

Enhancing English Writing Skills Through Reciprocal Social Media Messaging Tasks in The EFL Classrooms

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Abstract

Social media has increasingly been incorporated into classroom activities in the digital era, including for teaching English as a foreign language. This study investigates the integration of reciprocal social media messaging tasks into an EFL classroom. This study aimed to find out whether reciprocal social media messaging tasks could enhance students' writing skills and in what ways this method contributed to the enhancement of their writing skills. Reciprocal social media messaging tasks involved students exchanging messages back and forth and responding to each other. Moreover, the topic of the tasks in this study was invitations which led to informal writing. Furthermore, this study was a qualitative study that employed questionnaires and observations as the research instruments. The results showed that reciprocal social media messaging tasks could enhance EFL students' English writing skill. In addition, this method could contribute to the enhancement of several writing aspects, such as vocabulary development, interactive writing, pragmatic competence, functional writing skills, spelling and grammar in real context, as well as coherence and message clarity. Reciprocal social media messaging tasks improved student engagement, writing performance, and awareness of language use in a more authentic, digital environment.

Keywords: Social Media; Reciprocal Messaging Tasks; EFL Classrooms; Writing Skill

INTRODUCTION

Social media is now an itegral part of our daily lives. It enables people worldwide to connect instantly; facilitate the rapid spread of news, information, or knowledge; and influence how we live our lives. According to Dewing, social media includes various internet-based and mobile services that allow users to engage in online information exchanges (Iswahyuni, 2021). In addition, systems of social media are as diverse as they are widespread. They are used virtually widely for a variety of purposes, such as decision-making, activism, entertainment, and work. Because of this, they have also become more varied, with numerous unique designs that vary in terms of access control, delivery method, content type, organization, and many other aspects (Zhang et al., 2024). In the educational context, social media has increasingly been integrated into classroom settings in the digital age, including for EFL teaching. The incorporation of social media into EFL classrooms appears to provide numerous benefits. Social media is not only used for staying connected with friends. Platforms like WhatsApp and Instagram are now being used in educational settings, especially in EFL classrooms (Anjarwati & Sa'adah, 2023; Pratiwi et al., 2024). Their ease of access, real-time communication, and informal ambiance offer new opportunities for learning, especially outside the traditional classroom settings. Moreover, recent studies have revealed that learners or many students perceive social media as a helpful tool to improve their English skills, especially in reading and listening (Anjarwati & Sa'adah, 2023).

Nevertheless, most of the current studies focus on student perceptions on the use of social media for educational purposes without digging deeper into how it can be embedded into class activities or classroom tasks. Writing tasks, for example, still tend to rely heavily on paper-based exercises that may not reflect the real-life communication styles students engage in daily. As pointed out by (Wijayatiningsih & Erito, 2025), integrating digital platforms/ tools students are already familiar with can boost their motivation and autonomy in language production, but there's still little empirical evidence showing how structured social media-based tasks affect students' writing development. In light of this gap, there is a rising necessity to delve into how social media can be integrated into classroom instruction. In other words, there is a need to explore further how social media can be part of actual classroom learning, not just as communication platforms. By transforming everyday digital interactions such as message replies, status comments, or story responses into pedagogical writing tasks, educators can potentially bridge the divide between informal digital literacy and academic writing competence (Azizah & Supeno, 2024; Tan & Yunus, 2023).

This study investigates the integration of reciprocal social media messaging tasks into an EFL classroom. Unlike previous studies that mostly observed social media as a passive learning environment, this study endeavors to utilize it as an active tool for learning. In this context, students are required to create and respond to messages as part of their writing practice. The goals are to find out whether reciprocal social media messaging tasks can enhance EFL students' writing skills and in what ways this method contributes to the enhancement of their writing skills.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach. A qualitative research focuses on understanding social phenomena through the exploration of the context, existence, lived experiences, individual perspectives, and the meanings people attribute to their realities (Lim, 2025). In other words, This research deals with understanding human perspectives, interpreting meanings, and describing social phenomena. To obtain the data, this study uses questionnaires and observations as the research instruments. According to Wilson and McLean, questionnaires are commonly employed as an effective means of obtaining survey information (Cohen et al., 2007). It is structured and can be distributed without the presence of the researcher, and is usually relatively easy to analyze. Moreover, the questionnaires employed in this study are open-ended questionnaires and developed based on the research objectives. In open-ended questionnaires, the items are designed to allow respondents to elaborate freely without constraints, promoting rich and varied responses (Meitinger & Kunz, 2024). The questionnaires in this study are administered online via Google Forms. Meanwhile, the observations undertaken in this study are indirect observations, whereby the writer analyzes the students' reciprocal social media messaging tasks as a source of data. Furthermore, the respondents of this study are non-English university students. The data collection process begins with designing the questionnaires. The questions focus on whether the task, in the form of reciprocal social media messaging, can enhance the students' English skills and the reasons behind it. Once the questionnaires are finalized, they are distributed to the respondents via Google Forms. After the data is collected, the writer analyzes the results of the questionnaires using thematic analysis. The steps include familiarizing oneself with the collected data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing the identified themes, defining and naming them, identifying the most important quotations, and documenting the findings (Mwita & Mwilongo, 2025). The results are subsequently presented in accordance with the study's objectives. Ultimately, the writer formulates conclusions based on the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Reciprocal Social Media Messaging Tasks

Reciprocal social media messaging tasks in this study referred to activities in which two students engaged in mutual message exchanges through social media platforms as part of the learning process. The tasks began with instructions to form groups of two students. Afterwards, each group was assigned to carry out reciprocal social media messaging in English. Each student was required to send messages and the other was expected to reply. The main topic was invitations, but the students were allowed to include other topics in their messages (their written conversations). In addition, they were free to use any social media platform, such as WhatsApp, Instagram, etc. They were also allowed to use emoticons, images, videos along with their messages. They were encouraged to be creative and communicate as naturally as possible, simulating a typical message exchange. Finally, they were asked to take screenshots of their social media messaging and upload them to the assignment platform as instructed by their lecturer. The examples of students' reciprocal social media messaging tasks, reflecting the interactive exchanges and collaborative responses, were depicted in Figure 1, Figure 2, and Figure 3 below.



Figure 1. The Example of The Reciprocal Social Media Messaging Task (1)

Figure 1 illustrated two students engaged in a social media messaging exchange. Student A expressed feeling overwhelmed by his workload and deadlines, and Student B responded by asking about Student A's plan to overcome it. The conversation continued with Student A inviting Student B to go to the beach, and Student B asking which beach. Here, Student A used the expression "do you want to come along?" to make an informal invitation. This interaction exemplified the students' reciprocal communication, showing how they actively engaged with each other, provided feedback, and negotiated meaning through their messages.

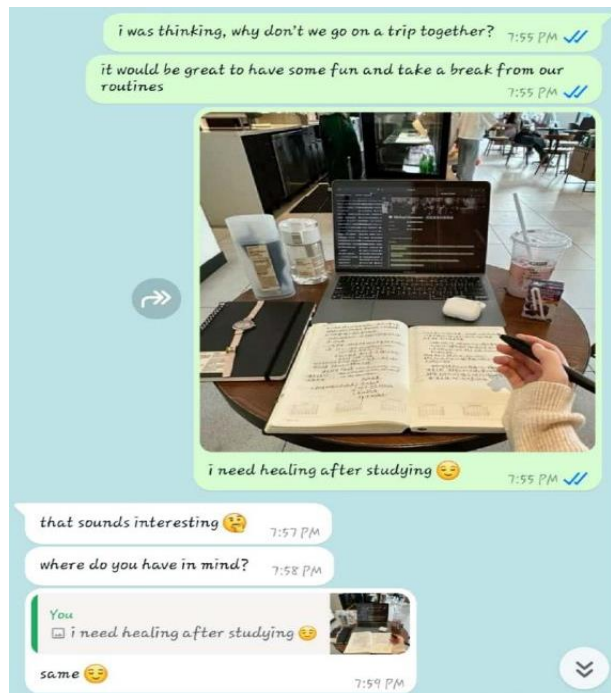


Figure 2. The Example of The Reciprocal Social Media Messaging Task (2)

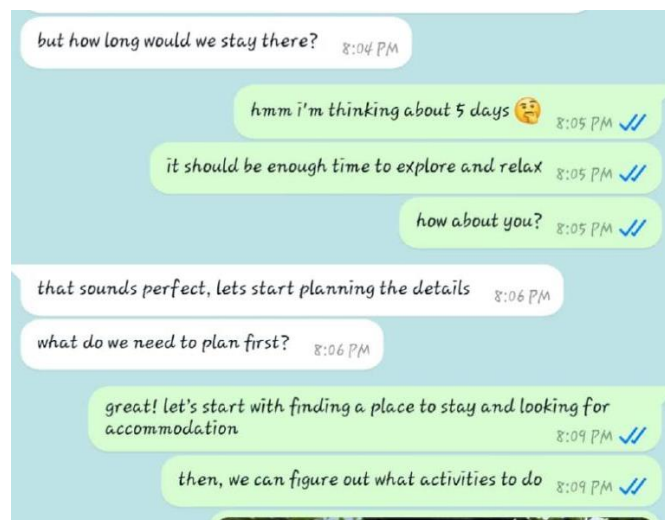


Figure 3. The Example of The Reciprocal Social Media Messaging Task (3)

Figures 2 and 3 illustrated a reciprocal social media messaging exchange between two students as well. It was a casual conversation in which Student X used the expression ‘Why don’t we go on a trip together?’ to make an informal invitation to Student Y. Notably, Student X used lowercase ‘i’ instead of the capitalized ‘I’ in her messages, reflecting the informal and spontaneous nature of the online interaction. Throughout the exchange, both students responded appropriately to each other’s questions, demonstrating how they learned to reply to messages according to the context, which also showed mutual engagement and understanding.

Results of the Questionnaires and Observations

The questionnaire results revealed that most students (93% of the students) perceived reciprocal social media messaging tasks could improve their English skills. Figure 4 depicted students' perception of the effectiveness of reciprocal social media messaging tasks in improving English skills.

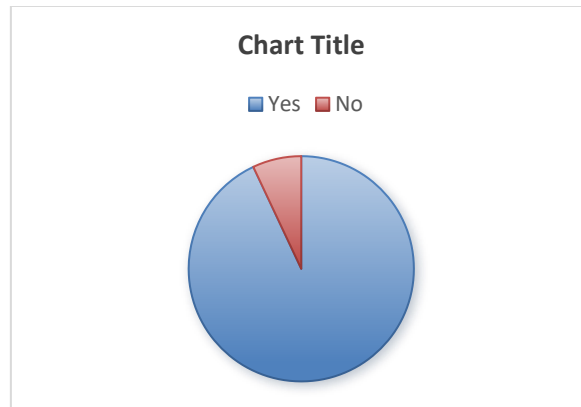


Figure 4. Students' Perception of the Effectiveness of Reciprocal Social Media Messaging Tasks in Enhancing English Skills

The majority of students felt that by carrying out reciprocal social media messaging tasks instructed by the lecturer, their English skills could be enhanced. There were various reasons behind it. Many students stated that the activities helped them practice real conversational English. In other words, the activities provided meaningful opportunities to practice English in a more natural and interactive way. Moreover, some of them noted that the tasks provided practical exposure to inviting or interacting with others in English. The students also highlighted that the activities could improve sentence structure, expand their vocabulary, and boosted their confidence in using English for everyday communication. In addition, repeating certain phrases helped reinforce their learning. Although one student experienced some confusion with the instruction, the overall response was favorable, the reciprocal social messaging tasks were considered beneficial and contributed positively to the development of the students' English skills, especially writing skills.

The reciprocal social media messaging tasks discussed in this study led to informal writing since the topic was invitations. Based on the results of the observations and questionnaires, the reciprocal social messaging tasks in this study could contribute to the enhancement of several writing aspects. They were as follows:

1. Vocabulary development

By sending and replying to messages, the students were encouraged to expand their vocabulary related to the topic of the given task. They could also learn some common expressions dealing with the topic by using some expressions taught by the lecturer. Whenever they didn't know what to type or they were unsure what to write, they would look up the relevant vocabulary in which it would develop their language skills.

2. Interactive writing

Through engaging in the reciprocal social media messaging tasks, the students learned to respond naturally and maintain the flow of conversation. Since chat was two-way, the students were trained to write responsively, interactively, and contextually, rather than just producing monologues.

3. Pragmatic competence

Pragmatic competence dealt with the ability to use language appropriately according to the situation or context. In the given tasks, the students learned how to invite others politely, in a friendly manner, and in accordance to the social context. Furthermore, they practiced responding to invitations, such as accepting, declining, or requesting clarification, which was a crucial component of written interaction.

4. Functional writing skills

This aspect related to writing based on communicative purpose. Focusing on practical goals such as inviting someone, setting time or place, responding to invitations; this trained students in real-life writing tasks.

5. Spelling and grammar in real context

Actually, grammar was not too emphasized here; the most important thing is mutual understanding since the ambiance was informal. However, students were encouraged to practice using correct spelling and basic grammar. They were also accustomed to light sentence structures that remained clear.

6. Coherence and message clarity

This aspect dealt with the logical and smooth connection between ideas (messages) and message clarity so that the messages could be easily understood and unambiguous. Even simple sentences were expected to be well-organized. In this case, students learned to convey their intentions briefly but clearly. They must ensure that important information (time, place, activities) was effectively communicated.

Discussion

A writing skill was one of the four language skills. This skill was an active skill or productive language skill. It involved producing language rather than just receiving it. According to Dendup, Suvin, and Valizadeh, a writing skill required both idea generation and organization, along with mastery of several aspects such as grammar, vocabulary, word choice, and punctuation (Pratama & Hastuti, 2024). For some people, this skill might be difficult to master. This study delved into the use of reciprocal social media messaging tasks in enhancing EFL students' writing skills. Social media was chosen as the medium since it has become an integral part of people's lives nowadays. WhatsApp, Instagram, Telegram were the examples of it. The social media most used by the students in this study were WhatsApp and Instagram. In this study, the social media was used to improve English writing skill of EFL students through reciprocal social media messaging tasks.

The tasks assigned to the students focused on the topic of invitations, specifically informal written invitations. Therefore, it led to informal writing. In engaging in these tasks, students exchanged messages with each other, one sent an invitation in English and then the other replied. The students were expected to send messages that flowed naturally and could be easily understood by both of them.

The results of the data analysis revealed that most of the students perceived reciprocal social media messaging tasks as beneficial for enhancing their English writing skills. Moreover, these tasks could contribute to the improvement of several writing aspects, such as vocabulary development, interactive writing, pragmatic competence, functional writing skills, spelling and grammar in real context, as well as coherence and message clarity. Even though the messages were informal writing, many important aspects of writing were still honed, especially those related to real communication, clarity of message, and use of language that was appropriate to the context. These findings were consistent with Purnama who confirmed that the integration of social media into EFL writing practice supported learners' linguistic competence through authentic and meaningful exchanges (Purnaman, 2024). Similarly, Dewi stated that social

media activities encouraged students to apply grammar, vocabulary, and coherence in real communication contexts (Dewi, 2022).

Reciprocal social media messaging tasks aligned with the core of collaborative writing, in which two or more students worked together to accomplish the tasks. The results of this study showed that by engaging in these tasks, EFL students' writing skills could be developed. This finding was in line with what was asserted by McDonough et al, namely that the collaborative writing process could lead to higher-quality writing (Anggraini et al., 2020). Moreover, Li found that online collaborative writing instruction markedly enhanced learners' writing performance, motivation, and self-efficacy, which supported the collaborative and reciprocal nature of the tasks applied in this study (Li, 2023). Therefore, the implementation of reciprocal social media messaging tasks not only encouraged interactive collaboration but also boosted students' confidence and autonomy in using English for authentic communication.

CONCLUSION

This study investigates the integration of reciprocal social media messaging tasks into an EFL classroom and its contribution to the students' writing skills. Reciprocal social media messaging tasks involve students exchanging messages back and forth and responding to each other. The process of these activities belongs to collaborative writing. Moreover, the topic of the tasks is invitations which leads to informal writing. The results of the study indicate that reciprocal social media messaging tasks could enhance EFL students' English writing skill. Moreover, this method can contribute to the enhancement of several writing aspects, such as vocabulary development, interactive writing, pragmatic competence, functional writing skills, spelling and grammar in real context, as well as coherence and message clarity. In other words, this method improves student engagement, writing performance, and awareness of language use in a more authentic, digital environment.

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