



## DEVELOPING STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH INSTAGRAM CAPTION ACTIVITIES: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

### *DEVELOPING STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH INSTAGRAM CAPTION ACTIVITIES: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW*

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#### Abstrak

Makalah ini bertujuan untuk menilai efektivitas aktivitas caption Instagram dalam meningkatkan keterampilan menulis siswa dalam konteks Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Asing (EFL) dari tahun 2020 hingga 2025. Seiring dengan terus berkembangnya pembelajaran digital, Instagram telah muncul sebagai alat pembelajaran yang banyak digunakan yang mendorong praktik menulis yang autentik, multimodal, dan menarik. Sebanyak sembilan studi empiris yang diterbitkan antara tahun 2020 dan 2025 ditinjau secara sistematis melalui basis data termasuk Google Scholar, ERIC, Mendeley, dan jurnal peer-review. Seleksi mengikuti prosedur PRISMA, yang meliputi identifikasi, penyaringan, penilaian kelayakan, dan inklusi akhir. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa aktivitas caption Instagram berdampak positif pada berbagai aspek penulisan, termasuk pembentukan ide, pengembangan kosakata, akurasi tata bahasa, koherensi, kreativitas, dan motivasi belajar. Prompt visual memfasilitasi pembuatan konten, sementara format caption yang ringkas mendorong penulisan yang terarah dan terorganisir. Lebih lanjut, interaksi dan umpan balik dari rekan sejawat, ditambah dengan paparan terhadap audiens nyata, meningkatkan kepercayaan diri dan keterlibatan siswa dalam tugas menulis. Namun, efektivitas pendekatan pengajaran ini bergantung pada desain pedagogis yang cermat, bimbingan guru, dan integrasi tahapan proses-penulisan. Secara keseluruhan, aktivitas caption Instagram menawarkan strategi yang inovatif, relevan, dan praktis untuk mengembangkan keterampilan menulis siswa EFL, yang mendukung kompetensi linguistik dan literasi digital abad ke-21 di kelas bahasa kontemporer.

**Kata Kunci:** *Penulisan Caption, Pembelajaran Digital, Integrasi Media Sosial*

#### Abstract

This paper aims to assess the effectiveness of Instagram caption activities in enhancing students' writing skills within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts from 2020 to 2025. As digital learning continues to evolve, Instagram has emerged as a widely used instructional tool that promotes authentic, multimodal, and engaging writing practices. A total of nine empirical studies published between 2020 and 2025 were systematically reviewed through databases including Google Scholar, ERIC, Mendeley, and peer-reviewed journals. The selection followed PRISMA procedures, encompassing identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and final inclusion. The findings indicate that Instagram caption activities positively impact multiple aspects of writing, including idea generation, vocabulary development, grammatical accuracy, coherence, creativity, and learner motivation. Visual prompts facilitate content creation, while the concise caption format encourages purposeful and organized writing. Furthermore, peer interaction and feedback, coupled with exposure to a real audience, enhance students' confidence and engagement in writing tasks. However, the effectiveness of this instructional approach relies on careful pedagogical design, teacher



guidance, and the integration of process-writing stages. Overall, Instagram caption activities offer an innovative, relevant, and practical strategy for developing EFL students' writing skills, supporting both linguistic competence and 21st-century digital literacy in contemporary language classrooms.

**Keywords: Caption Writing, Digital Learning, Social Media Integration**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The rapid advancement of digital technology has influenced the way students interact, communicate, and learn. Social media platforms, particularly Instagram, have become an integral part of students' daily lives, offering opportunities to integrate multimedia content into educational activities. As the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) continues to expand, educators are increasingly exploring creative and meaningful ways to incorporate digital literacy into language learning. Previous studies have shown that integrating of social media into English language teaching (ELT) can enhance learners' motivation, participation, and exposure to authentic language use, making it a relevant and effective medium for developing writing skills (Putri et al., 2025).

Writing is a complex skill that requires students to manage several components simultaneously, including idea generation, organization, coherence, and the use of appropriate linguistic features. Najma (2020) explains that many writing difficulties arise because students are often taught only vocabulary and grammar, without guidance in recognizing the discourse structures that shape effective writing. Her study shows that writing challenges frequently stem from students' limited awareness of text organization, such as patterns, functions, and relational structures within a paragraph or essay. This indicates that writing instruction must move beyond sentence-level accuracy and focus on helping students understand how ideas are connected and developed. In this context, Instagram captions, although short, provide a meaningful platform for practicing coherent idea construction, as students must select relevant information, maintain clarity, and relate text logically to accompanying visuals (Najma, 2020; Saputri, 2021).

A growing body of research shows that Instagram captions can serve as an effective learning tool by encouraging students to practice writing in a real-world digital environment. Through caption writing, students produce short texts that require clarity, creativity, and relevance to visual content. Studies involving English learners demonstrate that writing captions can enhance descriptive writing skills, grammar accuracy, and vocabulary development. Moreover, captions allow students to connect visual stimuli with textual explanations, reinforcing multimodal learning processes that support deeper comprehension and language use (Saputri, 2021).

Research on writing instruction also emphasizes the crucial role of discourse structures in helping students produce coherent and well-organized texts. Najma (2020) argues that teaching writing should not be limited to vocabulary and grammar but must include discourse-level features such as macro patterns (situation–problem–solution–evaluation), micro functions (elaboration, evaluation, inference, summing up), and relational structures (cause–effect, contrast, condition–consequence, and question answer). Her findings reveal that students become more capable of constructing logical and connected ideas when writing tasks intentionally guide them to recognize and apply these discourse features. This aligns with Instagram caption activities, in which students



must condense ideas, select relevant information, and connect text to visuals, thereby supporting discourse-based writing development (Najma, 2020).

From a writer's perspective, Instagram caption activities offer a practical and engaging approach to developing students' writing skills in the digital age. Caption writing encourages learners to think critically about word choice, clarity, and message delivery while enjoying a platform they already use daily. I believe that integrating Instagram captions into classroom practice not only enhances students' writing proficiency but also fosters creativity, confidence, and digital literacy. Therefore, Instagram caption activities should be considered a relevant and contemporary strategy for improving students' writing performance.

### **Research questions**

R1: How do Instagram caption activities influence students' writing skills in EFL contexts?

R2: What pedagogical strategies are used to integrate Instagram captions in writing classrooms?

R3: What kinds of Instagram-based tasks are implemented to support students' writing development?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Instagram in Language Learning**

Instagram has increasingly been recognized as a valuable educational tool because of its visually engaging content and accessibility. According to previous studies, the platform can significantly boost students' motivation and participation, especially when learning materials are presented through appealing photos, videos, and short texts that support better conceptual understanding (Net et al., 2024). As a popular social media application among young learners, Instagram offers a familiar environment that can effectively support technology-enhanced language learning. English learning activities both inside and outside the classroom (Khulel, 2022).

In educational settings, Instagram facilitates interactive learning through features such as captions, comments, and multimedia posts that encouraging learners to express ideas and engage in discussion. Widarti et al. emphasize that integrating Instagram into classroom activities increases students' motivation by making the content more dynamic and relatable, thereby fostering enthusiasm and engagement throughout the learning process (Khulel, 2022). This suggests that Instagram has significant potential to enrich language-learning experiences.

Beyond increasing motivation, Instagram also provides opportunities for contextual and flexible learning. Learners can access materials anytime and anywhere, making learning more independent and continuous. As Khulel stated, using Instagram as a platform to publish students' writing helps build their confidence, as they can share their work publicly and receive feedback from peers in real time (Khulel, 2022). Therefore, Instagram supports not only engagement but also authentic communication practices. (Khulel, 2022).

A systematic review by Dzulfian Syafrin (2025) highlights that Instagram has transformed instructional practices in English language teaching by offering a flexible, engaging, and widely accessible learning environment. Its visual-centric interface allows learners to explore language through images, videos, and captions, making language exposure more immersive and interactive.



The review emphasizes that Instagram supports idea generation by providing creative, varied content that aligns with digitally native learners' preferences for technology-mediated learning.

Furthermore, the review notes that Instagram supports communication, collaboration, and feedback among teachers and learners through features such as direct messages, comments, and stories. These affordances enable teachers to deliver instructions efficiently while fostering engagement beyond classroom boundaries (Dzulfian Syafrian, 2025). Instagram's popularity among teenagers also reduces technological barriers, encouraging students to participate actively in English learning activities both inside and outside the classroom (Khulel, 2022).

The reviewed studies consistently report that Instagram enhances various English language skills, including writing, speaking, listening, reading, vocabulary development, and grammar. It also boosts learners' motivation, confidence, and interest, particularly when activities involve authentic communication or the creation of creative content (Khulel, 2022). Overall, these findings underscore Instagram's potential as a powerful platform for language learning, supporting educators in designing student-centered, engaging, and pedagogically relevant learning tasks (Dzulfian Syafrian, 2025).

### **Writing Skills Development**

Writing is a complex productive skill that requires learners to generate, organize, revise, and refine ideas. The journal highlights that writing cannot be produced instantly; instead, it must go through several stages of development. Instagram caption activities allow students to engage in this developmental process by drafting captions, reflecting on their work, and revising based on feedback. Through this approach, learners become more aware that effective writing is achieved through continuous improvement, not through a one-step product (Avivi & Megawati, 2020).

Developing writing skills is a complex process influenced by vocabulary mastery, grammatical accuracy, and the ability to generate and organize ideas. Siddiqui et al. note that many EFL learners struggle with writing due to anxiety, limited creativity, and an overemphasis on mechanical aspects of writing, which often hinders their cognitive engagement in the writing process (Siddiqui et al., 2023). This indicates that improving writing skills requires a holistic and process-oriented instructional approach.

Khulel's findings demonstrate that writing proficiency can improve significantly when learners are guided through a full writing cycle, including planning, drafting, revising, and publishing (Khulel, 2022). Following these stages helps students understand that writing is not a one-step activity but a reflective process that encourages critical thinking and gradual refinement of ideas.

Technology integration, including Instagram, further supports the development of writing skills by providing authentic writing opportunities. Khulel reports that students show noticeable progress when their writing is shared on Instagram, as the platform's public nature motivates them to produce higher-quality texts and take ownership of their learning (Khulel, 2022). This highlights the importance of digital tools in promoting improved writing performance.



## Types Of Writing Skills

Writing encompasses a wide range of genres, including narrative, expository, argumentative, descriptive, and procedural writing. Each genre is governed by specific discourse structures that help learners convey ideas clearly and logically. Research indicates that understanding these genre-specific frameworks significantly contributes to students' ability to produce coherent texts. For instance the situation-problem-solution-evaluation pattern identified in discourse studies provide a structural foundation that supports writers in organizing their ideas systematically (Najma, 2020). Mastery of such structures enables students not only to understand the purpose of each genre but also shape their writing to meet communicative goals effectively. In the case of procedure texts, where the goal is to explain steps in a logical sequence, such structural awareness becomes especially essential.

At the micro level, writing also demands proficiency in rhetorical functions that determine the clarity and depth of students' written work. Studies in discourse analysis emphasize that elaboration, evaluation, inference, and summarizing are key elements that help writers express complete, meaningful, and well-connected ideas (Najma, 2020). These rhetorical skills allow students to expand explanations, justify arguments, interpret information, and condense key points, abilities that are foundational to academic writing. When students struggle with these micro-level features, their texts often become fragmented, lacking both coherence and cohesion. Therefore, instruction in writing must address not only global text organization but also the rhetorical strategies that support the development of individual paragraphs.

Logical relations also play a crucial role in shaping well-structured academic writing. Cause and effect, condition-consequence, claim counterclaim, and comparison contrast markers serve as relational signals that guide readers through the writer's reasoning. These markers are particularly important in genres that require explicit reasoning, such as argumentative and expository texts, where the clarity of thought and logical progression must be demonstrated explicitly (Najma, 2020). Without a firm grasp of these relations, students often produce texts with unclear argumentation or disconnected reasoning. Teaching these relational patterns explicitly enables learners to build more cohesive, logically sound writing and strengthens their overall proficiency across genres, including procedural writing, where clear sequencing is essential.

Building upon this theoretical foundation, recent empirical studies have explored pedagogical approaches that aim to support students in applying discourse structures and rhetorical skills within real writing tasks. One such study highlights the effectiveness of using Instagram picture series as instructional media for teaching procedure texts (Rahmawati & Musyarofah, 2020). The researchers argue that because students are highly engaged with social media, integrating familiar digital platforms into learning can increase motivation and deepen understanding. The visual nature of Instagram serves as a scaffold that helps students conceptualize procedural steps, making abstract writing requirements more concrete and relatable to their daily experiences (Rahmawati & Musyarofah, 2020).

The study employed a quasi-experimental design combined with Classroom Action Research (CAR), enabling both systematic comparison and iterative refinement of instructional strategies. In the experimental group, students were encouraged to create their own picture sequences and captions representing the step-by-step processes they intended to describe. This task





required them to draw on both macro-level structural understanding and micro-level rhetorical skills, as they had to organize steps logically, choose appropriate linguistic markers, and articulate instructions clearly. Results showed that students in the experimental group outperformed those in the control group in terms of clarity, coherence, and sequencing in their procedure texts (Rahmawati & Musyarofah, 2020)

The findings of this research suggest that visually based digital tools can support the development of essential writing skills by aligning instructional methods with students' real-world digital practices. The integration of Instagram picture series not only increases engagement but also reinforces conceptual understanding of procedural sequencing, logical relations, and structural organization. When connected to the broader theoretical framework provided by discourse studies (Najma, 2020). The use of such media demonstrates how writing instruction can be enhanced through multimodal resources that bridge visual and textual literacy. Overall, the literature indicates that combining explicit instruction in discourse structures with innovative digital media can significantly strengthen students' writing proficiency across genres, including procedure texts that require high levels of clarity and organization.

### **Teaching Writing**

A variety of approaches are used in teaching writing, including the product, process, and genre-based approach. Siddiqui et al. observe that many instructors still rely heavily on product-oriented methods, focusing on accuracy and error-free output while neglecting the developmental stages involved in writing (Siddiqui et al., 2023). This often limits students' creativity and discourages exploration of ideas.

On the other hand, the process approach emphasizes multiple stages such as brainstorming, planning, drafting, revising, and editing. Research suggests that this approach encourages learners to engage actively with their ideas and reduces anxiety because they are not required to produce a perfect text on the first attempt (Siddiqui et al., 2023). Scholars argue that this method fosters more sustainable writing improvement.

The genre-based approach is also widely recommended, especially for academic purposes. Siddiqui et al. explain that this approach equips learners with knowledge of structural conventions and communicative purposes across text types, enabling them to write appropriately for different contexts (Siddiqui et al., 2023). Therefore, combining process and genre approaches is often suggested to address both creativity and structural competence in writing.

### **Instagram Caption Activities**

Instagram caption activities are learning tasks in which students create short written texts to accompany images they upload on Instagram. These activities require learners to produce concise, clear, and meaningful messages tailored to a real audience, making writing more authentic and purposeful. Because captions are publicly visible and intended to communicate ideas effectively, students tend to pay greater attention to content, clarity, vocabulary choice, and overall coherence. According to Khulel, using Instagram caption writing as part of classroom activities encourages students to express ideas creatively while developing their writing skills through a real-world digital medium that they already use in their daily lives (Khulel, 2022).



Instagram caption writing also aligns strongly with process-oriented pedagogy, as students naturally go through several stages: drafting, editing, revising, and finalizing captions before publishing their posts. This iterative process helps students become more reflective writers, encouraging them to revise their ideas and improve linguistic accuracy. Khulel notes that students frequently rework their captions to ensure clarity and meaningful expression, demonstrating how the platform supports continuous refinement and fosters greater awareness of writing quality (Khulel, 2022).

In addition to supporting the writing process, caption activities allow learners to engage in interactive learning through peer feedback and audience responses. When students receive comments, likes, or suggestions on their captions, they experience increased motivation and a sense of achievement. Widarti and colleagues emphasize that Instagram-based learning stimulates student engagement because its visual and interactive features create a more enjoyable and meaningful learning environment, ultimately enhancing students' confidence and willingness to participate in writing tasks (Net et al., 2024).

## **METHODS**

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) aligned with PRISMA 2020 guidelines to synthesize empirical evidence on the use of Instagram caption activities to develop students' writing skills. The database search was conducted across Google Scholar, ERIC, Mendeley, and several online education journals using the keywords "Instagram," "caption writing," "writing skills," "EFL," "social media," and "digital learning."

From the overall search, 302,287 records were identified: Google Scholar (302,000), Mendeley (279), and ERIC (8). After screening titles, abstracts, and full texts and removing duplicated and irrelevant studies, 25 studies remained for eligibility assessment. Following a final assessment based on relevance, empirical design, and methodological quality, nine studies were selected as the final included empirical sources in this systematic review. These studies serve as the primary dataset for analysis.

The search results were processed through the established stages of identification, duplicate removal, title and abstract screening, full-text eligibility assessment, and final inclusion. Inclusion and exclusion criteria were determined prior to the search and applied consistently during the selection process. Only empirical studies that examined Instagram caption activities within writing instruction were included in the synthesis.

## **Sample / Participants**

Because this study is an SLR, the term sample or participants refers to the subjects described in the primary studies included in the review, rather than participants recruited directly by the authors of this SLR. The reviewed studies involved a range of EFL learners at secondary and tertiary levels, including senior high school students and undergraduate English majors. Across the primary studies, participant varied age, proficiency level, class size, and educational context. Some studies were conducted in small, structured classroom settings, while others involved larger cohorts within university programs. This diversity allows the review to capture how Instagram caption activities are implemented across different institutional environments and learner profiles.

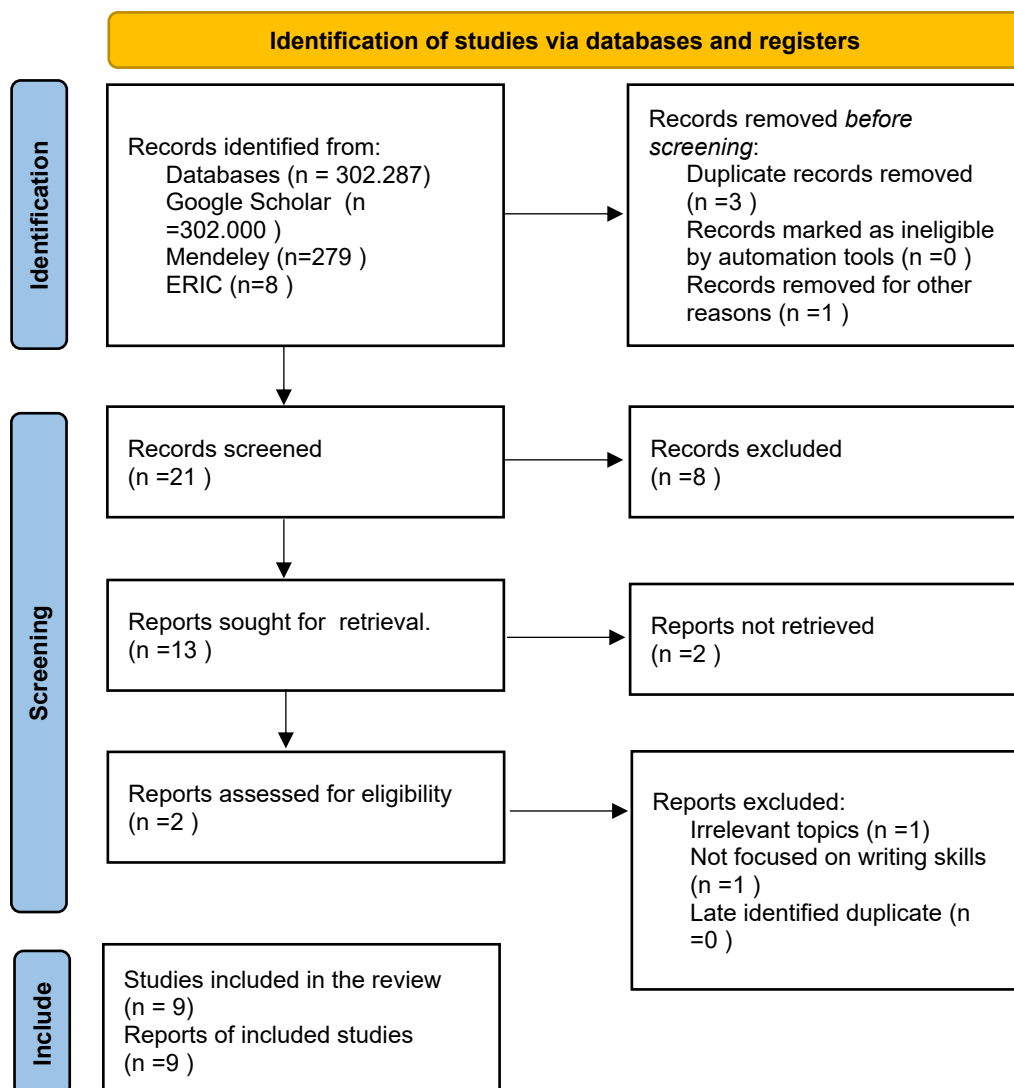


## Instrument(s)

The instrument across included studies used multiple research instruments to evaluate the effectiveness of Instagram caption activities. First, analytic writing rubrics covering criteria such as content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, mechanics, and coherence were widely used to assess students' written work. All quasi-experimental studies administered pre-test and post-test writing tasks, enabling measurement of writing improvement over time. .”

Several studies used peer feedback sheets, in which students reviewed and commented on peers' Instagram captions, yielding qualitative data on clarity, creativity, accuracy, and revision quality. Additionally, Likert-scale questionnaires were utilized to examine students' motivation, engagement, perceived usefulness of Instagram, and digital literacy.

To capture deeper student reflections, some researchers used interviews and reflective journals, while teachers employed classroom observation checklists to document instructional processes. A few studies also analyzed digital activity data, such as caption revisions, comment interactions, likes, and engagement patterns. Collectively, these instruments allowed for both quantitative and qualitative analysis of writing development and learner responses.



**Figure 1.** PRISMA Flowchart of the selection process.



**RESULT/FINDING AND DISCUSSION****Table 1.** Summary Of Included Empirical Studies

No	Author / country / year	Main characteristics	Study design / measuring instruments	Findings
1.	Avivi & Megawati/ Indonesia/ 2020	34 junior high school students practicing writing through Instagram captions	-Classroom Action Research (CAR) -Classroom observations -Analytic writing rubric	Instagram caption tasks enhanced students' awareness of process writing stages, including brainstorming, drafting, revising, and editing. Visual prompts helped students generate ideas quickly and improve sentence organization, completeness, and clarity. Overall, Instagram supported process writing and increased writing quality.
2.	Khulel/ Indonesia/ 2022	EFL learners using Instagram for writing practice	-Quasi experimental -Writing rubric -Interviews	Students showed significant improvement in grammar accuracy, coherence, and vocabulary use compared to the control group. Writing captions reduced cognitive load, increased confidence, and allowed students to focus on accuracy and paragraph coherence.
3.	Najma/ Pakistan/ 2020	Students' writing difficulties and discourse structures	-Mixed-method -Interviews -Writing rubric	Instagram captions helped students organize ideas clearly, improve discourse awareness, and develop concise and focused sentences. Short form writing decreased pressure of long essays and



				promoted gradual development of clarity and coherence in writing.
4.	Net et al./ Malaysia/ 2024	Instagram as a multimodal learning platform	-Qualitative -Classroom -Observations -Interviews	Visual elements of Instagram enhanced creativity, idea generation, and engagement. Students reported increased motivation and deeper connection between visual prompts and written expression. Multimodal features supported meaningful language use.
5.	Rahmawati & Musyarofah/ Indonesia/ 2020	Teaching procedure texts via Instagram picture series	-Quasi-experimental -Pre-test/post-test -Writing rubric -Peer feedback	Students improved in sequencing, clarity, and procedural organization. Captioning and image series helped students visualize steps, and peer feedback strengthened accuracy and completeness of procedure texts.
6.	Saputri/ Indonesia/ 2021	Using Instagram for descriptive writing development	-Experimental -Pre-test/post-test -Questionnaire	Instagram improved descriptive details, vocabulary variety, and sentence clarity. Visual prompts helped students elaborate on sensory description and focus on word choice. Writing in caption format enhanced attention to adjectives, sentence structures,



				and overall descriptive quality.
7.	Siddiqui et al./ India/ 2023	Digital writing intervention & writing anxiety	-Mixed-method -Writing tests -Anxiety scale -Questionnaire	Instagram reduced writing anxiety and increased creativity and engagement. Students felt less fear of evaluation and more freedom to express ideas. Social interaction via likes and comments reinforced motivation to write.
8.	Syafrian/ Indonesia/ 2025	Systematic review of Instagram in ELT	-Systematic review -Thematic coding	Instagram positively impacted writing skills, vocabulary acquisition, motivation, and communication. It served as an authentic platform for language practice, supporting contextualized writing and real world interaction.
9.	Widarti et al./ Indonesia/ 2022	Motivation and engagement through Instagram writing	-Survey -Motivation scale -Interviews	Students' motivation, confidence, and willingness to write increased. Familiarity with Instagram and the lightweight caption format encouraged regular writing practice and reduced fear of making mistakes. Engagement and positive attitudes toward writing were strengthened.

Analysis of the nine included studies shows consistent evidence that Instagram caption activities positively influence students' writing development across multiple dimensions.



Instagram's visual stimuli help learners generate ideas more easily, supporting descriptive, narrative, and procedural writing by making concepts more concrete. This support in content development, enabling students to produce richer, more structured texts. Vocabulary enrichment was also observed, with improvements in word choice, lexical variety, and the use of contextual vocabulary. The public nature of Instagram motivates learners to select words more consciously, resulting in more precise and appropriate language in their captions.

Short caption writing provides frequent micro-writing practice, which enhances sentence structure, grammar, and mechanics. Feedback from teachers and peers in the comment sections help students revise their writing effectively, reinforcing grammatical accuracy. Additionally, caption tasks require concise, logically connected ideas, while visuals help maintain relevance and cohesion, thereby strengthening overall text organization.

Instagram was found to increase students' motivation and engagement. The familiar and informal platform reduces anxiety, boosts confidence, and encourages active participation. Beyond linguistic skills, learners also develop multimodal literacy, online communication abilities, and responsible digital behavior, integrating both visual and textual elements in their writing.

These findings align with multimodal learning and process writing theories, demonstrating that Instagram functions as an authentic digital environment that enhances writing performance. Consistent with research on social-media-based writing, Instagram offers an authentic audience, real-time interaction, multimodal input (visual plus text), and motivational affordances such as likes and comments.

The most effective implementations occurred when teachers structured activities around process writing stages, used clear rubrics, guided the use of Instagram features, and provided peer feedback. This combination not only improved linguistic competence but also fostered 21st-century skills such as creativity, communication, and digital literacy. Overall, integrating Instagram into writing instruction shows that digital platforms can provide engaging, meaningful, and authentic contexts for language learning.

## CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review demonstrates that Instagram caption activities provide meaningful benefits for developing EFL students' writing skills. Across nine studies, consistent improvements were found in content development, vocabulary enrichment, grammatical accuracy, coherence, and overall writing quality. Instagram's visual nature supports idea generation, while its concise caption format promotes clarity and precision in writing. The platform also enhances student motivation, reduces writing anxiety, and encourages authentic communication through peer interaction.

However, successful implementation requires structured pedagogical planning, including the integration of process writing stages, clear rubrics, and teacher guidance. When used effectively, Instagram is a powerful, engaging, and relevant tool for modern writing instruction, enabling students to develop both linguistic and digital literacy skills. Therefore, Instagram caption activities are recommended as an innovative strategy for enhancing writing performance in contemporary EFL classrooms.

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