

## THE IMPACT OF INSTAGRAM ON ENHANCING DESCRIPTIVE WRITING SKILLS IN EIGHTH GRADE STUDENTS AT SMP NEGERI 1 PADANGSIDIMPUAN

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effectiveness of using Instagram as a tool to enhance students' descriptive writing skills at SMP Negeri 1 Padangsidimpuan. Utilizing the Class Action Research (CAR) method, the research involved pre-tests, post-tests, and two cycles of intervention with 30 eighth-grade students. Initial findings indicated that students' writing skills were categorized as poor, with an average pre-test score of 59.83. Following the integration of Instagram in the instructional process, students' average scores improved significantly to 66.5 in Cycle 1 and 82.5 in Cycle 2. The overall improvement from pre-test to post-test 2 was 37.89%, with 83.33% of students meeting the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM). These results confirm the hypothesis that Instagram can significantly improve students' descriptive writing skills. The study suggests that incorporating social media in educational practices can enhance student engagement and learning outcomes. It also highlights the potential for further research on the use of digital tools in education to foster innovative teaching methods.

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### A. INTRODUCTION

Writing is a crucial component of English language acquisition, yet it presents numerous challenges for both teachers and students. Research indicates that many



Indonesian students struggle with grammar, largely due to the cultural differences between their native language and English (Ariyanti, 2016). These differences often result in writing that does not align well with the conventions of English. Additionally, large class sizes and limited time further hinder the effectiveness of writing instruction.

Writing, a fundamental literacy skill, is complex and requires extensive cognitive processing. It is distinct from other language skills as it necessitates precise language use, often based on reading, listening, or discussion activities (Harmer, 1998). Despite its importance, Indonesian students often face difficulties in generating ideas, maintaining interest, and mastering grammar, especially in writing English texts (Siregar, P., Ramadhani, Y. R., & Nasution, L. S, 2023).

The Indonesian curriculum mandates proficiency in various text types, including recount, report, discussion, and descriptive texts, among others. Descriptive text, a focus for eighth-grade students, poses significant challenges (Pulungan, M. Hapni ., Maharani, & Meidipa, L. F.,2023; Pratiwi, S. ., Maharani, & Meidipa, L. F, 2024). According to Langan (2003), writing is a skill that can be developed through practice, similar to driving or cooking.

In today's digital age, written communication is prevalent in media such as books, newspapers, and social networks. Interviews with teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Padangsidempuan reveal that students lack motivation in writing and often find traditional teaching methods unengaging (English teacher's interview, 2022). With the rise of social media, platforms like Instagram offer innovative ways to enhance student engagement and writing skills (Bolat, 2018; Kavaliauskiene & Ashkinazi, 2014; Hutabarat, M. S., Siregar, R. K., & Harahap, N. 2024).

This research explores the use of Instagram as a tool for improving students' writing abilities, specifically in descriptive texts. The hypothesis posits that using Instagram will increase students' enthusiasm and motivation, leading to improved writing skills. Observations at SMP Negeri 1 Padangsidempuan indicate that students struggle with descriptive texts, with average scores falling below the Minimum Succeed Criteria (KKM) of 75.

This study aims to determine the effectiveness of Instagram in enhancing students' descriptive writing skills, providing insights for teachers to develop more engaging and effective teaching strategies.

## B. LITERATUR REVIEW

### 1. Writing Descriptive Text

Writing is a complex task that requires the integration of various activities and cognitive processes. For Indonesian high school EFL students, challenges include developing ideas and mastering grammar. Flynn and Stainthrop (2010) emphasize that writing systems provide a visual representation of language, enabling writers to communicate their ideas. Writing involves remembering, thinking, and organizing thoughts (Axelord & Chooper in Alice, 2013). Raimes (2010) describes writing as a collaboration of eye, hand, and brain to express ideas with proper structure, grammar, and vocabulary.

Harmer (2016) outlines four stages in writing: planning, drafting, editing, and final draft. Planning involves brainstorming and organizing ideas. Drafting is the initial attempt to put thoughts on paper. Editing focuses on refining the text to meet English standards, while the final draft is the polished version ready for sharing.

Copeland (2016) identifies eleven purposes of writing, including expressing ideas, describing, exploring, entertaining, informing, explaining, arguing, persuading, evaluating, problem-solving, and mediating. These purposes guide the focus, style, and structure of the writing.

### 2. Descriptive Text

Descriptive text aims to provide detailed information about a person, place, or thing, engaging the reader's senses (Anderson & Anderson, 2010; Hegarthy, 2012).

Heffernan and Lincoln (2017) categorize descriptive text into informative, analytical or technical, and evocative descriptions. Informative descriptions identify objects, analytical descriptions explain structures, and evocative descriptions recreate perceptions.

Knapp & Watkins (2011) outline grammatical features of descriptive writing, including the use of present and past tense, relational verbs, action verbs, mental verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and various literary devices like similes and metaphors.

Gerot & Wignell in Siahaan (2018) describe the structure of descriptive text as comprising identification and description. Identification introduces the subject, while description details its characteristics.

### 3. Instagram as a Teaching Tool

Instagram is a popular social network with over 300 million active users, allowing users to post photos or videos with captions (Kelly, 2015; Prichard, 2013). It offers a platform for L2 learners to create descriptive writing.

Instagram facilitates educational purposes by allowing teachers and students to share information and experiences (Kessler, 2013; McBride, 2009). It supports creative and critical thinking by using visual images to enhance learning.

Using media like Instagram in education can make lessons more engaging and interactive, reducing learning time and increasing student motivation (Dayton, 2013).

### 4. Strategies for Applying Instagram in Writing Descriptive Text

Instagram can be used to practice writing descriptive texts by using photos as prompts. Students can update their Instagram accounts with descriptive captions, enhancing their critical thinking and creativity. Feedback and reflection on Instagram posts can further improve their writing skills (Kelly, 2019).

Writing is essential for communication, and teachers must find effective strategies to teach it. Instagram offers a new approach by engaging students in a familiar digital environment. This study aims to explore the use of Instagram in improving students' descriptive writing skills, providing a solution to common challenges in writing instruction.

## C. RESEARCH METHOD

This research was conducted at SMP Negeri 1 Padangsidempuan during the 2022-2023 academic year, specifically with the VIII-1 grade students. Data collection is a crucial step in research. According to Arikunto (2016), collecting data is essential in research. The instrument chosen for this research is a self-writing test in essay form, assessing students' abilities in writing descriptive texts based on criteria such as formal accuracy, written accuracy, vocabulary, style, and communicative effectiveness (ECL Education System, 2020). The research includes pre-tests and post-tests to measure student improvement before and after using Instagram as a teaching tool. This study employs classroom action research, which involves cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. According to Gall (2003), action research in education aims to improve educational practice. Data collection methods include library research for theoretical sources and field research for practical data from SMP Negeri 1 Padangsidempuan.

The population consists of all eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 1 Padangsidempuan, totaling 330 students across 11 classes. The sample selected for this study is the VIII-1 class, comprising 30 students, chosen through cluster random sampling. Data analysis involves several statistical methods:

1. Mean Calculation

To determine the average score of students' writing skills in each test.

$$MX = \frac{\sum X}{N} \dots\dots\dots (1)$$

Where :  $MX$  is the mean,  $\sum X$  is the sum of individual scores, and  $N$  is the number of students.

2. Class Percentage Calculation

To find the percentage of students who meet the minimum competency criterion (KKM) of 75.

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\% \dots\dots\dots (2)$$

Where  $P$  is the class percentage,  $F$  is the total percentage score, and  $N$  is the number of students.

3. Improvement Calculation

To measure the percentage improvement in students' writing skills from pre-test to post-test in each cycle.

$$P = \frac{y1-y}{y} \times 100\% \dots\dots\dots (2)$$

Where  $P$  is the percentage improvement,  $y$  is the pre-test score, and  $y1$  is the post-test score.

The research is considered successful if there is a 30% improvement in students' mean scores from pre-test to post-test in each cycle. If this improvement is not achieved, further steps will be taken.

D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Research Results

The research was conducted using the Class Action Research (CAR) method to analyze the impact of Instagram on students' descriptive writing skills.

a. Pre-Test Results

Before using Instagram, a pre-test was conducted with 30 students. By using the collected data the writer can calculate the percentages of the students' writing descriptive text scores in pre - test as the following table:

Table 1  
 The Percentage Distribution  
 of the students' Writing Descriptive Text Scores of Pre-test

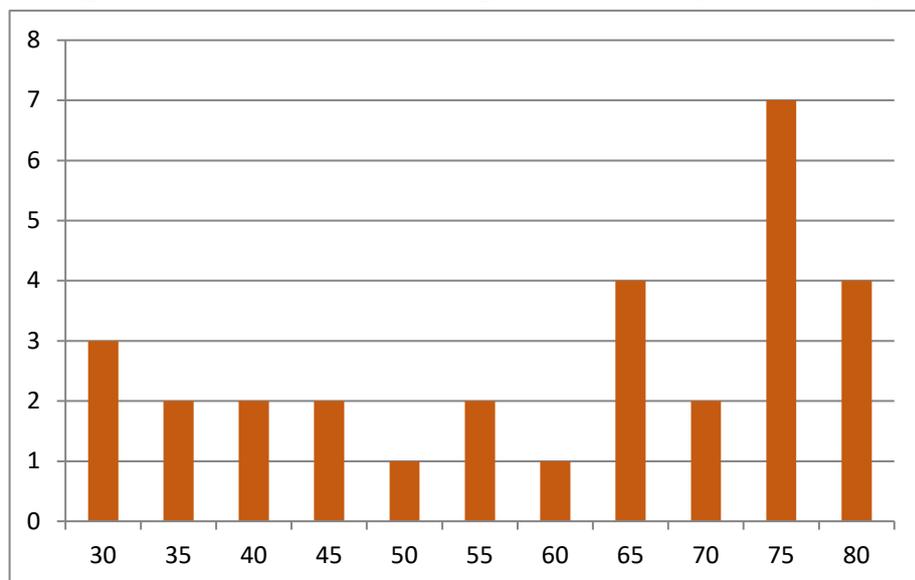
No	Score	Frequency	%
1	30	3	10%
2	35	2	6.66%
3	40	2	6.66%
4	45	2	6.66%
5	50	1	3.33%
6	55	2	6.66%
7	60	1	3.33%
8	65	4	13.33 %
9	70	2	6.66%
10	75	7	23.33%
11	80	4	13.33%
Total		30	100%

Source: Data Processing 2024

Based on the table above, the histogram graphic as follows:

Figure 1

The frequency histogram of the students' writing skill on descriptive text in pre-test



By using Formula (1), the mean score was 59.83, with only 11 students scoring above the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM) of 75. To find out the percentage of students who passed the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM), the authors used

the formula (2), only 36.66% of students met the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM).

b. Cycle 1: Post-Test Results

After implementing Instagram in teaching, the first cycle showed an improvement. Bu using Formula (1), the mean score increased to 66.5, with Formula (2), only 46.6% of students meeting the KKM. The percentage improvement from pre-test to post-test in Cycle 1 was 11.20%. However, this did not meet the success criteria of a 70% increase. These results were obtained from the following table and histogram:

Table 2

The Percentage Distribution of the Students' Writing Skill on Descriptive Text Score of Post-Test Cycle 1

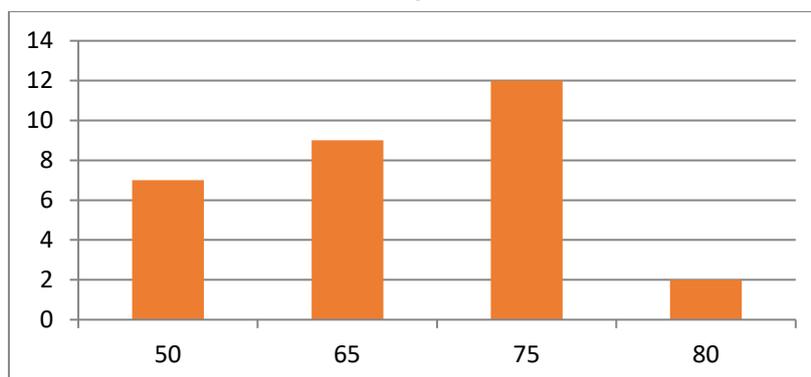
No	Score	Frequency	%
1	50	7	23.33%
2	65	9	30%
3	75	12	40%
4	80	2	6.6%
Total		30	100%

Source: Data Processing 2024

Based on the table above, the histogram graphic as follows:

Figure 2

The frequency histogram of the students' writing skill on descriptive text score of post-test cycle 1



c. Cycle 2: Post-Test Results

In Cycle 2, further use of Instagram led to a mean score increase to 82.5. The percentage of students meeting the KKM rose to 83.33%. The improvement from

pre-test to post-test Cycle 2 was 37.89%, meeting the success criteria. These results were obtained from the following table and histogram:

Table 3

The Percentage Distribution of The Students' Writing Skill on Descriptive Text Score of Post-test Cycle 2

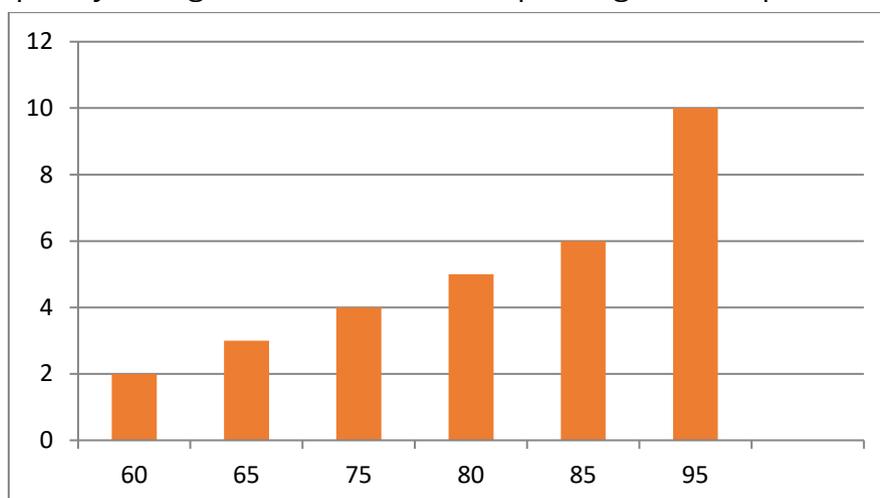
No	Score	Frequency	%
1	60	2	6.67 %
2	65	3	10 %
3	75	4	13.33 %
4	80	5	16.67 %
5	85	6	20 %
6	95	10	33.33 %
Total		30	100%

Source: Data Processing 2024

Based on the table above, the histogram graphic as follows:

Figure 3

The frequency histogram of the students' speaking score of post-test cycle 2



## 2. Hypothesis Testing

The hypothesis stated that there would be a significant improvement in students' descriptive writing skills using Instagram. The data analysis showed a 37.89% increase in mean scores from pre-test to post-test Cycle 2, confirming that the hypothesis is accepted.

## 3. Discussion

The research demonstrated that using Instagram significantly improves students' descriptive writing skills. The interactive and engaging nature of Instagram motivated

students to be more creative and active in their writing tasks. The CAR method, coupled with Instagram, proved effective in enhancing students' writing abilities from an initial average score of 59.83 in the pre-test to 82.5 in the post-test of Cycle 2. The study highlights the potential of social media platforms as valuable tools in educational settings, particularly for language learning.

## E. CONCLUSION

The use of Instagram significantly improved students' writing skills in descriptive texts, as evidenced by a 37.89% increase in test scores from pre-test to post-test 2. Initially, students' writing scores were categorized as poor, with an average pre-test score of 59.83. However, after applying Instagram in two cycles, students' writing scores improved to average categories of 66.5 and 82.5, respectively. This demonstrates that Instagram is an effective tool for enhancing students' writing skills, with the average score rising from 59.83 to 82.5. By the end of the study, 37.89% of Grade VIII students at SMP Negeri 3 Padangsidempuan met the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM), confirming the research hypothesis that Instagram can significantly improve students' descriptive writing skills.

The findings of this study suggest significant implications for educational practices and future research. The use of Instagram as a teaching tool in writing instruction has proven to be effective in enhancing students' writing skills. This implies that incorporating social media platforms into educational strategies can create a more engaging and motivating learning environment, which can lead to improved academic outcomes. For educators, the integration of Instagram can serve as an innovative approach to address the challenges of traditional teaching methods, making learning more interactive and relevant to students' interests.

Furthermore, the positive results of this study imply that technology and social media can play a crucial role in modern education. Educational institutions may consider training teachers to effectively use such tools to enhance their teaching practices. Additionally, the success of this approach suggests that further research into other social media platforms and digital tools could uncover new methods for improving various aspects of education.

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