STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD USING INSTAGRAM IN TEACHING WRITING

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate students' attitudes towards the use of Instagram in teaching writing. This study was descriptive research which was carried out at English Department UMMY Solok. The population of the research was first grade students of English Department UMMY Solok who took Writing I subject. The total number of 8 students enrolled at the closed group feature of Instagram, in which only group members can interact each other. To get the data of the research, the researcher used questionnaire and interviewed. The research design included a 5 point Likert-type questionnaire which were strongly agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagree (D), and strongly Disagree (SD). It was used to investigate students' attitudes toward the use of Instagram in teaching writing. For the interview, the researcher prepared semi-structured interviews. It was done to five students who had randomly selected. The finding of the research showed that students had a very positive attitude towards the use of Instagram as an teaching writing activity in the classroom.

Keywords: *Instagram, Writing, Teaching Writing.*

Abstrak

This study aims to investigate students' attitudes towards the use of Instagram in teaching writing. This study was descriptive research which was carried out at English Department UMMY Solok. The population of the research was first grade students of English Department UMMY Solok who took Writing I subject. The total number of 8 students enrolled at the closed group feature of Instagram, in which only group members can interact each other. To get the data of the research, the researcher used questionnaire and interviewed. The research design included a 5 point Likert-type questionnaire which werestrongly agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagree (D), and strongly Disagree (SD). It was used to investigate students' attitudes toward the use of Instagram in teaching writing. For the interview, the researcher prepared semi-structured interviews. It was done to five students who had randomly selected. The finding of the research showed that students had a very positive attitude towards the use of Instagram as an teaching writing activity in the classroom.

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INTRODUCTION

The development of technology has brought great impact for people's social life. One of them is the appearance of social media into people's life. Social media can be defined as web-based and mobile technologies which are used extensively for the purpose of communication. It is a set of Web 2.0 e-platforms used to socialize gossip, share information, and hang out (Boyd: 2014). Social media comprises of activities that involve socializing and networking online through words, pictures and videos. *Facebook, Twitter, Path, Pinterest*, and *Instagram* are mostly common platforms of social media known by people. These platforms provide users a lot of activities for interaction among people, where everybody can share, exchange, comment, discuss and create information and knowledge in a collaborative way. By using social media, people can create personal pages and connect with friends to share content. For those reasons, social media has been popular to be used by people for recent years.

The popularity of social media is also felt by teenagers especially the students. Students might spend their time almost around the clock to use social media via their laptops or mobile devices. It allows them to share information, conducts online discussions as well as has a direct live communication with their friends, family members or even teachers (Thurairaj, 2015). From this platform, the students comprise a lot ofactivities that involve socializing and networking online through words, pictures, and videos.

Therefore, the social media can be adapted by the teachers to develop certain activities in language learning. Teachers can actively use such tool to keep in touch with students or to organize activities online (Zhang, 2013). One basic reason to use social media is it is familiar to almost students. It also doesn't cost and require minimal training. Social media allows students to access an enormous variety of learning materials in most of the cases free of charge. Thus, social media have enough capacity for a good official education matching the social contexts of learning and promoting critical thinking in learners (Mason, 2006).

As one of the platforms social media, *Instagram* is become widely used by the students. It provides users an instantaneous way to capture and share their life moments with friends through a series of (filter manipulated) pictures and videos (Hu, 2014). It is common for the students to have an account on their *Instagram* and update every moment on their life such as sharing picture and video. Their followers may like and also comment on the picture/video.

Lecturers can use this tool to develop certain teaching activity creatively. One activity that can be done is teaching writing. As one of complex skill, writing still becomes the most difficult language skill to master. A lot of complexities which should be known and understood by the students in writing process.

As stated by Alsamadani (2010) writing is a challenging and difficult process as it includes multiple skills such as identification of the thesis statement, writing supporting details, reviewing and editing. Similarly, Abu-Rass (2001) also states that writing is difficult skill for native and nonnative speakers alike as students should make balance between multiple issues such as content, organization, purpose, audience, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling and mechanics.

To overcome these problems, lecturers can create meaningful activities to teach ESL/EFL writing by adapting features provided in the *Instagram*. They can use video, photos or other features posted in *Instagram* which can attract students' interest to write creatively. Students are already using *Instagram* anyhow, and tapping into that interest seems to be a fun and creative ways to have them use a tool they already like to think and learn. Besides, it is so very simple and seamless to use *Instagram* with a phone or mobile device. This 'good factor' will lead students to have the great stimulus of interest and participation during teaching and learning process.

There have been multiple studies and research papers investigating the use of social media platforms like *Facebook* (Eren, 2012) and *Twitter* (Mervat abd Elfatah, 2015), but fewer studies have dealt with using instagram in teaching writing. One of the papers described by Bell (2013) reported her attempt at using *Instagram* for college students' field trip in a library science course. Then, Sebah Al Ali (2014) in his research explored the possible use of *Instagram* as a language mlearning tool. Formhis finding, he found that *Instagram* was utilized as an mlearning tool to generate content that was used for one speaking activity, and two writing activities reinforcing speaking, grammar, writing and vocabulary skills.

Thus, this article focuses on academic use of *Instagram* as a support to the curriculum.

In this study, the researcher wanted to know students' attitude towards using *Instagram* in teaching writing. This current study attempted to answer the following question:

What are students' attitudes towards using *Instagram* in teaching writing activity?

REVIEW OF RELATED THEORIES

*Instagram*was launched on October 6, 2010. It is one platform of social media which its user can share photos, and start from mid-2013 *Instagram's* services expanded to sharing 15-second video. Since that time, the number of people used *Instagram* increased rapidly. From the *Instagram* statisctic showed that it has attracted more than 150million active users, with an average of 55 million photos uploaded by users per day, and more than 16 billion photos shared so far (Instagram, 2013).For now, *Instagram* can take many functions: create accounts, post content (pictures or 15-second videos), apply filters, add captions, tag users, add locations, add hashtags, like content, add comments, browse and follow other accounts, check a feed generated by followed accounts, and explore (search for) hashtag/users (Ali, 2014).

In general, *Instagram* has specific features which are commonly used by the user. The features can be described in the following:

1. *Instagram* profile interface.

This part displays information about user profiles. It includes biography, circular profile photo, number of posts, and users' follower/following count. The "+ Follow" option permits users to follow other users and stay updated on latter's posted content.

2. Profile content.

It provides viewers to scroll down the profile. Viewers may see all profile photos appear together. For a closer look, viewers have the option to click on any photo. The photo being chosen is displayed clearly.

3. *Instagram's* photo content.

Clicking on a photo displays a larger version of the photo. Here, viewers can like the photo, leave a comment, or read previously posted comments. In this photo content also displays how many people have "liked" the photo, the photo's caption, and comments appended below the caption.

4. Navigational tools.

There are five icons available at the bottom of each page in the *Instagram's* screen the icons are the home page, explore page, posting page, notification page, and user's profile page. These are the basic navigational tools for *Instagram*.

From the features given above, it gives the users "a unique way" to use *Instagram* as a social media. They can take photos and videos by applying different manipulation tools – 16 filters- in order to transform the appearance of an image. Then, the photos and videos can be shared instantly on multiple platforms (e.g., Twitter and Facebook). While posting photos or videos, users can Tag photos which include adding a location, tagging friends and assigning keywords tags to photo. Besides, the users also can add captions, hashtags using # symbol to describe the pictures and videos, and tag or mention other users by using the @ symbol (which effectively creates a link from their posts to the referenced user's account) before posting them.

In*Instagram*, a user follows any other users called "friends". On the other hand, the users following an *Instagram* user are called "followers". A user can set its privacy preferences to whom his/her post only can be looked by his/her followers. When the others users want to follow, they require approval from the user to be his/her follower. The

users can see the latest photos and videos from all their friends, listed in reverse chronological order. They can also favorite or comment on these posts.

For the students, *Instagram* mostly used to take photos of themselves which is known as a selfie. They like to take a picture and filter the picture in the *Instagram* app. From that filter, the picture is more catchy and beautiful. Finally, the picture will be posted on the *Instagram*. From that picture, it can describe everything which does not need to be mentioned in words. *Instagram* becomes a wonderful place for them to share feelings and situations through pictures. Besides, they like to do interaction with their friend by posting something and commenting photos from their friends.

In fact, *Instagram* is not just about selfies, likes/comments, or repost. Teachers should jump the opportunity to get the most out of this 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 (Kirst, 2016). A lot of activities can be done by using *Instagram* in the classroom. Using this tool, 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 for them to exchange knowledge with classmates and teachers. Thus, *Instagram* is a photo-sharing website, the taking, and editing of pictures as well as the captions and feedback options encourage students to be spatially and linguistically aware (Phillips, 2013).

Instagram seems to be a perfect tool to support learning English for the following reasons. First, it offers a plethora of contextualized visual data that can provide aid in a language classroom. Second, using *Instagram* in the classroom can assist in creating a socially connected community of learners, as the tool itself gives room for students to communicate and socialize each other beyond classroom constraints. Third, *Instagram* is a commonly used social media outlet that young learners are now almost fully immersed in and accustomed to; including it in their learning process can be seen as a form of applying topics learned in class in real life environment. Finally, ease of access to *Instagram* and availability in most handled devices makes it more inviting to consider this platform for use in a language classroom. (Ali, 2014).

METHOD OF THE RESEARCH

This research was a descriptive research conducted at English Department UMMY Solok. In this study, the researcher employed *Instagram* activity to provide students with an alternative to assist them to learn writing meaningfully. The population of the research was first grade students of English Department UMMY Solok who took Paragraph Writing subject. The total number of 8 students enrolled at the closed group feature of *Instagram*, in which only group members can interact each other.

To get the data of the research, the researcher used questionnaire and interviewed. The questionnaire intended to elicit students' perceptions toward the use of *Instagram* to support teaching writing. The questionnaire items were made in the form of statements to which the student had to respond on five-point scale which were strongly agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagree (D), and strongly Disagree (SD). It consists of 15 items which was developed from 5 major indicators. They are students' opinion on using *Instagram*, students' interest on using *Instagram,* improvement students' writing skill by using *Instagram*, efficacy of *Instagram* Exercises, and utility of Feedback on *Instagram*. For the interview, the researcher prepared semi-

structured interviews. It was done to five students who had randomly selected. They were asked to explain their opinions about the utility of applying *Instagram* in teaching writing.

Firstly, before using *Instagram* into classroom activities, the researcher created a private classroom *Instagram* account that is exclusively used for education purpose. This private *Instagram* is easily used to control the students and can be used to connect the students and other grade team members. By registering the class account, students can send one direct message to the account, knowing that it is specifically for them.

During the research, the researcher mostly did two activities in teaching writing by using *Instagram*. The activities as follows:

a. Caption it!

In this activity, the researcher post an interesting photo and asked students to write a descriptive caption in the comments. The students were free to express their ideas by using specific using specific sentence types, different parts of speech, clauses, prepositional phrase, and their current vocabulary words. This activity was done in three meetings. For each meeting, the students assigned to give brief caption in describing the photo.

b. Photo inspiration

In this activity, the researchers shared an interesting photo in the classroom *Instagram* account. While posting the picture, the researcher encouraged students by giving questions related to the picture. Students are assigned to comment and give their opinion about this picture.

Finally, at the end of the activity, the researcher distributed a questionnaire and interviewed students to investigate their attitudes toward the activity.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1.

Students' Response in the Questionnaire

No	Questionnaire items	Studens' Response					Total score
		Srongly Agree 5	Agree	Undecided 3	Disagree 2	Stongly Disagree 1	
1	Students' Opinion on using *Instagram*	15	6	3	-	-	108
2	Students' interest on using *Instagram*	17	4	3	-	-	110
3	Improvement students' writing skill	12	8	4	-	-	104
4	Efficacy of *Instagram* Exercises	14	6	4	-	-	106
5	Utility of Feedback on *Instagram*	15	6	3	-	-	108
	Total	365	120	51	-	-	536
	Percentage	**61%**	**25%**	**14%**	**-**	**-**	**89%**

Table 1 provides the scores and percentages for questionnaire items. From the table, it showed that 61% of the students ranked strongly agree on using *Instagram* in teaching writing. It can be seen from each indicator which showed higher percentage on showing positive feelings on instagram. Then, the students ranked 25% and 14% for option agree and decided. In sum, the total score of students' attitudes toward the use of *Instagram* in teaching writing was 89%. It is indicated that the students had very good attitudes on their feelings and ideas about the use of *Instagram* activity in teaching writing.

In addition, the data was also supportedfrom interview result which was done to five students. After transcribing the interviews, it was found out that students' attitudes towards this activity were very positive. The students showed their interest during the teaching and learning process. Most of them enjoyed to participate actively in expressing their idea during the teaching writing process. They were busy on the work on the *Instagram* and gave feedback each other about their friends' writing.

From the transcription, the students mostly stated that *Instagram* was really helpful to attract their interest to write actively. It guided them to write by giving clue from the picture, providing space for feedback from its comment, and relate students with real life situation. Below are some related parts of the interview transcriptions:

Student A

"….. *Instagram* makes learning process more fun. I did not feel boring anymore; even *Instagram* attacks my interest to learn writing. The picture is really helpful to gain my idea in writing…"

Student B

"… Yes…it is very interesting. I can see students' writing result directly on the comment. So, it also increases my motivation to write. Because every students have to generate their idea and caption it in the *Instagram*.."

Student C

"…. Yes, of course it is useful. From the activity in the *Instagram*, it makes me think twice before posting my writing. So Ireally need to consider about the quality of my writing because all people can see my writing. Idon't want to get embarrass because of mistakes that I made in the *Instagram*.

Student D

"…..I like the way we give feedback each other about our writing in the *Instagram*. It is just like what we do in our daily life on giving comment about a picture but in this case we have to write it in English…"

CONCLUSION

From the research findings, it can be concluded that the students' attitudes toward the use of *Instagram* in teaching writing was very positive. *Instagram* is a kind of tool which can give beneficial effect in guiding students to write effectively. It is useful education tool in giving students and teachers an easy way to communicate that goes beyond office hours and classroom. Using *Instagram* allows students to generate ideas with contextually-relevant content and offers them a learning experience that they enjoy. Therefore, the lecturer can use *Instagram* to develop certain activities in teaching writing interestingly. Finally, it can be emphasized that using *Instagram* in foreign language learning can be an effective an innovative tool as it is used by students and teacher for educational aims appropriately.
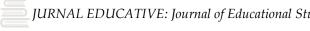
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