

# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

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This chapter described the background of the study, research problem, objective of the study, significance of the study, scope and limitation of the study and the definition of key terms and organization of the study.

### **1.1. Background**

#### **1.1.1. Expressing Ideas in English as the Research Focus**

Expressing opinion, thought and feeling in a foreign language which has different cultural, semantic, lexical and phonetic system is a tough effort for most foreign and second language learners. They must acquire some vocabularies, grammars and phonetic systems as well as ideas and organizations before they can express whatever they want to utter or write. However, this is not enough to express ideas e they have learn the language for several years.

Indeed, it should not discourage foreign language teachers to be permissive with this unpleasant reality because there are still some ways to make students speak without forcing them to learn direct grammatical rules and drilling. Language acquisition does not require extensive use of conscious grammatical rules, and does not require tedious drill (Krashen, 2005) because the nature of Second Language (L2) is systematic stages which require correction, reward and reinforcement. In addition to that, L2 learners may be content with less than target language competence or more concerned with fluency than accuracy. Thus, it is rarely fully successful for them to acquire the language.(Cook, 1988)

Therefore in this research, I made effort to make my students to express their thoughts in English. I previously considered that my speaking class was not communicative since not many students could articulate their ideas smartly in English, however if they were asked to express their opinion in Bahasa Indonesia, they could speak eloquently for hours. For that reason I requested my students to make some written preparation before they spoke in the class through inkshedding strategy. After that, they could express their ideas better than before.

The ideas which were prompted during the inkshedding strategy were expressed by the 13 students of Informatics System students acted as the research subject. Therefore, the research question of this study was, "How were the content and focus of the ideas expressed in the students' six written works (inkshedding)?"

As inkshedding was always done in writing, I investigated the ideas by exploring the content and focus of their writing, to produce evidence that leads to understanding of the case and answers the research questions – "How were the focus and content of the students' inkshedding?" Each focus and content was divided into four levels respectively: (1) novice, (2) basic, (3) proficient and (4) advanced in order to give clear information about how their content and focus of their ideas were.

To assist in targeting and formulating the questions, I conducted a literature review and previous studies on similar topics. This led to refined, insightful questions about the problem. Investigating the formula that inkshedding strategy stimulated the expression of their in writing; I intended to explore how inkshedding prompted the

ideas in writing through the dialogical and transactional written dialogues/comments – inkshedding.

### **1.1.2. Inkshedding Prompting Ideas**

When I requested my students to write their ideas, they had an opportunity to revive their ideas gradually into their best precision. Their ideas refinement could not be achieved in speaking because it did not provide the same kind of exploration, discovery, and precise articulation that writing did for a number of reasons.

Therefore jotting down ideas in writing could be advantageously conducted through transactional written discussion. In this way, I could ultimately monitor, comment and improve the ideas of my students which were express in writing. This method was called ‘inkshedding’, a simple method for gauging the ideas which were produced by the response of students to such things as presentations, course materials, group activities, and discussions. Developed by James Reither and his colleagues at St. Thomas University, Canada in the early eighties, inkshedding had three identifying characteristics:

1. *The writing is done quickly (i.e., five minutes or less).*
2. *The responses are disseminated to the entire class in some form, oral or written.*
3. *The responses are anonymous ( respondents may sign their names if they wish). (Wyche-Smith, n.d.)*

In this regard, the students surely learnt the language from the authentic transactional written dialogues which was the nature of inkshedding. This effort triggered them to express their ideas, feeling and thought in written form of the targeted language because they were stimulated to answer or respond the prompting text or dialogue. This action resembled the real life activities of writer and reader relationship because

the readers had to write their thought or opinion if they wanted to comment, criticize or respond the written information that they encountered.

Indeed, in this study, transactional written dialogue was virtually promoting learning because my students were encouraged to express their thoughts as needed by the texts which were given by their peers and me. They surely produced the language by expressing their ideas right after they read comprehensively the given texts.

Through inkshedding, I could also obtain any information I wanted by asking my students to answer my open-end question about certain phenomena I needed to know. In this way I could get an immediate glimpse into what each of my students were thinking and feeling as well as giving opportunity to all my students to access to what their peers were thinking.

Therefore I came up with my preview about inkshedding that included:

- Dialogical and transactional language activities which were focused on specific topic in listening, speaking, reading and writing which the response finally is interactively expressed in written form.
- Non ordinary responses: interesting, strangest, awkward, stupid, hazard and shocking to normally response provided topic, instead of ordinary responses, by the community/class of writing
- Language awareness and performance improvement, particularly in writing.
- Limited amongst members of the writing community / class

My point of view above about inkshedding would be the fundamental reference of this study, besides some other related references and previous studies.

### **1.1.3. Some Warnings for Inkshedding**

Since all inksheddors in term of those who applied inkshedding strategy in their class entailed to sacrifice their time, money or class size in order to give chance to all students to have access to one another responses, inkshedding was a cumbersome job for teachers. It was because they also needed to supervise, monitor and guide each student written work, besides giving chance to each of student to access their peer's written work. This surely would tie the teachers up, even for small classes (5-10 students); let alone for big classes (above 30 students) because there was hardly following up activities by the teachers (Elbow, 2001). To lessen the teachers' working load, partial representation which allowed only some represented or random students to express their idea in written form was better than no inkshedding at all, so at least teachers as the inkshedder still could figure out how the opinions, thoughts, and ideas of their students were.

Inkshedding strategy was not recommended to teachers who did not want to know about what their students thought because if asked about their idea about the teaching-learning activities in their classroom, for example, students would tell the situation honestly and frankly. Their straightforward expression sometimes despised integrity of the teacher of even school stakeholders.

### **1.1.4. Difference between Inkshedding and Conventional Strategy**

Below were some differences between the conventional writing class which placed the teacher as the key and source of all (Figure 01).

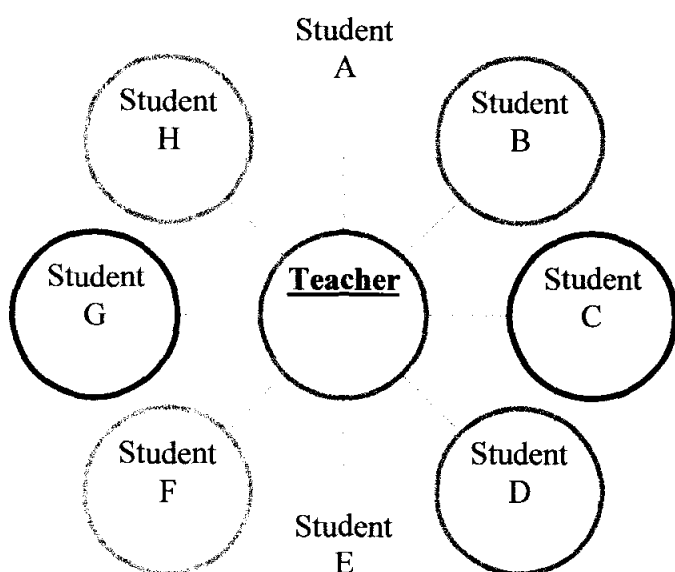


Figure 01

Meanwhile the Class using inkshedding strategies (figure 02) formed endless web which resembled the flow of communication and interaction. Here student A could interact with any students she or he wanted and vise versa. The position of teacher in this strategy was very much flexible. In my study, I could be in the middle of the class when I needed to give some comment, motivation and evaluation to my students while seeing the progress of all. I could help one of the students who had some learning problems. When I was at outside my class, I could see the smoothness of communication flow or might detect any unpredicted evident in my class.

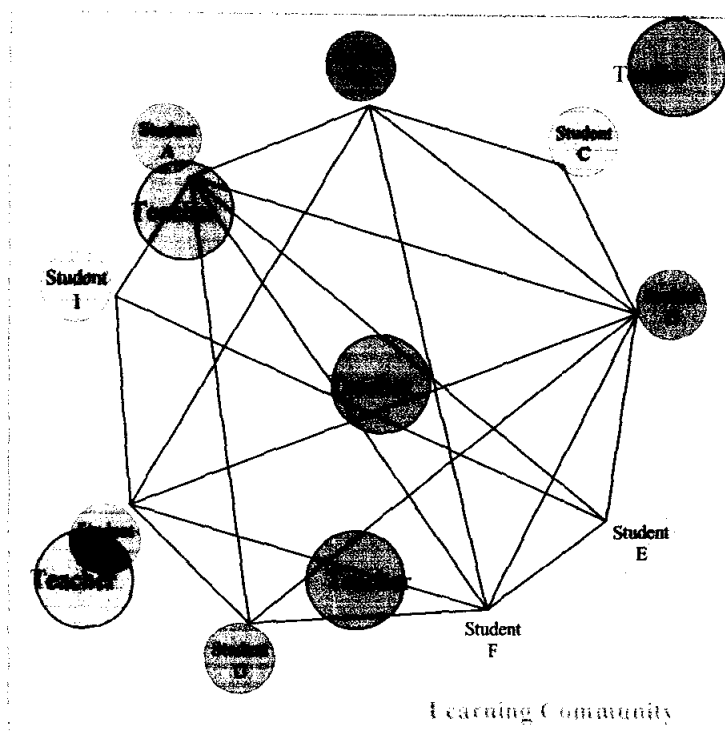


Figure 2

The points of view about inkshedding illuminated me to conduct research in order to see the expression of the ideas in the dialogical writing of inkshedding, by my students of STIKOM Technology School, East Java Indonesia.

In my research, these students showcased that automatic written transaction in the active learning community resembled writing activity in the real society: real readers and real writers or authors. Undeniably in the near and long run they would grow as good academic and professional readers and writers respectively.

In addition to that, I used a blog, mailing list and email to mediate all my research activities. By seeing the process of how all my students writing since very beginning, I could vividly view the growth, progress and anxiety of my students in writing at the electronic media.



## **1.2. Research Question**

Based on the description of phenomena and finding, this study is intended to observe how inkshedding strategy prompt the students' idea to express their thought and feeling in English. The major research question can be formulated in a question as, "How did inkshedding prompt the students' ideas to express their thoughts in English?" This major question could be elaborated into two specific questions:

1. How was the focus of their ideas?
2. How was the content of their ideas?

## **1.3. Purpose of the Study**

In accordance with the research problem, this study aimed at observing the written ideas of the students when they were prompted by inkshedding strategy, to express their thoughts in English. The ideas here were in term of the quality of the focus and content of their writings.

## **1.4. Significance of the Study**

This study was expected to:

1. Give information to English teachers about the possibility to use inkshedding in their class through meaningful and attractive learning community so that they could give opportunity to their students to express their thought, feeling and experience. In this way the teacher could also get any information about their students' opinion on certain topics or issues briefly.
2. Disseminate inkshedding that campaigned rich learning experience to foreign language teachers in Indonesia, particularly those who thought writing because it could stimulate the ideas of the students through its dialogical and

transactional written dialogues.

3. Discuss inkshedding activities which were packed in blended learning system.

It undeniably committed resourceful learning for the four language skill improvement, motivation and togetherness life skill.

4. Give information for further research about inkshedding which could actually be performed in conventional classes of which the students were not focused on learning Information Technology (non IT Classes), in order to accelerate the writing competence. This competence then had significantly effected their rhetorical organization in their oral and written discourse.

### **1.5. Assumption**

The subjects of this study were considered to have sufficient soft skill in terms of computer and internet skills in blended learning – online assignments.

### **1.6. Scope and Limitation of the Study**

To give a clear picture about this study, I revealed my scope and limitation of my study:

1. Scope:

- a. In my participant case study, Inkshedding undeniably produced many learning foreign language domains such as critical reading, critical thinking, making critical questions, speaking, writing activities and motivation. Presented in figure 5, I focused my study in the development of idea which was presented in the form of writing when they were asked to comment on the posted articles.
- b. The idea of their written comments and criticism was investigated. I

did not observe the other writing components – organization, vocabulary, grammar and the other domains – speaking, listening, motivation, reading, making critical question and critical thinking due to my limited time, capacity and competence.

- c. I then thoroughly studied the idea of my students' writing from their quality of focus and content.

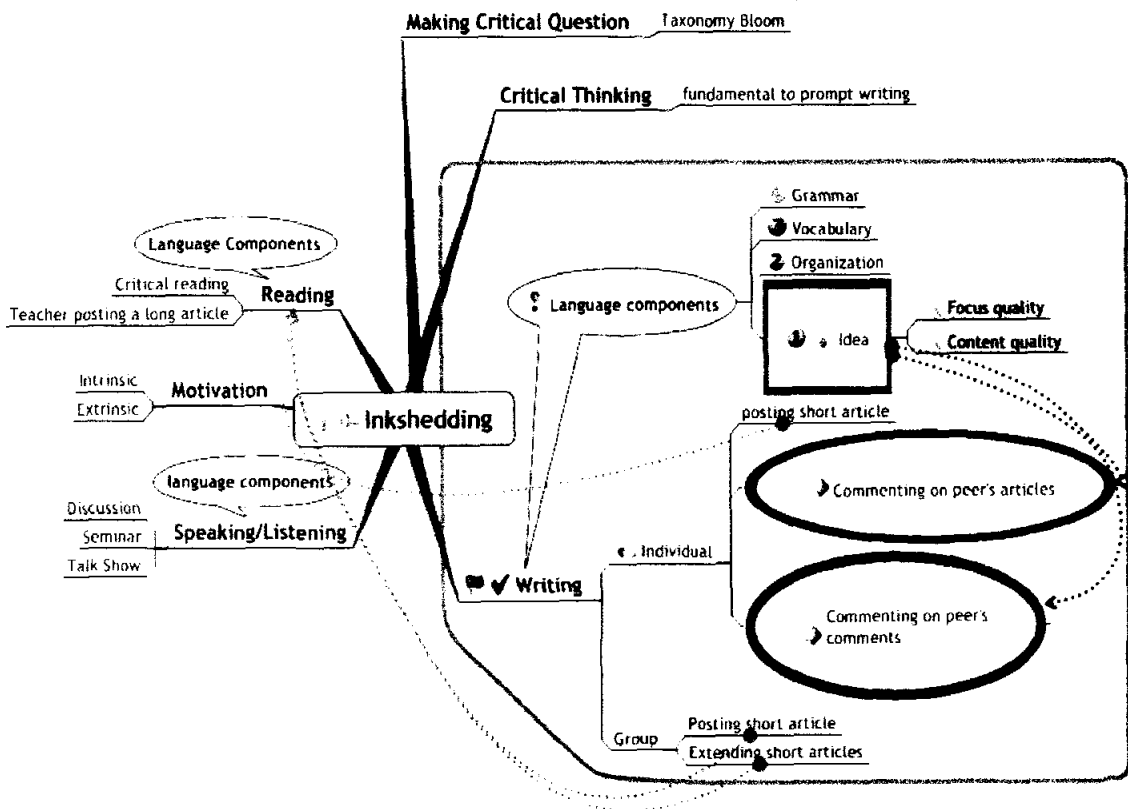


Figure 3

## 2. Limitation:

I finally used 13 out of her 38 students of the third semester of System Information Faculty of STIKOM, School of Technology as the Subject of her Inkshedding study.

- a. Since Inkshedding obligated an active learning in a learning community, I observed 13 students who completed all the six

inkshedding tasks out of the 38 students in my English Language class.

I could not observe the writing works thoroughly of those who did not complete their works because I wanted to know how inkshedding activities prompted their idea in writing. Therefore I assumed that only the works of the students did all inkshedding activities that could be studied.

- b. As inkshedding was done in writing and not in the spoken form, I observed and analyzed the written works of the 13 students in order to identify the development of their ideas' exposition and expression.

### 3. Research time and finishing thesis

- a. Right after 3 month research from October to December 2006, the writer had time to complete her study in the fourth semester only as recommended by the Graduate School. Thus, I opted to discuss thoroughly the findings in my research, by analyzing the idea of my students' written works.

## 1.7. Definition of Key Terms

### 1.7.1. Inkshedding

It was transactional dialogical free writing conducted by a learning community. The writing of each participant of the learning community had to be read by other participants and vice versa. Inkshedding was an effective way to improve the ideas which would be transmitted, besides the language.

### **1.7.2. Idea**

Idea was the message or thought of the written or oral production. In this research the idea was investigated through its focus and content quality, in the written form.

### **1.7.3. Focus**

In this research, focus was the single controlling point made with an awareness of task (mode) about specific topic.

### **1.7.4. Content**

The presence of ideas developed through facts, examples, anecdotes, details, opinions, statistics, reasons, and/or explanations.

### **1.7.5. Communication**

- 1 *The act of communicating; transmission.*
- 2 - *The exchange of thoughts, messages, or information, as by speech, signals, writing, or behavior.*
  - Interpersonal rapport (Answer.com, 2007)

In this study, communication refers to the exchange of thoughts, message and information by writing.

### **1.7.6 Learning Community**

*One definition of a learning community is exemplified by a cohort-based, interdisciplinary approach to higher education. This is based on an advanced kind of educational (or 'pedagogical') design in which the participants may be actively engaged in 'peer tutoring' as well as learning. Instructors (US) or tutors (UK/EU) may contribute from several distinct fields of study. Learning communities are now fairly common to American colleges and universities. They are also found in the United Kingdom and Europe. (Answer.com, 2006c)*

In this study, learning community refers to the 13 students and their teacher in the classroom. The students were engaged in peer tutorial system in learning. Teacher was not only the source to contribute the learning material for them. They are encouraged to contribute learning materials benefiting for their peers. Here the teacher's role was as motivator and facilitator besides educator. In this way, the students' learning intake was highly escalating because they actively searched the learning material from any available sources and learnt it, and also they were required to contribute what they learnt to their peers.

#### **1.7.7. Online learning community**

*An Online Learning Community is a common place on the internet that addresses the learning needs of its members through proactive partnerships. Through social networking and technology, people work as a community to achieve a learning objective as defined by the educator. (Answer.com, 2006d)*

In this thesis, the online learning community definition was the same as learning community, but online learning community used internet as the learning encounter. In this research, blog and mailing list were used.

#### **1.7.6. Blog**

*A blog is a website where entries are made in journal style and displayed in a reverse chronological order. Blogs often provide commentary or news on a particular subject, such as food, politics, or local news; some function as more personal online diaries. A typical blog combines text, images, and links to other blogs, web pages, and other media related to its topic. The ability for readers to leave comments in an interactive format is an important part of many blogs. (Wikipedia, 2006)*

Blog in this study referred to a website where I posted my articles, comments and instructions in formal way at the central messages and non formal at the asynchronic chatter box located at the left side of the blog. I also collected my students written comments as the data for my research. Meanwhile for the students, it was the media

where they posted their articles and comments. They could also express their feeling and thoughts at the chatter box, when they were assigned to do inkshedding activities.

#### **1.7.8. Mailing List (electronic)**

*It is a type of Internet forum which is a special usage of e-mail that allows for widespread distribution of information to many Internet users. It is similar to a traditional mailing list — a list of names and addresses — as might be kept by an organization for sending publications to its members or customers, but typically refers to four things: a list of e-mail addresses, the people ("subscribers") receiving mail at those addresses, the publications (e-mail messages) sent to those addresses, and a reflector, which is a single e-mail address that, when designated as the recipient of a message, will send a copy of that message to all of the subscribers. (Wikipedia, 2007)*

I referred mailing list as the internet forum for my class. I used the forum to distribute all my comments and messages to my students. They also utilized this forum to forward their comments and messages. With this electronic forum, the forwarding messages could be accepted by all members of the forums, therefore once my students or I sent our messages, all the members of the forum would accept it at their mail box. The forum also had its site in internet like a blog, where the members could read all the posting messages, chat, load files, put picture, join polling, go to links, or see promotions.

#### **1.7.9. Transactional dialogue**

Exchange of language in which each party's intention was to infer the other party's intention, as manifested in language.

#### **1.7.10. Blended learning**

*The combination of multiple approaches to learning. For example:- self-paced, collaborative or inquiry-based study. Blended learning can be accomplished through the use of 'blended' virtual and physical resources. Examples include combinations of*

*technology-based materials, face-to-face sessions and print materials. (Answer.com, 2006a)*

Blended learning in this research referred to both classroom and internet learning activities. In obtaining the data in this research, I had to conduct online and offline learning because the online activities - writing were actually the preparation of classroom encounter – speaking. See figure 3.

### **1.8. Organization of the Study**

I organized my thesis into 5 chapters in order to explain about my research result. Chapter one described the background of the study, research problem, objective of the study, significance of the study, scope and limitation of the study and the definition of key terms. Chapter two was about the researcher study to the related references. In chapter three, I explained about how I conducted my research while in chapter four I described the discussion and result of my investigation. Finally in chapter five, I elucidated the conclusion and suggestion of my research.

The background on how and why I keenly observed inkshedding strategy in my speaking class was to help my students to express their ideas in English by applying this strategy. It was allegedly to enhance the expression of ideas in written form by extending my class in some virtual encounters, wrapped in social classroom and academic context. Next I centralized my research to how the ideas of my students, in terms of the focus and content of their ideas.

In order to smooth my research academically and enrich my insight, in chapter two, I reviewed some related references about inkshedding in depth such as the meaning of inkshedding according to some experts, analyzing text for writing, dissatisfactions and



warning in applying inkshedding, inkshedding supporting student's learning and electronic inksheddings, besides some others related articles about motivation, second language acquisition, learning communities, writing to learn, blended learning, importance of ideas in English language discourse and writing scoring rubric for assessing ideas' development. All these references inspired me to write all chapters in this thesis completely.

In chapter three, I thoroughly unveiled how I conducted my research by applying descriptive case study method. I was challenged to clarify academically my case study conducted STIKOM by presenting how I conducted my research and collected my data by using blog and mailing list.

Next in chapter four, I discussed how I processed the data I obtained from the 13 written works performed in both blog and mailing list in order to answer the research question – how the content and focus of their ideas.

I summed up in chapter five that the content and focus of the students, expressed in the six inkshedding assignments were improving. I also suggested that the class applying inkshedding strategy had to fulfill certain criteria to apply the inkshedding properly. In addition to that, I suggested further research in inkshedding using pencil and paper in order to see the effect of how inkshedding for listening, speaking, reading and writing was in both specific and large academic context.