

## INSTAGRAM FOR WRITING PRACTICE: STUDENTS' PERCEIVED USEFULNESS AND EASE OF USE

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**Abstract:** Social media has grown rapidly and affects our everyday life. It helps many aspects in our life, including students' life. Instagram, one of the top platforms to use in the world recently, can be brought to the classroom for student's learning purpose. Therefore, this research aims to specifically investigate students' perception toward its usefulness and ease for writing practice. The sample was 31 out of 66 students in English Literature Study Program in the Faculty of Languages and Literature of one state university in Makassar. The data were collected by distributing questionnaire and by interviewing half of the participants. The items in the questionnaire were adapted from Davis (1989) theory about Technology Acceptance Model Articles. Supporting data were taken from the result of an interview. This research found that items in both perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness majority received a positive response. Students' knowledge of Instagram is an advantage in using it as a writing practice medium. The distraction from the learning process is the downside that frequently happened while using it. This indicates that Instagram is a useful media for writing practice.

**Keywords:** *Instagram; perceived ease of use; perceived usefulness; writing*

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## INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of technology has brought the internet to our homes. It informs either crucial or ridiculous incidents from around the world without us being physically there. It saves time to do business transactions as well. In the form of social media, technology connects people throughout the world unlimitedly.

Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, WhatsApp, Snapchat, Instagram, and many more are popular social media nowadays. They have been part of most people's lives in the world because they are practical, provide entertainment, and do not cost a lot of money to use. Many people, including students, use them daily to connect, share, learn, and even make money. Because of this mass popularity among the millennials, teachers

need to make use of this phenomenon. They must update their knowledge of technology so that they are not left behind by their students.

Writing is a thinking process where the writer expresses his/her thought (Brown, 2003). The words, sentences, and even paragraphs are constructed logically and grammatically correct so that the message is delivered to the reader. This writing process does not happen instantly (Nunan, 1991). It takes time to finish the draft until it comes to its final version because it must go through some stages. Starting with planning, drafting, revising, and then editing (Seow, 2002), this cycle can be endless until the writer him/herself decides to end it by publishing the final draft.

Teaching this skill-including other English skills as well-requires media. English teachers have various choices of media to teach this skill, such as journals, blogs, and now social media. And as social media is getting popular among the youths, they become a basic daily need in students' life and for the learning purpose, it can be the easiest medium to find and use in the classroom.

Social media mostly functions in communication. It connects people from many places without being necessary in the same place. This function can work the same during the learning process where they connect teachers and students (Dowerah Baruah, 2012; Faizi, El Afia, & Chiheb, 2013). Social media allows these two parties to interact not only during the classroom but also outside the classroom after the lesson is finished. Maintaining professionalism is required (Froment, García González, & Bohórquez, 2017). Students are expected to learn about context and behave accordingly; however, a more approachable teacher is preferable (Mahmud, Ramachandiran, & Ismail, 2016). A strict teacher who is difficult to communicate with the students is outdated. Recently, someone who can set the boundary but is still communicative becomes a more ideal teacher for this teacher-students interaction.

Social media can also connect the students among themselves which then creates collaborative work (Li, 2017; Vural, 2015). Students can work together on the same project although they are apart from each other, especially during this pandemic where most students learn from home. Sharing their idea and giving feedback to each other on the topic they learn is also possible. Their engagement in the lesson is not limited by either place or time.

The growth of social media is one factor that helps the rapid spread of information throughout the world. All kinds of information are provided instantly in just one click, including the material of the lessons which students may need during the learning process (Creighton, Foster, Klingsmith, & Withey, 2013). This easily-accessed content can contribute to the students' participation during the learning process (Abraham & Saini, 2015). Students actively involve themselves to find the necessary information and related content to improve their skills and knowledge with or without the teacher's initiation.

This easily accessed information on internet, however, brings side effect. Internet connects the social media users further to many unlimited sources in the virtual world which results in a distraction from the learning purpose (Joy, Ventayen, & Casama Orlanda-Ventayen, 2017; Ngonidzashe, 2013; Siddiqui, 2016; Yohanna, 2020). Students waste their time to search unrelated things and as a result, they lose their focus on the lesson. In addition, this uncontrollable activity may happen during the learning process out of the teacher's sight (Medel, 2015). To the worse, this can cause addictiveness to its users (Abdulahi et al., 2014). Students spend most of their time on their phones and feel difficult to stay away from it. They experience the feeling of

being left out even if they separate from their phone for only some time. This unlimited use of social media becomes a double-edged sword.

One of the social media that gains more followers each year is Instagram. It is the top six platforms in the world with more than one billion active users (Walsh, 2021). In Indonesia itself, in December 2021 there are more than 90 million users, and the majority of the users are between 17-24 ('Instagram users in Indonesia', 2021). These are the age of higher-level students.

This platform has many similarities to the older one, Facebook. Both provide a private message, visual images including photos and videos, insights to their users, live content, etc. However, Instagram is originally created especially for mobile phone users (Baer, 2012). Its features are created to be more mobile-friendly and easy to use. One of the main barriers hindering its use is the internet network (Anggareni, 2017). This external factor mostly depends on the students' location or the internet provider service which the students use to access this platform.

Instagram has one feature called 'caption' which is a place for descriptions of pictures and videos posted, and this feature can be used for learning purposes. The caption is known to be the place for students to express their feelings or thoughts in writing form. It gives an opportunity for students to practice their writing skills.

Some researchers have conducted studies on social media for their relation to student's writing skills. Students mostly show a positive attitude to the use of this platform for learning purposes (Akhiar, Mydin, & Kasuma, 2017; Rinda, Novawan, & Miqawati, 2018); that social media is useful for their academic life (Irwin, Ball, Desbrow, & Leveritt, 2012), and its use is motivating (Hopkyns, 2017). In general, it is concluded that social media, which is one of them is Instagram, is a good medium about the students' learning process.

This research itself focused to see the more specific result on two certain elements. These elements were adapted from Davis's Technology Acceptance theory on the use of Instagram as students' writing practice medium. They are students' perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness. Therefore, the objective of this research is to find out students' perceived ease of use and usefulness of Instagram for writing practice.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Subjects**

The population of this research was two classes with a total number of 66 students in English Literature Study Program of Languages and Literature Faculty in Universitas Negeri Makassar. The number of the sample chosen was 31 students. The sample was chosen purposively as the researchers needed the availability of the students for a six-week treatment where they used their Instagram accounts to practice their writing. The students were told to post photos at least twice a week on their Instagram accounts. The post had to be accompanied by a paragraph caption to describe the picture they posted. Feedback was open freely in the comment section for anyone who read the caption, including the lecturer and their friends.

### **Design and Procedure**

This research studied the students' perceived usefulness and ease of use of Instagram for writing practice. The method selected for this research was a mixed method. The quantitative approach was used to analyze the data from a questionnaire which asked about students' perceptions, and the qualitative approach was used to

analyze the data from the interview which supported or clarified the data gathered from the questionnaire.

### Data Collection and Data Analysis

The data were gathered using two research instruments after the six-week treatments. The first instrument was a questionnaire. The questionnaire was adjusted from Davis theory about Technology Acceptance Model. He determines two important variables for his theory which are perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. Perceived usefulness refers to someone's belief in the use of technology, whether it can help him or not in accomplishing his task. On the other hand, perceived ease of use refers to someone's belief that the use of the technology is effortless; he is not required to spend much time or energy in using it (Davis, 1989). Perceived usefulness asked some items such as writing performance, writing speed, productivity, quality, and usefulness; while perceived ease of use asked whether Instagram as a writing practice medium is cumbersome, easy to use, frustrating, controllable and if Instagram requires effort and mental health to use. The second research instrument was an interview. It was given to get a deeper understanding of students' answers for each item on the questionnaire.

Both instruments were delivered online as this research was conducted in the middle of the Corona pandemic, and the students were having online classes as instructed by the university. The questionnaire was given by Google Form which preceded by a brief explanation of its purpose and its items, and the interview was conducted by WhatsApp because students' answers were saved to be transcribed.

The data mainly gathered from the questionnaire were adjusted using Likert's Scale. It uses 5 scales to measure students' answers. It starts from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. The questionnaire has mixed statements, both positive and negative ones. The point from the 'strongly agree' for the positive statements received the highest score and the negative statements received the lowest score.

To count the mean scores for the two items – perceived usefulness and ease of use – the researcher calculated all the scores from the questionnaire. Then, the mean scores were categorized based on the scale range as follows:

Table 1. Scale category

Scale Range	Category
1.00-1.50	very low/ very negative
1.51-2.50	low/negative
2.51-3.50	moderate
3.51- 4.50	high/ positive
4.51-5.00	very high/very positive

The data from the interview functioned to support and clarify the data gathered from the questionnaire. They were analyzed qualitatively in three stages-data reductions, data analysis, and conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman, 2004). At first, the researcher selected the students' answers which fit to the focus of the research which is perceived usefulness and ease of use. Then, the transcription of the selected parts was displayed to be analyzed. In the last part, the researcher categorized the data which matches the items on the questionnaire to see if they support or against its quantitative result.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Findings

This section presents the data which were gathered through the research instruments: questionnaire, and interview transcription.

### *Perceived Usefulness*

Table 2. The mean score of perceived usefulness

Items	Mean Score	Category
Writing performance	4.16	Positive
Write quickly	3.42	Moderate
Increase productivity	4.19	Positive
Quality of writing	4.06	Positive
Make writing easier	3.90	Positive
Useful	4.00	Positive

This perceived usefulness is about students' belief in the use of Instagram about their writing accomplishments. Table 2 above displays the mean score for each questionnaire item. Item 'writing performance' gets 4.16, item 'write quickly' gets 3.42, item 'increase productivity' gets 4.19, item 'quality of writing' gets 4.06, item 'make writing easier' gets 3.90, and item 'useful' gets 4.00. From the table, it is seen that five items asked on the questionnaire received positive responses and the mean scores are in the 'positive' category. They are writing performance, increasing productivity, quality of writing, making writing easier, and useful items.

Below is the data taken from the interview related to the items on the questionnaire.

#### Writing performance

*'I am getting used to writing, Mam, thanks to the assignment.'* (ASR)

*'I feel that my writing skill is improving because of the weekly assignments.'*  
(FRL)

#### Quality of Writing

*'Your comments on the comment section help me to fix my writing.'* (FRL)

#### Make writing easier

*'It is easy for me to find the topic to write because the pictures are already there, I just need to scroll down.'* (AND)

*'I like it, Mam. I like using my Instagram to submit my writing.'* (PTR)

#### Useful

*'Yeah, of course, they're useful. It is fun to write using Instagram which I use every day.'* (KML)

The answers displayed above support the data of the questionnaire where the students agree to give a positive response to the use of Instagram for writing practice.

The only item with the moderate category is 'write quickly' with a 3.42 mean score. The reason is clarified in the interview. The students mentioned that the writing process was not shortcut just because they used Instagram. The paragraph posted is the

result of the writing process that the students went through using other different media besides Instagram.

*'Yes we can type in the caption directly, but we have prepared the concept before.'* (YSR)

*'I can write quickly because I just copy-paste the paragraph from my note. I have written them before posting it.'* (NRL)

*'I fix my paragraph many times before posting it. I can't just write in the caption without any draft.'* (ASR)

### **Perceived Ease of Use**

Table 3. The mean score of perceived ease of use

Items	Mean Score	Category
Cumbersome	3.87	Positive
Easy to use	3.71	Positive
Frustrating	3.81	Positive
Controllable	4.00	Positive
Effort to be skilful	3.23	Moderate
Mental effort	3.45	Moderate

Perceived ease of use is about someone's belief on how effortlessly he is in using a technology, in this research is Instagram, to complete his work. The table above shows the six items, their mean scores, and their categories. They are cumbersome (3.87), easy to use (3.71), frustrating (3.81), controllable (4.00), effort to be skilful (3.23), and mental effort (3.45) items. Out of the six items, four are categorized as 'positive'. It is also supported by students' answers from interview.

#### Cumbersome

*'I stay log in. I get into my account once I click the icon.'* (FDL)

#### Easy to use

*'There is no problem, Mam.'* (AND)

*'I use it every day, so ... yeah, it's easy.'* (KML)

#### Controllable

*'The 'edit' button is good because I can fix my paragraph after someone writes his correction.'* (FRL)

*'Actually, I have a private account, but I open the lock for this assignment, so Mam can check my writing and give comments.'* (HKM)

The students' answers during the interview show they had no problem using Instagram because they have been familiar with it. They find no trouble because they are also in control of their account.

Different from the result of perceived usefulness, in the table of this perceived ease of use shows there are two items that receive moderate response from the students. They are effort to be skilful and mental effort items. For the effort to be skilful item, it

was found that what some students mean by skilful in this item is the skill in composing the paragraph, not the skill to use Instagram.

*'I still need to edit my paragraph even after I posted it.'* (FZH)

For the mental effort item, the information gathered from the interview stated similar answers to the previous item. It is more related to their writing process, not to their Instagram use.

*Yes, 'mental effort' ... because I don't write every day on my Instagram, you know. So, if this is not an assignment from you, I don't think I will write a paragraph in the caption. Maybe just an emoticon or a quote or, yeah, one or two sentences.* (ARF)

*'I don't spend much time when posting my paragraph, I spent much time before posting it. Like, such overthinking if someone will underestimate my writing, like worrying if someone will write a harsh comment after reading my caption. Something like that.'* (AML)

One interesting finding is on the item 'controllable'. This item receives the highest mean score out of the six items which are 4.00. The reason is the account that the students used were their own Instagram accounts. Therefore, they had full control of the account. They are in control of the topic, the picture, and the paragraph. They are also in control of how much time they want to spend using it. However, the students stated that they were sometimes distracted to do something else while using Instagram to post their assignments.

*'I typed the keyword on the 'search' bar, but sometimes I ended up looking at my favourite idol's IG posts. It took some time to get me back to my first work.'* (PTR)

*'I distracted a lot, Mam, especially because I write my favourite topic.'* (FJR)

## **Discussion**

Instagram is a result of the rapid growth of technology. Different from a diary, it is known to be a more up-to-date platform. Its intentional use for educational purposes is in the hope that it helps students to be more relevant to the learning process. And this research aims to see students' perception of the use of Instagram as a writing practice medium from their perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. To find the answer, two instruments were given to the participants, and the Findings show students' responses.

In terms of the perceived usefulness, students' responses to the questionnaire show that majority of the items received positive responses which can be seen from the mean score. This means the students positively believe that Instagram is useful to be used for their writing practice. It assisted them to find the topic they want to write, they easily searched the suitable pictures, it gave them the opportunity to edit their writing after being given feedback by whoever read their posts, and they agreed that it helped them to improve their writing performance. This result supports the previous research on Instagram related to students' writing performance (Akhiar et al., 2017; Rinda et al., 2018).

Communication between teachers and students is one important aspect of the learning process. It used to be limited only to the classroom, but now it can be brought

to the virtual world by social media, which is one of them is Instagram. This communication is also not only between the teacher and the students but also among the students themselves (Vural, 2015). The teacher and their peers can give encouragement on the students' writing by clicking the 'like' button. They can also write their feedback on the comment section which is open publicly. This interaction is important as the feedback can be more optimally delivered (Faizi et al., 2013). This act is much cherished because it shows appreciation for the students' works. The students can see the specific parts of their writing which need improving. The opportunity to fix their mistakes is available through the editing tool, and this helps students to revise their writing and then repost it.

In terms of the perceived ease of use of Instagram for writing practice, major respondents also agree that it is easy to make use of Instagram as a medium to practice their English skills, especially writing. They are already familiar with it because they actively interact with it on their daily basis. There is not any problem with the log-in process, or the features provided by Instagram, and they have full control over the account that they own.

From the findings, using Instagram for writing practice receives positive responses from the participants. From both perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, students agree that Instagram can also be used for their academic purpose. They found a new side of the platform with which they interact every day. However, this result displays the negative side gained from students' additional answers during the interview. Using social media is addictive. Students are easily tempted to do something else especially if it is related to their interest, like their favourite public figure or their hobby. As a result, it frequently distracts students' from what they are supposed to do in the first place (Gupta & Rani, 2013; Joy et al., 2017; Siddiqui, 2016; Yohanna, 2020). Searching for inspiration for the writing topic has changed to endless and aimless scrolling on social media.

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

Transforming social media functions to support the learning process is necessary. Having many research results display positive response from the students' side indicate this media can be helpful for them to learn. Instagram as one kind of this platform is suitable for students to practice their writing. Its features which are easy to use and function, already familiar to students, and support writing practice are some of the advantages. Instagram like other social media platforms is an available space for teachers and others to give feedback on students writing which is necessary for the improvement for their writing.

Nevertheless, this research is limited to see on students' perceptions only on the use of Instagram for writing practice. Moreover, the practice the students carried out in this research was based on the teacher's instruction. It needs further research to see the use of this platform for academic purpose about the students' autonomous learning.

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