



Boosting Caption Craft: Instagram and WH-Questions to Elevate Student Writing

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Abstract

The ability to communicate clearly and effectively through written text is a fundamental skill that students need to master for better English acquisition. In particular, digital communication has become increasingly prevalent, with social media platforms like Instagram that students might be involved in various writing activities such as descriptive captions, storytelling, persuasive writing, informational posts, and reflective writing. As such, there is a pressing need to develop innovative teaching strategies that not only improve students' writing abilities but also make the learning process relevant and engaging in the context of their digital lives. This study aimed to analyze the improvement of high school students' ability to write structured paragraphs for captions through Instagram utilizing the WH Question Technique. The research engaged 28 twelfth-grade students from SMAN 2 Batang Anai in West Sumatra, Indonesia. The classroom action research framework, conducted over two cycles, each consisting of three sessions. Data collection methods included assessments of student achievements, interviews, and classroom observations, analyzed using qualitative and quantitative descriptive methods. The findings demonstrated a notable improvement in students' writing skills; the average score increased from 67.08 in the first cycle to 71.76 in the second. Improvements were particularly significant in the students' ability to generate ideas and adapt their writing for social media, specifically Instagram. The study concludes that the integration of Instagram discussions with WH Question Technique enhance paragraph writing skills in an engaging and practical digital format, proving beneficial for high school students' engagement and skill development in writing.

Keywords: Writing skills, WH-question technique, social media in education, Instagram.

INTRODUCTION

Social media has become an integral part of society, with its usage spreading across all segments, including students. It encompasses platforms such as social networking sites, video sharing sites, photo sharing sites, bookmarking sites, discussion forums, storify and wikis, has become a key facilitator of these interactions (Chugh & Ruhi, 2019; Laire et al. 2012; Elola and Oskoz, 2017). It provides academics with new opportunities to publicize their work and engage with a broad audience, including the public, students, practitioners,

and other academics across different disciplines (Carrigan & Jordan, 2021). Many scholars view social media as powerful tools that can transform educational settings by integrating learning needs into more social and open contexts, thus challenging the traditional boundaries of teaching environments (Trust et al., 2016; McLoughlin & Lee, 2010). Social media plays a crucial role in reconnecting new generations of students with higher education institutions, supporting both formal and informal learning through enhanced social interaction and learning networks (Smith & Gallicano, 2015; Alalwan, 2022). A meta-synthesis of studies has highlighted that social media can facilitate deep learning and knowledge creation in higher education (Mnkandla & Minnaar, 2018). Recent studies have shown a significant impact of social media in education, demonstrating a positive relationship between social media use and students' performance (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2016; Alwagait et al., 2015). As a result, social media is gaining popularity in the educational field, offering new avenues for collaborative learning and academic engagement (Putri & Aminatun, 2021).

Given the widespread use of social media, Instagram, which was launched in 2010 as a photo-sharing platform, has evolved significantly with the addition of features such as video sharing, messaging, and story sharing, greatly contributing to its growth (Ellison, 2017). In the context of language learning, Gomes (2020) suggests that Instagram can be utilized for various activities in language classrooms, including digital storytelling, role-playing, and reading and speaking activities through videos. Another study also found that Instagram boosts students' motivation to learn and increases their participation in classroom activities (Teng et al., 2022). Moreover, Richter et al. (2022) discovered that Instagram encourages interaction, collaboration, and the seeking and sharing of information, all of which contribute to teacher professional development. Additionally, research by Soviyah and Etikaningsih (2018) and Basith and Syafi'i (2020) indicates that Instagram is an effective tool for enhancing students' writing skills.

Writing is an essential skill developed in educational settings, vital for clearly articulating ideas and engaging with content analytically (Altinmakas & Bayyurt, 2019). Mastery of writing provides students with the tools for independent thought, clear communication, fluid expression, and creative exploration, all of which are crucial for academic achievement and professional success. Empirical research highlights the effectiveness of targeted questioning in educational methodologies. Specifically, WH-questions—such as 'what', 'who', 'where', and 'when'—are key in sparking students' curiosity and significantly enhancing their ability to retrieve and process information. This form of questioning promotes deeper inquiry and facilitates critical thinking by prompting them to explore and organize their thoughts comprehensively (Moghadam et al., 2023). Studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of WH-questions and social media platforms like Instagram in enhancing students' writing skills. Research conducted by Jee and Aziz (2021) found that 5W1H questions had successfully assisted the learners in writing an argumentative essay, allowing students to become autonomous in their essay writing by utilizing the 5W1H method. This approach empowers students to take ownership of their learning process, fostering independence and critical thinking. Namasivayam et al. (2017) found that WH-questions effectively guide students through the idea generation and organization phases in writing descriptive texts, boosting their confidence and clarity in

writing. This approach not only supports the foundational aspects of language learning but also fosters an environment where students can develop a nuanced understanding of text construction and effective communication.

Despite the growing body of research on the integration of social media in education, there remains a significant gap in the literature regarding the use of Instagram captions as a learning medium, specifically employing the WH-question approach. While previous studies have explored various social media platforms and educational techniques, the unique combination of Instagram and WH-questions in enhancing writing skills has not been extensively investigated. This gap highlights the need for innovative teaching strategies that not only improve students' writing abilities but also make the learning process relevant and engaging within the context of their digital lives. Therefore, this study aimed to analyze the improvement of high school students' ability to write structured paragraphs for captions through Instagram, utilizing the WH-question technique. By focusing on this approach, the research seeks to provide insights into how integrating a popular social media platform with a targeted questioning method can enhance students' writing skills and engagement.

METHOD

This study employed the Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach as described by [Esparza et al. \(2022\)](#), which allows data to be collected from assignments that students complete as part of their regular coursework, eliminating the need for external assessments solely to evaluate student outcomes. The study was conducted with 28 twelfth-grade students from SMAN 2 Batang Anai in Padang Pariaman, West Sumatra, Indonesia. Data were gathered using four primary instruments: standardized tests to measure improvements in writing skills, observational techniques to gauge student engagement and interaction. Furthermore, the research took place from October 2, 2023, to November 27, 2023, and was structured into two cycles, each comprising four weekly meetings. Each meeting lasted 90 minutes, divided into two 45-minute sessions. Three meetings were dedicated to developing writing skills, while the fourth meeting in each cycle was reserved for testing the students' progress.

Initially, to gauge the students' baseline writing abilities, the researcher presented various Instagram pictures and asked each student to select one and write a caption based on the chosen image. According to [Sana and Carpenter \(2023\)](#), this pre-test aimed to assess students' initial capability and promote the retention of information, in this case, through writing captions. Following the instructional intervention and practice sessions, a post-test was administered to measure the improvement in the students' writing skills. In the post-test, students were again presented with a selection of Instagram pictures and asked to write captions using the 5W+1H technique. This test was designed to evaluate the progress made by the students in terms of their ability to generate structured and coherent captions. The results of the post-test provided a comparative analysis with the pre-test, highlighting the areas of improvement and the overall effectiveness of the teaching strategies ([Pan & Sana, 2021](#)).

The data analysis in this study involved interpreting the data collected through various methods. The researcher gathered data by observing the teaching-learning process and evaluating the results of the students' tests, which focused on crafting captions using

Instagram photos chosen with the 5W+1H technique. The researcher then analyzed this data using percentage and mean score descriptive quantitative analysis to assign scores, as it is fundamental and necessary for describing quantitative/statistical data to determine the improvement in students' achievements (Larson-Hall & Plonsky, 2015). This approach allowed the researcher to quantify the enhancement in students' writing skills by calculating the percentage increase in their performance, providing a clear measure of the effectiveness of the instructional strategies employed.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

In the first cycle, the primary focus was on understanding the baseline writing abilities of the students and implementing the WH-Question technique to enhance their skills. During this cycle, several difficulties faced by the students became apparent. Many students struggled with organizing their thoughts coherently, resulting in disjointed and unclear captions. Additionally, there was a noticeable lack of vocabulary diversity, with students frequently repeating simple words and phrases. Some students found it challenging to maintain proper grammar and mechanics, leading to errors in punctuation, spelling, and sentence structure. Furthermore, students often had trouble generating ideas and providing sufficient detail in their captions, which hindered the overall quality of their writing.

To address the difficulties encountered in the first cycle, the researchers employed the 5W1H technique, which stands for Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How. This technique is a systematic approach designed to ensure comprehensive and structured responses by prompting students to consider these six key questions. The application of the 5W1H technique in the writing activities was implemented as follows: students were encouraged to identify the subject or person involved in the image or scenario they were describing (Who), describe the main action or event taking place (What), specify the time or period when the action or event occurred (When), describe the setting or location (Where), explain the reason or motivation behind the action or event (Why), and elaborate on the manner or process by which the action or event occurred (How). By integrating the 5W1H technique, students could systematically address each aspect of their captions, helping them organize their thoughts more coherently, expand their vocabulary, and improve the overall quality of their writing.

The second cycle saw noticeable improvements in students' writing abilities as the focus sharpened on aspects of writing that had not yet met the minimum completeness criteria of 75. To further enhance their skills, the researcher incorporated peer scaffolding into the activities. This involved students engaging in generating WH-Questions related to their peers' pictures, which helped them deepen their understanding and application of writing concepts in a collaborative setting. The peer scaffolding approach not only facilitated better comprehension of the writing process but also promoted collaborative learning, allowing students to learn from each other's insights and feedback.

Table 1. Students' average writing scores before and after using wh-questions.

Aspect of writing	Percentage Score	
	Before using WH Question	After Using WH-Question
Content (30%)	68.75 %	79.46%
Organization (20%)	59.82 %	67.41%
Vocabulary (20%)	55.36 %	70.54%
Language Use (25)	53.57 %	68.30%
Mechanics (5%)	44.64 %	65.18%
Total	56.43 %	70.18%

Significant enhancements in the students' ability to write captions by the end of the study highlighted the efficacy of integrating WH-Questions and peer interactions in the learning process. The students' average writing scores improved across all criteria—Content, Organization, Vocabulary, Language Use, and Mechanics—as evidenced by the comparative analysis of pre-test and post-test results. The consistent upward trend in scores from Pre-Test through Post-Test 2 demonstrated the effectiveness of this instructional strategy in enhancing writing skills. This research underscores the value of a structured, reflective approach to teaching writing, emphasizing the importance of peer collaboration and targeted questioning techniques in fostering significant improvements in students' writing abilities.

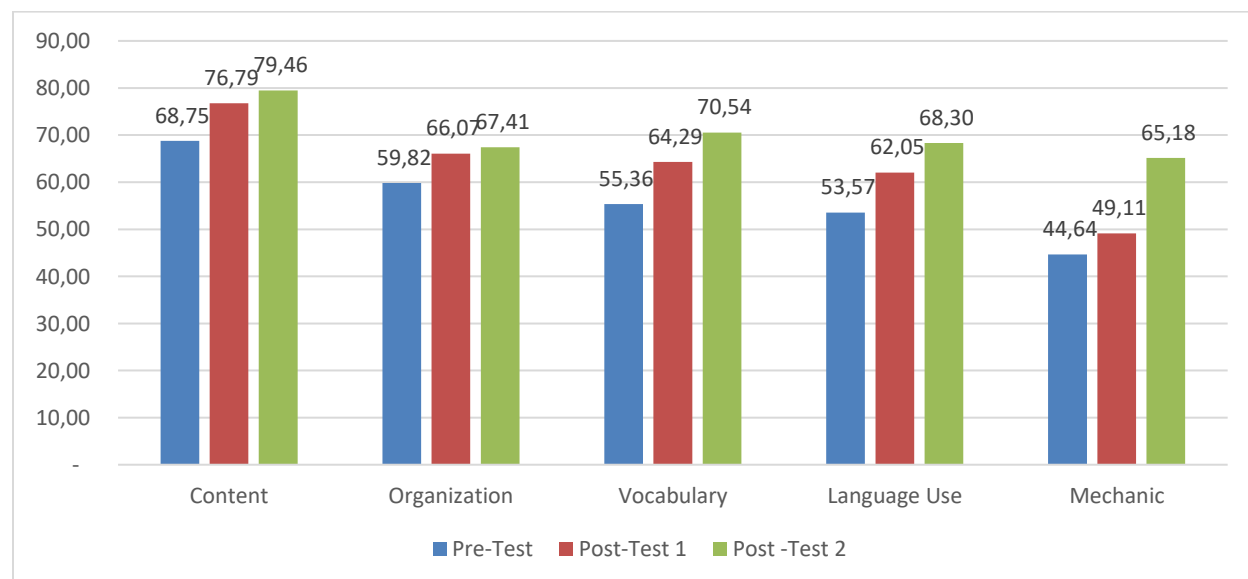
**Figure 1.** The progression of average scores in writing paragraphs of caption text

Figure 1 illustrates the progression of average scores in writing paragraphs of caption text, from pre-test to post-test, following the implementation of the WH-Question technique. Initially, students' average scores increased from 56.43 to 70.18, indicating a marked improvement due to the technique's application. A more detailed analysis in Cycle 2 reveals varying scores across different assessment indicators. Content achieved the highest score at 79.46, reflecting significant enhancements in the students' ability to generate and structure relevant material. Vocabulary followed with a score of 70.54, showcasing improvements in

the use of varied and appropriate language. Language use scored 68.30, indicating better grammatical accuracy and overall language proficiency. Organization scored 67.41, reflecting better coherence and logical structuring of ideas in the students' writing.

The mechanics indicator, although scoring the lowest at 65.18, showed a notable improvement. Initially scoring 49.11 in the first post-test, it increased by 16.07 points in the second post-test. This was the largest gain among all indicators, suggesting a significant, albeit incomplete, mastering of writing mechanics. The considerable improvement in mechanics highlights the effectiveness of the WH-Question technique in addressing grammatical and structural aspects of writing, although it also indicates that these areas require further attention and continuous practice. Overall, the consistent upward trend in scores across all indicators from pre-test through post-test 2 demonstrates the effectiveness of the WH-Question technique in enhancing students' writing skills. The substantial improvements in content, vocabulary, language use, and organization, alongside the significant gains in mechanics, underscore the value of this instructional strategy in fostering comprehensive writing proficiency among students.

DISCUSSION

The use of social media as a learning medium aims to motivate students and enhance teaching methods. The dynamic and interactive nature of social media allows teachers to introduce diverse educational content, facilitate discussions, and provide real-time feedback, thereby fostering a more stimulating and responsive classroom experience (Klimova & Pikhart, 2019; Van Den Beemt et al., 2019). Educators can use platforms like Instagram, as this study focuses on, to connect with peers across contexts and engage in professional exchanges. Instagram, though not originally designed for educators, has become a valuable tool for accessing professional affinity spaces where teachers can share ideas, seek support, gain affirmation, and elevate the teaching and learning process to a new level (Carpenter et al., 2020).

In the context of writing, and in alignment with the current research, a study by Gunantar and Transinata (2019) found that using photo-based media on Instagram can significantly improve students' English writing skills. By leveraging photo-based media, students are encouraged to express their ideas more broadly and creatively. The visual stimuli provided by Instagram photos serve as prompts that stimulate students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills. As students interact with images, they are inspired to articulate their thoughts more effectively and explore different aspects of writing. Similarly, a study by Wahyudin and Sari (2018) shows that Instagram positively impacts undergraduate students' writing abilities. Their findings reveal that students in blended learning classes using Instagram performed better in writing than those who did not. This study adds to the evidence that social media can significantly enhance students' interest and confidence in writing, making Instagram a valuable tool for teaching writing outside the classroom.

Furthermore, The study's major findings demonstrate a significant improvement in students' writing skills following the implementation of the WH-Question technique in conjunction with Instagram discussions. Specifically, student scores increased from an average of 56.43 in the pre-test to 70.18 in the post-test, with notable gains across all writing

indicators. The most substantial improvement was observed in the area of mechanics, which saw an increase from 49.11 to 65.18. These results underscore the effectiveness of interactive and targeted questioning techniques in enhancing students' ability to generate and structure written content. A study conducted by [Anggraini \(2020\)](#) found that the 5W1H technique is highly effective, classifying it as a very good technical indicator. The study concluded that students' news writing skills, particularly those related to the 5W1H technicalities, news structure, sentence structure, and spelling, showed significant improvement. Students demonstrated no difficulty in incorporating all the elements of the 5W1H technique in their news writing, effectively presenting comprehensive and well-structured articles.

The 5W1H thinking strategy, when incorporated into an event map, helps students develop their ideas more easily. This strategy enables students to break down their planning process into smaller, manageable tasks, thereby minimizing cognitive overload ([Chou, 2012](#)). By using the 5W1H strategy, students could organize their thoughts, enhance their vocabulary, and improve their grammatical accuracy, leading to notable improvements in writing. Instagram's interactive and visual nature made the learning process more engaging and relevant. The success of this approach shows the importance of integrating targeted questioning techniques and modern technology into education. The collaborative environment on Instagram facilitated better understanding and peer learning, enhancing students' writing abilities. In summary, combining the WH-Question technique with social media platforms like Instagram effectively enhances writing skills, promotes critical thinking, and supports independent learning. These findings offer valuable insights for educators seeking innovative strategies to improve writing instruction.

CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates the significant impact of integrating the WH-Question technique with Instagram discussions on enhancing students' writing skills. The findings show that students' average writing scores improved from 56.43 in the pre-test to 70.18 in the post-test, with notable gains in content, vocabulary, language use, organization, and mechanics. The interactive and visually stimulating nature of Instagram, combined with the systematic approach of the 5W1H strategy, facilitated better organization of thoughts, expanded vocabulary, and improved grammatical accuracy. This study underscores the potential of using targeted questioning techniques and social media platforms to make the writing process more engaging and relevant to students' digital lives.

Despite the positive findings, this study has several limitations. First, the sample size was limited to 28 twelfth-grade students from a single school in West Sumatra, Indonesia, which may not be representative of a broader population. Second, the study's duration was relatively short, extending over two months, which may not capture long-term effects of the intervention. Third, the research relied on self-reported data and observations, which could introduce bias. Finally, the study focused on Instagram as the primary social media platform, potentially limiting the applicability of the findings to other platforms.

Future research should address these limitations by expanding the sample size and including students from diverse educational backgrounds and regions to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Longitudinal studies are recommended to examine the long-

term effects of integrating the WH-Question technique with social media discussions on students' writing skills. Additionally, future studies could explore the impact of using different social media platforms to determine if similar improvements in writing skills can be achieved. Researchers should also consider incorporating more objective measures and diverse data collection methods to minimize bias and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the intervention's effectiveness. Finally, investigating the role of teacher training and support in implementing these strategies could provide valuable insights into optimizing their application in educational settings.

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