

Storytelling in Instagram: Exploring a Creative Learning in Digital Era

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ABSTRACT

Teaching and learning in the 21st century require students to become active thinkers in using technology to learn, innovate, communicate, and discover new knowledge. Instagram media was a great tool to showcase learning in an innovative learning environment where students took ownership of their learning and ideas. It could be used as hands-on training and build local and professional communities' knowledge. The sample for this study was 15 students from Tritech Informatika High School located in North Sumatra, Indonesia. Data was collected through interviews and related literature. Data analysis was analyzed using open coding methods that examined classified, tabulated, or combined evidence to solve the original research problem. Qualitative analysis that was conducted showed that Instagram media was the most used social media platform among participants, preferring to use it for educational and language learning purposes. This showed that social learning positively affected learning material research, motivation, academic and academic achievement satisfaction, and cooperative learning.

1. Introduction

Language is a tool to communicate orally and in writing to express information, thoughts and ideas, develop science and technology, and culture are realized in the four language skills, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Jackson and Stockwell (2011) state that language is the human faculty that enables us to exchange meaningful messages with some of our fellow human beings by means of discourses and texts, which are structured according to the rules and conventions of the particular language that we share with those fellow human beings.

Writing is the most difficult skill to learn among the four language skills taught in schools. It needs specialized skills that include the ability to express the writer's opinions or thoughts clearly and efficiently. These abilities can be achieved only if a learner masters some techniques of writing, such as how to obtain ideas about what he or she will write on, how to express them in a sequence of sentences, how to organize them chronologically and coherently, and how to review and revise the composition until the writing is well-built. That is, the writer must be able to balance what can be assumed to be the audience's private background knowledge of the communicative intent of the text and the audience's ability to make inferences, which depends on both knowledge of language and knowledge of the real world.

Writing is a way of connecting individuals with each other in ways that carry particular special meanings. It means writing as a gateway to self-expression and self-identification (Monaghan, 2007). Writing is a technology, a set of skills that must be practiced and learned through experience. Writing, particularly the more complex composing skill valued in the academy – involves training, instruction, practice, experience, and purpose (Grade & Kaplan, 2014).

Based on preliminary research at Tritech Informatika Senior High School in North Sumatra-Indonesia, the writer found some students' problems and difficulties in writing a text. None of us spoke and wrote our language precisely in the same way. As stated in Tarigan and Liana (2018), the most difficult part of writing is that students cannot organize their thoughts and the purpose of

their writing. Likewise, Madden (2018) states that "the lack of teachers' time to evaluate writing in accordance with strict timetable constraints and rigorous pressure to cover demands of the curriculum, teachers at a disadvantage. In addition, feedback from multiple peers can yield improvements in writing that are significantly higher than improvement for those who received assessment only from an instructor or subject matter expert." As such, almost all students perceived writing only as homework from their teacher. This case created plagiarism in English writing. Most of them would rather copy from other sources than write themselves or only have a few words to write whenever they were asked to write an English composition. In other words, they lack the sequence of ideas and poor ability to organize English writing. The result is often loss of self-awareness in English use and not all students fully comprehend the English genre.

Technology has changed every aspect of modern life and education is no exception. Therefore, teachers must facilitate students with digital media to increase student's awareness of the English writing experience since teaching and learning do not always take part in the classroom. One digital media to support students' personalized learning is using Instagram media. People can create personal pages and connect with their friends to share information and knowledge collaboratively by using social media. Young people, including students, also feel the popularity of social media. One basic reason to use Instagram is that it is familiar to almost all students. As the students are familiar with Instagram, they did not seem to operate Instagram. Moreover, teachers can actively use Instagram to keep in touch with students or organize activities online. As Serafinelli (2018) argues, "Visual storytelling is the technique adopted by most freelance social media marketers and popular Instagram users." Instagram is a nationwide social media where students can use for self-expression and account for phenomena. Since Instagram offers lots of contextualized visual information, it gives positive feedback to encourage students to be spatially and linguistically aware of their English writing. Teachers can check students' English improvement anytime and anywhere as long as the internet connection is available and instant feedback from all students' social relations, including students' family about English writing. To fulfill the purpose of the study, the following research questions have been raised by the researchers:

1. What are the activities by using Instagram media to enhance students' English writing skills?
2. What are the students' responses after they are taught writing skills using Instagram media?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Writing

Writing skill is a way to deliver ideas or thoughts to achieve a communicative purpose in the form of written language. Writing is a complex task that requires integrating multiple cognitive, linguistic, and motor abilities (Wendling & Mather, 2009). You do not write because you want to say something, you write because you have something to say (Smith, 2016). Furthermore, the writing process is how we translate these ideas into written text. It starts with an idea and the need to develop it, communicate it to an audience, and preserve it (Freeman, 1998). Writing is not merely revealing what has been put into 'the black box.' Students' minds are not empty containers; but instead, students already have beliefs, ideas, and conceptions. Students should be encouraged to generate ideas and inferences even before they know a domain well, and they should be given feedback on these ideas, helping them revise, elaborate, and reflect on their ideas. This motivates students to learn more because personally meaningful questions are being activated. This is also a start for truly student-centred, participatory instruction. Writing is a tool for thinking and a tool for learning (Tynjala et al., 2001).

Students begin their writing journey using a conventional graphic system (an alphabet) to form words. Writing also offers a medium for students to explore their interests, feelings, and experiences while allowing a venue for artistic and creative self-expression (Spencer & Boon, 2010). In addition, news interest is enhanced when information deals with unusual incidents. Human interest involves presenting information about people and their experiences, problems, challenges, and achievements in a way that engages readers or viewers by arousing not only their attention but also their empathy or sympathy (Smith, 2016).

2.2 The Aspects of Writing

Several aspects of good writing must be concerned of the writer when turning the ideas into the written form. Good writing requires a coherent progression of ideas expressed in grammatically correct sentences. Along the way, the writer needs to write grammatically correct sentences, use appropriate words, use correct punctuation marks, ensure logical development of the subject, and maintain a coherent flow of the topic (Parsons & Oja, 2010). The same way goes for Yagelski (2015), who describes that effective paragraph in academic writing has three key characteristics. They are:

1. Well-developed. A paragraph should cover its topic sufficiently. Often, that means elaborating on key points, ideas, or facts and including examples.

2. Coherent. Coherence refers to how the paragraph focuses on a main idea or point. All the sentences relate clearly and communicate ideas or information relevant to the main point in a coherent paragraph. Usually, but not always, a strong paragraph also has a clear topic sentence that states the main point and establishes the focus of the paragraph.
3. Cohesive. Cohesion means the statements, ideas, and information in a paragraph are explicitly linked together. To a great extent, cohesion is a function of the use of specific words and phrases that indicate to a reader that statements are connected: *similarly, by contrast, also, therefore, on the other hand, moreover, in addition*, and so on. Writers also achieve cohesion by repeating keywords or phrases.

2.3 The Theory of Learning

Taylor (2008) explains that the integration of technology to support four theories of learning:

1. Learning occurs in context: Technology can expand learning by providing culturally relevant information that engages learners in solving complex problems within their environment or contexts.
2. Learning is active: Educators must experiment and create innovative approaches to involve learners by permitting students to connect what they know and solve new problems by constructing meaning from their experiences.
3. Learning is social: School personnel has long considered promoting social skills through work or solving learning problems. It is incumbent upon the school to develop, direct, supervise, and support efforts to collaborate with efforts in their surrounding communities.
4. Learning is reflective: One promising technique is for the teacher to provide feedback about students' thinking. Students should then be required to make revisions and reflect on their thinking in the critical thinking areas. Through technology, students may demonstrate how their thinking will reflect high levels of solving problems. Technologies can be integrated into classrooms to improve communication, feedback, and reflection to facilitate revisions (Tarigan & Stevani, 2020).

2.4 Mobile Learning on Social Media

Mobile learning is learning that can take place anytime, anywhere with the help of a mobile computing device (Martin, 2010). Social media is the activities, practices, and behavior met in the communities that gather to share information, knowledge, and opinions through conversational environments (Brown, 2016). Social network sites as web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system. Social network sites allow users easy access to information about persons they know (friends, colleagues, family members) and potentially about contacts of these persons (Abramowicz 2009). Social media tools are used to promote school and showcase students' work. Instagram is often used in these ways by telling stories through images and limited written text (Graham et al., 2019).

2.4.1 Instagram Media

Instagram is a mobile application that allows users to capture and share images and videos with followers. Instagram is a free application for mobile devices, which allows users to upload, edit, and share with other pictures and a very short video. Instagram launched on 6 October 2010 and rapidly gained popularity, having 300 million active users per month and 70 million pictures per day being shared. In January 2011, Instagram added hashtags and from 27 April 2015, users were able to use emoji as hashtags. Hashtags are tags or words prepended with '#' used to indicate the content of the picture, allowing users to search for pictures and increase visibility. Emojis are pictograms that are connected with emotions a user wants to give to the picture. The role of hashtags was traditionally to organize knowledge, facilitate access, and enable information retrieval. (Chbeir et al., 2015).

Specifically, Instagram was launched in October 2010 and became popular with more than 300 million active users in 2015. Instagram is the online sharing of photos and videos on mobile phones. This is one of the original social media tools designed to be used on mobile devices through an app. Instagram users can perform several functions: post content (60-second images and videos), add captions, tag users, add locations, add hashtags, follow other users, check feeds, add comments, like content, discover other users, collect online content and send direct messages (Kelly, 2015). On Instagram, the use of the photo is more connected to users' interests as a combination of passions, events, hobbies, or scenarios. Furthermore, Garner (2016) stated that Instagram offers smartphone users a forum to communicate their experiences through both choice of photo subject and ways they choose to manipulate and present them. This activity also creates an opportunity for a larger audience outside of the immediate experience to participate, become engaged, and be creatively influenced by the content shared (Serafinelli, 2018).

2.4.2 The Features in Instagram Media

Handayani (2016) criticizes that Instagram has several specific features that users commonly use. The possibility can be described as follows.

1. Instagram profile interface: This part displays information about the user profile. Includes bio, original profile picture, number of posts, and number of subscriptions/subscriptions the user has. The "+follow" option allows users to follow other users and keep up to date with their posted content.
2. Profile content: Viewers can scroll down the profile. The viewer will see all the profile pictures displayed together. For a more detailed view, the viewer can click on the photo. The selected photo is displayed clearly.
3. Navigation tool: At the bottom of each page on the Instagram screen are five icons: Home page, Explore page, Posts page, Notifications page, and User profile page. This is Instagram's main navigation tool.

We offer our users a "unique way" to use Instagram as a social network based on the features described above. Various manipulation tools (16 filters) allow you to change the appearance of images by taking photos and videos. Users can tag the photo, including adding a location, tagging friends, or tagging photo keywords when posting a photo or video. Users can also add captions and hashtags that describe images and videos using the # sign and tag or mention other users with the @ symbol (which creates a link from the post to the specified user account).

2.5 The Procedures of Teaching Writing through Instagram Media

According to Spencer (2012), there are different activities that teachers can use to implement Instagram in their classes. These include utilizing digital storytelling, practicing grammar on photo captions, doing photojournalism, creating photo prompts for themselves, finding metaphors within chosen photos, creating photo blogs, finding and documenting context within photos, doing an ethnographic study, sharing art, and exercising creative and artistic expression through taking own pictures.

Matte (2009) classifies the steps of teaching writing through Instagram:

1. Caption it: One of the problems students face when writing is that they have difficulty developing ideas. Instagram can be used as an inspiration to encourage students to write. Teachers can post interesting photos and ask students to write descriptive captions in the comments. Pictures can help students think about what to write about. It would be difficult to ask students to write signatures using certain types of sentences, various parts of speech, sentences, prepositional phrases, and current vocabulary. Finally, the teachers can give a reward for the best caption wins a prize!
2. Photo Inspiration: Teachers can share interesting photos from their accounts. Teachers encourage students to ask photo-related questions by posting photos. Students can comment and comment on this photo. Asking students questions about photography is useful to guide them through creative writing tasks. Students can express their thoughts based on what they see in the photos. The teacher can learn how students develop ideas from the pictures presented in this activity. Alternatively, teachers can ask students to share a series of photos. Students are encouraged to write picture-based stories using the language structures learned in class. This assignment provides students with an opportunity to practice their writing skills. Students are allowed to practice spelling, grammar, and sentence structure and will be more careful when writing if they know what the world is seeing.

The researchers add some rules to teach writing through Instagram:

1. People are naturally drawn to pictures. Chenevert (2006) points out that pictures are literally worth a thousand words. The audience will forget 90% of your words but remember pictures and their ideas. Based on this statement, English writing aims to gain public attention: (a) Take pictures of things that people do not normally get to see. (b) Try to be creative. Think about the story to convey the meaning of pictures. (c) Figure out metaphor or idiom to relate the words to the chosen picture. (d) Both English writing and pictures must have a logical development.
2. By using an exciting hashtag, students can differentiate their writing, so they should strategically find the best hashtag to use.

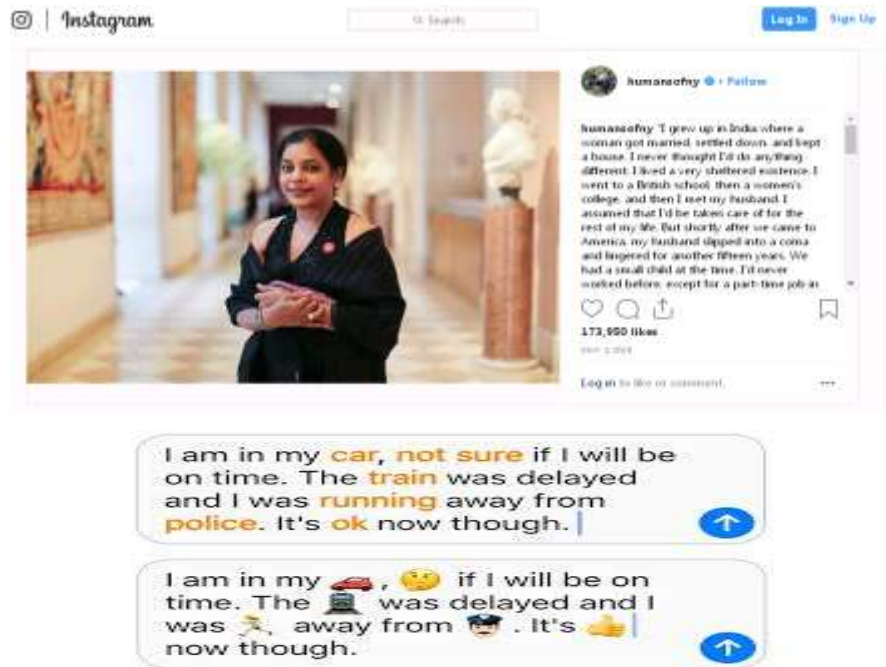


Figure 1. Example of Experience Quotes by using Paragraph and Emoticon

2.6 The Advantages of Instagram Media

As a fact, Instagram is not just about selfies, likes/comments, or repost. Teachers should jump the opportunity to get the most out of the progress. It is a great idea to start using Instagram in the classroom. Instagram can become a great educational tool that makes the educational process unique, interesting, and insightful. By using Instagram, students can exchange opinions and views on different topics. Students can also participate in a group activity where each student asks the others to comment on a photo or video. This makes it possible to exchange knowledge with classmates and teachers (Phillips, 2013). Instagram seems to be the perfect tool to support learning English for the following reasons: First, it provides many contextual visuals that can be helpful in language lessons. Second, using Instagram in the classroom can help build socially connected communities of learners, as the tool itself allows learners to interact and interact with each other outside the classroom. Third, Instagram is a widely used social network that young learners are now almost completely immersed in and used to. Inclusion in the learning process can be viewed as applying topics learned in the classroom to real-life settings. Finally, the easy accessibility and availability of Instagram on most managed devices make it more attractive to use this platform for language lessons (Ali, 2014).

According to all the statements, Instagram promotes interpersonal skills among students. With this tool, teachers can engage the students in classroom activities that use interpersonal skills to apprehend the feelings and mood of fellow students. Tarigan and Stevani (2021) argue that the online tool invites teachers and students to be a single platform to engage in various fun activities and engagements.

3. Methodology

In this study, qualitative research is used as a generic term encompassing various types of social research. According to Denscombe (2003), qualitative research is a way to understand the meaning and patterns of behavior. It is an exploratory process that builds complex and coherent pictures of words, conveys detailed opinions from a few informants, and understands social or human problems based on what is done in their natural environment. The sample of this study is 15 students at Tritech Informatika Senior High School which is located on Jalan Bhayangkara No. 484, Indra Kasih, Kecamatan Medan Tembung, Kota Medan, Sumatera Utara, Indonesia. In this study, data is collected through interviews and the relevant literature. Data analysis involves examining, classifying, tabulating, or combining evidence to address the original research problems. The data obtained from the questionnaire is analyzed using a method called "open coding". This method involves the process of decomposing, exploring, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data. Open coding allows researchers to classify and classify data to identify patterns and draw conclusions. The researcher presents the code as the data move. Thus, researchers look for common dominant themes in data descriptions (Leedy, 1993).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 The Activities in Teaching and Learning Instagram Media

There are several activities found by teachers and students when registering to teach and learn via Instagram:

1. Capture travel trip memories

Students love to take a photo and post it on their Instagram account most of the time. Teachers can develop an activity by applying it this way. Teachers can ask students to post pictures of their vacation. It could be their weekend, recalling last semester's vacation photos, and so on. Students are encouraged to use a hashtag that others have not previously used. They were then asked to choose five images of their own to prepare a two-minute presentation about their vacation memories. Teachers can develop this activity according to the expectations of the curriculum. For example, teachers can use this activity to teach students to retell passages. Students may be tasked with creating a narrative text based on their photos posted on Instagram. The hashtags will provide a general clue to the content of what they want to talk about in their presentation. By presenting a series of images, it is helpful to guide them in presenting and developing the textual structure of the story. This activity was supported by Ali (2014), who researched the use of Instagram in language teaching. From the results of his research, we found that students did not spend much time preparing when trying to find the pictures and relate them to their real-life experiences. He also notes that easy access to filtered images using Instagram keeps students focused on the language used rather than the content. In showcasing their vacation experience, students proudly share photos they have taken of themselves, and classmates are encouraged to view photos on Instagram to like them.

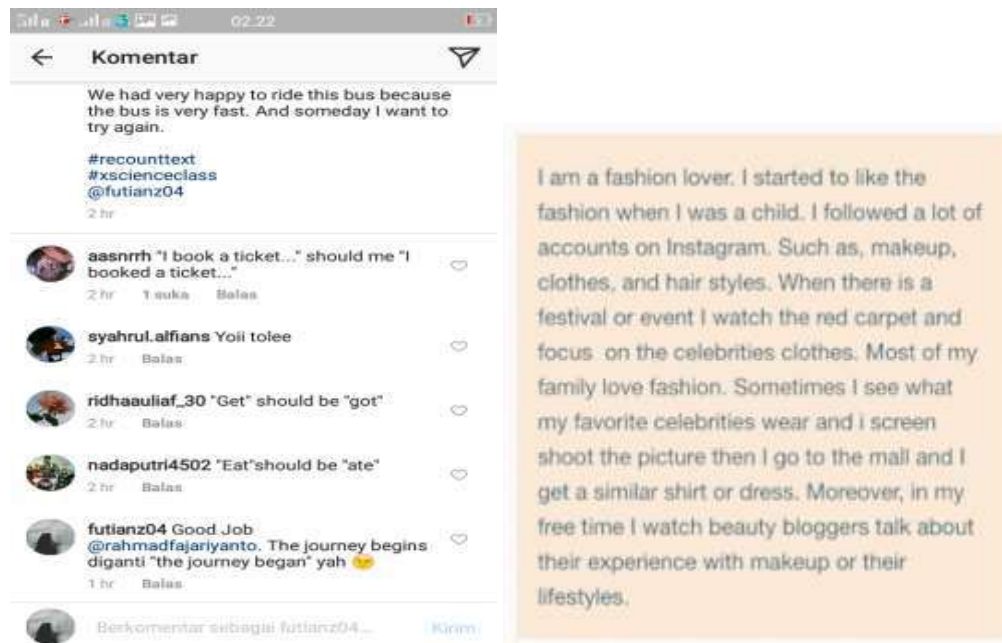


Figure 2. Example of a Photo and a Paragraph in Instagram

2. Overview a famous person in history

Teachers can also use Instagram for students to browse historical photos of celebrities and create bulletin boards. Then, they can ask them a few questions related to their bulletin board in class. For example, if students talk about a historical figure in class, the teacher can ask them about the person in the picture giving a description related to that person. This activity can also be used to teach students to describe a particular person. Students have the option to share and post their favorite celebrities. They were asked to briefly describe the person. It could be about looks and personality traits. Then, other students can develop their views and opinions about the celebrity.

3. Role-play practice

The teacher can ask students to play a small role. Topics focus on maintaining interpersonal communication such as hello/goodbye, asking for directions, starting a conversation, asking for help, and so on. The 10-second video option is a great way for students to really get into the character through recorded role-playing and even re-enactment of the performance.

4. Pronunciation practice

To improve students' pronunciation, teachers can post videos to practice pronunciation. The posted video is also tagged with a unique "hashtag" to entice students to watch. In addition, students were asked to practice pronunciation by imitating what they saw in the video. In addition, teachers can ask students to record videos related to pronunciation practice. The video was posted on their Instagram account. After posting the video, students can directly evaluate their performance. They can self-assess and correct their pronunciation. This activity is very helpful in helping them self-correct. Finally, teachers can also encourage students to rate and comment on each of their friends' videos. This activity will be fun for students. They can see their appearance in the video and directly correct the errors that arise.

5. Share reading suggestions

There are many activities that teachers and students can do by sharing reading books. Teachers can invite students to take pictures of their favorite books and write a short 25-sentence review in the captions. They will be happy to choose and share their photos, encouraging them to think through each topic. Invite other friends to comment and give opinions on your friend's post. This activity led to an extensive discussion of book reviews. From this activity, the teacher can have a visual library of all the books the class has read. On the other hand, teachers can also encourage students to make "book trailers". This activity was suggested by Ferlazzo (2011). This is an engaging 20-second trailer video activity. The content of the video includes the name and author of the book, an illustration that describes the book's theme, as well as a summary sentence the student will say, a favorite quote from their book. This activity helps students have fun choosing a particular book they enjoy. In addition, making book trailers can also be linked to classroom learning materials. For example, the teacher might have students read a simple autobiographical book when reading a narrative text. They can choose their favorite storybook to use as a book trailer. After spending enough time reading the book, students were tasked with creating a 20-second video and posting it on Instagram. Most of the content in the video, including the book's name and author, an illustration that describes the book's theme, a favorite quote from their book, and how students love the book by giving "stars" in the trailer. Once all student projects are posted, the teacher can continue by discussing the contents of the student book trailer as a class.

4.2 The Students' Writing Skill Improvement by Using Instagram Media

Although Instagram is still seen as a new medium in the Indonesian context, it seems that the students who have been treated have adapted to the medium. Before the experiment, when asked if they were familiar with Instagram, almost all of the students answered that they had an Instagram account. Given these facts, Instagram proves to be a really popular app in the world, with 400 million active users in 2016 and over 900 million active users in 2018 (Smith, 2017). The students knew Instagram well and had no problems using it. College students were active on social media (Solomon, 2013). It was found that the students' writing quality improved during the course of this study. Some errors, such as omitting thesis sentences from the essay and not having enough sentences in a paragraph, gradually diminished. Overall, the students were able to write a well-thought-out thesis. In addition, they were also able to express their views and make persuasive arguments in essays on the subject.

Instagram makes it easier for students to provide feedback on a sketch of a colleague's letter. You can also request further clarification on your feedback in the same Instagram comment box (Moriarty & Rajapilai, 2007). This technique is relatively easy to use to provide and receive feedback as students adapt. Instagram is also used to host visual media, especially images and videos. Photos of notes posted by instructors on Instagram are of great value as they can help students write good essays. Students realized that the last sentence of the introduction to the essay contained a thesis. In addition, they learned that a good main paragraph in an essay contains enough sentences. Students indeed completed an essay writing course last semester, but they may not have memorized the content completely. Therefore, using photos from notes posted on Instagram can help students remember what material they received at that time. This made a huge difference as students could simply use their smartphones to access their Instagram account and view images from their class' Instagram account. I could access it outside of class hours when I was trying to write an essay at home. In addition, videos uploaded to Instagram could be used as basic knowledge before announcing the primary material. Students could easily control their smartphones by watching videos on them. Our observations showed that students seemed comfortable while completing tasks. Videos can also be used as a basis for follow-up activities. I used it to get feedback from students on issues in the video. When students asked for their opinions and reasons, some students voluntarily shared their opinions and reasons. This is consistent with previous findings by Griesmer (2012) that, despite the amount of time social media is used, media can be a vehicle to highlight a topic and introduce additional topics. Some, but not all students, use Instagram to discuss assignments. This proved that students were very engaged. This result confirmed the claim that social media is rapidly changing the communication environment (Griesemer, 2012). It also confirmed the view of Solomon (2013) that college students have higher participation in networks. Not only did the students actively participate in the class, but they also achieved positive learning outcomes.

4.3 The Students' Response by Using Instagram Media

One of the main things that the researchers learned from the interviews with the students was that using Instagram was an integral part of our daily life, and using Instagram for language learning has made the students more accessible to languages outside of our regular classes. For example, on this topic, Student 1 says: *"I spend most of my time following my friends on Instagram. Ever since I started using my Instagram account for classes, I started wasting time checking messages about classes and checking friends' responses to messages."* Student 2 says *"I always check Instagram on my phone. Anyway, it is a habit and I am learning a lot by seeing these posts almost every day."*

In terms of motivating students to complete tasks, Student 3 explains: *"When I have to answer a question on a question in a post during a discussion, I really keep wasting my time shooting the video and finally pick the best one. I love these activities and I feel motivated."* Similarly, student 4 said, *"It is fun to read the text after class, and I remember it better."* Student 5 said, *"I think the content of the post would be interesting."* Student 6 says *"When I am motivated, I think it is more fun to read posts like that."*

Regarding the effectiveness of Instagram for developing students' language skills, student 7 says *"On Instagram, I especially benefited from vocabulary posts such as idioms and phrasal verbs. I also posted synonyms for the next course to make the course easier to read."* Similarly, Student 8 said, *"It is not enjoyable to participate in the occasional speaking task in class, but I thought posting a short video for conversation was quite fun and contributed to my performance. I have uploaded a few videos that work."*

Regarding student's memory when learning English, student 9 says *"Sometimes I need help even though I am a normal learner, but through Instagram media, I can remember better through posted messages with lecture content."* Student 10 said, *"I learned the class better because I already knew and prepared the class because the Instagram post included the content of the next class."* Student 11 said, *"Unlike school classes, there are no restrictions or a compulsory lesson to check the comment via Instagram, so I am more motivated to check messages and participate in class assignments."*

5. Conclusion

Based on the discussion in this study, it can be concluded that Instagram has a beneficial effect on improving students' language ability. This useful educational tool provides an easy way for students and teachers to communicate outside the classroom. Instagram allows students to generate ideas with contextual content and provide learning experiences that they enjoy. In addition to sharing learning materials, Instagram media also allows students to maintain a formal classroom environment, fostering an atmosphere of collaboration and exchange. Instagram has provided educational opportunities for students to learn a language while feeling comfortable and spontaneous, and Instagram assignments can help students improve their communication, writing, and reading skills. As can be seen from the interviews conducted in this study, it is clear that Instagram can be used to support students' language learning as it allows them to practice their language with their peers and people around the world and open up language content from other countries regarding improve language skills in the classroom. Future researchers are expected to explore the many other features of Instagram that could potentially be implemented in the classroom, such as Instagram stories, Instagram polling, and more. Similar studies are also needed for different student levels and language abilities. It presents a broader perspective of using Instagram in an educational context, especially in the foreign language context.

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