

ABSTRACT

This qualitative case study investigates how Instagram Reels enhance students' critical thinking in writing analytical exposition texts on humanitarian issues in Gaza, and examines students' perceptions of using this media. Forty-three ten-grade students joined a single-session intervention that presented selected Instagram Reels about Gaza, followed by analytical exposition writing tasks. Six students across three proficiency levels (Advancing, Developing, Initiating) were purposively chosen for in-depth interviews. Portfolios were analyzed using Facione's (2023) six critical thinking indicators, and interview transcripts were examined through thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Portfolio results showed (1) Advancing students exhibited sophisticated critical thinking across all indicators; (2) Developing students demonstrated emerging competence with notable inconsistencies; and (3) Initiating students revealed nascent potential constrained by significant limitations. Thematic analysis produced nine patterns: (1) Visual Scaffolding as a Cognitive Bridge, (2) Emotional Engagement as a Catalyst for Persuasive Writing, (3) Multimodal Stimulation for Idea Generation, (4) Digital Gatekeeping as an Unintentional Barrier, (5) Perceived Helpfulness versus Perceived Difficulty, (6) The "Sharing" Culture as a Form of Critical Engagement, (7) The Struggle for Originality and Independence, (8) External Constraints Affecting Critical Thinking, and (9) Prior Knowledge as a Mediating Factor. Findings indicate that Instagram Reels can provide valuable scaffolding for writing development and foster meaningful engagement with complex global issues; however, students still struggle with text structure, topic complexity, and contextual limitations. The study recommends larger, more diverse samples, longitudinal tracking of critical thinking development, and comparative research on multimodal platforms to better understand their role in enhancing critical thinking in writing.

Keywords: analytical exposition text, writing, critical thinking, humanitarian issues of Gaza, Instagram Reels