated into their daily routines. Overall, both questionnaire and interview findings indicate that the ability to access learning materials anytime and anywhere is a significant advantage of using social media to improve writing skills. This flexibility helps students maintain consistent engagement with English and supports more frequent opportunities for writing practice.

Social Media Platforms Availability of Reliable Sources

Another advantage highlighted by the students is the abundance of reliable sources available on social media. Students explained that the variety of content creators, pages, and learning resources allows them to access accurate information, compare different explanations, and choose materials that best support their writing development. This diversity of trustworthy sources helps them strengthen their understanding of writing conventions, vocabulary usage, and grammar accuracy. Based on the closed questionnaire, one respondent emphasized the benefit of having multiple credible references:

AEPJ19: "There are many sources available, and we can compare one source with another to find the one that is more convincing, accurate, and appropriate."

This illustrates how students use social media not only as a learning platform but also as a space to critically evaluate information, ensuring that the writing guidance they follow is reliable.

Interview findings strengthen this theme. One participant shared how the abundance of educational content on social media helps them access writing-related instruction easily:

VA20: "We can search for anything; we can learn anything as well. There are also many influencers who teach lessons, including writing."

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This statement highlights the role of content creators and educational influencers who contribute to providing reliable and accessible writing resources through their posts, videos, and explanations. Overall, both the questionnaire and interview findings show that students appreciate the availability of trustworthy and varied learning materials on social media. The wide range of credible sources enhances their ability to evaluate information, understand writing concepts more deeply, and improve the quality of their writing.

Social Media Increased Students' Vocabulary

Another significant advantage identified in the findings is the increase in students' vocabulary as a result of engaging with English content on social media. Students reported that the constant exposure to new words, phrases, and sentence patterns helps them improve their writing skills by expanding their lexical knowledge. Through reading posts, watching videos, or engaging with English captions and stories, students naturally acquire new vocabulary that they can later apply in their writing. Based on the closed questionnaire, one respondent highlighted this benefit clearly:

AAZA13: "I become able to understand proper writing, gain new vocabulary, and more."

This shows that students not only learn how to structure sentences correctly but also enrich their vocabulary through repeated exposure to English content.

Interview findings further reinforce this theme. One participant explained:

NH15: "It helps a lot because there are many new vocabularies that I can learn."

Another interviewee also expressed that social media provides many opportunities to discover new vocabulary:

AF18: "There is grammar content and a lot of new vocabulary that I can learn."

AD21: "I can learn and gain new vocabulary."

These statements collectively show that social media platforms expose students to diverse vocabulary through authentic and varied English content. This natural and continuous exposure supports vocabulary retention and allows students to incorporate new words into their writing more effectively. Overall, the findings demonstrate that social media significantly enhances students' vocabulary development, which directly contributes to improvements in their writing skills.

The Disadvantages Students Face When Using These Social Media Platforms to Improve Their Writing Skills

Students Experience Distractions While Using Social Media

Although social media offers many benefits for improving writing skills, one significant disadvantage reported by students is the high potential for distraction. The interactive nature of social media, along with constant notifications and the presence of multiple entertaining features, often interrupts students' focus while learning or practicing writing. These distractions can lead to reduced concentration, repeated rereading, and less effective learning sessions.

Based on the closed questionnaire, one respondent pointed out that distractions are often unavoidable:

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FAS6: "there are major distractions, and the language becomes less formal."

Another student expressed that social media makes it easy to get influenced by unrelated content:

SID5: "easily influenced by other things."

These responses show that distractions can come from both the content format and the informal environment of social media, which may shift students' attention away from writing tasks.

Interview findings further strengthen this theme. One participant shared:

FF11: *"it's easy to get distracted, especially when connected to another social media platform at the same time."*

Another explained how notifications interrupt their reading and concentration:

NH15: "I get distracted often; when I'm reading and a notification appears, I forget and have to reread from the beginning."

VA20: "easily distracted; when I'm opening and reading something, I quickly lose focus if another notification appears."

Overall, both the questionnaire and interview data reveal that distractions are a major drawback of using social media for writing practice. Notifications, entertainment features, and cross-platform connectivity often interrupt students' focus, reducing the effectiveness of learning and making it harder to maintain consistent writing engagement.

The Internet Connection is Poor

Another disadvantage experienced by students when using social media to improve their writing skills is the issue of unstable internet connectivity. Since most social media platforms rely heavily on internet access, poor connection can disrupt learning activities, delay access to materials, and reduce students' motivation to practice.

Based on the closed questionnaire, one respondent mentioned:

 AKD4: "…poor internet signal."

Another participant noted that poor connection may also lead to misunderstandings:

ASA2: "if we are not careful it can cause misunderstandings, and there are also problems with bad signal."

A third respondent expressed that using social media can sometimes consume more mobile data, especially when the signal is weak:

AF18: *"it consumes a lot of data and the signal is often bad."*

Interview findings support these concerns. One interviewee stated:

FN12: "The disadvantage is the network; the signal is often weak."

AA8: "The internet connection is not always stable."

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These statements show that connectivity issues disrupt students' ability to engage consistently with learning materials, especially when accessing videos, downloading content, or joining discussions on social media.

The Students Lack of Confidence in Their English Ability

Students also reported feeling insecure or unsure about their English writing ability when using social media. Exposure to others' corrections or comparisons with more advanced users often increases anxiety, making students hesitant to write.

From the closed questionnaire, one participant expressed:

FN12: "sometimes I become scared or nervous when writing because some people correct my grammar harshly."

AKD4: "I don't know whether my writing is correct or not."

Interview data further emphasize this issue. One interviewee stated:

AKD4: "I feel unsure and afraid of making mistakes, especially in grammar and writing accuracy."

These findings indicate that while social media offers a space for practice, it can also create pressure, especially when students worry about being judged or corrected by others. This anxiety may limit their willingness to write or share their work.

Grammar and Spelling Quality Decline

Another drawback identified in the findings is the potential decline in students' use of correct grammar and spelling. Because social media often encourages informal language, abbreviations, and slang, students may unintentionally adopt these nonstandard forms in their writing. Based on the closed questionnaire, one respondent explained:

MDP22: "There are many inappropriate words."

Another student noted:

NATD23   : "a decline in the quality of grammar and spelling."

ADF24 : "a decline in standard language, such as incorrect grammar and spelling due to abbreviations and informal style."

Interview data align with these concerns. One participant shared:

MDP22: "There are many inappropriate words."

These findings show that while social media provides constant exposure to English, the informality of online language may negatively influence students' grammar accuracy and spelling habits.

Discussion

Platform Preferences: Instagram and TikTok as Dominant Tools

The findings of this study indicate that Instagram (31.5%) supported the systematic review conducted by Nasution (2023) who found that Instagram supports language learning by

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integrating multimodal elements that aid comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and creative writing. Features such as interactive comments, carousel posts, and hashtags allow learners to explore various forms of written discourse and engage with real users, thus exposing them to authentic writing models. This aligns with the present findings, as students reported that Instagram's accessible content and diverse learning materials encouraged them to read more, imitate sentence structures, and apply new vocabulary in their own writing.

Similarly, the preference for TikTok (29,6%) is in line with the results of Firdayanti and Hartiningsari (2023) who demonstrated that TikTok effectively enhances students' writing ability, particularly in recount texts. The short-video format on TikTok facilitates rapid consumption of learning materials, enabling students to revisit, pause, or replay explanations until they fully understand the writing concepts presented. Many educational creators on TikTok also break down grammar structures, essay tips, and vocabulary in simplified ways, making the platform an attractive tool for learners who prefer concise and visually supported instruction. Furthermore, the preference for these two platforms highlights a growing trend toward *microlearning*, where students learn in short, focused bursts rather than through lengthy instructional texts. Micro-content on Instagram and TikTok helps reduce cognitive load, making it easier for learners to process language structures and retain information. This pattern also corresponds with research on blended and mobile learning environments, which suggests that short-form digital content enhances motivation, engagement, and consistency in language practice.

Beyond the two dominant platforms, the questionnaire findings further indicate that Twitter (20.4%), WhatsApp (18.5%), and Duolingo (11.1%) also play distinct roles in supporting writing development. Twitter functions as a micro-writing platform in which students compose short, coherent messages, thereby practicing clarity and conciseness. WhatsApp serves primarily as a communication tool for group tasks, informal discussions, and quick writing exchanges. Duolingo supports structured, level-based learning and benefits students who require systematic grammar and vocabulary practice. Other platforms such as YouTube, Telegram, Wattpad, and Kamusku appear in smaller proportions and tend to serve more as content-consumption tools rather than platforms that directly stimulate productive writing. These patterns echo the argument of Tenaja and Oco (2023) who assert that participatory social media platforms contribute more effectively to creative writing development than passive content-based platforms.

When compared with the findings of Pujiyanti et al (2024) who reported that Canva-based learning increases student engagement in writing short functional texts due to its visual and structured format, the present study similarly highlights the motivational power of visually rich platforms. However, Canva provides a guided writing environment, whereas Instagram and TikTok offer spontaneous exposure to authentic language. Additionally, Amalia et al (2022) demonstrated that mind mapping techniques improve short text writing by offering cognitive scaffolding. In contrast, the present findings show that scaffolding may also occur socially through repeated exposure to multimodal content on social media, not solely through cognitive structuring techniques.

Overall, the convergence between this study and previous literature demonstrates that students benefit significantly from visual-rich, interactive, and participatory platforms that provide abundant examples of authentic language use. Instagram and TikTok, in particular,

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supply immediate real-world writing models that help students internalize grammar, structure, vocabulary, and stylistic features. These platforms also promote continuous English exposure in informal contexts, complementing formal instruction and supporting the development of writing fluency. Thus, the findings reaffirm that social media, especially Instagram and TikTok, plays a substantive role in shaping students' writing habits and literacy practices.

Reasons for Using Social Media

The results of this study indicate several key advantages experienced by students when using social media to improve their writing skills. Many students reported noticeable improvements in their writing fluency, grammatical awareness, and overall confidence when producing written texts in English. These advantages align with a growing body of research that highlights the positive impact of digital tools and social platforms on writing development. According to Irwandi et al (2024) integrating digital media into Project-Based Learning (PBL) significantly enhances students' writing performance by providing an authentic and collaborative learning environment in which digital platforms expose students to models of effective writing, enable repeated writing practice, and offer accessible resources that assist them in refining their writing abilities. One prominent advantage found in this study is vocabulary expansion; students frequently acquired new words from captions, educational creators, and online discussions. This observation corresponds with Nasution (2023) who emphasized that Instagram's multimodal features comprising visual cues, textual explanations, and context-rich posts support vocabulary retention and usage. The visual textual integration promotes intuitive understanding, making vocabulary learning more efficient. Likewise, TikTok creators often simplify new vocabulary through short, digestible content that reinforces memory through audiovisual cues (Purnama, 2024).

Confidence building also emerged as a significant advantage. Students expressed that exposure to authentic language use in informal settings such as reading comments, composing captions, and engaging in discussions helped reduce anxiety and increase comfort when writing in English. This aligns with the conclusions of Nkhi (2023) who found that students using social media experienced lowered affective barriers due to the non-threatening nature of digital communication. Consistent with the Affective Filter Hypothesis, environments that reduce anxiety facilitate language production, and social media serves precisely this function by allowing learners to write without fear of formal judgment. Accessibility further strengthens students' writing development. Participants noted that social media platforms are easy to open, flexible, and convenient to use even in brief moments throughout daily routines, making learning more natural and less formal. They also acknowledged that social media assists in recognizing grammar patterns, generating ideas, and constructing sentences through constant exposure to authentic texts such as captions, comment threads, and discussion posts.

Practicality is another essential factor; students do not require physical materials such as books or laptops because a mobile device alone is sufficient for learning. Social media additionally provides abundant content vocabulary tips, grammar explanations, writing examples, and language-learning communities that enrich students' exposure and writing practice. This supports the findings of Sethi et al (2024) who stated that digital environments enhance literacy through repetitive exposure and autonomous learning opportunities. When compared with previous studies, the results also correspond with Azziza (2025) who found that social media

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promotes flexibility, motivation, and creativity in writing practice among junior high learners. However, the present study expands this understanding by showing that accessibility fosters habitual learning routines, enabling students to engage in writing naturally without instructional pressure. Moreover, the findings support Fahad (2022) who argued that collaborative digital spaces increase student engagement, highlighting that accessibility and practicality are major determinants of students' willingness to participate consistently in writing activities. Overall, these advantages collectively demonstrate that social media not only enhances technical aspects of writing but also strengthens motivation, confidence, and sustained engagement in writing practices.

Advantages of Social Media in Writing Learning

Despite the advantages, the results of this study also reveal several challenges faced by students when using social media for writing development. A prominent issue is frequent distraction. Many students explained that notifications, advertisements, and unrelated content on social media often interrupt their focus, reducing the effectiveness of learning activities. This finding aligns with the observations of Nkhi (2023) who reported that although social media enhances exposure to English, it also creates an environment where learners are easily distracted due to the constant influx of digital stimuli. Distraction not only slows down learning but also reduces students' ability to engage deeply with writing tasks.

Another challenge identified is the decline in grammar accuracy and the increased use of informal language. Some students noted that frequent exposure to informal writing styles such as slang, abbreviations, and nonstandard grammar negatively influenced their academic writing. This phenomenon is well-documented in studies on digital literacy, including findings discussed by Irwandi et al (2024) who warned that without proper guidance, students may internalize inaccurate language models from social media. Informal writing culture can cause learners to become desensitized to grammatical errors, making them more likely to replicate these errors in academic contexts. Another concern is the emotional impact associated with writing in a public digital environment. Some students expressed insecurity regarding their English ability, especially when receiving corrections or criticisms. This emotional barrier aligns with the findings of Nasution (2023) who highlighted that exposure to public feedback can both motivate and discourage learners. When feedback is constructive, students learn; however, when feedback is harsh or abrupt, it may increase anxiety, causing students to avoid writing altogether.

In addition to these challenges, the study also found several advantages that simultaneously emerged from social media usage demonstrating the dual nature of the platforms. Students reported improvement in vocabulary, increased writing confidence, flexible learning time, and broader access to learning resources. Many students mentioned that they unconsciously learned new words by reading posts, captions, or comments and later applied them in their writing. This supports Putri and Putri and Syafryadin (2023) who argue that repeated exposure to language input enhances vocabulary acquisition and linguistic awareness. Furthermore, social media encourages feedback from peers, content creators, and even native speakers, allowing students to evaluate and refine their written expression. Learning occurred not only through writing but also through reading and comparing sentence structures across different accounts, genres, and content types. This reflects findings by Tahir et al (2024) who demonstrated that collaborative learning in social media environments fosters academic competencies and provides broad access to diverse

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learning resources. The ability to compare examples, grammar explanations, and discourse features across platforms further supports students' writing development while simultaneously highlighting the platform's potential challenges.

Disadvantages Experienced

The findings of this study are closely connected to several theoretical perspectives in second language acquisition and digital learning. First, the use of Instagram and TikTok aligns with Input Theory, which asserts that learners acquire language when exposed to comprehensible and meaningful input. Nasution (2023) emphasized that Instagram's rich multimodal input combining visuals with text supports comprehension and encourages learners to imitate authentic models of writing. In the present study, many students reported learning sentence structures and new vocabulary from posts, captions, and short explanations, illustrating how visual-text integration supports writing development.

Interaction Theory is also reflected in the findings. Students frequently interact with content creators, peers, and online communities through comments, messages, and discussions. These interactions offer immediate feedback and promote negotiation of meaning both essential components of language acquisition. The collaborative nature of these interactions parallels the findings of Irwandi et al (2024) who demonstrated that PBL integrated with digital media fosters communication, collaboration, and meaningful engagement with writing tasks. As students engage with others online, they refine their writing based on real-time feedback, contributing to continuous improvement.

The affective dimension of learning is also evident. Many students reported increased confidence when using social media for writing practice. This observation aligns with Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, which states that low-anxiety environments facilitate language acquisition. Social media offers a nonjudgmental environment where learners can practice writing casually, without the pressure of formal evaluation. Nkhi (2023) similarly found that the informal and supportive nature of digital communication reduces anxiety, enabling students to express themselves more freely and develop fluency.

Irwandi et al (2024) found that digital PBL tasks encourage students to produce real-world writing outputs, engage with audiences, and develop reflective thinking. The findings of the present study reinforce this theoretical connection, demonstrating that social media expands the learning environment by offering authentic audiences and meaningful contexts for writing practice.

Although benefits were evident, challenges also emerged as strong themes in the data. The most prominent issue was distraction, where notifications, unrelated content, and multitasking habits interrupted writing focus. Students also faced unstable internet access, which hindered consistent engagement, especially during online reading or posting. Another concern was the influence of informal English, including slang, abbreviations, and non-standard grammar, which led to uncertainty and lack of confidence in writing formally. This finding supports the argument that uncontrolled media exposure may weaken academic language quality if not guided by structured learning (Baili et al., 2025). Thus, while social media offers meaningful writing opportunities, it requires monitoring, reflective practice, and instructional guidance to prevent declining spelling and grammatical accuracy. Comparable findings were reported by Fahad

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(2022) who found that excessive exposure to informal English on social platforms led students to adopt shortened expressions, emoji substitution, and non-standard punctuation in academic essays. However, the present study expands this conclusion by showing that informal exposure does not merely influence sentence structure but also affects students' *confidence, linguistic certainty, and willingness to write academically*.

Conclusion

Based on the results and discussion, it was found that students use various social media platforms to improve their writing skills, including Instagram (31.5%), TikTok (29.6%), Twitter/X (20.4%), WhatsApp (18.5%), Duolingo (11.1%), and other platforms such as YouTube, Telegram, Wattpad, and Kamusku. The findings also reveal four main components discussed in this study: the types of social media platforms used by students, the reasons for using these platforms, their advantages, and the disadvantages encountered. Students reported choosing social media because of its ease of access and convenience, its ability to support writing improvement, its simplicity and practicality, and the availability of abundant learning content. The advantages identified include improved writing skills, increased confidence in writing English, flexible access anytime and anywhere, availability of reliable sources, and enhanced vocabulary. However, several challenges were also reported, including distractions while using social media, poor internet connection, lack of confidence in English ability, and a decline in grammar and spelling accuracy.

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