

Instagram as a Catalyst for Descriptive Writing Development

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ABSTRACT

The widespread use of social media among students offers significant potential for its application in language learning. Among various platforms, Instagram is particularly prominent due to its widespread popularity and strong visual features. Descriptive writing, which focuses on illustrating people, places, or objects in detail, is an essential skill in English language education. It helps students communicate their ideas vividly and creatively, while also improving their vocabulary, grammar, and ability to structure ideas effectively. However, students frequently face challenges in mastering descriptive writing, often due to low motivation and the use of monotonous teaching techniques. This research aimed to evaluate how effective Instagram can be as a digital medium in teaching descriptive writing. Using a quantitative approach, the study was conducted with 34 tenth-grade students at SMA Negeri 8 Jambi, divided evenly into experimental and control groups. Both groups were given pre-tests and post-tests to measure their writing progress. The results showed a notable improvement in the experimental group's performance, with their average score rising from 36.76 to 53.67. Additionally, independent samples t-test analysis confirmed a significant difference between the two groups' results. These outcomes indicate that Instagram can be an effective and engaging tool to improve students' skills in writing descriptive texts in English.

Keywords: *Instagram, Descriptive Writing, Digital Learning Media, Writing Proficiency*

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INTRODUCTION

In this era of globalization and modernization, technology has become an integral part of everyday life, influencing how people communicate, access information, and learn. This shift is especially evident among students, who increasingly rely on digital platforms and social media to obtain educational resources beyond the traditional classroom environment. The learning process is no longer confined to face-to-face instruction; instead, it is expanding into virtual spaces where students interact, collaborate, and construct knowledge in more dynamic and engaging ways. Social media, as a product of technological development, plays a crucial role in the learning experiences of students. It is commonly used not only for social interaction but also for academic purposes, such as forming study groups, exchanging materials, and discussing assignments.

One platform that has gained immense popularity among youth is Instagram. With its visual orientation and user-friendly interface, Instagram allows users to share photos and videos, which can be creatively integrated into educational activities. As of 2015, Instagram had more than 300 million active users worldwide (Instagram, 2015), illustrating its vast potential as an educational medium. To make the learning process meaningful and effective, it is essential for students to be personally involved and motivated. This requires the use of interesting teaching methods and media.

Unfortunately, many teachers continue to rely on conventional approaches, such as lecturing, which are often perceived as practical and efficient. However, these methods may no longer align with the learning preferences of today's students, who are accustomed to

interactive and visually stimulating content. As a result, students often become disengaged and unmotivated, especially in subjects such as English writing, which demands creativity, precision, and sustained effort.

Writing is one of the most challenging language skills for students, particularly for those learning English as a foreign language. It requires not only the ability to generate ideas but also the capacity to organize thoughts, select appropriate vocabulary, use correct grammar and punctuation, and convey meaning clearly. Many students struggle in these areas, leading to poor performance in writing tasks. This issue was also observed during a teaching practicum conducted by the researcher at SMA Negeri 8 Jambi City. The students showed low motivation in writing descriptive texts, and their work often lacked coherence, appropriate vocabulary, and grammatical accuracy.

One of the contributing factors to these difficulties is the lack of innovation in the learning process. The absence of media integration and the continued reliance on traditional teaching methods result in a monotonous classroom atmosphere. Furthermore, while mobile phones and social media have the potential to support learning, they are often viewed as distractions. In reality, these tools if used effectively can enhance student engagement and creativity. Instagram, for example, can be utilized to encourage students to write descriptive texts based on images or videos they post. This approach not only makes writing more relatable but also provides visual prompts that help students generate ideas and structure their texts.

Despite the potential benefits of media integration, many teachers are still unsure about how to incorporate technology into their lessons. At SMA Negeri 8 Jambi City, several English teachers reported challenges in adopting media-based instruction. They preferred to rely on traditional lecturing methods, believing them to be more efficient. However, this approach often results in students becoming bored and less responsive, which negatively impacts their learning outcomes. Therefore, there is a clear need for innovation in teaching, especially in the context of writing instruction, to better engage students and improve their performance.

Descriptive writing is a type of writing that presents clear, vivid details about a person, place, object, or event. It engages the reader's senses and imagination by describing how something looks, feels, sounds, smells, or tastes. In language learning, this genre is important because it helps students express ideas more clearly and creatively. It also enhances vocabulary, grammar accuracy, and text organization. For EFL learners, descriptive writing builds confidence and fluency by encouraging observation and self-expression. Moreover, it strengthens students' overall writing skills and prepares them to compose various types of texts more effectively.

Based on these observations, this study aims to investigate the effectiveness of using Instagram as a medium to teach descriptive writing to eleventh-grade students at SMA Negeri 8 Jambi City in the academic year 2022/2023. The focus is to determine whether integrating Instagram into writing instruction can significantly improve students' writing abilities, particularly in constructing descriptive texts. The study is limited to the use of Instagram in the first semester of the eleventh grade and seeks to answer the research question: "Is there a significant effect of using Instagram on students' ability to write descriptive texts?"

The findings of this study are expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, this research may enrich the literature on digital media integration in English language teaching and highlight Instagram as a viable tool for enhancing writing instruction. Practically, the results may offer valuable insights for students, helping them improve their writing skills through a familiar and engaging platform. For teachers, this study can serve as a reference for developing more interactive and innovative teaching strategies. For readers and educational practitioners, it may demonstrate the potential of social media to positively influence language learning outcomes.

To avoid any misunderstanding, several key terms used in this study are clarified. Media, as defined by (Fatria, 2017), refers to tools that transmit messages and stimulate students' thoughts and motivation, ultimately facilitating the learning process. Instagram, according to (Atmoko, 2012) is a photo-sharing social networking service created in 2010 that

allows users to apply filters and share visual content. Writing skill, as noted by (Javed et al., 2013), is one of the most complex skills for EFL learners and requires a solid foundation in grammar, vocabulary, and coherence. Descriptive text, as defined by (Pardiyono, 2016), is a type of writing that aims to provide vivid information about a particular subject, helping readers to visualize the object, place, or person being described.

By focusing on these elements, this study intends to contribute to the development of more effective and engaging writing instruction strategies, leveraging Instagram as a modern tool that resonates with students' daily experiences and learning preferences. By reviewing relevant theories and empirical findings, this section establishes a strong foundation for understanding the significance of using Instagram to enhance students' descriptive writing skills.

Social Media

Social media refers to forms of electronic communication that facilitate interactive exchange based on certain interests, using web and mobile technologies. Define social media as a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, enabling the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). According to social media is a medium that enables individuals to be social by sharing various content such as news, photos, and videos. The use of social media varies; some people utilize it for business, shopping, marketing, and even education (Taprial & Kanwar, 2012).

As social media grows in popularity, many people take advantage of it to broaden their social interactions. Instagram, for instance, is one type of social media used to communicate and share moments such as photos or videos. Stated that social media consists of Internet platforms where people interact freely, sharing and discussing information about themselves and their lives using a mix of words, images, videos, and audio (Doa, 2015). As two-way communication tools, social media platforms enable effective interaction between teachers and students, as well as among students and learning materials.

In general, social media can be defined as electronic communication platforms that allow users to create online communities to share information, ideas, messages, and multimedia content. These platforms serve as technological tools through which people connect, communicate, and collaborate by creating, sharing, and commenting within their networks. Today, educators can utilize social networking platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp to deliver engaging content that aligns with students' preferred learning styles and educational goals. By embracing such tools, educators can better align with the digital fluency of today's learners.

Instagram

Instagram is a photo-based social media platform that allows users to share photos and videos online. The name "Instagram" is a combination of the words "instant" and "telegram." The term "instant" refers to the concept of instant photography like a Polaroid camera, while "telegram" refers to sending information quickly. Hence, Instagram is designed to quickly share visual information. According to (Maulina, 2018), Instagram is a modern social media platform that encourages both students and teachers to be creative in its usage. One of its features allows users to like photo content, display the number of likes, comment on posts, and use hashtags in captions.

Instagram can be a compelling tool for teaching writing, as it motivates students to use English in captions, making their content accessible to a broader, even global, audience. Instagram defines as a social media application that enables users to modify their images with filters and share them across various platforms (Tyer, 2016). Instagram can be used as a mobile learning tool; users simply take a photo, apply a filter, and share it permanently (Soviyah, 2018). Text can be added for context, and the app allows global interactions through posts, comments, and messages.

Instagram is among the most popular social networking platforms, with more than 300 million active users worldwide (Instagram, 2015). Users can post photos or videos with descriptions to their profiles, with around 70 million new posts shared daily (Instagram, 2015).

Therefore, Instagram provides an ideal environment for students learning a foreign language to practice and improve their writing skills. Based on the statements above, Instagram can be concluded to be an effective media platform for sharing visual content and enhancing student engagement through the addition of filters, captions, and interactive features.

Definition of Writing Skills

Writing is one of the essential language skills, alongside listening, speaking, and reading, that must be mastered by English learners. Students must be able to express their thoughts in writing, develop their ideas clearly, and engage the interest of readers. Through writing, they can convey information and knowledge to others. In other words, writing serves as a form of communication between the writer and the reader (Reszy, 2013).

Writing is a language skill used to communicate indirectly, not face-to-face, but through written media. Writing involves not only selecting appropriate topics but also considering the target audience and the purpose of the text (Syatriana, 2018). Writers express thoughts and feelings, whether fictional or based on real experiences: funny, sad, embarrassing, or painful.

Writing is a way of life, involving the development of ideas, logic, arguments, and cause-effect relationships (Saifuddin, 2016). Without writing skills, students may struggle to pass academic courses. Writing is also a developmental process that helps learners improve through practice. Based on these perspectives, writing can be defined as an activity to express thoughts and feelings through text, which serves as a tool for indirect communication.

Writing Components

To produce good writing, several components are essential. These elements help students control and organize their ideas effectively. The five key components in writing, according to Depdiknas (Nasional, 2004), are: first is content that refers to the substance of writing, including the main idea and its development (Jacobs et al., 1981). Second is organization: Involves the logical arrangement of ideas to maintain coherence throughout the text (Ary et al., 2010). Third is vocabulary: Pertains to word choice appropriate to the topic, with clarity and precision as the primary goals. Forth is Grammar: Describes how language functions; it is essential for constructing meaningful and communicative sentences. Last is mechanics: Includes punctuation, spelling, capitalization, and formatting conventions to ensure readability.

Teaching Writing

Writing is an integral part of English instruction, playing a crucial role in both academic and everyday contexts. Teaching writing involves guiding students to write effectively and produce quality texts. outlines four reasons for teaching writing: Firstly, Reinforcement refers that written language helps students understand structure and retain new knowledge (Harmer, 2004). Secondly, Language Development refers to writing promotes deeper language learning through cognitive engagement. Thirdly, Learning Style refers to writing suits learners who prefer reflective or slower-paced language acquisition. Lastly, writing as a Skill refers to writing that essential for academic, personal, and professional communication, including online media.

Writing Assessment

Distinguishes between testing and assessment. Testing is a one-time evaluation, while assessment is a continuous process (Brown, 2001). A test is a subset of assessment. This research uses analytic scoring to assess students' writing. The criteria include as Content: Relevance and clarity of the topic, Organization: Unity and coherence of the paragraph, Vocabulary: Word choice and precision, Language Use: Grammar and sentence patterns, and Mechanics: Spelling and punctuation.

Definition of Descriptive Text

Descriptive writing defines as text that appeals to the senses, allowing readers to visualize a person, place, or object (Oshima & Hogue, 2007). A research describe it as a type of text that provides details about living or non-living things (Husein & Pulungan, 2017). Also a research state that descriptive text aims to describe a particular person, place, or thing. It is commonly found in encyclopedias, science magazines, and history books (Gerot & Wignell,

1995). Thus, descriptive text is used to describe specific entities by emphasizing their characteristics through sensory language.

Previous Studies

Several studies have examined the effectiveness of Instagram in teaching writing. First, researched the use of Instagram to teach recount text to tenth-grade students at MAN 2 Kediri using a quasi-experimental design (Lailiyah, 2020). The ANCOVA results showed a significant effect of using Instagram on students' writing skills. Second, investigated the effectiveness of Instagram in teaching descriptive writing to junior high school students (Warda & Wijaya, 2019). Using experimental design and SPSS 20.0 for analysis, the results showed Instagram improved students' writing ability.

Third, studied Instagram's impact on eighth graders at MTsN 3 Banjarmasin (Putri, 2018). The findings showed that students became more attentive and active, and their writing improved through the use of photo inspiration. Fourth, explored Instagram's impact on primary school students' motivation to write descriptively (Min & Hashim, 2022). The mixed-method study revealed students were highly motivated and engaged in writing outside the classroom. These studies support the effectiveness of Instagram in improving writing skills. In this research, a pre-experimental design and cooperative learning will be used to help students stay focused and engaged while writing using Instagram.

Hypothesis

Hypothesis is a statement predicting the relationship between variables in quantitative research (Creswell, 2014). The hypotheses in this study are: H_0 : There is no significant effect of using Instagram as an online media on writing descriptive text. H_1 : There is a significant effect of using Instagram as an online media on writing descriptive text.

METHOD

Respondents

The participants in this study were students from SMA Negeri 8 Kota Jambi. The total population involved in this research consisted of 72 students from two eleventh-grade science classes (XI IPA 1 and XI IPA 3), each comprising 36 students. A simple random sampling technique was used to determine the sample. As a result, the sample consisted of two groups: one control class (XI IPA 1) with 17 students, and one experimental class (XI IPA 3) with 17 students, totaling 34 students.

Instruments

The primary research instrument used in this study was a writing test, consisting of a pre-test and a post-test. In both tests, students were required to write three descriptive paragraphs based on a specific theme. The purpose of the pre-test was to assess students' initial writing skills, while the post-test aimed to measure the improvement after the treatment. The writing was assessed using five criteria: content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics, adapted from (Weigle, 2002). Each criterion was scored on a scale from 1 to 4.

Procedures

This study applied a quantitative research design using a quasi-experimental method, specifically a one-group pre-test and post-test design. The treatment involved the use of Instagram as a medium to enhance students' writing skills. The procedures included the following phases:

Pre-test

The pre-test was administered to both control and experimental groups before the treatment. Students were asked to write descriptive paragraphs based on a given theme related to their school environment.

Treatment

The experimental class received four sessions of treatment using the Inside-Outside Circle method integrated with Instagram. The activities began with a pre-writing phase, where students were introduced to descriptive texts and engaged in discussions about photo-based themes using printed Instagram images. During the whilst-writing phase, students created

their own Instagram accounts, selected relevant pictures based on the assigned themes, and composed descriptive paragraphs related to their chosen images. In the post-writing phase, feedback and discussions were facilitated through interactive quizzes and follow-up questions to reinforce the learning objectives.

Post-test

The post-test was administered to both groups after the treatment to measure the effectiveness of the Instagram-based learning method on students' descriptive writing ability.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The scoring was based on five writing aspects: content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. Each student's pre-test and post-test scores were calculated and converted to a 10–100 scale. The average (mean) scores were computed and analyzed using SPSS version 21.

To determine the effectiveness of the treatment, several analytical steps were conducted: (1) Normality Test: Liliefors test was used to assess whether the data distribution was normal; if the calculated L-value (Lhitung) was less than the table value (Ltable), the data were considered normally distributed. (2) Homogeneity Test: Conducted to verify that the variances between the control and experimental groups were similar. (3) T-Test: An independent sample t-test was performed to evaluate the significance of the differences in post-test scores between the two groups by comparing their means, variances, and sample sizes. (4) Standard Deviation: Calculated to measure the dispersion of student scores using standard deviation formulas. (5) Effectiveness Percentage: The improvement in student performance was interpreted using a rating scale, as follows: 81–100% (Very Effective), 61–80% (Effective), 41–60% (Sufficiently Effective), 21–40% (Not Effective), and 1–20% (Not Very Effective). Both the pre-test and post-test scores were also presented in graphical form to illustrate students' progress. The final analysis included both numerical and narrative descriptions to interpret the data meaningfully and identify the influence of Instagram on students' writing improvement.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The Effectiveness of Using Instagram as an Online Media toward Students' Descriptive Writing

This study examined the impact of using Instagram in teaching descriptive writing to tenth-grade students. It involved two groups of 17 students: an experimental group taught using Instagram and a control group taught traditionally. The intervention lasted for four sessions between January 17 and January 24, 2023. The experimental group used a private Instagram account to upload images, write descriptive captions, and comment on classmates' posts. These activities were followed by guided writing exercises. Meanwhile, the control group received textbook-based instruction, lectures, and grammar drills without digital tools. Writing performance was measured using pre-tests and post-tests based on content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics.

The treatment was implemented by having students interact with descriptive captions and images on Instagram, followed by guided writing activities. The students' performance in writing descriptive texts was measured using pre-tests and post-tests. Assessment was based on five criteria: content, organization, vocabulary and mechanics, and grammar, as adapted from Sara Cushing (Weigle, 2002).

The pre-test results in the experimental group indicated that most students scored around 37.50, with multiple issues in vocabulary use, grammar, and coherence. After the Instagram-based treatment, post-test scores improved significantly, with most students achieving scores between 50.00 and 56.25. This improvement suggested that students were able to construct better-organized and more coherent descriptive texts after engaging with the Instagram-based learning activities.

Differences in Student Achievement Between the Experimental and Control Classes

To determine the effectiveness of the treatment, both descriptive and inferential statistics were applied. Descriptive analysis from SPSS version 21 showed that the mean score of the

experimental group in the pre-test was 36.76, while the control group had a slightly higher mean of 41.91. However, in the post-test, the experimental group achieved a mean of 53.67, outperforming the control group, whose post-test mean was 48.52.

This upward trend in the experimental class shows a notable improvement in writing achievement. Frequency distribution tables also show that 58.8% of students in the experimental group achieved the highest score (56.25), while only 11.8% of the control group reached the same score range. These findings suggest that Instagram had a positive impact on student learning outcomes, especially in improving their ability to write descriptive texts effectively.

Statistical Evidence from Hypothesis Testing

To test the research hypothesis, normality and homogeneity tests were performed prior to conducting the t-test. The results from the Shapiro-Wilk normality test showed that the data were normally distributed for the control group in both pre-test and post-test. However, the experimental group's data were slightly skewed but still acceptable for further analysis. Levene's test for homogeneity revealed that the post-test data met the assumption of equal variances ($\text{sig.} = 0.078 > 0.05$), allowing the use of an independent t-test.

The results of the paired-sample t-test showed a statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-test scores in both groups. However, the difference in the experimental group was more substantial. The t-value for the experimental group was -23.754 with a significance level of 0.000, indicating a strong effect of the Instagram-based treatment.

To test the research hypothesis, normality and homogeneity tests were performed before conducting the t-test. The Shapiro-Wilk test confirmed normal distribution for both groups, and Levene's test showed equal variances ($\text{sig.} = 0.078 > 0.05$), allowing the use of an independent t-test. The paired-sample t-test showed a significant improvement in the experimental group ($t = -23.754, p < 0.001$). Furthermore, the independent t-test comparing post-test scores showed a significant difference between the groups ($t = -2.96, p = 0.005$). The calculated effect size (Cohen's $d = 1.36$) indicates a large effect. These results confirm that using Instagram significantly improved students' descriptive writing performance.

Discussion

This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of using Instagram as an online media in enhancing students' descriptive writing ability at the tenth-grade level of SMA Negeri 8 Jambi City. The findings showed a significant improvement in the writing performance of students in the experimental class after receiving treatment through Instagram-based instruction, in contrast to the control group, which received no such treatment.

Before the treatment, the students demonstrated several difficulties in writing, particularly in the areas of content, vocabulary, grammar, organization, and mechanics. Their writing often lacked focus, relevant details, and coherence. These results align with the findings of Weigle (Weigle, 2002), who emphasized that effective writing requires mastery across multiple components, including content development, grammatical accuracy, and organizational structure.

Following the Instagram-based treatment, students in the experimental group showed improvement in all five components of writing. They demonstrated better control over content development, more appropriate vocabulary use, improved grammar, and fewer mechanical errors. This improvement supports (Vygotsky, 1978) theory of social constructivism, which posits that learning is mediated through social interaction and cultural tools. Instagram, as a visual and interactive social media platform, provided students with contextualized and engaging input, encouraging them to construct meaning and develop their writing collaboratively and independently.

The positive outcome of this study also echoes previous research. Found that Instagram could enhance students' motivation and ability in writing descriptive texts, as the platform offers rich visual stimuli and real-world relevance. A study by (Putri & Wulansari, 2020). Similarly, a study revealed that students who engaged in writing tasks using Instagram captions were more confident and creative in expressing their ideas (Astuti, 2021). These

studies reinforce the findings of the current research, indicating that Instagram can serve not only as an instructional tool but also as a motivational factor in writing.

Moreover, the interactive nature of Instagram made students more enthusiastic and involved in the learning process. This observation is consistent with (Krashen, 1982). Affective Filter Hypothesis, which states that students learn better when they are relaxed, motivated, and confident. The use of Instagram appeared to lower students' affective filters, making them more willing to express themselves in writing.

Statistical analysis using a paired sample t-test further confirmed the significant difference between the experimental and control groups. The t-value was -23.754 with a significance level of $p < 0.05$, indicating that the improvement in the experimental group's writing was statistically significant. Thus, the hypothesis that Instagram has a significant effect on students' writing ability was supported.

In contrast to the initial misinterpretation in this discussion section, the correct conclusion based on statistical evidence and previous literature is that Instagram positively impacts students' writing performance. Therefore, the integration of Instagram as a learning medium can be considered effective in supporting writing instruction, particularly in teaching descriptive texts. This study confirms that the use of Instagram is effective in improving students' descriptive writing skills.

This finding is consistent with theoretical frameworks and previous studies that emphasize the value of digital media in language learning. Instagram's visual and social features contribute to better content generation, increased vocabulary exposure, and greater student motivation. Teachers are encouraged to consider Instagram as a pedagogical tool to foster student engagement and enhance writing outcomes.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study clearly indicate that the use of Instagram as an online instructional medium has a positive and significant impact on students' descriptive writing skills. Implemented with tenth-grade students at SMAN 8 Jambi City, the study demonstrated a notable improvement in students' writing performance, with the average score rising from 36.76 in the pre-test to 53.67 in the post-test. This improvement reflects meaningful progress in students' ability to generate and organize ideas in written form. The statistical findings, supported by t-test analysis, revealed a significant difference between students' performance before and after the intervention. Accordingly, the null hypothesis was rejected in favor of the alternative, confirming that Instagram is an effective and engaging tool for enhancing descriptive writing in English language education. These findings suggest that incorporating visually driven platforms such as Instagram can foster greater student engagement and creativity in the writing process. The visual and interactive nature of the platform encourages learners to express ideas more vividly and accurately, while also supporting the development of essential writing components such as vocabulary, grammar, coherence, and content structure. Based on these insights, it is advisable for educators to adopt Instagram as a complementary learning resource, especially in writing-focused instruction. Teachers should provide clear guidelines and actively facilitate student participation to ensure that the platform is used effectively and purposefully. When implemented thoughtfully, Instagram can transform writing activities into more meaningful, relevant, and student-centered learning experiences.

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