

“LET’S WRITE A CAPTION!”: UTILIZING *INSTAGRAM* TO ENHANCE ESP STUDENTS’ WRITING SKILLS

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Abstract

The integration of technology in language classroom is a prerequisite in the twenty-first century teaching. Social media as part of technology advancement has a great potential to improve students’ motivation and the efficacy of learning a language. Therefore, the present study sheds light on the effect of the use of Instagram on ESP students’ writing ability. It involved 36 Indonesian ESP students majoring in Sharia Banking of a university in Surakarta Indonesia. The pre-experimental research was conducted in eight meetings, including the writing pre-test and post-test. The students were assigned to write a descriptive essay by means of Instagram as the instructional medium. A questionnaire was also given to reveal their perceptions toward the use of Instagram to practice writing. The result of the data analysis showed that there was a significant difference on the students’ writing scores between the pre-test and the post test. The finding of this study is expected to provide significant contribution to the realm of English for specific purposes (ESP) teaching in Indonesia. Based on the findings, some insights are given for teachers and future researchers about the potential use of Instagram on the teaching of writing.

Keywords: Instagram, writing ability, ESP learners, students’ perception

1. INTRODUCTION

The integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the field of education has become one of the current norms. The advancement of Internet, as a part of ICT development, has changed students and teachers behaviors in an educational context (Cahyono & Mutiaraningrum, 2015). It has affected how the students learn, how the students and teachers communicate, and how they behave in their daily life. For the recent decade, most of students are familiar with various internet-based platforms and social networking sites varying from WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, e-book, to tablet books, following the

earlier available application such as e-mail, internet sites, and websites. In Indonesian context, technology-based techniques for teaching and learning have been proposed to be integrated in the language teaching curricula. For instance, the results of research studies reported by Gatcho and Hajan (2019) and Wilkinson (2016) suggested education institutions to integrate the use of technology in pre-service education program. In a similar direction, a study reported by Naghdipour (2017) recommended that internet-based facilities can be used as alternative media for language learning.

The use of technology in teaching writing obtains its popularity in which social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp (Ahmed, 2019; Aloraini, 2018; Slim & Hafedh, 2019) and weblogs (Said et al., 2013; Sulistyo et al., 2019) are utilized to enhance the students' writing skills. This is not surprising since social networking sites are considered as an alternative answer of various problems in teaching writing such as time limitation (Cahyono & Mutiaraningrum, 2015), inadequate media of teaching writing (Bilal et al., 2013), and lack of motivation (Erkan & Saban, 2011). Therefore, internet-based facilities are potential to be used in teaching writing for its promising effect on students' writing skills (Alwehaibi, 2015).

With the recent development of technology, social networking sites cannot be taken apart outside classroom. Social media such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, etc. are mobile application that are very popular and become part of students' daily life. These mobile devices with their practicality offer online resources which are very beneficial to enhance students' language skills and to encourage students to actively involve in learning activities to acquire the target language (Handayani, 2017). Since mobile devices became an essential part of daily life, there is a necessary to integrate them in language learning activities (Miangah & Nezarat, 2012).

Some previous studies have reported the emergence of the social networking sites in teaching of writing (Robertson & Adamson, 2007; Xodabande, 2018), especially by means of Instagram (Al-Ali, 2014; Aloraini, 2018; Handayani et al., 2018; Listiani, 2016). A research report from Handayani et al. (2018) entitled "The Use of Instagram in the Teaching of EFL Writing: Effect on Writing Ability

and Students' Perceptions" showed that the students' writing ability in writing an opinion essay improved after being taught by using mobile application Instagram as a medium of learning. The use of Instagram in teaching writing also triggers the students to communicate with their friends and offers opportunities for interaction which are meaningful and less intimidating, especially for introvert students (Aloraini, 2018). Writing online by means of Instagram is also motivating since the students will have responsibility to do the best writing performance they can do and they will continue learning even after the class (Aljumah, 2012).

Listiani (2016) examined the effect of using Instagram on the writing ability of junior high school students. The study indicated that the use of Instagram in the teaching writing had a significant impact on the students with high and low motivation. In an agreement with this, Kelly (2015) stated that Instagram is an effective medium to develop students' vocabulary and grammatical accuracy. In a similar direction, Mansor and Rahim (2017) conducted a research employing Instagram as a learning tool and the result indicated that it was an effective medium for the interaction among students while discussing task-related content.

Although there have several previous studies addressing the use of Instagram in a foreign language writing, the literature has been silent on integrating this potential mobile application in the teaching writing of English for specific purposes (ESP) students. We know that writing is still becoming a problem since it is considered as the most difficult skill among the four skills of English (Fareed et al., 2016). However, writing is a language skill that have to be mastered

by learners, including ESP students. Moreover, the issue of Instagram use to improve the ability of ESP students' writing of descriptive essay has slightly been addressed before. By considering the promising use of Instagram to enhance students' writing ability as reported by the studies reviewed here, the present study aimed at filling this gap by investigating the effect of Instagram use to improve the writing skill of ESP students majoring in sharia banking of a university in Surakarta. Besides, the study sheds light on the students' perspectives on the use of Instagram in their classroom teaching. To ensure the objectives, the study is guided by these two questions: (1) does the ESP students' ability in writing improve after being taught by Instagram? and (2) What are ESP students' perspectives on the use of Instagram in the teaching writing?.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Teaching writing

When students of English as foreign language are asked which English skill, among the four, is the most difficult, the researchers believe that most of them will answer writing. Writing is a productive language skill in which students have to express their opinion and ideas through written utterances (Ahmed, 2019). The primary challenge of acquiring writing competence is how to build ideas and compose them into grammatically and culturally appropriate written expressions (Nugroho, 2019). In addition, Wilkinson (2016) argues that writing competence is about composing an effective piece of written work to fulfill a specific purpose.

To enhance the students' writing skills, English teachers should arrange an effective writing task that has clear objectives and meaningful for the students. Ur (2012) suggests several

criteria in planning and creating a writing task. The criteria are (1) the task should be motivating and stimulating; (2) the language use should be appropriate with the level of students; (3) the topics of writing should be in line with the students' interests; and (4) the task should be easy to understand. To create an effective writing task, information and communication technology (ICT) can be an alternative to assist the students' writing as a supplementary tool (Handayani et al., 2018).

2.2 Mobile application Instagram

Mobile applications have been put in a leading position in almost all parts of human life, including in education. The popularity of mobile applications is supported by the advanced development of internet and technologies (Khalitova & Gimaletdinova, 2016). In Indonesia, the total number of smartphone users has reached 63 million people on the android platform and about 95% of them actively use social media including Instagram (Kemenkominfo, 2019). Therefore, it makes sense that scholars in English language teaching made use of Instagram as an instructional media in the classroom (Aloraini, 2018; Anggraeni, 2017; Handayani et al., 2018; Listiani, 2016; Kelly, 2015).

In particular, Instagram is an online smartphone photo-sharing and video-sharing which enables the users to give captions as the descriptions. It was established in October 2010 and gained active users that are increasing time by time. Data from Kemenkominfo (2019) reveals that Indonesia is in the top five countries which the citizens frequently use Instagram along with other countries such as United States, Brazil, India, and United Kingdom. In fact, Instagram is a widely used social media which language learners are very familiar with.

The result of the study conducted by Handayani (2017) reported that millennial tend to spend hours accessing it. In addition, Instagram is a smartphone device which is easy to operate (Al-Ali, 2014). Therefore, Instagram is a worth social networking site to be integrated as a language learning tool in classrooms.

Researches on the use of Instagram in the field of language literature and language teaching have depicted its potential use to enhance students' language skills (Kamariah & Ambalegin, 2019, Ahmed, 2019; Aloraini, 2018; Slim & Hafedh, 2019). These researches indicate that Instagram is an effective tool as an alternative medium for language learning, especially writing. Notwithstanding the fact, the literature on the integration of Instagram to enhance ESP students' skills in writing a descriptive has still been silent. Therefore, the present study is intended to ascertain the potential use of mobile application Instagram for teaching writing of ESP students.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a pre-experimental research design with no control group aiming to examine the effect of the use of Instagram on the students' writing ability. It used one group pre-test and post-test design. This study involved 36 Indonesian students majoring in Sharia Banking who were taking English for specific purposes (ESP) course at IAIN Surakarta. They were 22 females (61%) and 14 males (39%). ESP course was one of the required courses for Sharia Banking students. The course aimed to equip the students with the skills of English, including writing ability.

The data were collected by means of a writing test and questionnaire. The writing test was administered in the pre-test and post-test

to measure the students' writing ability. The pre-test was conducted in the first meeting before the treatment, while the post-test was delivered after the treatment. Also, the questionnaire was employed to reveal the students' perception toward the use of Instagram as a medium to learn writing. The questionnaire used in this study was adapted and modified from Handayani et al., (2018) by following some procedures: creating the blueprint, stating the indicators, and developing the questionnaire items. The instruments were then validated by consulting to the English language teaching experts.

In the treatment consisting of nine meetings, the students were trained to write a descriptive essay by focusing on some parts of essay, i.e., introduction, body paragraph, and conclusion. One of the researchers (the first author) acted as the instructor. In the first meeting, the students were introduced to the nature of descriptive essay. They were assigned to write a descriptive essay by selecting one of the topics given by the instructor. The result of the students' writing was used as the pre-test score. In the second meeting, the students were introduced to Instagram as a technological medium to help them write. They were taught how to compose an introductory paragraph as well as some grammatical rules such as tense, subject-verb agreement, and active-passive sentences. Hereafter, the students were asked to post a picture and wrote (a) sentence(s) showing a general description (topic) of the picture as the caption, which was later developed as an introductory paragraph.

In the third meeting, the students were involved in the discussion of the body and concluding paragraphs of a descriptive essay. They were also asked to write at least three aspects as the main description points of the picture they posted on their Instagram in the previous meeting. After that, the students

consulted their outline of the essay to the instructor. In the fourth meeting, the students were asked to write a full descriptive essay by elaborating their description points. They were also encouraged to view the instructor's post in the Instagram about several tips of writing a descriptive essay. A consultation session was conducted during the meeting to anticipate the students' confusion in the process of writing. In the end of the meeting, the students were assigned to repost their pictures on Instagram, but in this time, the picture was completed with the essay showing its description.

In the fifth meeting, the students were asked to make a group of four. They were to give correction, feedback, or insight to their friends' essay by posting in the "comment". Thus, each of the student's essay would be reviewed by the other three students in the group alternately. By the end of the meeting, the instructor assigned the students to revise their essay based on their friends' insights and corrections and once again to post their pictures along with the revised descriptive essay on their Instagram account and tag to the instructor by Instagram before the following meeting. They were also told to submit their printed essay to the instructor in that meeting. In the rest of the meetings, the students were asked to write one more descriptive essay by conducting similar activities in the previous meetings. In the sixth meeting, after submitting their essay, the students were assigned to choose one of several topics posted on Instagram by the instructor. They were then asked to post the chosen picture and write a full descriptive essay on their Instagram account.

In the seventh meeting, the students worked with their pairs to do pair correction and give feedback each other. They were also asked to revise

their essay based on the suggestions of their partners. They had to post their pictures along with the revised essay and tag it to the instructor's Instagram account. In addition, they were also told to submit their printed essay in the next meeting, before the post-test was conducted.

Two raters were involved in scoring the essay. The first rater was one of the authors and the second rater was an English department lecturer. The scoring rubric adapted from Jacobs (1981) was used by the raters to assess the students' writing. The scoring rubrics consisted of five aspects having different weights: content (30), organization (20), vocabulary (20), language use (25), and mechanics (5). The final students' essay scores were determined by the average of score given by the two raters. The students' scores in the pre-test and post-test are presented in Appendix A.

The questionnaire consisted of 13 items comprising three parts: writing competence (1-6), interest (7-10), and process of learning (11-13). It was made in four-option Likert Scale graded from "strongly agree" (4), "agree" (3), "disagree" (2), and "strongly disagree" (1). All of the participants (36 students) completed the questionnaire. Thus, the maximum possible score for an item is 144, while the minimum possible score is 36. In general, the students' responses that have average value close to 4 are considered the most favorable (strongly agree). On the other hand, if the average value of the students' responses close to 1, it is considered the least favorable (strongly disagree). The full version of the questionnaire is attached in Appendix B.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The result and discussion of this study are presented in two sections. The first part deals with the effect of the

integration of Instagram on the Indonesian ESP students' writing ability. The second part focuses on the students' perceptions toward the use of Instagram in writing class.

4.1 The effect of the use of Instagram on the students' writing ability.

To examine the difference between the results of students' writing in pre-test and post-test, the mean of the two scores are found out and compared. The data of the pre-test and post-test scores are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The data of the pre-test and post-test

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pre-test	61.1579	36	5.744067	2.253163
Post-test	76.3947	36	10.56827	1.105446

Table 1 shows that there is a significant difference of the mean in the pre-test and the post-test. The mean score of the students' writing in pre-test is 61.1579, while the mean score in the post-test is 76.3947. In order to know

whether the two mean scores have significant difference or not, a paired sample t-test was administered. The result of the analysis is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Comparison of the Means by Using Paired Sample t-Test

Paired Differences		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference							
		Mean	Std. deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	Pre-test Post-test	-15.23	4.31	0.69	-16.65	-13.81	-21.768	37	.000

The students' scores in the post-test emphasized that they achieved better writing ability after being taught by using Instagram. Table 2 depicted that the paired t-test statistics was -21.506 and the significant level was .000. Since the significant level was lower than .05 ($.00 \leq .05$), it means that there was a significant different between the result of pre-test and post-test scores. As presented in the table, the average of the students' post-test score was 15 points higher than the pre-test scores. Therefore, it could be concluded that the null hypothesis was rejected. In a nutshell, the students who were given treatment by using Instagram had improvement in writing a descriptive essay.

Although Instagram was still considered as a new platform in

Indonesian education context, the students who were the participants of this study had seemingly been adjusted to the medium. When they were asked if they were familiar with Instagram in the beginning of the experiment, the majority of the students said that they had Instagram account. Because the students were familiar enough with Instagram, they did not seem to have any difficulty in using it. It was advantageous because the researchers did not need to tell them in detail about how to operate Instagram. College students in the twenty-first-century teaching had advanced level of performance on the social networking sites (Salomon, 2013).

The present study also revealed that the quality of the students' writing improved. Some common mistakes such

as incorrect grammar, incomplete component of a sentence, and missing a thesis statement decreased bit by bit. In general, the students were successfully able to compose a well-developed thesis statement. Moreover, they were also able to write a descriptive essay as well as to provide a systematic description about the picture being described. This result supports the finding of Handayani's et al. (2018) which concluded that the students' ability of writing an argumentative essay significantly improved after being taught by means of Instagram.

This study also found that although not all students, most of the students employed Instagram to consult their writing problems related to the exercise and assignment. They utilized Instagram as a means of feedback and correction with the teacher and friends. This proved that teaching writing by means of Instagram could make the students more engaged in the learning activities (Listiani, 2016). This finding agreed with a statement that social networking sites were rapidly changing

the way of communication (Griesemer, 2012). In addition, it also supported Salomon's (2013) statement that the students' engagement through the social media appeared to be higher. Not only did the students actively engage in the teaching activities, they also achieved better learning results.

4.2 The students' perceptions toward the use of Instagram

The result of the questionnaire reveals the students' perceptions toward the use of Instagram in teaching writing on three aspects, i.e., writing competence, students' interest, and learning process. In total, there were thirteen items given in the questionnaire. The distribution of the results are presented in the following sections.

4.2.1 The students' responses on their writing competence

Items 1-6 of the questionnaire were addressed to reveal the students' perceptions on their writing ability as the result of integrating Instagram in their learning. The results of the students' responses are presented in the Table 3.

Table 3. The result of students' responses in terms of their writing competence

No.	Items	Total Value	N	Average
1.	I can do well in my English writing class.	106	36	2.94
2.	I am confident with my ability to compose a descriptive essay on the writing test.	102	36	2.83
3.	I can organize ideas based on the given topic in each paragraph coherently.	112	36	3.11
4.	I can use appropriate vocabulary in my essay.	105	36	2.91
5.	I can use correct grammar in my essay.	92	36	2.55
6.	I can use appropriate spelling, punctuation, and capitalization in my essay.	104	36	2.88

As shown in the Table 3, the students' positively respond to all the criteria of the writing competence since the average value of their responses is around 3. It means that the students agreed to the statements examining their writing ability stated in the questionnaire. More specifically, they agreed that they could perform well in

their English class (item 1), were confident with their ability to write a descriptive essay (item 3), could organize their ideas based on the given topic (item 3), could use appropriate vocabulary in writing their essay (item 4), could use correct grammar in composing their essay (item 5), and could use appropriate spelling,

punctuation, and capitalization in their essay (item 6).

4.2.2 The students' responses on their interest in the use of Instagram

The students' were also asked to respond the questionnaire examining their interest in the use of Instagram in their English class. The results of their responses are displayed in the Table 4.

Table 4. The result of students' responses in terms of their interest in the use of Instagram

No.	Items	Total Value	N	Average
7.	It is fun to post writing assignments on Instagram.	130	36	3.61
8.	It is interesting to get feedback through Instagram.	112	36	3.11
9.	It is interesting to give feedback through Instagram.	70	36	1.94
10.	Posting writing assignments on Instagram motivates me to write better.	118	36	3.27

Table 4 clearly depicts the students' perceptions toward their interest in the use of Instagram to teach writing in English class. Based on the average value, in general, they agreed that it is fun to post writing assignment on Instagram (item 7), that it is interesting to get feedback through Instagram (item 8), and that posting assignments on Instagram motivates them in writing the essay (item 10). However, it was found that the students

disagreed that obtaining feedback through Instagram is interesting (item 9).

4.2.3 The students' responses on the learning process

The other parts of the questionnaire were to find out the students' perceptions toward the learning process using Instagram. The results of their responses are shown in the Table 5.

Table 5. The result of students' responses in terms of the learning process

No.	Items	Total Value	N	Average
11.	I enjoy giving feedback/corrections to my partner's essay posted on Instagram.	100	36	2.77
12.	My friends' feedback helps me make my writing better.	125	36	3.47
13.	The features available on Instagram helps me write better.	113	36	3.13

As depicted in Table 5, the students positively perceived to all questionnaire items examining the learning process by using Instagram. They enjoyed giving feedbacks and corrections to their partners' essay posted in Instagram. They are also agree that their friends' feedbacks help them in making their essay better. Also, the features available online on Instagram, such as direct message and comment,

are helpful as media to enhance their writing ability.

The result of the data analysis obtained from the questionnaire shows that the Indonesian ESP students respond positively to most of the statements. To confirm their answers, the researchers kindly checked the students' essay. The result revealed that their writing quality improved. The researchers still found some mistakes in

their essay such as grammatical and mechanics but those mistakes were less frequently found in their results of the post-test. This finding confirms the result of the study conducted by Handayani et al. (2018) that showed a significant difference between the students' scores in pre-test and post-test.

The result of this study also proves that social media, in this case Instagram, could be utilized as a learning tool in educational context. This is in line with Khalitova & Gimaletdinova's (2016) statement that mobile application Instagram offers various advantages as an effective means of learning a language. This statement is also supported by Anggraeni (2017) who argues that using Instagram in the process of learning a language is worthy since today is the twenty-first century era where technological devices and social media networking sites become the basic needs of the learners. However, a different response to the questionnaire was found in one statement in the part of the students' interest in the use of Instagram. The students agreed that obtaining feedback through Instagram is really interesting. In contrast, they did not feel the same when they have to provide feedback to their friends' essay through Instagram. Most of the students did not think that giving corrections and feedbacks through Instagram is interesting.

Integrating Instagram as an instructional medium in creative writing activities motivates students to engage in an active learning. They are given the freedom to choose pictures and composing their ideas in writing their essay (Aloraini, 2018). The students also believed that the uploaded pictures with the captions encourage them in composing the best essay writing. In addition, most of the students use Instagram as a medium to ask questions

to their friends or the instructor regarding their writing problems. It implicates that Instagram is beneficial to assist the students' writing ability.

5. CONCLUSION

Drawing on the findings and discussion, it is clearly showed that there is a significant difference between the students' writing scores in the pre-test and the post-test. It indicates that the students perform better writing ability after being taught by using Instagram. Besides, the sample t-test showed positive correlation which means that the students who obtain higher scores in the pre-test still had higher scores in the post-test. Similarly, those who get lower scores in the pre-test still had lower scores in the post-test. Moreover, the result of the questionnaire reveals that the students perceive positively toward the use of Instagram in English class. The students view that Instagram is meaningful and offers a number of benefits for the twenty-first century learning. The findings of this study provide practical contribution as an insight for language teachers in utilizing Instagram and other types of social media to teach language skills, especially writing. Future researches examining other features of Instagram such as instastory, instapolling, etc should be conducted as an immense project of exploring the use of social media for language learning. Furthermore, similar researches involving different levels of students and language skills are highly recommended to present comprehensive description of the utilization of Instagram in teaching English as foreign language context.

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