

# ENHANCING EFL INDONESIAN STUDENTS' WRITING ABILITY AND MOTIVATION THROUGH FACEBOOK-INKSHEDDING

Nur Alfa Rahmah  
*State University of Malang*

## ABSTRACT

This paper is attempted to propose a breakthrough alternative in the EFL teaching to enhance students' ability and motivation in writing through facebook-inkshedding. The current development of technology and teenager's close relationship with online social networking demands English instructor to be more creative in choosing the medium that suit the students' interest and teenage trend. Facebook nowadays possess a prominent position among other social network media that makes it a very potential learning media. Inkshedding, on the other side, is a very effective strategy to boost students' creative ideas and confidence in writing. It brings an active discussion into written form and trigger students to express their mind in the target language and make them get used of it gradually. Not only that facebook-inkshedding exists beyond time and physical boundary, it can also grow students' sense of community and motivate them to develop independently.

**Keywords:** facebook-inkshedding, facebook, inkshedding, teaching of writing, peer-review

There are at least two things that are often overlooked in the teaching of writing. The first is the fact that writing involves linking experiences into meaningful new perceptions which the writer can share by mapping those perceptions into words (Hughey, et.al.,1983). When the students do not have any experience related to the topic the teacher gave to them, they will surely face difficulty in composing a written text. It is necessary for students to know what to write before they know how to write. Therefore, giving the students topics they are already familiar with is a wise decision; or else, giving them a freedom to choose their own topic will be good too.

The second thing that is frequently missed in the teaching of writing is a notion that people write in the expectation of reading and response, especially immediate ones (Hunt, 2004). This part, as we know, plays an important role in motivating students to write. To stimulate students' motivation in writing, feedback from teacher alone is not enough. Teacher's review on students' work can sometimes be intimidating for some students (Moloudi, 2011). Student's peer feedback will be a valuable source of information and a supplement to teacher's feedback (Hu, 2005 in Moloudi, 2011). In addition, it provides a real audience for students' writings, develops a sense of tolerance and acceptance towards peer criticism, and cognitively benefits the students who give the review too (Rollinson, 2005; Suprajitno, 1998; Grabe & Kaplan, 1996; Harris, 1992; Nelson & Murphy, 1992; Spear, 1988; Wooley, 2007; and Gere, 1987 in Molodi, 2011).

Having interesting experience or personal ideas to share upon the text, sufficient background information to back up the writing process and immediate readers' response

will be a great reinforcement to students' writing activity. The researcher believes that the reinforcement can be advantageously conducted through transactional written discussion, in which teachers will be able to ultimately monitor, comment, and improve the idea of their students expressed in writing. This method is called *inkshedding*, a simple method for gauging ideas which are produced by the response of students to such things as presentations, course materials, group activities, and discussion (Rahayu and Andanty, 2008). A transactional written dialogue is offered in this method; what is expressed by the students will be given immediate comments from their peers. In this case, the researcher proposes 'facebook inkshedding' as a more effective medium for the comment or response immediacy rather than conventional 'ink inkshedding'.

### **WHY FACEBOOK?**

Facebook nowadays is the leading social network occupied by the majority of teenagers in Indonesia. Facebook has attractive applications and interesting features, such as wall application, friend application, note application and group application. In addition, facebook can be used for various purposes, for example: asynchronous written communication (like email), synchronous written communication (online chat), group communication (like mailing-list), sharing ideas (like note) and for storing documents (Cahyono, 2011).

Some researchers discovered that facebook is effective to improve students' EFL learning. Djiwadono (2009, in Cahyono 2011) reported that sharing reading text through facebook increased students' vocabularies. Cahyono (2011) conducted a deeper research on the English essay writing skill of his students and found out that the use of facebook could boost their skill and it was responded positively by them. Through facebook, students can have online peer review which is a more effective medium compared to conventional one. A research by Rahayu and Andanty (2008) proved that online peer review improved student's writing quality gradually as their ideas could be 'heard' easily.

### **INKSHEDDING: WHAT AND WHY**

*Inkshedding* is a way of discussing ideas in a group through a writing activity (Smith, 2009). It is basically an adaptation of freewriting which is developed by Reither and Hunt at St. Thomas University, Canada, in the early eighties, into something dialogically transactional (Rahayu and Andanty, 2008; Hunt, 2004).

Smith (in Rahayu and Andanty, 2008) describes inkshedding as a method to get quick, anonymous, written student responses to specific or open-ended immediate responses which are then published for the whole class to review. It can be done at academic conferences, in classrooms, or similar forums. The idea of inkshedding is to have students write on a particular topic or their ideas on certain experience they have been through, and then pass their writing on to the other members of the class (or group). The other members then mark areas of the writing that are interesting to them, and also give comment on the inkshed. When students read each other's inksheds, what they should be focusing on is what is said rather than on how it is said: students are to read, understand, and respond to the content of the inkshed, not try to evaluate or improve the writings. The difference between inkshedding and regular freewriting is that students are composing for an immediate and known audience. Inkshedding is designed to be shared.

In inkshedding, the students form their writing into a more conscious dialogic exchange. According to Smith (in Rahayu and Andanty, 2008), inkshedding has three characteristics: (1) the writing is done quickly; (2) the responses are disseminated to the entire class in some form, oral or written; and (3) the responses are anonymous (respondents may sign their names if they wish). Hunt (2004) added some important characteristics of inkshedding that are easy to lose sight of. First, inkshedding needs to be read immediately. Second, the reading has to be social, and cannot be evaluative or judgmental. Third, inkshedding is part of a social situation, and needs to be read in a social context.

Through inkshedding, the researcher believes that students can enhance their writing ability significantly. Inkshedding can create in students an intense desire for discussion and link the discussion into written form. This effort, according to Rahayu and Andanty (2008), triggered them to confidently express their ideas, feeling and thought in written form in the targeted language. It grows also in students a learning independence and a sense of community that will lead them to be better independent and cooperative learners at the same time and give them adequate chances to develop by themselves their writing abilities in a creative way.

Furthermore, inkshedding is motivating in its nature. The most powerful thing about inkshedding idea is that the readers' imagination is not controlled by certain rules; instead, the writer can easily consider the best decision to write because they can have immediate reader's reading response in an active way (Hunt, 2004). The inkshedding activities resembled the real life relationship between the writer and readers because the writers can feel that they have real audience who will appreciate or criticize their writing. Therefore, the students write will be most likely motivated when considering that readers are waiting to read their written shared ideas.

## **COMBINING FACEBOOK AND INKSHEDDING**

As, over the past few years, students arrive in class with more and more experience with computers and computer networks, having merely 'ink inkshedding' in the writing class is then no longer interesting. Considering its nature as a prominent and joyful social network, the researcher believes that facebook can be a better alternative for inkshedding medium. Moreover, facebook is not confined to with physical and time constraint. The teaching of writing in the class, then, can focus on other aspects, such as more on theoretical basis while the inkshedding serves to support students' creative ideas, confidence, communicative and cooperative social interaction, and learning autonomy.

Using facebook-inkshedding, peer-review process can be accelerated, equal participation between peers can be realized, and an opportunity to compare one's work with another is widely open as they are all available on the discussion board (Moloudi, 2011). Furthermore, students could save or print their digital interaction so they did not have to depend on their memory to review their drafts merely based on what they could remember from their peer's oral comments (DiGiovanni and Nagaswami, 2001 in Moloudi, 2011).

## **SOME CONSIDERATION AND PRACTICAL STEPS**

### **Preparation**

Preparation is an initial activity covering opening facebook accounts and introducing to the students how to use the facebook for inkshedding purpose.

- Teacher makes a facebook close group named “inkshedding”
- Students add the group
- Teacher explains how to use the facebook facilities for inkshedding
- Students are given a topic to write on, with the understanding that only once all the writings were completed would they be available for reading by everyone else in the class.

### **Inkshedding**

- Students write their writing through a facebook note and post it on facebook group wall without worrying too much about style and correctness. Instead of allowing the students to post to the discussion board as they each finished their writing, the instructor would determine the due date at which time all writings should be released for review.
- Students read other people’s writings, underline, and comment on the most attracting aspects of the other students' writings.
- Students find their original inkshed to see what others have written on it

### **Teacher’s feedback**

- Teacher gives evaluation on the text organization and language form through inbox
- Students revise their writing and repost it again on the facebook group wall

### **Follow-up for the class activity**

- The writings that are most commented are then compiled and can be used for discussion by the whole class

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

The development of technology demands teachers to be creative in choosing the medium that suit the students’ interest and trend. On the other hand, students’ needs of reader’s response and share their striking ideas in a supporting community are often overlooked. Facebook-inkshedding can be a better alternative to trigger students’ critical ideas and their confidence in expressing and sharing their mind to their peers in a form of interactive written discussion. Continuous process of joyful facebook-inkshedding with effective control from teacher can make the students get used to using English in written form. It can also grow students’ sense of community and prepare them to be an independent learner.

The researcher suggests that a further research be conducted on the implementation of facebook-inkshedding to students’ writing ability. This research can be used as a part of theoretical background that will support the next researches on the similar or even more-developed topic about students’ writing ability.

## REFERENCES

- Cahyono, Bambang Yudi. (2011). Using Facebook to Enhance English Department Students' Skill in Writing English Essay. *Techniques and Strategies to Enhance English Language Learning*. Bambang Yudi Cahyono and Nur Mukminatien (Eds). Malang: State University of Malang. 1(11): 147-160.
- Hughey, JB. et al., (1983). *Teaching ESL Composition: Principles and Techniques*. Rowley: Newbury House Publisher.
- Hunt, Russell A. (2004). *What is "Inkshedding"?* (Online), (<http://www.stthomasu.ca/~hunt/dialogic/inkshed.htm>, accessed on May 21, 2012)
- Moloudi, Mehrdad. (2011). Online and Face-to-face Peer Review: Measure of Implementation in ESL Writing Classes. *Asian EFL Journal*. 52(1): 4-24.
- Rahayu, Endah Yulia & Andanty, Ferra Dian. (2008). Inkshedding in English Writing: Indonesian Context. *Asian TEFL International Conference*. Bali, Indonesia. August 1-3, 2008.
- Smith, Tania S. (2009). *Inkshedding: an Activity for Events* (Online), (<http://edurhetor.wordpress.com/2009/01/23/inkshedding-for-events/>, accessed on May 20, 2012)