

**STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF INSTAGRAM-BASED ENGLISH
LEARNING MATERIALS IN IMPROVING WRITING SKILLS:
A QUALITATIVE STUDY**

Meliana¹, Mariana Efrasia Dade², Baiti Nabila Sari³, Rampeng⁴

^{1,2,3,4}Department of English Education, Faculty of Education and Literature,
Universitas Bosowa, Makassar, Indonesia

¹melianarazak83@gmail.com, ²marianadade07@gmail.com,

³baitinabila16@gmail.com, ⁴rampeng@universitasbosowa.ac.id

ABSTRACT

The use of social media in English language learning has transformed how students access learning materials and develop language skills. Among various platforms, Instagram has become popular because of its visual features, interactive content, and accessibility. It provides authentic English learning materials, including vocabulary, grammar explanations, captions, reels, and writing activities that support language development. However, limited research has examined students' perceptions of Instagram-based learning materials, particularly regarding their contribution to writing skills. Therefore, this study investigates students' perceptions of Instagram as a source of English learning materials and its role in improving writing skills. This study employed a qualitative approach involving twelve undergraduate students from the English Education Department who had regularly used Instagram-based English learning materials for at least one semester. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, including data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings revealed three major themes. Instagram provides engaging and authentic learning materials that motivate students to practice writing. Its visual and multimedia features improve vocabulary, grammar, and writing organization. Although students generally perceive Instagram positively, they also experience challenges such as distractions, inconsistent content quality, and limited teacher guidance. The study concludes that Instagram-based English learning materials enhance students' motivation, confidence, autonomous learning, and writing skills. These findings suggest that English teachers should integrate carefully selected Instagram content into writing instruction to promote meaningful learning and strengthen students' digital literacy.

Keywords: *Instagram, English learning materials, writing skills, students' perceptions, qualitative study.*

ABSTRAK

Penggunaan media sosial dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris telah mengubah cara mahasiswa mengakses materi pembelajaran dan mengembangkan keterampilan berbahasa. Di antara berbagai platform, Instagram menjadi salah satu yang paling populer karena fitur visual, konten interaktif, dan kemudahan aksesnya. Platform ini menyediakan materi pembelajaran bahasa Inggris yang autentik, seperti kosakata, penjelasan tata bahasa, caption, reels, dan aktivitas menulis. Namun, penelitian mengenai persepsi mahasiswa terhadap materi pembelajaran berbasis Instagram, khususnya dalam meningkatkan keterampilan menulis, masih terbatas. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan mengeksplorasi persepsi mahasiswa terhadap penggunaan Instagram sebagai sumber materi pembelajaran bahasa Inggris serta kontribusinya terhadap pengembangan keterampilan menulis. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan melibatkan dua belas mahasiswa Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris yang telah menggunakan materi pembelajaran berbasis Instagram selama minimal satu semester. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dan dianalisis menggunakan model interaktif Miles, Huberman, dan Saldaña. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Instagram menyediakan materi pembelajaran yang menarik dan autentik, membantu meningkatkan kosakata, tata bahasa, dan organisasi tulisan, serta meningkatkan motivasi, kepercayaan diri, dan kemandirian belajar. Meskipun demikian, mahasiswa masih menghadapi tantangan berupa distraksi, kualitas konten yang beragam, dan terbatasnya bimbingan dosen. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan agar dosen bahasa Inggris mengintegrasikan konten Instagram yang dipilih secara cermat dalam pembelajaran menulis guna meningkatkan kualitas pembelajaran dan literasi digital mahasiswa.

Kata Kunci: Instagram, materi pembelajaran bahasa Inggris, keterampilan menulis, persepsi mahasiswa, penelitian kualitatif.

A. INTRODUCTION

Writing is considered one of the most difficult productive skills in learning English because it demands that learners arrange their thoughts in a logical way while using the right vocabulary, grammar, and techniques to connect ideas smoothly. Writing requires thoughtful preparation,

creating a draft, reviewing it for improvements, and making necessary changes to ensure ideas are clearly and effectively expressed. As a result, many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students face challenges in writing clearly in English because they have limited vocabulary, insufficient knowledge of grammar, and low self-

confidence. In recent years, technological progress has greatly transformed how education is delivered, especially in the field of language learning. Digital technology allows students to access learning materials at any time and from any location via different online platforms. Among these platforms, social media has become a significant educational resource because it supports communication, teamwork, and self-directed learning. University students often spend a lot of time using social networking apps as part of their daily routines, which means these platforms can serve as valuable learning spaces outside of traditional classroom settings. Instagram has become one of the most widely used social media applications around the world, particularly among young adults. Instagram was first created as a place to share photos, but it has grown into a space where people also use it to share educational content through images, videos, reels, stories, and other interactive features. Many English instructors, schools, and language learning groups produce educational material on Instagram. This content includes lessons on vocabulary, explanations

of grammar rules, advice on writing, discussions about common expressions, and techniques for academic writing. These features allow learners to easily access real English content in a format that is both visually appealing and enjoyable to use. The widespread use of Instagram has motivated teachers to include the platform in their English language instruction. Previous research suggests that Instagram has the potential to boost students' motivation, involvement, creativity, and level of engagement when learning a language. Students can witness real-life language usage, communicate with fellow students, and improve their writing skills by using captions, comments, reflections, and group activities. These learning experiences help learners take more control of their own learning and offer chances to keep practicing the language regularly beyond the classroom setting. Writing instruction, especially, gains from using learning materials found on Instagram because students come across short but significant texts along with visual backgrounds. Images and videos help students imagine and come up with ideas before they start writing their texts. Moreover, captions

created by native and skilled English speakers offer real examples of how sentences are structured, how words are used, and how ideas are arranged in conversations. These real materials assist students in learning how English is naturally used in daily conversations. Although these benefits exist, Instagram also brings certain difficulties when used in educational settings. Students might get distracted by entertainment content that is not related to their learning goals. In addition, the quality and trustworthiness of educational materials can differ a lot because anyone has the ability to upload content without it being checked by academics. Hence, students require support from teachers to choose trustworthy learning materials and build strong abilities to critically evaluate digital information. Many earlier research works have examined Instagram as a platform for learning or as a means of communication. However, there have been relatively few studies that specifically look at how students perceive English learning materials on Instagram, especially in terms of how effective they are in helping improve writing skills. Understanding students'

perceptions is important because positive perceptions can affect their motivation, their level of engagement, and the results they achieve in learning. Students' experiences offer important information about how well digital learning materials work from the learners' point of view. This study is designed to investigate how university students perceive Instagram-based English learning resources in terms of their effectiveness in enhancing writing skills. Specifically, the study aims to address the following research question:

How do students view the use of Instagram-based English learning resources in enhancing their ability to write in English?

The results of this study are anticipated to support the advancement of technology-based English language instruction, especially in creating new writing resources that match students' preferences for digital learning. The study also offers useful insights for English teachers, curriculum designers, and researchers who want to incorporate social media into language teaching. Writing is considered one of the most difficult productive skills in learning English

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B. Research Methods

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to explore students' perceptions of Instagram-based English learning materials in improving writing skills. The study was conducted at the English Education Study Program, Universitas Bosowa, Makassar. Three undergraduate students and one lecturer who had used Instagram for English learning for at least one semester were selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions focusing on students' experiences, perceived benefits, and

challenges of using Instagram for learning English writing. Each interview lasted approximately 25–35 minutes, was audio-recorded with participants' consent, transcribed verbatim, and translated into English. The data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which consists of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. To ensure trustworthiness, the study applied credibility through member checking, while ethical principles were maintained by obtaining informed consent, ensuring voluntary participation, and protecting participants' anonymity using pseudonyms (P1–P4).

C. Results And Discussion

This section presents the results of the interviews with four participants regarding their perceptions of Instagram-based English learning materials in improving writing skills. The analysis generated three themes: (1) Instagram provides authentic and engaging learning materials, (2) Instagram supports the development of writing skills, and (3) Challenges in using Instagram for English learning. All participants perceived Instagram

as an accessible platform that provides authentic English learning materials, including vocabulary, grammar explanations, writing tips, captions, and educational videos. The visual presentation and interactive features encouraged students to learn English more frequently and independently.

Participant 1 stated:

"I usually follow English learning accounts because they post grammar explanations and vocabulary every day. It is easier for me to understand than learning only from textbooks."

(P1)

Similarly, Participant 3 explained:

"Instagram helps me learn English naturally because educational content often appears on my timeline."

(P3)

These findings indicate that Instagram provides authentic language input that supports students' learning outside the classroom. This finding supports Tomlinson (2013), who argues that effective language learning materials should be meaningful, engaging, and expose learners to authentic language. Likewise, Brown (2004) emphasizes that authentic language input contributes to language development by exposing learners to

real-life communication. The present finding is also consistent with Rizal and Farikhah (2021), who reported that Instagram promotes learner engagement through visually attractive and authentic English learning materials. Similarly, Nasution (2023) concluded that Instagram encourages autonomous learning by allowing students to access educational content anytime and anywhere. Therefore, Instagram can be considered an alternative source of English learning materials that complements classroom instruction. The participants agreed that Instagram contributed to the improvement of their writing skills. They explained that reading English captions and following educational accounts enriched their vocabulary, improved grammar, and increased their confidence in writing.

Participant 2 stated:

"After reading English captions, I learn new vocabulary and expressions that help me write better." (P2)

Participant 4 added:

"Writing captions on Instagram makes me more confident because I can practice expressing my ideas in English." (P4)

These findings support Hyland (2003), who explains that writing develops through continuous practice and exposure to language models. Instagram provides opportunities for students to observe authentic written English and apply it in their own writing activities. The improvement in vocabulary found in this study is also consistent with Nation (2013), who emphasizes that vocabulary knowledge is an essential component of writing proficiency. Furthermore, students' increased confidence supports Bandura's (1997) concept of self-efficacy, which suggests that repeated successful learning experiences strengthen learners' confidence in performing academic tasks. The present findings are in line with Erarslan (2019), who found that Instagram encourages students to practice English through authentic communication. Similarly, Pasha et al. (2024) reported that Instagram positively influences students' motivation, engagement, and writing performance in English language learning. Overall, the findings suggest that Instagram-based English learning materials support students' writing development by increasing vocabulary knowledge, grammatical awareness,

and writing confidence. Although the participants expressed positive perceptions, they also identified several challenges. The most common challenge was distraction caused by entertainment content. In addition, participants mentioned that the quality of educational content varied across different Instagram accounts.

Participant 1 stated:

"Sometimes I open Instagram to study English, but I end up watching entertaining videos instead." (P1)

Participant 2 also explained:

"Some English learning accounts explain grammar differently, so I need lecturers to recommend reliable sources." (P2)

These findings indicate that Instagram provides both opportunities and challenges for language learning. This result is consistent with Selwyn (2016), who argues that digital technologies facilitate learning but may also reduce students' concentration because of the abundance of non-academic content. Furthermore, Tomlinson (2013) emphasizes that learning materials should be selected carefully to ensure their quality and suitability for learners. Therefore, lecturers play an important

role in guiding students to use reliable educational accounts and integrate Instagram into structured learning activities. Overall, while Instagram offers valuable learning opportunities, its effectiveness depends on students' self-regulation and lecturers' guidance. The findings demonstrate that Instagram is positively perceived as a supplementary source of English learning materials for improving writing skills. Students considered Instagram engaging because it provides authentic language input through captions, educational posts, and short videos. These findings support the concept of authentic materials proposed by Tomlinson (2013) and Brown (2004), which emphasizes the importance of exposing learners to real-life language use. The findings also indicate that Instagram contributes to students' writing development by improving vocabulary, grammar, and confidence. This result supports Hyland (2003), who argues that writing proficiency develops through regular practice and authentic language exposure. The findings are also consistent with Nation (2013) and Bandura (1997), highlighting the importance of vocabulary knowledge and self-

efficacy in writing development. However, Instagram also presents challenges, particularly distractions and inconsistent content quality. These findings are consistent with Selwyn (2016), who explains that digital technologies offer educational benefits while simultaneously creating challenges related to attention and information credibility. Therefore, lecturers should integrate Instagram into writing instruction by recommending credible educational accounts and designing structured learning activities that maximize its educational benefits. Overall, this study suggests that Instagram-based English learning materials can effectively support students' writing development when combined with appropriate instructional guidance and students' digital literacy.

D. Conclusion

This study explored students' perceptions of Instagram-based English learning materials in improving writing skills among students of the English Education Study Program, Faculty of Education and Letters, Universitas Bosowa. The findings indicate that Instagram is positively perceived as a

supplementary learning resource because it provides authentic, accessible, and engaging English learning materials. The participants reported that Instagram helped them improve their vocabulary, grammar, writing organization, and confidence through continuous exposure to authentic English content and regular writing practice. In addition, Instagram encouraged autonomous learning by enabling students to access learning materials beyond the classroom. Despite these positive perceptions, the participants also identified several challenges in using Instagram for English learning. The presence of entertainment content may distract students from learning activities, while the varying quality of educational content requires students to be more selective in choosing reliable learning resources. These findings suggest that the educational value of Instagram depends on students' digital literacy and lecturers' guidance in integrating the platform into writing instruction. This study has several limitations. First, the study involved only four participants from the English Education Study Program at Universitas Bosowa, limiting the generalizability of the findings.

Second, the study focused only on students' perceptions through interviews without examining the actual improvement of students' writing performance. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted within the context of this study. Based on these findings, English lecturers are encouraged to integrate Instagram-based learning materials into writing instruction by selecting reliable educational accounts and designing activities that promote meaningful writing practice. Students are also encouraged to use Instagram critically and purposefully by prioritizing educational content and applying what they learn to their writing activities. Finally, future researchers are recommended to involve a larger number of participants from different educational institutions and employ mixed-methods or quantitative approaches to examine the effectiveness of Instagram-based English learning materials in improving students' writing skills.

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