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Assessing Students' Motivation and Perceptions in Descriptive Text Writing Through Instagram Reels at SMP Negeri 1 Boliyohuto

(*Analisis Motivasi dan Persepsi Siswa dalam Menulis Teks Deskriptif Melalui Instagram Reels di SMP Negeri 1 Boliyohuto*)

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Abstract

This study explores ninth-grade students' motivation and perceptions regarding Instagram Reels as a medium for composing English descriptive-text captions. A convergent mixed-methods approach was applied to a purposively selected class of 30 students at SMP Negeri 1 Boliyohuto during eight instructional sessions. The quantitative strand employed a ten-item, five-point motivation questionnaire, while the qualitative strand drew on open-ended responses and semi-structured group interviews addressing acceptance, understanding, and evaluation. The reported item-level descriptive statistics yielded an average of approximately 3.86 out of 5; the separately reported intrinsic and extrinsic motivation averages were 3.94 and 3.74, respectively. Item-level scores ranged from 3.27 to 4.07. The qualitative account identified four interconnected themes: greater interest in writing, emerging confidence, social engagement, and hesitation about technical demands or public posting. These findings suggest that short-video caption tasks may provide meaningful opportunities for choice, visual support, and interaction, but they do not demonstrate a causal improvement in writing proficiency. The study is limited by one class, post-activity self-report measurement, and the absence of an independently assessed writing outcome. Teacher scaffolding, constructive feedback, and safer options for sharing work are therefore recommended.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji motivasi dan persepsi siswa kelas IX terhadap penggunaan Instagram Reels sebagai media penulisan caption teks deskriptif berbahasa Inggris. Pendekatan metode campuran dengan orientasi konvergen diterapkan pada 30 siswa kelas IX-A SMP Negeri 1 Boliyohuto yang dipilih secara purposif selama delapan pertemuan. Data kuantitatif diperoleh melalui angket motivasi sepuluh butir berskala Likert lima poin, sedangkan data kualitatif berasal dari jawaban terbuka dan wawancara kelompok semi-terstruktur mengenai penerimaan, pemahaman, dan evaluasi. Berdasarkan tabel statistik deskriptif per butir, rerata sepuluh butir adalah sekitar 3,86 dari 5; rerata motivasi intrinsik dan ekstrinsik yang dilaporkan masing-masing 3,94 dan 3,74. Rerata per butir berkisar antara 3,27 dan 4,07. Ringkasan data kualitatif menunjukkan empat tema, yaitu meningkatnya minat menulis, tumbuhnya kepercayaan diri, keterlibatan sosial, serta keraguan terkait kendala teknis dan publikasi terbuka. Temuan ini mengindikasikan potensi tugas caption berbasis video pendek untuk memberi ruang pilihan, dukungan visual, dan interaksi. Namun, data deskriptif tanpa kelompok pembanding belum membuktikan peningkatan kemampuan menulis secara kausal.

Bimbingan guru, umpan balik konstruktif, dan pilihan berbagi karya secara lebih aman diperlukan agar kegiatan digital tetap inklusif.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Writing descriptive texts requires learners to select relevant details, organize them into a recognizable structure, and use language accurately enough for a reader to imagine a person, place, object, or experience. For junior high school learners of English as a foreign language (EFL), these demands occur simultaneously: learners must generate ideas, retrieve vocabulary, arrange sentences, and attend to grammatical form. Descriptive writing is therefore more than a vocabulary exercise. It is a communicative task in which observation, audience awareness, and textual organization intersect. When activities are experienced only as isolated worksheet exercises, students may complete them without developing a sustained reason to revise and share their writing.

Motivation matters because participation in language learning is shaped not only by the difficulty of a task but also by its perceived value and the opportunities it provides for meaningful action. Self-determination theory distinguishes intrinsic interest from varied forms of extrinsic regulation and emphasizes the psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2020). In instructional settings, giving learners meaningful choices while maintaining clear expectations may support engagement more effectively than either unrestricted freedom or rigid control. Reeve and Cheon (2021) describe autonomy-supportive teaching as an approach that joins learner perspective-taking with purposeful instructional structure. This framework is relevant to writing activities that invite personal expression yet still require linguistic guidance.

Social-media platforms have expanded the possible audiences and forms of language-learning tasks. Instagram combines images, video, captions, and opportunities for feedback, making it a plausible setting for contextualized written production. Aloraini (2018), examining authentic learner interactions on Instagram, reported that different kinds of language posts elicited different amounts of written output. Gonulal (2019) found broadly positive language-learning experiences among Instagram users while also identifying differences in how learners used the platform. Erarslan (2019) likewise documented learners' perspectives on Instagram as a supplement to English instruction. These studies provide evidence of potential affordances, but their populations, activities, and measured outcomes differ from the descriptive caption task examined here.

Evidence from Indonesia also suggests that Instagram can be perceived as an engaging environment for writing. Wahab et al. (2023), for example, reported favorable enthusiasm ratings in a small secondary-school sample using Instagram in text-writing activities. Such findings should be read as context-bound evidence of learners' reactions, not proof that every Instagram feature improves language proficiency. Instagram Reels is a particularly distinct format: short moving images may supply concrete descriptive details, while the caption must still communicate meaning in words. The potential educational benefit lies in coordinating these modes rather than assuming that video exposure itself improves writing.

Research on digital multimodal composing provides a useful wider perspective. Jiang (2017) identified technological, educational, and social affordances arising from multimodal composing in EFL learning; Xu (2023) reported improvements in selected writing outcomes in a comparative study of multimodal projects; and Maghsoudi et al. (2022) investigated integrating such composition into EFL writing instruction. At the same time, Hafner and Ho (2020) caution that assessment must attend to composing processes as well as products. Taken together, this literature suggests that students' enthusiasm for combining words and visuals should be considered alongside the quality, structure, and assessment of the written text.

An important gap concerns how younger EFL learners interpret caption writing as an activity that is both educational and socially visible. Kang and Kim (2023) observed that adolescent learners' perceptions of digital multimodal tasks changed in different ways over time; positive attitudes were not uniform. Related scholarship has examined the rhetorical choices adolescent writers make across text-based and multimodal tasks (Kang, 2022). However, findings from other settings cannot be transferred automatically to a rural

Indonesian junior high school, particularly when public posting, access to devices, and confidence about English language use can shape participation.

The present study addresses this contextual gap by examining one ninth-grade class at SMP Negeri 1 Boliyohuto following eight sessions of descriptive caption writing associated with Instagram Reels. It asks two questions: (1) What level and pattern of writing motivation is reported by students after the activities, including intrinsic and extrinsic dimensions? (2) How do students describe their acceptance, understanding, and evaluation of Instagram Reels for descriptive-text tasks? The study contributes a classroom-level account of perceived engagement and of conditions that may support or constrain participation. Its purpose is descriptive and interpretive, not to establish a treatment effect on writing achievement.

2. RESERACH METHODOLOGY

The study used a mixed-methods approach described in the original research design as convergent parallel. Quantitative questionnaire results and qualitative interview accounts were considered as complementary descriptions of the same classroom experience rather than as independent evidence of causation. In mixed-methods research, integration is most informative when points of agreement and difference are considered explicitly (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Here, integration was undertaken at the interpretation stage, where numerical response patterns were read alongside the recurring themes in students' accounts.

The setting was SMP Negeri 1 Boliyohuto in the 2025/2026 academic year. Class IX-A, comprising 30 ninth-grade students, was selected purposively because learners had previously encountered descriptive-text concepts. All 30 students were included in the reported quantitative summaries. As a single intact classroom, the sample is suitable for describing a local pedagogical experience but not for estimating the attitudes of students across schools. The researcher facilitated the learning activities in collaboration with the English teacher, a role that made consistent task guidance possible but may also have influenced participants' reported enthusiasm.

Instruction took place in eight sessions. The first two introduced descriptive-text organization and demonstrated how to connect appropriate visual material with an English caption. Sessions three to seven provided guided caption-writing practice around familiar topics, including a favorite teacher, an animal, a place, an object, and self-description. Learners selected or created suitable visual material and prepared descriptive captions associated with Reels. Group interviews with approximately five students per discussion group took place during the middle sessions. The final meeting focused on reflection, followed by distribution of a motivation questionnaire through a class WhatsApp group.

The quantitative instrument was a ten-statement, five-point Likert-type questionnaire addressing aspects of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. It was administered after the sequence; no comparable pre-activity score or control-group result was reported. The available descriptive output contains the number of respondents, minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation for each coded item, alongside separate summaries for the two motivation dimensions. The qualitative component combined open-ended responses and semi-structured group interviews organized around acceptance, understanding, and evaluation. Instruments were presented in Indonesian to support comprehension and fuller expression.

The quantitative analysis reports descriptive means and standard deviations without significance testing. The overall item average is calculated as the unweighted mean of the ten item means shown in the descriptive output, while the intrinsic and extrinsic dimension means are retained as separately reported statistics. Interview material was summarized through recurring themes, following a thematic analytic orientation that distinguishes identifying patterns from establishing their prevalence (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Nowell et al., 2017). Because interview quotations and item-to-dimension coding are not available in the reported summaries, the discussion does not attribute exact statements, frequencies, or statistical relationships to individual students.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Quantitative Pattern of Writing Motivation

The item-level descriptive statistics for the 30 respondents show mean scores ranging from 3.27 (P07) to 4.07 (P10). Notably, eight of the ten items recorded mean scores of 3.87 or higher, suggesting an overall positive assessment on the five-point scale. However, the variation in mean scores indicates that respondents did not evaluate all aspects of the experience equally. Although the results reflect a generally favorable perception, the relatively high averages should not be interpreted as evidence of unanimous satisfaction, particularly since the individual response distributions are not available for further examination.

Averaging the ten displayed item means gives approximately 3.86. This figure is an item-level descriptive summary, not an independently computed person-level composite with a reported reliability estimate. It is therefore used cautiously as an indication that favorable responses were common, rather than as a validated psychological scale score. The item P07 mean of 3.27 is still above the scale midpoint of 3, but it

is meaningfully lower than the highest-rated item. Its comparatively large standard deviation (1.015) points to more varied responses and argues against treating the class as a homogeneous group of social-media enthusiasts.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for the Ten Questionnaire Items (N = 30)

Item	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
P01	2	5	3.97	0.718
P02	2	5	3.97	0.765
P03	2	5	4.03	0.718
P04	1	5	3.90	0.803
P05	1	5	3.60	1.070
P06	1	5	4.03	0.765
P07	1	5	3.27	1.015
P08	1	5	3.90	0.885
P09	1	5	3.87	0.900
P10	1	5	4.07	0.740

Note. P01-P10 identify questionnaire items; SD = standard deviation.

3.2 Intrinsic and Extrinsic Orientations

The separate dimension summary in Table 2 reports a mean of 3.9389 for intrinsic motivation and 3.7417 for extrinsic motivation. The difference is approximately 0.20 points on the response scale. This pattern is consistent with the possibility that some students found value in the writing activity itself, not merely in external rewards. Nevertheless, descriptive mean differences alone do not establish statistical significance, and they do not show that intrinsic motivation increased from a pre-existing level. The absence of an item-to-dimension key also prevents an audit of how the reported subscale means were obtained.

The standard deviations of 0.59449 and 0.68696 suggest appreciable variation between students within both dimensions. An educationally useful reading is that the same task may motivate students for different reasons. A learner who enjoys producing a visually coherent caption may respond to the chance for creative choice; another may participate because the teacher will assess the text or classmates will see the product. Self-determination theory does not require dismissing all external motives: forms of extrinsic motivation differ in how far their value is internalized (Ryan & Deci, 2020). The important instructional issue is whether external expectations are experienced as meaningful support or as pressure.

The narrower spread of intrinsic scores should not be interpreted as a more reliable measure, because the subscale reliability coefficients are not reported. A scale can produce a high mean even when its constituent items have limited coherence. At the current descriptive level, the most defensible conclusion is that the sample expressed favorable attitudes on both reported dimensions and that the intrinsic dimension average was slightly higher.

Table 2. Reported Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation Summaries (N = 30)

Dimension	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
Intrinsic motivation	1.67	5.00	3.9389	0.59449
Extrinsic motivation	1.50	5.00	3.7417	0.68696

3.3 Qualitative Perceptions: Acceptance, Understanding, and Evaluation

The qualitative summary identifies four recurring themes: interest in writing, confidence, social engagement, and concerns related to technical demands or public sharing. These themes offer a view of the activity that the numerical means alone cannot capture. They are presented here as analytic categories from the existing interview summary, not as quantified themes or verbatim testimony. Table 3 makes their relationship to the three interview dimensions explicit and shows that favorable and cautious reactions can coexist within one learning experience.

Table 3. Interpretive Mapping of Reported Qualitative Themes

Reported Theme	Perceptual Focus	Classroom Interpretation
Interest in writing	Acceptance	Visual topics may make caption tasks approachable
Confidence in composing	Understanding/ evaluation	Prompts and guided revision can make tasks manageable
Positive social engagement	Acceptance/ evaluation	Audience and feedback can give writing a purpose
Technical or posting concerns	Evaluation	Public exposure and access can restrict participation

First, the interest theme relates primarily to acceptance. Familiarity with the visual and short-video format appears to have made some writing tasks feel more approachable. When a student can begin with a personally meaningful object or place, a descriptive sentence has an immediate referent. Such a task can support

the movement from generating ideas to selecting appropriate adjectives and specific details. The key distinction is that interest facilitates participation; it does not, by itself, verify vocabulary growth, grammatical accuracy, or greater textual coherence. Studies on Instagram and learner attitudes similarly identify engagement as a plausible affordance while using different measures from direct writing tests (Erarslan, 2019; Wahab et al., 2023).

Second, the confidence theme intersects with understanding and evaluation. The combination of visual prompts, teacher demonstration, and the possibility of revising captions may help learners see a manageable path from observation to English-language expression. At this point the evidence concerns perceived confidence, not experimentally documented improvement. Abdelhalim (2025) examined writing self-regulation and self-efficacy under multimodal instruction in a different high-school context, which provides a relevant comparison but not a substitute outcome for the present sample. Classroom teachers should therefore distinguish students' willingness to attempt writing from their demonstrated control over sentence structure, detail selection, and editing.

Third, students' references to social engagement connect acceptance with evaluation. A potential audience can give classroom writing an authentic communicative purpose: the caption is constructed for someone to understand, not only for a teacher to correct. Comments and other forms of recognition may make the activity more visible and encourage revision. Yet the present statistics cannot isolate likes or peer comments as the strongest cause of motivation. Research on multimodal composition emphasizes the role of authentic audience and meaningful communication but also the need to examine actual participation patterns rather than assume them (Jiang, 2017; Hafner & Ho, 2020).

Fourth, technical and public-posting concerns complicate an otherwise positive account. Not all students necessarily have the same device familiarity, access, confidence about making mistakes, or willingness to be publicly identified with English writing. These concerns are part of the evaluation dimension: learners can accept a tool's usefulness while remaining uncertain about the costs of using it. Kang and Kim (2023) illustrate that adolescent learners' responses to multimodal tasks can develop differently over time. An instructional design that interprets reluctance as laziness risks overlooking anxiety, privacy preferences, and digital access barriers.

3.4 Integrating the Quantitative and Qualitative Accounts

Reading the two strands together produces a more informative conclusion than either source could provide alone. The generally favorable item scores and the qualitative theme of greater interest point in a similar direction: students were often willing to engage with descriptive caption writing. The confidence theme provides a possible account of why a visually anchored task might seem manageable. However, the relatively lower-scoring questionnaire item and the theme of posting anxiety show why an aggregate positive average must not erase individual hesitation. Integration here means comparing convergent and divergent descriptions, not declaring that one data type proves the other (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Autonomy is one plausible explanatory lens. The assignment sequence gave students opportunities to choose familiar subjects and visual representations, making the task relevant to their lived experience. The activity still required an English caption organized as a descriptive text, so choice operated within a defined language-learning purpose. This balance resembles the autonomy-supportive instruction discussed by Reeve and Cheon (2021). The present data cannot measure psychological need satisfaction directly, because no autonomy scale was administered. Rather, the theory helps explain why personal topic selection may be pedagogically attractive and specifies what future research would need to measure.

Competence offers a second lens. Visual content may reduce the initial difficulty of finding something to describe, but it can also hide language weaknesses if an attractive video is mistaken for a strong paragraph. Xu (2023) reported gains in particular writing dimensions following multimodal composing in a separate quasi-experimental study. Maghsoudi et al. (2022) likewise explored multimodal integration in EFL writing. Those studies support taking the approach seriously, yet the present project lacks matched pre- and post-writing scores. It can therefore report a favorable learning experience while leaving improvement in linguistic proficiency an open empirical question.

A practical response is to assess the caption as writing rather than as social-media content alone. Teachers can use a concise rubric covering descriptive purpose, organization, relevant details, vocabulary, grammatical intelligibility, and revision. The video should help generate and situate meaning, not substitute for text. Hafner and Ho (2020) argue for an assessment perspective that considers the composing process, while Jiang et al. (2022) emphasize genre-related features in digital multimodal assessment. For a junior high school descriptive task, genre expectations should remain visible even when learners experiment with audiovisual presentation.

Relatedness provides a third lens, but its role needs careful interpretation. Writing for classmates may be more meaningful than writing into a notebook that no one reads. Positive reactions may foster a sense of belonging, while imagined negative reactions may discourage participation. Instagram can therefore produce

opposing experiences among learners in the same class. Gonulal (2019) identified learner profiles that differed in their orientation toward Instagram use; Aloraini (2018) similarly showed that interactions depend on the kind of material shared. Classroom designs should support constructive peer response without turning view counts or popularity into proxies for writing quality.

The study also highlights the need to distinguish multimodal composing from routine social-media consumption. A Reels-based activity is educational when the teacher specifies a writing objective, models how to observe details, guides drafting, gives feedback, and invites reflection. Without these features, learners may spend more time selecting effects or monitoring reactions than composing descriptive sentences. Kang (2022) shows how adolescent L2 writers make different rhetorical choices across media, and Zhang and Yu (2025) examine digital multimodal composing as a competence requiring identifiable skills. These insights reinforce the importance of teaching design, not simply the novelty of a platform.

Broader findings provide both support and caution. Pham and Li (2023) reported learners' views of a multimodal composing platform in a university setting; Jing and Mahfoodh (2026) examined motivation under multimodal writing instruction using a comparative design. Their findings suggest that perceived value and effort can coexist. The results here are consistent with that tension, but are narrower: the outcome is a post-activity description within one class, and a Reels caption is not identical to an infographic or a longer multimodal project. The specific contribution is to identify teaching conditions under which short-form visual writing may feel inviting yet remain socially or technically demanding.

The practical value of the intervention lies in making the writing cycle visible. Before posting, the learner can plan a topic, identify observable attributes, draft a caption, and check whether the description would make sense without the video. During revision, teacher and peers can respond to clarity and language rather than attractiveness or popularity. After publication, students can reflect on which revisions improved the text. This sequence aligns with the view that writing is a process of making and remaking meaning, even when its final form is multimodal (Hafner & Ho, 2020; Jiang et al., 2022).

The dimensions of acceptance, understanding, and evaluation should not be collapsed into a single judgment of satisfaction. Students may accept Instagram because it is familiar, understand the caption task because the teacher demonstrates it, and still evaluate public posting negatively. Distinguishing these positions matters for fair participation. It helps the teacher respond to a learner who is technically comfortable but worried about social judgment differently from a learner who lacks confidence in either the language or the interface. The four qualitative themes give an initial map of these possibilities, although fuller interview excerpts would strengthen evidence for the interpretation.

3.5 Pedagogical Implications and Limitations

Three design principles follow from the integrated account. First, use choice with structure: offer a small selection of familiar descriptive topics, teach the required text elements, and reserve time for drafting and revision. Second, make engagement safe: allow a private submission or restricted classroom audience where appropriate, obtain the permissions required for minors, and avoid making public engagement metrics part of the grade. Third, separate types of feedback: respond to writing accuracy and content in teacher assessment, and teach classmates to provide respectful, specific language suggestions. Autonomy-supportive teaching is compatible with firm boundaries that protect learners' confidence and privacy (Reeve & Cheon, 2021).

These proposals should be treated as instructional implications rather than measured outcomes of the study. The data cannot establish that students used more sophisticated vocabulary, improved paragraph coherence, or retained motivation after the project. A single post-intervention questionnaire is vulnerable to social desirability, familiarity with the researcher, and the immediate novelty of the platform. The purposive sample, small class size, and absence of a comparison condition further limit causal inference and transferability. The quantitative summary also does not provide item-to-subscale coding, internal consistency coefficients, or the original response matrix, so conclusions about psychometric properties are not warranted.

Qualitative interpretation is similarly bounded. The summary identifies themes but does not provide direct quotations, interview transcripts, or a count of participants expressing each view. Without these records, it is not possible to assess how strongly individual cases support each theme or whether important minority experiences were omitted. Nowell et al. (2017) recommend an explicit audit trail for qualitative trustworthiness; Braun and Clarke (2022) emphasize analytical coherence when developing themes. Future reports can strengthen this component by presenting carefully anonymized excerpts and documenting the movement from coding to theme construction.

Future studies should compare learners' descriptive texts before and after the intervention using an independently assessed writing rubric, ideally with a suitable comparison group and follow-up measurement. Researchers could also record the structure and wording of each questionnaire item, report subscale reliability, and explore how device access and posting preferences shape experiences. Longitudinal findings from Kang and Kim (2023) suggest that a single end-of-project impression may conceal changing attitudes. Such designs

would allow researchers to test whether the encouraging response pattern observed here becomes sustained participation and measurable writing development.

4. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Conclusion

The study examined students' motivation and perceptions following eight sessions of English descriptive-caption writing associated with Instagram Reels in one ninth-grade class. The item-level statistics show generally favorable responses (unweighted average approximately 3.86 of 5); the separately reported means for intrinsic and extrinsic motivation were 3.94 and 3.74. The qualitative summary identifies increased interest, confidence, social engagement, and reservations about technical tasks or public sharing. Taken together, the findings support considering Reels-based caption writing as a potentially engaging classroom option, while not demonstrating that it caused an improvement in students' writing proficiency.

4.2 Suggestions/Recommendations

Teachers are encouraged to retain clear descriptive-writing criteria, model the drafting process, provide constructive feedback, and offer safer alternatives to public posting. Students should be supported in treating digital caption writing as an opportunity for revision and communication rather than a competition for popularity. For subsequent research, larger and more varied samples, transparent instrument reporting, verbatim qualitative evidence, and independently scored pre- and post-writing outcomes are recommended.

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