Instagram: A Platform to Develop Student's Writing Ability

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Abstract
Traditional method of teaching writing has been seen monotonous to the current generation thus this forces educators to incorporate and integrate Web 2.0 which allows for more exposure to teaching and learning as it involves the use of technology and the internet. This study explores the use of Instagram as a platform in developing students' English language writing ability and to discover their attitudes towards Instagram as an interactive learning tool. Employing an action research design, 25 Form 3 English language learners in SM Sains Rembau were involved and their posts containing descriptive writing were given corrective feedback and analyzed. A survey was conducted to collect their attitude. The results of the study indicate Instagram as an effective tool for developing learners' vocabulary range and grammatical accuracy. Learners also portrayed positive attitude as they fancied the use of Instagram for writing. Instagram can be an effective pedagogical tool in second language acquisition if used and supervised appropriately.
Keywords: Action Research, ESL Learners, Instagram In Teaching Writing, Interactive Learning Tool, Writing Ability

Introduction
        In this modern digital era, teaching writing seems to be one of the skills that is considered to be one of the toughest skills to be taught among ESL learners (Cahyono, Widiati & Astiti 2018). This is due to the fact that the current trend of using digital gadgets in classroom teaching is by far more appropriate than the traditional chalk and talk. Having smartphones and tablets, students are accessing social media everyday by chatting with their friends, updating their status and current feelings as well as uploading videos and pictures in order to keep up with the world (Anngraeni 2018). Thus, this current phenomenon needs to be taken into today's teaching and learning process and strategies.
        The current phenomenon here refers to the use of ICT particularly social media in teaching and learning process. There are many studies conducted in regard to the use of ICT in language learning. These studies proved that ICT gives positive feedbacks and boost motivations to the users (educators and students) when using it. Thus, when using ICT

especially social media, it is said to provide comfortable platform for the learners to be able to complete tasks given by the teacher and indirectly promotes autonomous learning environment (Al-Munawwarah 2014).

Social media can be defined as web-based and mobile technologies used mainly for communication. It is a platform in which includes socializing and online networking through words, pictures and videos (Cahyono, Widiati & Astiti 2018). Instagram is a social media that focuses on writing captions of uploaded pictures or videos and share it to the digital users of the world. Writing in social media helps the users (students) to express their feelings, share their memorable moments and even inspiring others to write their opinions and thoughts of current issues. According to Maulina (2018), social media also help to encourage the use of the English Language as the users (students) want their captions to be read locally or internationally and the best way to do it is through the use of English Language as it is a language used by the world.

Literature Review
Technology in The Classsroom

To be at par with other developing countries not just merely focusing on economics but education also plays major roles towards it (Lim 2018). According to Nordin, Embi, & Zaidan (2011), in order to compete with these countries, education need to be modernized. Many has equipped their students by preparing them with 21st century teaching and learning process. According to Ruggiero & Mong (2015), this includes the use of different types of technology in the classroom. Integrating technologies in classroom teaching seems to boost up students' motivations and provide excitements towards the subject taught. Not only can technology help the lesson to be more efficient but indirectly, it can also help in developing instructions (Sanders & Isbell 2018).

The use of technologies in classroom teaching is not something new. For example, in Malaysia, teachers are encouraging to use technology in the classroom. The government has provided teachers with Frog VLE and even YES internet connecting device which enable teachers to them in teaching and learning process. The government in collaboration with 1Bestarinet spent thousands of Ringgits to schools for teachers and students to get access to FROG VLE and the internet. The government also provide Chromebook for students to get access to this (Frog 2016).

Social Media in Language Teaching

Since there are many setbacks in regard to FROG VLE, social media can be one of the teaching tools in teaching and learning process. In a study conducted by Saakir, Rahman & Salija (2016) on students' perception of using social media in teaching English in higher institution found that majority of the students showed positive attitude towards the use of social media especially in writing class. This indicates that social media can be used in writing class and that it motivates students to write virtually. The immediate feedbacks received or commented helps students to realize their grammatical mistakes and with the edit features, they are able to correct their mistakes immediately. This claim is supported with a study conducted by Alfahadi (2017), indicates that students get immediate feedbacks through social media and it encourage them to write more.

Moreover, social media is a place for students to share photos and video with a little descriptive caption about them. Indirectly, students are able to learn new vocabularies, the correct sentence structures and grammatical items through social media. Khan, Ayaz &

Faheem (2016) investigate the role of social media in teaching writing and the findings show that social media plays the main role in English Language vocabulary development at university level. Social media facilitates students to learn new words, phrases and improve their vocabulary thus making it appropriate tools to use in teaching writing. According to Bakeer (2018), social media arouse the interest of learners towards English Language learning at university level. The findings of her study also indicate that the learners will use social media for a long period of time without hesitation and boredom. However, Maulina & Muslem (2018) disagrees with the fact that social media helps in writing as their students still lacking in knowledge of grammar rules and with that, it creates confusion to the one reading it.

Instagram As Pedagogical Tool

One of the most used social media in the world is Instagram. Instagram is the combination of *Insta* which is instant camera and *gram* refers to telegram. Basically, Instagram is an interactive way to share the user's life through a series of pictures. Instagram is a new form of communication using the medium of pictures and videos. With it many features, users find it fun to be able to create, filters, share live videos of themselves with their friends locally or internationally (Yuheng, Manikonda & Kambhampati 2014). A research conducted by Sirait & Marlina (2018) which explore the use of Instagram as a tool for online peer-review activity in writing descriptive text for Senior High School students finds that Instagram and it features are relatively easy to use, convenient and can be accessible at any time. It also increases their motivations to write and review others' descriptive writing. Hence, Instagram is an appropriate teaching tools in teaching writing. This statement is supported through a qualitative research done by Nada & Shiellany (2018) stated that Instagram is an effective tool for developing students' descriptive writing skills. This study also found that Instagram can be an effective pedagogical tool if used appropriately.

There were some advantages of using Instagram as teaching and learning tools. A research conducted on university student's perception and attitude towards the use of Instagram in English language writing found that its mobile and accessible through gadgets making it applicable for continuous exposed of the language. Instagram also promotes socialization in a community via communication beyond classroom context (Ayuni Akhiar, Al-Amin Mydin & Shaidatul Akma Adi Kasuma 2017). Moreover, Kurniawan and Kastuhandani (2016) stated that students are given their freedom in generating ideas of captions and uploading pictures to complete writing tasks. It automatically creates personalized learning environment of the students. Therefore, through past studies, Instagram is used as a learning platform of either reading or writing and proven to be a success language teaching tools.

Methodology
Participants

This study was carried out in Sekolah Menengah Sains Rembau (Rembau Science Secondary School) in Negeri Sembilan in October 2018. As mentioned earlier, this study investigates Instagram usage to develop ESL learners' writing ability and at the same time measure their attitude towards Instagram as an interactive learning tool in English language classroom. Action research design was utilized as it aims to problematize an issue and enact change through intervention and collaboration with participants (Somekh 2006). This chapter will discuss the processes explicitly and what were other considerations that had been taken into accounts when this research was carried out. First and foremost, participants, pretest

and post test questions and data collection tools of online Instagram posts as well as a set of questionnaires will be discussed. Each methods opted for evaluation in this study was implemented by the researchers for two weeks in the following manner. Each strategy was not influenced by others during the evaluation as there was no English classes taking place during the process. For this purpose, 25 Form 3 (15 years old) students were selected as participants in this research. The participants were asked to, first, follow an Instagram account as assigned by researchers under the name of MissSaza. This was to enable the participants to respond to the tasks that were later assigned by researchers. Participants were fully instructed by researchers using Instagram posts and at this point, they were observed by researchers via Instagram posts too. Other than that, there was also hash tag for every post as it was to made easier for the researchers to track the responses posted by participants.

Instrument and Data Analysis

Before beginning with the use of Instagram posts, a pretest was administered. Pretest question was a writing task that required participants to introduce themselves in an online website. This task was deemed as the most basic activity for students when learning English and this task also belonged to lowest band according to Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Most participants found it easy to be done. Their writings were later being screenshot into Word document and were corrected and graded by researchers following the CEFR grading system. Next was when the use of Instagram came in where participants were asked to respond to Instagram tasks posted by researchers. There were five tasks all over and each task was then corrected and reviewed by the researchers as grades were also taken to mark the progress of each participant. During the tasks, participants were also allowed to give constructive comments or responses to their friends' posts. This was done to see if participants found it helpful in their writing progress and to create a conducive learning environment as they probably felt more comfortable when being responded to by their classmates. Throughout the five assigned Instagram tasks, participants were allowed to ask researchers for any clarification on the tasks given.

The unit of method was later followed by a post test question; also a write-up in which participants described themselves. Again, the process was like the aforementioned in pretest and grades were taken. The process was finally completed with a set of questionnaires to measure the participants' attitude or perceptions towards the use of Instagram as learning tool. The questionnaire was answered by participants in hard copies. There were 10 items and some of the items were to be answered according to 4-level Likert Scale of 'Strongly Disagree', 'Disagree', 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree'. The option 'Unsure' was left out as to make sure that participants firmly decided whether to only agree or disagree. There was one item in which participants were asked to leave a comment or opinion on how did they find Instagram when utilized as interactive tool in learning writing.

While the pretest, post test and Instagram tasks were graded following the CEFR; for the analysis of questionnaire, frequency and percentages were employed to depict the participants' views on the Instagram usage as a tool for learning writing. For more systematic analysis, each participant was renamed as code P01,P02 until P25 then, their comments or opinions were cited to be examined.

Questionnaire Items
The items in the questionnaire were built with reference to the research questions and they were as follow.

1. How often do you use Instagram in your native language?
2. How often do you post on Instagram in English?
3. I think it is easy to use Instagram to learn writing in English.
4. I think it is interesting to use Instagram for writing task.
5. I think Instagram has helped me to improve your writing skill.
6. I feel motivated to learn writing in English when using Instagram.
7. I learn new vocabulary from reading comments of my classmates on my writing.
8. The ideas or comments from my classmates helped me to get better idea before doing the task.
9. I will continue to write in English when using Instagram.
10. Instagram is a really good way for me to learn writing in English. Yes or No? State a comment/opinion.

Findings & Discussion
Pretest
      There were 14 female (56%) and 11 male (44%) students who participated in the Instagram tasks. After pretest writing task was graded, there were 12 participants who got band A2 which was the second lowest in CEFR. 11 ranked in band B1 and the remaining 2 in band B2. No participants were recorded to be in band C1 and above.

Instagram Task
      Throughout the administration of #InstaTask, there were improvements could be seen among the participants. In the different task, participants were recorded to be getting better in terms of their writing as they received constructive comments and applause from their friends. Other than that, some participants who were stuck before getting started, got better ideas when seeing their friends' posts especially during Task 3; "Someone they admire". Out of 25 participants, they were 23 students who improved their CEFR writing band while two remained in band B1. The reason why the two participants remained would be disclosed in the following discussion.

      Besides that, what the researchers noticed throughout the Instagram tasks was, the introverted students or the shy ones that often withdrew themselves from giving feedback in the classroom were responsive when they went online. That was because there was no face-to-face interaction which often resulted the students to feel embarrassed to respond when they were in the classroom. When using social networking site (Instagram), participants could actually express themselves without having to feel scared or anxious of making mistakes (Yunus, Li & Ishak 2012).

Post Test
      After the Instagram tasks, a post test was conducted to grade the participants' writing task and for the grades to be compared to pretest. Researchers examined the writing task that required students to describe themselves and their character traits and their writings were graded according to CEFR. Out of 25 participants, 23 improved their grades in writing. 2 students whom previously belonged to B2 have achieved C1. 14 students achieved

B1; this included the stagnant 2 students whom their writing grade remained and 9 students' writings had improved to band B2. Table 1 shows the data of comparison of students' grades between pretest and post test.

Table 1
Comparison of students' grades between pretest and post test

CEFR Band	No. Of students Achieving the Band (25)	
	Pretest	Post Test
A1	0	0
A2	12	0
B1	11	14
B2	2	9
C1	0	2
C2	0	0

The reason of the two students remained in the same grade has been identified when they answered the questionnaire, item number 10 that required the participants to give opinion or comment if they found Instagram is a good way for them to learn writing in English. The opinions given by these two participants have been regarded as challenges that teachers and students may face when using social networking sites in teaching and learning. These challenges have also been recorded in a study conducted in Ulster University on the use of social networking site for developing writing proficiency in which a participant responded he was sometimes preoccupied by what is featured on Instagram (Kelly, 2015). Their opinions would be discussed in the following unit.

Questionnaire

Item 1 and 2 in the questionnaire were posted to know the participants' frequency of using Instagram in their native language (Malay) and second language (English). Table 2 shows the data of the frequency of students' posts in native language and in English.

Table 2
Frequency of Students' Posts on Instagram in a Week in Native & Second Language

Item No.:		Frequency of Students' Posts on Instagram in a Week			
		1-4	5-8	9-12	13 & above
1	Post in Native Language	0	0	6	19
2	Post in English	17	4	3	1

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Data has shown that there were 19 students posted in Instagram more than 13 times in their native language and they were only 6 students who posted in native language in range of 9 to 12 times a week. The next item showed that 17 students posted only at range of 1 to 4 times a week in English, only 4 students posted in English for 5 to 8 times a week, 3 students posted 9 to 12 times a week in English and only one student posted on Instagram in English more than 13 times a week. This can conclude that participants or these students found it more comfortable to post on Instagram in their native language. Therefore for further utilization of social networking sites in classroom, an array of engaging activities are highly suggested to be carried out. According to Yunus, Salehi, Amini, Shojaee & Fei (2016), some of the activities could be group or open discussion, creative writing on favourite festival or even an online debate on current issues.

The next tabulation of data shows the cumulative data percentage for Likert scale used in the items in questionnaire.

Table 3
Students' perceptions on Instagram usage

	Item No.:	Cumulative Disagree (%)	Cumulative Agree (%)
3	It is easy to use Instagram to learn writing in English	88.0	12.0
4	it is interesting to use Instagram for writing task.	96.0	4.0
5	Instagram has helped me to improve writing skill.	88.0	12.0
6	I feel motivated to learn writing in English when using Instagram.	92.0	8.0
7	I learn new vocabulary from reading comments of my classmates on my writing.	80.0	20.0
8	The ideas or comments from my classmates helped me to get better idea	88.0	12.0
9	I will continue to write in English when using Instagram.	92.0	8.0
10	Instagram is a really good way for me to learn writing in English. Yes or No? State a comment/opinion.	92.0	8.0

From Table 3, it could be seen that more than 85% of the participants generally agree that Instagram task is helping them for learning writing in English. The data also gives answers to the research questions on whether Instagram is a fun way to learn writing in English. It is now shown that Instagram task helps students in improving writing skill by making them motivated in learning writing in English and at the same time they learn new vocab by reading comments from classmates and they also get to gain new ideas with assistance from friends. What is more interesting is, 23 out of 25 students will continue to write in English when using Instagram. There is another item in the questionnaire which is participants were asked to give comments or opinions. 92.0 % agreed that Instagram is a good way to learn writing in English meanwhile 8.0 % disagreed. The 23 participants who agreed that Instagram is a good way to learn writing in English have also given their comments. One student responded "Instagram task helps me get ideas by looking at my friend's post" (P12). Another student said "friends helped me in terms of spelling and vocab especially for creative writing-haiku" (P22). Some other comments include:

1) "The comments from friends help me activate prior knowledge before the actual writing task" (P07)
2) "I received motivation from friends via constructive response and corrections" (P11)

Meanwhile, the two participants whom their writing grades stagnant, disagreed that Instagram can be an effective approach to learn writing and have stated that they were distracted by celebrity post they follow on Instagram and also some online shopping temptation. Every time they wanted to do the task, they remained focus for only 5 to 10 minutes before started browsing for celebrity posts and giving in to online shopping. These are probably the two challenges out of many that need to be pondered upon with for future study. In addition, according to Yunus and Salehi (2012), other challenges that need to be highlighted when using social networking sites for teaching writing are first, the process is tedious that it requires students to wait for responses from other students. Another one could be there is limited space for writing and some students only keep commenting on the same point as their classmates.

Conclusion

As a conclusion, from the perception of 25 students that participated in the Instagram tasks in this action research, it is clear that Instagram does help in developing students' writing ability in terms of new vocabulary and it boosts their motivation too. Even though the impact of using it is not immediate but somehow it slowly works in a way which teachers should take into account that Instagram can be considered as one of the pedagogical tools in teaching writing. Moreover, the writing of captions helps to widen the vocabulary range among students. Students are able to use various words to express their opinions, feelings and even motivate others to write well. Through Instagram, students are able to see different type of writing styles among users and develop their own writing style. They gain better idea prior to writing task as their friend's post has been featured in the Instagram. Furthermore, grammatical structure can be improved by reading other people's post especially the native of the English Language. The students are learning how to use word class in creating sentences through the reading of others' post and making sense of the usage of English Grammar. Besides, it provides a meaningful and fun learning environment for the students as they are comfortable using Instagram in completing school tasks. The main challenge that teachers need to take note is the distraction students face as mentioned in the findings such as celebrity posts and online shopping temptation also probably other features on Instagram. Although students may likely to study or learn independently, teachers need to monitor and supervise their learning as to achieve the learning objectives.

As English Language in Malaysia has been actively debated about in the current curricular especially the adaptation of the Common European Framework of References (CEFR) in the current syllabus in both primary and secondary schools, it is recommended that further research is conducted and focus could be more on the challenges when using Instagram for language learning. Furthermore, it is also advisable to look into whether Instagram is applicable to Malaysian primary school students apart from just looking at secondary and tertiary level. All in all, Instagram can be one of the pedagogical tools in teaching the English Language especially in teaching writing if used and supervised appropriately.

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