INTEGRATING INSTAGRAM INTO EFL WRITING TO FOSTER STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

by Priyatno Ardi

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by **Octana Ayu Prasetyawati** and **Priyatno Ardi**

Sanata Dharma University, Mrican, Catur Tunggal, Depok, Sleman,

Yogyakarta, Indonesia

octana.ayu @ gmail.com, priyatnoardi @ usd.ac.id

Abstract

Engaging students in writing is a challenge for language teachers. Nowadays, some students have low engagement in writing classes because the genres of writing inside the classes are disconnected from students' real lives. Since today's students are close to social media, integrating it into writing activities can promote student engagement in the learning process. One of the popular social media that can be incorporated into the writing process is *Instagram*, which is featured with a photo caption where students can write text messages. The present study aimed to investigate how the implementation of *Instagram* can promote student engagement in EFL writing. This exploratory study used a qualitative research design. The participants of this study were forty-five students enrolled in writing courses and one lecturer of writing. The data were obtained through a semi-structured interview with the lecturer and seven students, classroom observations, and Instagram documentation. The findings showed that *Instagram* promoted student engagement in five ways, namely allowing the students to be more actively involved in the learning process, providing a new learning environment for the students, providing greater target readers, allowing the collaboration and interaction between the students, and facilitating the students to choose their own learning style during the process of writing.

Keywords: student engagement; EFL writing; *Instagram*; social media; learning technology

1. Introduction

Student engagement plays a significant role in encouraging learners' positive attitudes and behaviors, as well as increasing their success and sense of learning ownership (Oliveira, 2012). The notion of engagement refers to "the amount of physical and psychological energy that the students devote to the academic experience" (Astin, 1999, p. 518), which could affect students' positive learning outcomes (Lester, 2013), such as increasing grades and satisfaction (Abas, 2015). In this sense, students who are engaged in the learning process should do better than those who are not engaged (Abas, 2015).

Since engagement is one of the important aspects of language learning, language teachers need to find ways to promote it. One of the ways to boost student engagement is to integrate technological tools in the process of language teaching and learning. The integration of technology in language learning can encourage students to be more engaged in the learning process (Costley, 2014), provide a new learning environment and foster student-centered learning (Oliveira, 2012).

One of the current technologies which can be integrated into language classroom is social media. Social media are Internet-based applications and technologies for Web 2.0 which allow users to create and exchange the content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, as cited in Mbodila, Ndebele, & Muhandji, 2014). Due to their growing popularity, social media can be suitable educational tools to engage students in language learning. Increasingly, language teachers have been attracted to use social media in language learning to engage and motivate students to be more active learners (Junco et al., 2011). Social media are also favored by the students because they use them every day to share their feelings, ideas, thoughts and life stories. The incorporation of social media into language teaching and learning enables the students to use the language learned inside the classroom in their real lives. As a result, social media can engage the students in the learning process inside and outside the classroom (Unitec & Macquarie, 2017) while increasing their level of engagement and allowing students to have a high level of interaction with others (Ternes, 2009).

The use of social media to engage students in the learning process has attracted many researchers. Akbari, Naderi, Simons, and Pilot (2016), for example, investigated the use of *Facebook* to increase student engagement in foreign language learning. The researchers compared the control group which used face-to-face learning and the experimental group using blended learning by integrating *Facebook* in the learning process. The findings revealed that the experimental group had higher outcomes in the TOEFL post-test than the control group. The students from the experimental group enjoyed interacting with their teachers and peers through *Facebook*. They spent their time and effort to do collaborative and educational activities. The study concluded that the experimental group showed a higher level of engagement than the control group.

In another study, conducted by Mbodila, Ndebele, and Muhandji (2014), the effect of *Facebook* on student engagement and collaboration was investigated. The findings of the study revealed that *Facebook* helped the students to interact with other students and lecturers. It engaged the students in collaborating with others and finding more information about the learning materials.

An experimental study conducted by Junco, Heibergert, and Loken (2010) investigated the effect of *Twitter* on college student engagement and grades. The results showed that the experimental group had a greater increase in engagement than the control group. The study concluded that *Twitter* could be an effective learning tool to engage students to participate more actively in language learning.

Another popular social media which can be implemented in language learning and teaching is *Instagram*. It is the first photo social platform that allows users to upload their pictures or videos using a caption (Desreumaux, 2014). *Instagram* is close to students' lives because the students access it every day. The number of *Instagram* users in Indonesia is rising daily. As of April 2020, there were 64 million *Instagram* active users in Indonesia. Indonesia was ranked in the fourth position as the largest *Instagram* audience worldwide after the United States with 120 million users, India with 88 million users, and Brazil with 82 million users (Clement, 2020). Thus, *Instagram* has the potential to be integrated into English language learning in Indonesia to promote student engagement.

This paper reports a part of a bigger study on the implementation of *Instagram* in EFL writing courses. This paper focuses on how the implementation of *Instagram* can promote student engagement in EFL writing. Student engagement is important to be promoted in EFL writing because writing activities inside the classroom may not fully engage students in the learning process (Andrews & Smith, 2011) and may lead to writing anxiety (Arindra & Ardi, 2020). Writing activities inside the classroom are disconnected from activities outside the classroom which are close to students' real lives. Writing activities outside the classroom can promote student engagement because the students have clear target audiences for their works, and they can relate their writing to their world. Accordingly, *Instagram* is a technological tool that potentially facilitates the students to get more engaged in EFL writing (Kelly, 2015). Therefore, the current study sought to examine whether the implementation of *Instagram* can promote student engagement in EFL writing.

2. Literature review

2.1. Student engagement in language learning and teaching

Engagement is defined as "the amount of physical and psychological energy that the students devote to the academic experience" (Astin, 1999, p. 518). It is often associated with the efforts, behaviors, and experiences that the students devote to educationally purposeful activities contributing directly to desired learning outcomes (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004; Hu &

Kuh, 2002; Lester, 2013). In other words, student engagement is the result of the meaningful learning which is experienced by the students during the learning process.

Student engagement plays a great role in language teaching and learning processes because the students who are engaged often work well in the learning process (Abas, 2015). They spend their time and effort working on their assignments and actively engaging in the learning process. They show their interest in learning and working on the learning materials, while they face and solve obstacles in the learning process, and they feel satisfied after they finish working on it (Oliveira, 2012). As a result, student engagement can increase the positive learning outcomes (Lester, 2013) as well as the students' success, such as the high grades and student satisfaction, the positive attitudes and behaviors of students, and a sense of belonging among them (Abas, 2015; Oliveira, 2012).

Oga-Baldwin (2019) mentioned four interrelated aspects of engagement, namely behavior, emotion, cognition, and agency. Behavior is the most visible marker of engagement, which can be observed through body language, gaze and response to instructions. Behavioral engagement is argued to instigate the other aspects of engagement. Another aspect is emotion, which refers to students' affective involvement in learning processes. Students who are behaviorally engaged are likely to be emotionally engaged, too. The next aspect, cognition, deals with what students think. Even though cognition is difficult to be observed, cognitive engagement is shown in the quality of academic works that the students produce. Lastly, agency is associated with students' contributions to the improvement of the learning environment and the quality of instruction. It can be expressed through clarifying learning materials, expressing ideas and opinions, as well as asking for meaningful inputs.

In this digital era, English teachers can engage their students through online courses and digital tools (Barkley, 2010; Koltovskaia, 2020). The students can learn English through websites or any new trends in education. English becomes easier to be learned because the students can access many sources easily through technology. The learning process is hence easier and more enjoyable (Sarica & Cavus, 2009). This development supports the idea that integrating technology in language learning is one of the effective ways to enhance student engagement (Oliveira, 2012).

2.2. The use of technology to engage students in language learning

Using technological tools inside the classroom is one of the effective ways to motivate students in learning in the 21st Century (Oliveira, 2012). In terms of improvement, technological tools give various options for making teaching more interesting and productive (Shyamlee & Phil,

2012). The integration of technology in language classrooms also supports the development of 21st Century skills, such as collaboration, digital literacy, critical thinking, and problem-solving (Oliveira, 2012).

The integration of technology in language learning often brings several advantages for students. First, it increases students' motivation, independence, and self-confidence (Andrade, 2014) because "technology provides greater opportunity for the students to express themselves" (p. 33). It means that technology frequently provides various activities and practices which can be done by the students autonomously. For instance, students can write something and share it with their friends and relatives (Andrade, 2014). Second, technology also facilitates students' independence because technological tools can enhance learner autonomy in language learning (Ardi, 2017; Pasaribu, 2020). In this regard, technologies typically enable the students to learn English at their own pace, place and time. Third, using technology in the language learning classroom can also increase students' motivation, decrease anxiety, create student-centered approach, allow students to have a more authentic learning process and provide greater language production (Jin et al., 2006, as cited in Andrade, 2014, p. 34).

The integration of technology in language learning encourages students to be more engaged in the learning process (Costley, 2014). First, the use of technology inside the classroom can create a new learning environment for the students, which can engage the students more in the learning process (Oliveira, 2012). Second, implementing technology in language learning can foster a student-centered approach, which is usually considered as one of the effective ways to engage the students. Accordingly, the combination of a student-centered approach and technology use in the classroom creates a dynamic learning environment where the students get engaged and participate in the learning activity. As a result, there should be more positive outcomes in the classroom (Dornyei, 1994, as cited in Oliveira, 2012).

One of the technologies that are commonly used in language learning is social media. Social media have become a part of students' lives so that the students often access them (Junco et al., 2010, as cited in Al-Bahrani, Patel, & Sheridan, 2015). The popularity of social media among the students can make them more engaged outside the class because they are familiar with this kind of technology. Besides, integrating social media in the learning process enables teachers to meet the students in the virtual space where they have already become active (Al-Bahrani et al., 2015). Therefore, the use of social media can encourage students to be more active in the learning process.

The use of social media in the learning process allows the students to have peer-to-peer contact to provide the students with richer learning experiences (Ternes, 2009). The interaction

with the material can be considered as "commenting, reshaping, and sharing the messages" through their social media (p. 1). The students directly spend their time and energy to develop the material. Moreover, the interaction on social media provides immediate feedback, support and challenge among the students.

The implementation of social media in the learning process allows the students to invest their time in it (Purvis, Rodger & Beckingham, 2016). The students are required to spend some amount of time to work on their assignments on social media. It can optimize the time-on-task, which encourages the students to create more student engagement. As a result, the students invest their time and energy in this learning process.

Instagram, a photo social platform established by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger in 2010, is one of the popular social media nowadays. It was then bought by *Facebook* in April 2012 (Desreumaux, 2014). This application aims to share users' photos or videos with other people (Muwafiqi, 2017). This kind of social media also allows the users to upload the photos and choose the photo filter to adjust the appearance of the picture (Ferwerda et al., 2016). *Instagram* allows users to write down the description of the photos or videos through captions (Kelly, 2015). Moreover, *Instagram* has other interesting features, such as Instagram Story, live video streaming, direct message, group messaging, image editing, location tagging, commenting, mentioning, video editing tools, search functions, user tagging, user profile, hashtags, and filters (GetApp, 2017).

Instagram is one of the social networking tools which can be implemented in language learning since it is accessible for everyone. Khalitova (2016) argues that *Instagram* is a tool that is quick and easy to be accessed as a mobile application by the students. *Instagram* has a bright interface and interesting content, which can make the learning process more motivating. Moreover, through *Instagram*, the students gain the possibility to learn the English language anytime and anywhere (Khalitova, 2016) because they can access it easily through their smartphones. *Instagram* is also a platform that can help the students to learn English by enriching their language learning experiences (Hadiyanti & Simona, 2016).

Instagram is one of the social media platforms that can be integrated into writing classes. The tool facilitates authentic resources of visual text and audio to the students. Integrating *Instagram* in writing instruction can give the students a new experience of learning EFL writing (Kurniawan & Kastuhandani, 2016; Purnama, 2017) because it allows the students to read and write through photo description or caption, comment and direct messaging (Kelly, 2015). *Instagram* has a limit of 2200 characters, which encourages its users to write extensive texts. Therefore, it is different from *Twitter*, which allows only a very limited number of

characters. Moreover, *Instagram* has certain features which allow the students to discuss their writing through feedback messages (Kurdi, 2017). Thus, it is possible for teachers to give feedback after the students upload their writings.

Instagram can be a medium for increasing students' writing skills. Hadiyanti and Simona (2016) state that *Instagram* can enhance students' writing skill by giving comments on the photos or videos and writing some captions or hashtags which are uploaded by the students. Furthermore, the students also get better inspiration to create texts since the platform provides spaces for pictures or videos which can support them to arrange good writing (Muwafiqi, 2017). In other words, the students have more opportunities to develop their writing skills especially while improving the structure, coherence, and thematic development of their writing (Kelly, 2015). Therefore, *Instagram* can provide opportunities and assistance for the students to improve their skills in writing.

Writing captions on *Instagram* helps the students feel greater authenticity and purpose than in the traditional writing assignments which can only be seen only by the teacher (Kelly, 2015). In this sense, *Instagram* can help the students to increase their awareness of their readers. Thus, the students become more aware of their language because their posts can be seen by everyone. As a result, the students encourage themselves to give their best in writing to make a well-arranged writing product (Muwafiqi, 2017).

2.3. Instagram as a tool of multimodal writing

According to Andrews and Smith (2011), nowadays writing in the classroom is disconnected from students' lives. The students are more aware of the genres outside the classroom. Hence, writing outside the classroom can engage the students because it is connected to real-world experiences. Moreover, this real engagement provides the students with greater audiences of their work and increases their motivation in writing. Therefore, they give their best in writing to produce accurate writing. Writing outside the classroom also allows the students to have a sensory experience in the real world. It can produce the writing product which is different from that with the simulated world in the classroom (Andrews & Smith, 2011).

In this digital era, the proliferation of technology enables students to create multimodal texts. *Instagram* is one of the potential platforms that facilitates the students to write in multiple modes. First, it allows the students to write a caption as a text. The caption is used to describe photos or videos which will be uploaded later by the students. Each caption is 2200 characters for maximum (Kelly, 2015). Indeed, writing activities on *Instagram* can facilitate several modes in one activity. First, the students are allowed to write a text on the new mode using

social media. Second, the students have pictures and videos which can help them to produce a text (Andrews & Smith, 2011). The pictures and videos can stimulate the students to write a text. Thus, they can help the students to avoid students' blank page syndrome.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design

This paper is a part of a larger qualitative study that examined the implementation of *Instagram* in EFL learning. The study took place in two writing classes, consisting of 45 first-year students, at the English Language Education Study Program of Sanata Dharma University, Indonesia, during the academic year of 2017/2018. Both classes were taught by the same lecturer, focusing on composing a good paragraph with the use of *Instagram*.

There were several steps to the implementation of the platform in the writing instruction:

1) The lecturer announced the topic of the writing project.
2) The students were asked to browse and download pictures related to the topic.
3) The students started writing a draft.
4) The students did peer editing.
5) The students revised their writing based on their peer's suggestions.
6) The students uploaded the pictures and texts on *Instagram*.
7) The students were asked to give comments or feedback on at least three other students' works.

3.2. Data collection and analysis

The data were collected through observations and interviews. The observations aimed at describing behaviors, settings and interactions (Ary et al., 2010). In this data-gathering technique, the researchers played the role of participant-observers. In this role, the researchers built a relationship with the participants but did not get involved in the activities of the class. The status of an observer was known to the participants (Ary et al., 2010). Therefore, the researchers were given time to introduce themselves in front of the class by the lecturer. The purposes of conducting the observation were to investigate the real process of the implementation of *Instagram* in the writing class and to build the relationship with the participants so that they would trust the researchers in the interview. Thus, the participants

could feel open to giving detailed and reliable information related to the questions in the interview.

During the observation, the researchers captured the implementation of *Instagram* in the writing classes. Besides, students' interaction, collaboration and social engagement performed by the students on the *Instagram* comment columns were observed and documented. The data were in the form of the screenshot of *Instagram's* posts.

The interview was used to explore and investigate how the use of the platform promoted student engagement in writing. According to Creswell (2009), interview is the process of collecting data which involves unstructured and open-ended questions to get the data from the participants by face-to-face communication. It is used to collect the information from people about their opinions, beliefs, and feeling related to a certain situation in their own words (Ary et al., 2010). An interviewer needs to go deeper, pursue an understanding of the complexity and build the relationship with someone to share their perceptions about the world (Richards, 2003). The researchers conducted interviews with the lecturer and seven students to get detailed information related to those two research questions. The students were coded as P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, and P7, respectively.

While conducting this interview, the researchers used open-ended questions to allow the participants to give their best answers related to their experience without getting any interference from the researchers (Creswell, 2012). Thus, the participants could describe and give detailed information related to the questions. In this study, the researchers conducted one-on-one interviews. This type of interview allowed the researchers to ask some questions to only one participant at a time (Creswell, 2012). Additionally, the researchers also used semi-structured interviews, allowing the researchers to ask questions which are formulated beforehand and modify the questions during the interview process (Ary et al., 2010).

The results of the interviews were analyzed through several steps. First, the interviews were transcribed. "Transcript allows the sort of focused attention on minutiae of talk that promotes insights into technique and content" (Richards, 2003, p. 81). It helped the researchers to analyze the data more easily. Second, the researchers did the member checking by giving back the results of the interview to the interviewees to ensure the validity of the interview. Third, the researchers categorized the data in the transcript. Fourth, the researchers reduced the data by deleting the information which was not related to the research question.

The data from the observation and interview were confronted to provide a thick description of the implementation of *Instagram* in the writing processes to boost student engagement.

3.3. Findings and discussion

Engagement is a complex set of experiences and behaviors which influence students' outcomes. Engagement is important in English language learning because it can enhance students' positive learning outcomes (Lester, 2013) and increase their learning success, positive attitudes and behaviors as well as learning ownership (Oliveira, 2012). As a result, the students who are engaged in language learning should do better than those who are not engaged, and those who are engaged should get higher grades and satisfaction (Abas, 2015).

Based on the findings, the integration of *Instagram* in the two writing classes promoted student engagement in five ways, namely allowing the students to be more involved in the writing processes, creating a new learning environment, providing greater target readers, ensuring the collaboration and interaction among the students, and allowing the students to choose their own learning style.

3.3.1. Allowing the students to be more involved in the writing process

Instagram facilitated the students to be more involved in the learning process, especially in working on their writing project on *Instagram*. The students who were involved in the learning process were more engaged in learning. Student engagement can be promoted by students' interests in working on their tasks, learners' efforts in facing and solving the problems or obstacles and their satisfaction in accomplishing their works (Oliveira, 2012).

The findings revealed that the integration of *Instagram* in EFL writing enabled the students to be more involved in the learning process. First, *Instagram* was one of the social media which are close to students' lives. The students accessed their *Instagram* account every day on their smartphones even though they sometimes just scrolled the timeline or watched the Instagram Story. The participants said:

> I usually scroll the timeline to watch the photos or videos, watch the Instagram Story, and read the new information. (P1)
>
> I often open and access Instagram on my smartphone, almost every day. (P2)
>
> Every time I open my smartphone, I usually access Instagram even if it is just for a moment. (P3)

Hence, the popularity of *Instagram* among the students encouraged the writing lecturer to implement this social media in this course. She admitted in the interview:

> One of the reasons why I implement Instagram in the writing class because this social media is the door to enter the students' lives. Indeed, Instagram is a popular social media among them.

This statement indicated that *Instagram* allowed the lecturer to meet her students in a virtual space in which the students had already been active (Al-Bahrani et al., 2015). She knew that *Instagram* was a part of the students' lives. Therefore, she decided to incorporate this technology into her writing classes. This echoes Zepke and Leach's (2010) idea that teachers are at the heart of engagement. Furthermore, implementing *Instagram* in writing classes encouraged the students to be more interested in working on the writing projects. Indeed, the students were familiar with *Instagram* because they accessed it every day on their smartphone. In the interview, Participant 5 said:

> Basically, we have these writing projects which are close to our lives. So, we do not have any burdens to work on it. In contrast, we really enjoy working on this writing project because it is our habit to write and post something on social media especially Instagram. (P5)

The students were also interested in finishing their writing projects on *Instagram* because social media had a bright interface and interesting features which encouraged and motivated them to express their ideas on writing. In the interview, the participants admitted:

> I love writing and posting some quotes on my Instagram Story. (P2)
> I love writing on Instagram even though I just write one or two sentences as my photo's caption. (P3)

Those two statements indicated that the students showed their interest in writing on *Instagram* because of its interesting features, namely Instagram Story and photo's caption. The bright interface and interesting content of *Instagram* motivated the students in writing processes (Khalitova, 2016).

Accordingly, *Instagram* was an interesting learning tool for the students in this writing class. They were very familiar with this tool and all of its features. As a result, the students were interested in working on their writing projects on *Instagram*. They were involved and more engaged in the learning process because they were interested in working on their writing assignment (Oliveira, 2012).

Second, the students were successful in facing obstacles in working on their writing projects on *Instagram*. The students could find solutions to overcome their problems by asking their friends, checking the difficult words in the dictionary, and browsing on the Internet. In the interview, the students admitted:

> I do not know how to arrange sentences to be a good paragraph. So, I will look for the references and read the articles. I will not copy the sentence but I will copy the structure of that sentence. (P1)

My difficulties in working this writing project are using the correct grammar and dealing with difficult words. Because sometimes, several different dictionaries have different meanings. That is why sometimes I am confused to choose the best word to be used in my writing. So, I will ask my friends as a solution. (P2)

Those two statements revealed that the students tried to overcome their problems and difficulties on their own. For example, P1 tried to look for references and read articles to find out good and correct sentence patterns. P2 tried to overcome her difficulties in grammar and vocabulary by asking her friends. Therefore, the students were involved in the implementation of *Instagram* in the writing classes because they could face and solve their obstacles (Oliveira, 2012) in their own way while working on their assignments.

Third, the implementation of *Instagram* in the writing classes allowed the students to have a feeling of satisfaction after working and finishing the writing project. In the interview, one student said:

I am very satisfied after posting my writing on Instagram. Sometimes, I cannot believe that finally, I could make such good writing with certain topics. (P4)

That statement showed that the student expressed her feeling of being satisfied after working, facing, and overcoming her obstacles in this writing project on *Instagram*. She did not realize that she could produce a good piece of writing on a certain topic. In this case, student engagement was reflected in the feeling of being satisfied (Oliveira, 2012).

3.3.2. Providing a new learning environment

Instagram as a learning tool in the writing classes provided a new learning environment to the students. The new learning environment could engage the students in the learning process (Hadiyanti & Simona, 2016; Khalitova, 2016; Kurniawan & Kastuhandani, 2016; Muwafiqi, 2017; Oliveira, 2012). The findings revealed that *Instagram* provided a new learning environment for the students, which enabled the students to conduct the writing process, allowing them to write and post the writings on social media not only on the paper, providing an accessible learning tool, and stimulating them to write using photos or videos.

Instagram provided a new learning environment for the students. First, the students could experience the writing process on *Instagram*. The use of the platform in writing classes allowed the students to enrich their writing experiences through drafting, writing, publishing and sharing their writing with others.

In the second writing project, there were many steps to writing projects on *Instagram*. First, the students were asked to browse any pictures on the Internet. Second, the students were asked to start writing based on the picture that they chose before. Third, the students were asked to choose a partner to have peer editing. They gave their writing draft to their partner. Thus, their partner could start revising by checking the grammar, spelling, punctuation, and so on. Fourth, all of the students had to give back their peer's work. Therefore, the students could check and revise their own work based on their friends' feedback. Fifth, the students wrote their writing on the Instagram class account. Sixth, the students posted and published their writings on *Instagram*.

The classroom observation showed how the students enriched their experiences in the writing process. They did not write in one sitting but also completed their writing projects in several steps. There were five steps in the writing process, namely prewriting, drafting, revising, editing and publishing (Faraj, 2015). The students conducted the prewriting process by looking for pictures and ideas for their writing. The drafting process was conducted by writing a rough draft related to their topic. The students also had peer editing as the part of the editing process. Their peers could correct the mistakes found in the draft. Besides, the students revised their own writing based on their peers' suggestions. Lastly, the students could publish and share their final writing with others on *Instagram*.

Second, the students who usually worked and submitted their writing projects on paper got a new experience. They did not write their writing projects anymore on the paper. Instead, they got a chance to write and publish their writing on *Instagram*. Thus, the students could upload the pictures or videos and write their writing projects on the photo caption. In this regard, the students gained a new learning environment for writing. The students admitted:

> I never write something in a long and detailed form in social media. So, this is my new experience. (P1)
>
> The positive side of implementing Instagram in the Basic Writing class is to follow the advent of technology and the task is not only focusing on the paper. (P2)
>
> Because if we write only on the paper, only me who knows my own work. Other people cannot read my writing. (P7)

Those statements revealed that the students experienced how to learn and write in the new learning environment (Oliveira, 2012). *Instagram* facilitated the students to write a text on the photo caption. The students were engaged more in working on this writing project because they could explore something new.
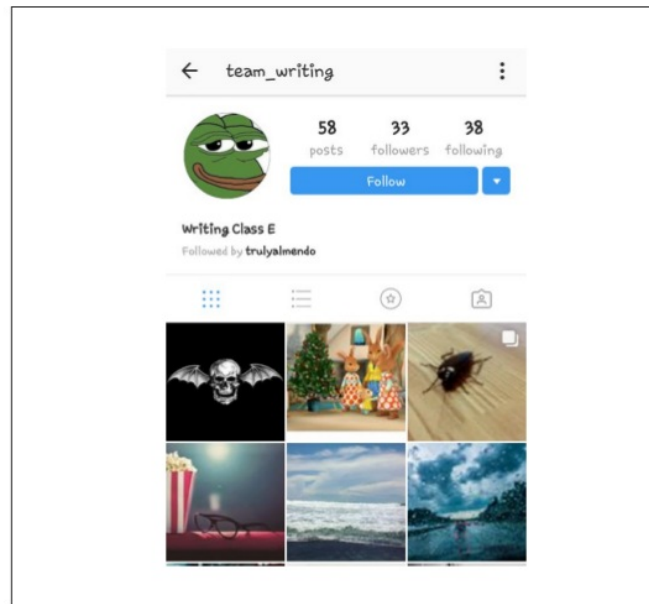
Figure 1. Screenshot of Students' *Instagram*

Third, the new learning environment could be facilitated by *Instagram* features. *Instagram* allowed the students to post and upload pictures or videos related to their writings. As a result, both the pictures and videos helped the students to be more motivated in writing because it could give stimulation to them. In other words, those photos and videos helped the students to get better ideas and inspirations in working on their writing projects. As one student remarked,

> The picture helped me to relate the topic and my writing. I could develop my writing to be better using the picture. (P4)

This statement was also supported by the lecturer. She said:

> By integrating Instagram, the students do not only have experiences with arranging the words but it is also helped by the pictures. So, the pictures can stimulate their writings. Usually, some of the students have blank page syndrome. So, they are confused to start writing. However, when they have pictures, they can get fresh ideas from those pictures.

Instagram as the learning tool in the writing classes provided videos and pictures which helped the students to arrange good writing (Muwafiqi, 2017). As a result, the students were not afraid and worried anymore to write because this social media could overcome their blank page syndrome by giving them stimulation through pictures and videos.
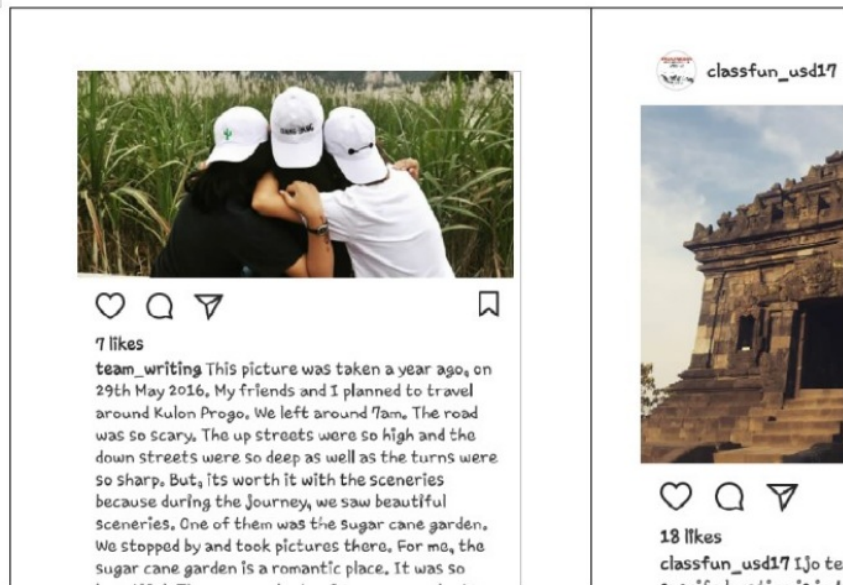
Figure 2. Screenshot of students' paragraphs

Fourth, the implementation of *Instagram* in the writing class also gave the students other new experiences. *Instagram* allowed the students to access and work on their writing projects anywhere and anytime by using their smartphones (Khalitova, 2016). The students were more flexible in working on their assignments. They were not bounded anymore to submit their writing project on the spot. The students said:

> Because of this assignment on Instagram, I could submit my work before the deadline since I could directly upload my writing project anytime and anywhere. (P3)
>
> We can work on this writing project anytime and anywhere but we must have internet access. Moreover, we do not need to type our writing project anymore on our laptop and print it in the print shop. (P6)

Moreover, the lecturer also stated:

> Instagram is a practical tool to be implemented because it can be accessed anywhere and anytime.

Those statements indicated that the students had possibilities to work on their writing projects anytime and anywhere because they could access Instagram easily through their smartphones (Khalitova, 2016). Besides, the students also could submit their assignments

before the deadline. It could encourage students' behavior to follow the rule or guidelines related to the due date of the writing task.

3.3.3. Providing greater target audience

Writing on *Instagram* enabled students to have greater target audience. Public readers or students' followers on *Instagram* could read their postings. The students shared their thoughts in the interview. They said:

> Using *Instagram* can make us easily to publish our writing. A lot of people can read our writings. (P3)
>
> If we write and post our writing on social media (*Instagram*), it will be read by many people so I will show them that my grammar is good. (P4)

The lecturer also added:

> Using *Instagram* allows the students to have a sense of audience. If they work on the paper, only me who can read their writings. However, if their writings are published on *Instagram* or other social media, they will give their best in writing. So, they will have greater target audiences in their mind.

Based on the previous statements, the use of *Instagram* in the writing classes allowed the students to feel the greater authenticity of the target audience or readers (Kelly, 2015). Indeed, *Instagram* allowed everyone to read students' writing products.

Having greater target audience, the students were encouraged to be more careful in working on their writing projects. They did not want to make any mistakes since a lot of people would read their writings. In the interview, the students also admitted the same thought that they increased their awareness in working on the writing projects on *Instagram*. They stated:

> Of course, I will be more careful in writing. I also ask others' suggestions so I will produce good writing. (P1)
>
> I am more aware of my writing, so if I write a caption on Instagram, I usually pay attention to my writing even if it will not be assessed because many people can read it. (P4)
>
> Because many people can assess us through our writing, so I will post something good. (P6)

Those statements revealed that the students realized they were aware of the greater target readers. Consequently, the students decided to be more aware and be careful in composing the texts. The students gave their best in writing by paying attention and increasing their awareness of their own work. Thus, the students put more effort into it. This statement was supported by the lecturer. She said:

> Because they realize that they have greater target readers such as their family members and their
> friends, they will give their best in writing.

As a result, students' writing products on *Instagram* could be better than the writing products on paper. In the interview, she said:

> Maybe, writing projects on *Instagram* give better results. I can compare the writing projects result
> and the writing test result. Of course, writing on *Instagram* allowed the students to have a better
> result because they can have a lot of time to prepare their writing. So, writing is a process, right?
> Besides, writing on Instagram makes them prepare for their writing topic more. So, that is one of
> the reasons why using Instagram will make them better especially in writing.

Writing on *Instagram* allowed the students to have greater target audience because everyone could access and read it. It enabled the students to feel greater authenticity (Kelly, 2015). As a result, the students did their best by paying attention and increasing their awareness of their writings. They could make a well-arranged writing (Muwafiqi, 2017). This authentic way of learning encouraged the students to be more engaged in the learning process (Abas, 2015). Thus, student engagement was promoted by having greater target audience on *Instagram*.

3.3.4. Allowing collaboration and interaction among the students

The implementation of *Instagram* in writing instruction allowed the students to collaborate and interact with others by giving feedback and comments in the comment column. The students could correct others' works by leaving the comments. As a result, they could get feedback on their writing.

The interaction of giving feedback among the students was articulated in the interview. One student stated:

> The positive side of using *Instagram* in this class is allowing others to give comments to our
> writing. Sometimes, my friends will tell our mistakes and give a correction to me. So, later on, we
> can correct and revise that mistake. (P7)

The lecturer also said:

> Using *Instagram* in this class allows the students to collaborate through peer editing.

The collaboration between the students to give feedback and comment about others' writing is presented in Figure 3. In the figure, Student B gave comments and suggestions to Student A.
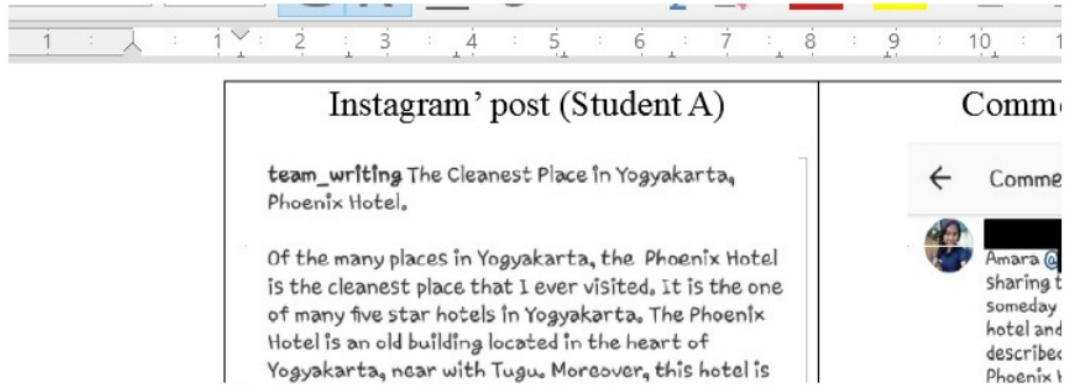

Figure 3. Students' collaboration on Instagram comment column

The students also showed their interaction with other students on *Instagram* by leaving comments and discussing others' work. Figure 4 presents an example of the interaction between two students in commenting on others' work on the *Instagram* comment column. For instance, Student C described a restaurant with a beautiful interior design. Other students, who were interested in going to the place, left their comment and showed their amazement on the comment column.
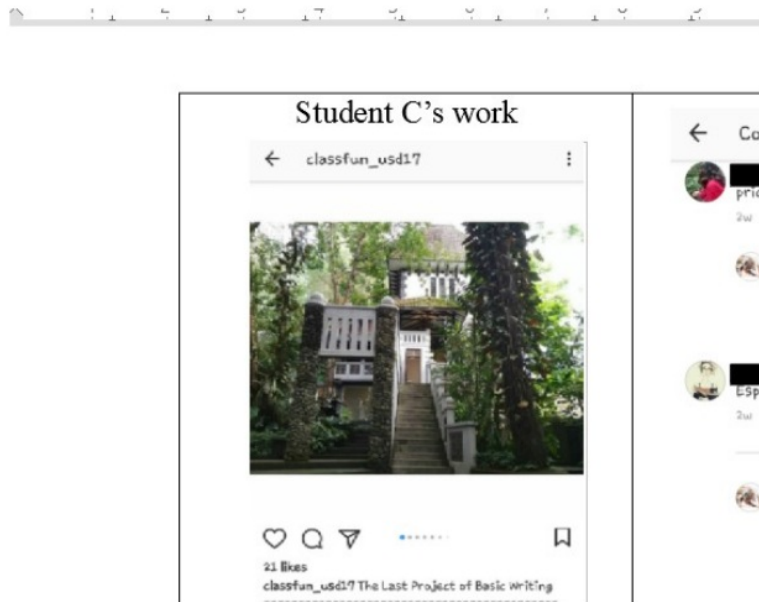

Figure 4. Students' interaction on *Instagram*

Those two examples of collaboration and interaction showed that *Instagram* allowed the students to have a peer to peer contact which leads the students to have richer experiences (Ternes, 2009) in EFL writing. This collaboration and interaction between peers encouraged the students to get a deeper knowledge of the material outside the class. As a result, *Instagram* could promote student engagement because the students could collaborate with their friends (Mbodila et al., 2014).

3.3.5. Allowing the students to choose their own learning style
Incorporating *Instagram* in the writing class encouraged the students to choose their own learning styles. It was articulated by one student in the interview as follows:

> Even though I have an idea, sometimes I need a long time to encourage myself to start writing. For example, in this last project, my friend (P2) needs 3 days and the other one (P7) has to arrange his schedule to finish this assignment. However, if I have my own intention to work on the writing project, I will directly type and finish it especially when I have a good mood to work on it. (P3)
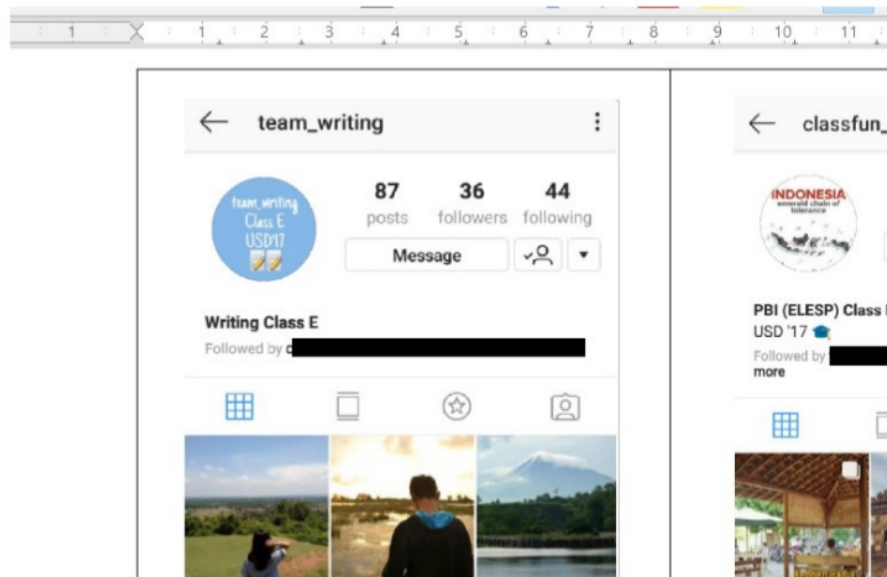

Figure 5. Students' third writing projects

The statement implied that every student followed a different learning style, especially while working on the writing projects. For instance, P2 spent three days doing her writing projects; P7 had to arrange his schedule first; and P3 had to have a good mood first to finish his writing projects. The implementation of *Instagram* in this course created student-centered learning by allowing the students to choose their best learning style (Gelisli, 2009). Thus, the

combination of integrating technology and student-centered learning boosted student engagement (Oliveira, 2012).

4. Conclusions and recommendations

This paper presents a study examining how the implementation of *Instagram* in two EFL writing classes promotes student engagement. The results show that the implementation of *Instagram* in the writing classes promoted student engagement in five ways, namely allowing the students to be more involved in the writing processes, providing a new learning environment, providing greater target audience, fostering collaboration and interaction among the students, and allowing the students to choose their own learning style. As a result, EFL writing is not disconnected from the real world context outside the classroom, which is experienced by the students daily.

The promotion of student engagement in the writing classes cannot be separated from the affordances of *Instagram*. Its features facilitated interaction, communication and collaboration among the students, which may bring about meaningful learning experiences. The meaningful learning process is a critical factor for the enhancement of student engagement (Abas, 2015).

The researchers recommend that *Instagram* be implemented in EFL writing classes to foster student engagement. As the findings suggested that the implementation of the platform facilitated interaction, communication and collaboration, writing teachers need to create an active and collaborative learning atmosphere that explores students' real lives. Since the present study only focuses on how the implementation of *Instagram* to enhance student engagement in EFL writing, future research may further examine such dimensions of student engagement in the implementation of *Instagram* in EFL writing as emotional engagement, cognitive engagement, behavioral engagement (Fredricks et al., 2003 and Fredricks et al., 2004), social engagement, reflective engagement, and goal-clarity engagement (Gebre et al., 2014). Studies on engagement dimensions will shed more light on the affordances of *Instagram* to engage EFL students in writing.

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