



# Instagram-Supported Writing Instruction: Exploring Vocational Students' Writing Development and Engagement in an Indonesian EFL Context

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Article Info	Abstract
<b>Article History</b> Received: 2025-12-08 Revised: 2026-01-15 Published: 2026-02-13  <b>Keywords:</b> <i>Instagram-Assisted Writing Learning; Vocational High Schools; Writing Skills; Student Engagement; Social Media-Based Learning.</i>	This study aims to explore how Instagram-supported writing instruction influences vocational high school students' writing development and engagement in an Indonesian EFL context, identify the aspects of writing most affected, and examine the challenges encountered during the learning process. Adopting a qualitative descriptive design, the study involved 20 eleventh-grade vocational students from a vocational high school in West Java, Indonesia. Data were collected through classroom observations, document analysis of students' Instagram posts, and semi-structured interviews with selected students and the teacher. The data were analyzed thematically to capture recurring patterns related to writing development, engagement, and learner perceptions. The findings indicate that Instagram-supported instruction positively enhanced students' engagement, confidence, and motivation to write. Students demonstrated noticeable improvement in creativity, relevance, and coherence of writing, supported by Instagram's multimodal affordances and authentic audience interaction. However, grammatical accuracy and vocabulary limitations remained challenges, highlighting the need for pedagogical scaffolding. The study implies that integrating Instagram into EFL writing instruction can support vocationally relevant writing practices when combined with guided feedback and instructional support.

Artikel Info	Abstrak
<b>Sejarah Artikel</b> Diterima: 2025-12-08 Direvisi: 2026-01-15 Dipublikasi: 2026-02-13  <b>Kata kunci:</b> <i>Pembelajaran Menulis Berbantuan Instagram; Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan; Keterampilan Menulis; Keterlibatan Siswa; Pembelajaran Berbasis Media Sosial.</i>	Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi bagaimana pembelajaran menulis berbantuan Instagram memengaruhi perkembangan keterampilan menulis dan keterlibatan siswa sekolah menengah kejuruan dalam konteks pengajaran Bahasa Inggris di Indonesia, mengidentifikasi aspek-aspek menulis yang paling terdampak, serta mengkaji tantangan yang dihadapi selama proses pembelajaran. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain deskriptif kualitatif dengan melibatkan 20 siswa kelas XI dari sebuah sekolah menengah kejuruan di Jawa Barat, Indonesia. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi kelas, analisis dokumen terhadap unggahan tulisan siswa di Instagram, serta wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan siswa terpilih dan guru. Data dianalisis secara tematik untuk mengidentifikasi pola-pola yang berulang terkait perkembangan menulis, keterlibatan belajar, dan persepsi siswa. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pembelajaran menulis berbantuan Instagram secara positif meningkatkan keterlibatan, kepercayaan diri, dan motivasi siswa dalam menulis. Siswa menunjukkan peningkatan yang nyata pada aspek kreativitas, relevansi, dan koherensi tulisan yang didukung oleh fitur multimodal Instagram serta interaksi dengan audiens nyata. Namun demikian, keterbatasan kosakata dan akurasi tata bahasa masih menjadi tantangan, sehingga diperlukan pendampingan pedagogis yang lebih terstruktur. Temuan ini mengimplikasikan bahwa integrasi Instagram dalam pembelajaran menulis EFL dapat mendukung praktik menulis yang relevan dengan pendidikan vokasi apabila dipadukan dengan umpan balik dan scaffolding yang memadai.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Writing is a core language skill that plays a central role in academic success, professional communication, and participation in global discourse (Hyland, 2019; Yunus & Bachtiar, 2025). In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), writing is frequently regarded as the most challenging skill to master due to its multidimensional demands, including idea

generation, text organization, grammatical accuracy, and lexical appropriateness (Hyland, 2019). Unlike receptive skills, writing requires learners to actively construct meaning while simultaneously attending to linguistic form and communicative purpose. These cognitive and linguistic demands often result in anxiety and low confidence among EFL learners. Consequently, effective writing instruction

requires pedagogical approaches that are both linguistically supportive and contextually meaningful.

Despite its importance, writing instruction in many EFL classrooms remains dominated by form-focused and product-oriented practices that offer limited opportunities for authentic communication (Faizat et. al., 2025). Writing tasks are often confined to worksheets or examination-driven exercises with an artificial audience, usually the teacher. Such decontextualized practices may reduce learners' sense of purpose and ownership over their writing. Previous research indicates that the absence of meaningful context and audience can negatively affect students' motivation, engagement, and writing development (Bachtiar et. al., 2024; Barrot, 2022). As a result, learners may perceive writing as a monotonous and stressful activity rather than a tool for communication.

The challenge of writing instruction becomes more pronounced in vocational high school contexts, where students are expected to acquire practical communication skills aligned with workplace demands. Vocational students are required to produce functional texts such as reports, descriptions, promotional materials, and digital content relevant to their fields of expertise (Jinfang & Dizon, 2024; Rahmadhani & Suryati, 2022). However, many vocational EFL learners struggle to express ideas coherently and appropriately in written English. These difficulties are often exacerbated by limited exposure to authentic writing practices. As a result, vocational students may graduate without sufficient writing competence to meet professional communication expectations.

In Indonesia, English writing instruction in vocational schools frequently relies on conventional teaching methods, including textbook-based tasks and isolated grammar exercises (Rintaningrum, 2023). While these approaches may support linguistic accuracy, they often fail to reflect real-world communication contexts encountered in vocational settings. This pedagogical mismatch can limit opportunities for meaningful language use and reduce students' motivation to write in English. Moreover, traditional classroom practices rarely incorporate digital literacies that are increasingly required in modern workplaces. Consequently, there is a growing need for instructional approaches that bridge classroom learning and authentic vocational communication.

The rapid integration of digital technology in education has prompted educators to explore

learning environments that align with students' everyday digital practices (Putri et. al., 2025; Shadiev & Wang, 2022). Social media platforms, in particular, have gained attention for their potential to support learner interaction, creativity, and audience engagement. Research suggests that social media can facilitate authentic communication by allowing learners to interact with real audiences beyond the classroom (Carpenter et al., 2020; González-Mohino et al., 2024). Such platforms offer opportunities for learners to publish texts, receive feedback, and engage in meaningful exchanges. These features position social media as a promising medium for enhancing EFL writing instruction.

In the context of writing pedagogy, social media has been shown to promote learner motivation, engagement, and writing development by situating writing within authentic communicative practices (Manullang & Katemba, 2023). Through social media-based writing, learners can write for real audiences, negotiate meaning, and reflect on feedback from peers and readers. These experiences may foster greater awareness of audience, purpose, and textual clarity. Furthermore, social media environments support collaborative learning and learner autonomy, which are essential components of effective writing instruction. However, the pedagogical effectiveness of social media depends on how it is integrated into instructional design.

Among various social media platforms, Instagram has emerged as one of the most popular platforms among secondary school students (Erarslan, 2019; Sheldon & Bryant, 2016). Instagram allows users to combine visual images with written captions, hashtags, and comments, creating a multimodal space for meaning-making (Kessler & Marino, 2023). This multimodal affordance can support idea development and contextualization in writing. Several studies have reported that Instagram-supported writing instruction can enhance students' motivation, creativity, and engagement in EFL contexts (Fatata Rahima Noordi et al., 2024; Manullang & Katemba, 2023). These findings suggest that Instagram holds pedagogical potential as a writing platform.

Nevertheless, existing research on Instagram-assisted EFL writing remains limited in several important ways. Most studies focus on general secondary or university students and predominantly employ quantitative designs that emphasize measurable outcomes such as writing scores or linguistic accuracy (Nasution, 2023;

Nugraheni & Arief Suryo, 2025). While such studies provide valuable evidence of effectiveness, they often overlook learners' lived experiences, perceptions, and emotional responses during the writing process. Moreover, vocational high school students, who have distinctive learning needs and professional communication goals, remain underrepresented in the literature. Understanding how these learners experience Instagram-mediated writing is crucial for evaluating its pedagogical relevance in vocational education.

Despite the growing interest in social media-supported writing instruction, there is a clear lack of qualitative research examining how Instagram facilitates writing development among vocational high school students through authentic audience interaction. Little is known about which aspects of writing development are most influenced, how students perceive engagement and feedback, and what challenges they encounter when writing for a real audience, including anxiety and self-confidence issues (Rinda et al., 2019). Addressing this gap, the present study aims to explore the influence of Instagram-supported writing instruction on vocational students' writing development and engagement in an Indonesian EFL context. Specifically, this study seeks to examine students' experiences of writing through Instagram, identify the aspects of writing most affected, and investigate the challenges encountered during the learning process. By adopting a qualitative approach, this study contributes contextually grounded insights into social media-based writing pedagogy in vocational education, an underexplored yet increasingly relevant area in EFL research (Barrot, 2022; Samala et al., 2024).

## II. METHOD

### 1. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore vocational high school students' experiences and perceptions of using Instagram in writing instruction. A qualitative approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of how Instagram influenced students' writing development and learning experiences within an authentic digital environment. Data was collected through classroom observations, document analysis of students' Instagram posts to capture rich, contextualized accounts of participants' engagement with writing activities. Qualitative research designs are widely acknowledged for their ability to

examine complex educational phenomena by emphasizing participants' perspectives, meaning, and real-world practices (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Miles et al., 2014). By adopting this approach, the study was able to generate detailed insights into students' writing processes, perceived benefits, and challenges when interacting with a real audience on Instagram, thereby providing a nuanced understanding of social media-assisted writing instruction in a vocational education context (Jianbin, 2024; Salmons, 2021).

### 2. Research Participants

The participants were 20 eleventh-grade students from a vocational high school located in Garut Regency, West Java, Indonesia. The site was selected for its emphasis on developing students' English communicative competence and its openness to integrating digital technology into classroom instruction. The participants consisted of 20 eleventh-grade students enrolled in the Light Vehicle Engineering and Agricultural program. Purposive sampling was employed to ensure that all participants in English learning were included during the research period. This sampling strategy was considered appropriate for qualitative inquiry as it allowed the selection of information-rich participants who could offer a deeper perspective. Several students were invited to participate in in-depth interviews, while one English teacher served as a key informant to provide contextual insight into instructional practices and classroom implementation. Purposeful participant selection in the vocational education context is essential to ensure the relevance and credibility of findings, particularly when examining technology-mediated language learning practices (Miles et al., 2014; Rahmadhani & Suryati, 2022).

### 3. Research Instruments

The primary instruments were employed to collect rich qualitative data in line with the research objectives. First, classroom observations were conducted to examine students' engagement, participation, and interaction during Instagram-based writing activities. Observation notes focused on how students responded to writing tasks, interacted with peers, and engaged with authentic audiences through comments and feedback on Instagram. The second document analysis examined students' Instagram posts

as written artifacts. The analysis emphasized key aspects of writing development, including content elaboration, organization of ideas, and language use, which are central components of EFL writing competence (Hyland, 2019). Third semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected students to explore their perceptions, experiences, and challenges when using Instagram for writing. This instrument enabled the researcher to capture students' voices and gain deeper insight into their attitudes, motivation, and perceived learning outcomes in a real digital writing environment (Jianbin, 2024; Salmons, 2021).

#### 4. Procedures

The study was conducted over a four-week period and integrated into the vocational high school's regular English curriculum. During the instructional process, Instagram was used as a platform for writing practice, where students were assigned to create written posts related to lesson topics and vocational context. Students were encouraged to upload their writing in the form of captions accompanied by relevant images and to interact with peers by giving comments and feedback. The teacher guided the writing activities, provided prompts aligned with curricular objectives, and facilitated classroom discussion to reflect on language use, content clarity, and audience awareness. This integration of Instagram enabled students to engage in writing practices that extend beyond the classroom and involve real audiences, which has been shown to enhance engagement and motivation in EFL writing instruction (Barrot, 2022). Throughout the intervention, students were also given opportunities to revise their writing based on feedback received from peers and the teacher, fostering reflective and iterative writing practices.

#### 5. Instrument Validity and Reliability

To ensure the robustness and trustworthiness of the qualitative data, several strategies were employed. Content validity was addressed by developing observation guidelines. Document analysis criteria and interview questions based on established literature on EFL writing and social media-assisted learning (Hyland, 2019). The interview guides were reviewed by an expert in English language education to ensure clarity and relevance to research

objectives. Credibility was strengthened through data triangulation, comparing findings from classroom observation, document analysis, and interview data, thereby allowing cross-validation of emerging themes (Miles et al., 2014). Dependability was supported by maintaining detailed field notes and clear documentation of data collection and analysis procedures. Ethical consideration, including informed consent, ensured that participants' identities were protected and that the research adhered to ethical standards in qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Salmons, 2021).

#### 6. Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and meaningful themes related to students' writing development and learning experiences. Observation notes, students' Instagram posts, and interview transcripts were systematically coded and categorized into themes such as writing improvement, engagement with authentic audiences, and challenges encountered during the learning process. The analysis followed established qualitative data analysis procedures, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, to ensure a systematic and transparent interpretation of the findings (Miles et al., 2014). An inductive coding approach was adopted to allow themes to emerge naturally from the data, reflecting students' authentic experiences with Instagram-mediated writing activities. Triangulation across data sources enabled the researcher to compare and corroborate findings from observation, document analysis, and interviews, thereby enhancing the credibility of the interpretations (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

### III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Hasil This section presents the findings and discussion in direct alignment with the objectives of the study: (a) to examine how the use of Instagram affects students' writing skills, (b) to identify which aspects of writing are most improved through Instagram-based learning, and (c) to explore challenges encountered by students when learning writing through Instagram. The findings are derived from classroom observations, document analysis of students' Instagram posts, and semi-structured interviews with selected students and the

teacher. These data sources were triangulated to provide a comprehensive and credible account of the learning outcomes and underlying processes.

### 1. The Effect of Instagram on Students' Writing Skills

The findings indicate that integrating Instagram into writing instruction positively influenced students' overall writing performance. Classroom observations revealed increased engagement and participation during writing activities, particularly when students were required to produce captions and short texts related to procedural and invitation genres.

**Table 1.** Observation Findings of Instagram-based Writing Activities

No	Focus Area	Positive Indicators	Challenges Observed
1	Engagement a	Active participation, creative post design, and group collaboration	Limited vocabulary for captions
2	Writing Activities	Relevant procedure and invitation texts	Difficulty maintaining grammatical accuracy
3	Use of Instagram Features	Effective use of captions, images, and hashtags	Overreliance on visuals
4	Peer Feedback	Supportive interaction and emoji response	Uneven participation in commenting
5	Enthusiasm and confidence	Noticeable improvement across sessions	Initial hesitation in public posting
6	Technical challenges	Better adaptation after feedback	Internet access and time limitations

These findings suggest that Instagram provided an authentic and motivating environment for writing practice. Students demonstrated greater willingness to participate and expressed ideas more freely when their writing was connected to visual content and shared with peers. This supports previous studies by Kessler and Marino (2023) who found that social media platforms encourage meaningful writing through real audiences and multimodal contexts.

### 2. Improvement in Specific Aspects of Writing

Further evidence of writing development was obtained from document analysis of the students' Instagram posts. Table 2 presents the analysis results based on predefined writing criteria.

**Table 2.** Analysis of Students' Instagram Writing Performance

No	Criteria	Yes	No	Notes/Evidence
1	Writing is coherent and organized	17	3	Logical structure and sequencing in most posts
2	Grammar and mechanics are generally correct	15	5	Minor tense and punctuation issues
3	Vocabulary use is appropriate and varied	16	4	Accurate use of technical vocabulary
4	Relevance to topic/assignment	20	0	All posts aligned with the given topics
5	Originality and Creativity	18	2	Creative captions supported by visuals
6	Effective use of Instagram features	17	3	Integration of visuals, captions, and hashtags
7	Peer/teacher feedback interaction	14	6	Feedback mainly through comments and emojis
8	Visible improvement over time	15	5	Development in grammar and coherence

The results show that creativity, relevance, and coherence were the most improved aspects of writing. The high number of students demonstrating originality (18 out of 20) indicates that Instagram effectively supported creative expression, particularly through the combination of images and captions. This finding aligns with Sari and Afrida (2020), who reported that visual prompts in digital platforms stimulate idea generation and creativity in EFL writing.

Coherence and organization also improved as most students were able to present ideas logically within short captions. The need to convey meaning concisely encouraged students to focus on clarity and structure, supporting Hyland (2019) argument that digital writing contexts promote awareness of audiences and organization.

Grammar showed moderate improvement but remained a challenge for some students. While 15 students demonstrated generally accurate grammar, errors in tense consistency and punctuation persisted. These findings confirm previous research suggesting that social media platforms enhance fluency and creativity more effectively than grammatical accuracy unless accompanied by explicit corrective feedback (Barrot, 2022).

### 3. Students' Engagement, Confidence, and Perception

Interview findings revealed that students perceived Instagram-based writing activities as more enjoyable and less monotonous than conventional worksheet-based tasks. Many students stated writing captions felt "shorter," "easier", and "more meaningful" because their work was visible to others.

Students' enthusiasm and confidence increased over time, although several initially experienced anxieties. This hesitation gradually decreased as students became familiar with the platform and received supportive peer responses, mainly in the form of comments and emojis. These findings are consistent with the previous study by Barrot (2022), who identified that Instagram-based writing activities can reduce learners' anxiety and foster confidence through informal interaction and peer support

The teacher also observed an increase in on-task behavior and participation, including among students who were previously passive in traditional writing lessons. This finding

aligns with research suggesting by Kessler and Marino (2023) that social media-mediated learning environments promote sustained engagement and active participation by extending learning beyond conventional classroom practices.

#### 4. Challenges in Learning Writing Through Instagram

Despite the positive outcomes, several challenges were identified. Limited vocabulary constrained students' ability to express ideas fully in captions, leading some to rely heavily on visuals rather than written text. Grammar accuracy also remained inconsistent, highlighting the need for teacher scaffolding and focused feedback.

Technical issues, particularly unstable internet connections and limited instructional time, affected the smooth implementation of Instagram-based activities. Similar challenges have been reported in previous studies on technology-integrated learning by Rintaningrum (2023) who highlight infrastructural constraints and limited access as persistent barriers, especially in non-ideal learning contexts.

## IV. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

### A. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Instagram-supported writing instruction positively influences vocational high school students' writing development and engagement in an Indonesian EFL context. The findings reveal that Instagram provides an authentic and motivating environment that encourages students to participate actively in writing activities and express ideas more confidently. Through multimodal features such as images, captions, and peer interaction, students showed noticeable improvement in creativity, relevance, and coherence of their writing. Writing for a real audience increased students' awareness of purpose and clarity, while peer feedback contributed to greater confidence and reduced writing anxiety. Although grammatical accuracy improved moderately, it remained less developed compared to higher-order writing aspects, indicating the need for instructional support. Overall, Instagram functioned not merely as a digital tool but as a pedagogical space that fostered meaningful, contextualized writing practices aligned with vocational communication needs.

Despite these positive outcomes, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. The small number of participants and the short duration of implementation limit the generalizability of the findings. In addition, this study relied primarily on qualitative data, which provides rich insights but does not allow for statistical measurement of writing gains. Future research is therefore recommended to employ mixed-methods or longitudinal designs to examine sustained writing development across different vocational programs and regions. Pedagogically, teachers are encouraged to integrate Instagram with explicit grammar instruction and structured feedback to balance creativity and linguistic accuracy. From a broader perspective, this study implies that social media platforms, when thoughtfully integrated, can support vocationally relevant EFL writing instruction and help bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world communication demands.

### B. Suggestion

The discussion related to this research is still very limited and requires a lot of input, suggestions for future authors are to study it more deeply and comprehensively about Instagram-Supported Writing Instruction: Exploring Vocational Students' Writing Development and Engagement in an Indonesian EFL Context.

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