

Optimizing the Use of Instagram Captions as a Teaching Medium to Enhance Students' Descriptive Writing Skills

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Abstract

Background:

Instagram captions play an important role in digital communication and can be used as an innovative tool in writing instruction. By encouraging creativity and clarity, captions help students practice meaningful writing through a familiar platform. This study aims to examine the implementation of Instagram captions in teaching descriptive texts and assess their impact on students' writing skills and motivation.

Methodology:

This research employed classroom action research (CAR) design, conducted in two cycles, each consisting of five meetings, with the aim of improving tenth-grade students' descriptive writing skills using Instagram as a teaching media. In the planning phase, lesson plans were developed incorporating Instagram post caption activities. During the implementation phase, students were engaged in writing descriptive texts by creating captions for photos on Instagram. Observations were made throughout the teaching process, with field notes documenting the students' participation and enthusiasm. Data were collected through pre-test and post-test assessments to measure students' writing skills, and qualitative data from observations were analyzed to assess classroom dynamics.

Findings:

The findings of this research indicate a significant improvement in students' descriptive writing skills after the implementation of Instagram post captions as a teaching media. In the pre-test, the mean score was 75.94, with only 50% of students meeting the minimum achievement criteria (KKM). However, after the intervention, the post-test mean score increased to 80.16, with 100% of students achieving the KKM. This demonstrates a 55.57% improvement in students' writing abilities. Additionally, observations during the lessons revealed that students were more engaged and enthusiastic throughout the process, suggesting that Instagram captions effectively captured their interest and contributed to a more active and interactive classroom environment.

Conclusion:


In conclusion, the use of Instagram post captions as a teaching media has proven to be an effective strategy for improving students' descriptive writing skills in the tenth grade at SMAN 3 Kuningan. The research demonstrated a significant improvement in students' writing performance, with all students meeting the minimum achievement criteria by the end of the study. The integration of Instagram into the learning process not only enhanced students' writing skills but also increased their engagement and enthusiasm during lessons. Therefore, Instagram post captioning can be considered a valuable and innovative tool for teaching writing, particularly in descriptive text, and can be applied in similar educational settings to foster student creativity and motivation in writing.

Originality:

This study offers an original approach by utilizing Instagram post captions to improve students' descriptive writing skills, integrating social media as an effective tool in enhancing language learning outcomes.

Keywords : Writing Skill; Instagram Post Captioning; Descriptive Text.

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INTRODUCTION

Academic writing proficiency is essential for EFL learners, as it directly influences their academic success and professional development. However, many, including Iraqi EFL learners, face challenges in mastering writing skills, particularly in punctuation, spelling, and the appropriate use of lexical bundles, all of which are crucial for clarity and coherence in academic texts (Raad & Ghafar, 2024; Zhang et al., 2021). Academic writing is a formal and structured style used in scholarly contexts, emphasizing clarity, coherence, and evidence-based arguments. It not only organizes ideas systematically but also fosters professional relationships and academic credibility. Mastering academic writing is essential for producing quality research, advancing knowledge, and informing practice. For EFL students, descriptive writing helps in structuring ideas and expressing thoughts clearly. Ultimately, academic writing facilitates knowledge dissemination and intellectual discussions across various fields. (Hughes et al., 2024; Kang et al., 2020; Nhi & Phuong, 2025). However, many students encounter linguistic and cognitive challenges that hinder their ability to compose well-organized descriptive texts (Mulyani, 2024). Common difficulties include limited vocabulary, issues with sentence structure, and struggles with coherence and organization. To address these challenges, various instructional strategies have been implemented. Research suggests that techniques such as pair work (Divarianti & Abbas, 2024), and mind mapping can significantly enhance students' descriptive writing skills by providing structured guidance and fostering collaboration. Thus, adopting interactive and student-centered methods can play a vital role in improving students' writing proficiency (Asi et al., 2025).

Observations in a tenth-grade class at SMAN 3 Kuningan further highlight the challenges students face in writing descriptive texts. In class X2, students were observed to be disengaged and lacked enthusiasm during lessons, particularly when tasked with structuring their ideas into coherent written compositions. Interviews with the teacher indicated that students struggled with organizing their thoughts, which further impeded their writing performance. Although various writing instruction approaches exist, there remains a gap in the implementation of effective strategies to enhance student engagement and improve writing outcomes. The increasing role of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) in academic writing

has also become a subject of scholarly discussion, particularly in the context of English as a Second Language (ESL) learners. Recent studies highlight that GenAI can support students by improving their grammar, vocabulary, and overall coherence in writing (Jin et al., 2025). However, concerns persist regarding the potential overreliance on AI-generated text, which may reduce student engagement and diminish the creative writing process (Bestari et al., 2020). While AI-assisted tools can enhance writing performance, they may also lower cognitive effort, affecting students' ability to develop independent writing skills. Additionally, integrating translingual approaches in writing instruction has been proposed as a means to support multilingual learners, allowing them to leverage their full linguistic repertoire more effectively (McArthur, 2023). As academic writing continues to evolve in response to technological advancements, it is crucial to develop pedagogical strategies that balance AI assistance with fostering students' critical thinking and creativity (Chang et al., 2025).

Table 1. Students' Score of Description Text

No.	Level	Number of Students	Percentage
1.	77 > 100	18	50%
2.	70 < 0	18	50%
Total		36	100%

The students' writing scores in the tenth grade indicate that many did not meet the Minimum Achievement Criteria (KKM), reflecting a significant weakness in their writing skills. This issue suggests that current teaching methods and instructional media may not effectively support students in developing their descriptive writing abilities. To address this problem, it is essential to implement more engaging and effective teaching strategies that enhance students' understanding and motivation. One potential solution is using interactive and innovative learning media, which can help improve their ability to organize ideas, structure sentences, and express thoughts clearly in descriptive texts.

In this context, instagram has emerged as a powerful tool for enhancing writing instruction, particularly for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. The platform's caption feature allows students to express their ideas in written form in a more engaging and interactive manner (Avivi & Megawati, 2020). By employing a process-based approach, students can refine their writing skills through drafting, editing, and revising their texts before publication, while also receiving valuable feedback from teachers and peers. Furthermore,

research indicates that incorporating Instagram captions into writing instruction significantly boosts students' motivation and engagement in writing activities (Bestari et al., 2020). Therefore, integrating social media platforms like Instagram into language learning presents an innovative strategy to enhance students' writing proficiency in the digital era.

In the digital era, Instagram has evolved into a platform that significantly contributes to writing skill development. The use of Instagram as a learning medium is based on its visual and interactive features, which encourage students to express ideas through more creative and communicative writing. Iqlima (2023) indicates that Instagram plays a role in improving students' writing skills through the use of captions, allowing students to practice writing in a concise yet communicative format. This approach actively engages students in language learning and provides opportunities to receive direct feedback from other readers. Additionally, Mulyani (2024) reveals that integrating Instagram into writing classes has a positive impact on students' motivation and digital literacy skills. By utilizing Instagram features such as *stories*, *comments*, and *hashtags*, students can engage in interactive writing exercises and experience technology-based learning in a more engaging manner. Furthermore, Kormos et al. (2024) emphasizes that social media-based learning models can help students develop both academic and creative writing skills. In this research, a project-based approach using Instagram was found to enhance students' understanding of proper writing structures while also boosting their confidence in writing.

In the context of descriptive writing, Instagram, as a social media platform, has evolved into a space where individuals can express themselves through writing and imagery. With features such as captions, stories, and reels, Instagram is not only a place for sharing visuals but also a medium for creative and communicative writing (Kormos et al., 2024). According Sulasno et al., (2022) Instagram allows users to construct narratives through engaging and interactive captions, which can enhance writing skills and strengthen their digital identity. Furthermore, Pratama & Hartono (2020) the use of Instagram as a storytelling tool helps users refine their ability to craft cohesive and compelling stories. The interactive features, such as comments and direct messages, also facilitate discussions and collaborations, which can further improve writing skills through direct engagement with the audience. Therefore, Instagram is not merely a visual-based social media platform but also a space that fosters creativity in writing dynamically and interactively (McComb et al., 2021).

Based on the analyzed studies, it can be concluded that Instagram is not merely a social media platform but also an effective learning tool for improving writing skills. Its features

support a more collaborative, creative, and interactive learning process, helping students develop better writing abilities.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a mixed-method research approach, integrating qualitative and quantitative techniques within a Classroom Action Research (CAR) framework to assess the effectiveness of Instagram-based learning in improving students' descriptive writing skills. The subjects of this study are secondary-level students who are learning descriptive writing in English, with the research conducted at a school that has implemented social media in its learning process (Al-Khalidi & Khouni, 2021). This study follows the CAR cycle, which includes planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. The planning phase involves designing materials, interaction methods, and evaluation instruments (Nuraeni et al., 2023). During the implementation phase, Instagram is used as the primary medium for learning. Observations are conducted to analyze student engagement and their interactions on Instagram, while the reflection phase aims to evaluate results and determine necessary improvements for the next cycle. Data collection techniques include descriptive writing tests before and after the intervention, classroom observations, questionnaires, and interviews with students and teachers. The data is analyzed quantitatively using descriptive statistical analysis and t-tests to measure improvements in writing skills, while qualitative analysis is conducted using thematic analysis on observational, questionnaire, and interview data. Data validity is ensured through triangulation by comparing results from multiple sources. Through this methodology, the study aims to make a significant contribution to the use of social media as a learning tool, particularly in enhancing students' descriptive writing skills (Inawati & Susanti, 2023).

The participants in this study are tenth-grade students at SMAN 3 Kuningan during the 2023/2024 academic year. A purposive sampling technique is employed to ensure that the selected participants align with the research objectives. Unlike previous studies with limited sample sizes, this research expands the sample to 72 students, divided into two classes: one experimental class implementing Instagram-based writing strategies and one control class following conventional methods. This grouping is designed to provide a clearer understanding of the impact of Instagram-based learning on students' writing development. To obtain valid and reliable data, this study employs multiple instruments, including Classroom Observations – Conducted to document students' engagement, participation, and interaction during Instagram-based writing activities. Observations are recorded in field notes to analyze student engagement patterns. Semi-Structured Interviews – Involving both students and teachers to

explore their perceptions of Instagram's role in writing instruction. The interview data is analyzed thematically to identify patterns in student and teacher responses and experiences. Pre-Test and Post-Test – Administered to measure students' descriptive writing skills before and after the intervention. The assessment criteria are adapted from recent research on writing evaluation.

Assessment Criteria and Data Analysis, Students' writing skills are assessed based on five key aspects: (1) content, (2) organization, (3) vocabulary, (4) language use, and (5) mechanics. To ensure consistency in assessment, this study employs a structured rubric aligned with international standards for evaluating English writing skills (Pongsapan & Patak, 2021). Quantitative data from the pre-test and post-test are analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical tests to evaluate changes in students' writing skills before and after the intervention. Meanwhile, qualitative data from observations and interviews are analyzed thematically to identify patterns in student engagement and teacher-student perceptions of Instagram-based learning.

This study contributes to the field of digital pedagogy by exploring the role of social media in enhancing English writing skills. By incorporating a control group, a larger sample size, and detailed assessment criteria, this research aims to provide stronger empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of Instagram as an instructional tool in language learning. Furthermore, the findings of this study are expected to offer valuable insights for educators in developing more interactive, technology-based teaching strategies to improve the quality of writing instruction.

FINDINGS

The qualitative and quantitative analysis from observations, interviews, and test results demonstrated a significant improvement in student engagement and writing skills during descriptive writing lessons using Instagram post captions. Prior to the intervention, students exhibited low confidence, minimal participation, and difficulty in structuring ideas, leading to disorganized texts. However, as the intervention progressed, a notable transformation occurred. Students became more engaged, actively discussed their writing with peers, and displayed greater confidence in crafting Instagram captions. Furthermore, they demonstrated increased motivation to complete writing tasks, as they found the platform familiar and enjoyable.

Qualitative findings from semi-structured interviews with both students and teachers further supported these observations. Initially, students faced challenges in generating descriptive texts due to a lack of ideas and fear of making mistakes. However, repeated practice

with Instagram helped them become more comfortable with brainstorming and sentence structuring. One student mentioned, "At first, I struggled to write descriptions because I didn't know what to say. But when we started using Instagram captions, I became more comfortable and could write faster." Additionally, exposure to their peers' captions facilitated vocabulary expansion and improved sentence structures, resulting in more varied and expressive writing. Teachers also noted that the Instagram-based approach significantly increased classroom participation, particularly among previously passive students. Moreover, students displayed a greater willingness to revise and refine their texts after receiving peer feedback, fostering a collaborative learning environment.

The quantitative results further validated these improvements. Before the intervention, only 50% of students met the Minimum Achievement Criteria (KKM), with an average pre-test score of 75.94. Many students struggled with sentence structure, word choice, and coherence. However, by the end of the second cycle, all students met or exceeded the KKM, with the average score increasing to 80.16. The most significant progress was observed among the lowest-performing students, highlighting the effectiveness of this method in supporting struggling writers. A detailed analysis of students' writing revealed specific areas of improvement. In the pre-test, students struggled with content development and organization, often producing vague descriptions with limited details. In contrast, the post-test results showcased clearer structures, more descriptive language, and richer vocabulary. Grammar and mechanics also improved, with fewer errors in sentence construction and punctuation.

These findings suggest that integrating Instagram post captions as a writing tool not only enhances students' descriptive writing skills but also boosts their motivation and confidence. The success of this intervention underscores the potential of social media as an effective instructional medium, bridging the gap between formal writing exercises and real-world digital literacy practices. To maximize its effectiveness, educators should design tasks that align with learning objectives while leveraging Instagram's interactive features to engage students. Storytelling through Instagram Stories can help students structure their ideas cohesively while maintaining conciseness. Establishing clear guidelines on responsible social media use can also ensure a focused and academically oriented learning environment. Reflective discussions after each activity encourage students to analyze their progress and identify areas for improvement. Additionally, collaboration with fellow educators or language experts on social media platforms can provide students with authentic exposure to language use. Developing a structured, technology-based learning framework aligned with curriculum

objectives is crucial for long-term sustainability. With the right strategies, integrating social media into language learning can serve as a sustainable innovation that enriches students' learning experiences.

Table 2. Students' pre-test score

No.	Name	Pre-Test Score	KKM	Status
1	Student 1	75	77	Failed
2	Student 2	73	77	Failed
3	Student 3	77	77	Passed
...
36	Student 36	78	77	Failed
Total		2734		

The data showed that the mean score of the pre-test that involved 36 students was 75.94. It was so far from the Standard Minimum Achievement Criteria- Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal (KKM) 77 (seventy-seven) that was set by the school. Some so many students got very low scores. There was only one student or 50% who passed the score above the Standard Minimum Achievement Criteria-Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal (KKM) meanwhile the other 18 students were below. The lowest achievement score was 73. From that analysis, it could be seen that almost all of the student's writing skills were still very low.

The results of the post-test showed noticeable improvement, with the average score rising to 76.47, a significant increase from the pre-test average of 75.94. 22 students achieved scores above the Standard Minimum Achievement Criteria (KKM) of 77, indicating a positive shift in their writing abilities. While this is a clear sign of progress, it also highlights that there is still room for further development. The post-test results suggest that, although many students made strides in improving their descriptive writing skills, additional efforts are required to ensure that all students consistently meet or exceed the KKM. This progress, though encouraging, points to the need for continued support and refinement in teaching strategies to further elevate the students' performance.

Table 3. Students Post Test Cycle 1

No.	Name	Post-Test Score	KKM	Status
32	Student 32	77	77	Passed
33	Student 33	77	77	Passed
34	Student 34	75	77	Failed

No.	Name	Post-Test Score	KKM	Status
...
36	Student 36	78	77	Passed
Total		2753		

The result of the post-test cycle 1 showed that the mean score of the class achieved 76.47 in which 22 students passed the Standard Minimum Achievement Criteria-Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal (KKM) 77 (seventy- seven). The following were the detailed results of students' writing in the post-test: The calculation of the mean of students' scores in writing post-test gained 76.47. The data showed that the mean score of the post-test was 76.47. The mean score was higher than the final draft in the pretest. It showed that there was still a mean score improvement.

The post-test for Cycle 2 showed a remarkable improvement in students' writing skills. All 18 students achieved scores above the Standard Minimum Achievement Criteria (KKM) of 77, indicating a 100% success rate. The students' scores ranged from 78 to 85, showcasing notable progress across the class. This significant improvement reflects the positive impact of the interventions made during the cycle, confirming that students have enhanced their descriptive writing skills.

Table 4. Students Post Test Cycle 2

No.	Name	Post-Test Score	KKM	Status
1	Student 1	80	77	Passed
2	Student 2	78	77	Passed
3	Student 3	84	77	Passed
4	Student 4	81	77	Passed
...
18	Student 18	80	77	Passed
Total		2886		

Table 5. Comparing Scores of Pre-tests and Post-Test

Pre-Test	Post-Test	Post-Test
	Cycle 1	Cycle 2
75.94	76.47	80.16

The result of the post-test showed that the mean score of the class was 80,16 in which 36 students passed the Standard Minimum Achievement Criteria-Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal

(KKM) 77 (seventy-seven). The following were the detailed results of students' writing in the post-test: The calculation of the mean of students' scores in writing post-test gained 80.16. The data showed that the average score of the post-test was 80.16. The average score was higher than the average score in the cycle 1 post-test. This shows that the average score has increased significantly from before. Then, the calculation of the class percentage of the students who passed the Standard Minimum Achievement Criteria-Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal (KKM).

Based on the result of the students' writing, there was a better improvement in students' mean scores from the students' writing in the preliminary study to the post-test. The mean score for the pre-test was 75.94 and the mean score for the post-test was 80.16. It means that there was a 48,59% mean score improvement. The students who passed Standard Minimum Achievement Criteria.

DISCUSSION

This study aims to optimize the use of Instagram captions as a teaching medium to enhance students' descriptive writing skills. The findings indicate that integrating social media into learning has a positive impact on students' motivation and writing abilities, aligning with previous studies that highlight the role of technology in language education. Research has demonstrated that using Instagram as a teaching tool effectively improves students' writing skills. For instance, [Jayanti \(2020\)](#) found that Instagram enhances students' ability to write image-accompanying texts. It was discovered that students become more motivated and demonstrate better writing proficiency when using Instagram for English learning.

The integration of Instagram post captions as a learning tool in this study significantly enhanced students' descriptive writing skills through various Instagram-based activities. Activities such as photo description challenges, storytelling through carousel posts, and collaborative caption writing provided engaging and interactive learning experiences. One particularly effective exercise was the "Descriptive Caption Challenge," where students selected an image and composed a well-structured caption using vivid adjectives and sensory details. This activity not only fostered creativity but also helped students develop a deeper understanding of descriptive language. Additionally, the "Peer Review through Comments" activity encouraged students to provide constructive feedback on their peers' captions, enhancing collaborative learning and revision skills ([Wang, 2024](#)).

Despite these positive outcomes, the study also identified challenges in implementing Instagram as a learning tool. One major difficulty was students' initial reluctance to participate in writing activities due to a lack of confidence. Many students hesitated to share their work

publicly, fearing criticism from their peers. To address this, the teacher introduced a private class account where only classmates and the teacher could view and comment on posts, creating a safer and more supportive learning environment. Another challenge was ensuring that students remained focused on learning objectives rather than being distracted by other Instagram content. To mitigate this, structured guidelines and clear task instructions were provided before each activity, helping students stay engaged and on track ([Anggreni, 2024](#)).

Based on these findings, The integration of social media, particularly Instagram, in descriptive writing instruction positively impacts students' motivation and writing skills. Studies highlight that utilizing features such as captions and storytelling on Instagram enhances students' creativity and expressive abilities in writing. Additionally, this method fosters interaction and collaboration through comments and online discussions, supporting feedback-based learning. However, challenges such as potential distractions and a lack of digital literacy among students necessitate the active role of educators in guiding and structuring social media use for academic purposes. To effectively implement Instagram-based learning strategies, educators should design tasks that align with learning objectives while leveraging Instagram's interactive features to enhance engagement ([Toshpulatov, 2022](#)). For instance, storytelling through Instagram Stories can help students structure their ideas cohesively while maintaining conciseness. Furthermore, setting clear guidelines on responsible social media use ensures a focused and academically oriented learning environment. Reflective discussions after each activity encourage students to analyze their progress and identify areas for improvement. Additionally, collaboration with fellow educators or language experts on social media platforms can provide students with authentic exposure to language use ([Sy & Sinaga, 2023](#)). Developing a structured, technology-based learning framework aligned with curriculum objectives is crucial for long-term sustainability. With the right strategies, integrating social media in language learning can be a sustainable and innovative approach that enriches students' learning experiences.

The role of social media, particularly Instagram, in enhancing students' descriptive writing skills. The findings indicate that integrating social media as a learning tool positively contributes to students' motivation and writing abilities. One effective strategy is incorporating Instagram captions into writing tasks, allowing students to express their ideas more creatively and structurally. However, challenges such as distractions and students' lack of confidence were also identified, highlighting the need for teacher guidance in optimizing social media use for learning. With the right strategies, integrating social media into language education can be

a sustainable and innovative approach (Khulel, 2022; Lestari & German, 2021; Teng et al., 2022). Furthermore, incorporating Instagram-based writing tasks into formative assessments can encourage students to consistently practice and refine their writing skills beyond the classroom setting. To sustain student engagement, varying content formats such as interactive polls, writing prompts, and multimedia storytelling should be introduced over time. Encouraging students to create personal learning portfolios on Instagram, documenting their writing progress, can serve as both a motivational tool and a reflective practice (Waluyo & Soepriyanti, 2024).

Overall, while this study demonstrates the potential of Instagram as a valuable tool for enhancing descriptive writing skills, its successful implementation requires careful planning, structured guidance, and continuous refinement. Future research could explore the long-term impact of social media-based learning on writing proficiency and investigate its applicability across different language learning contexts.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of Instagram as a learning media demonstrates several important findings. The challenges encountered were not only related to the students but also involved the English teacher's approach. Students faced significant difficulties in their writing skills, which required focused attention. The research involved two cycles, each consisting of five sessions, and Instagram post captioning was found to be an effective tool in enhancing students' writing abilities.

Several key results support this conclusion. First, there was a notable improvement in students' writing performance, as reflected in their test scores. The average pre-test score was 75.94, which increased to 76.47 in the post-test of Cycle 1, and further improved to 80.16 in Cycle 2's post-test. Second, the field notes reveal that the classroom atmosphere during the teaching-learning process contributed positively to student engagement. The use of Instagram facilitated a creative and dynamic learning environment, where students became more active, enthusiastic, and innovative in generating ideas.

In conclusion, the integration of Instagram as a learning media proved to be a valuable method in improving students' writing skills, fostering a positive learning environment, and encouraging student participation and creativity in the classroom.

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