

## **The Use of Social Media in Designing The Writing Assessment for EFL Students**

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This research investigates social media as the assessment for EFL students at State University of Medan (UNIMED) of second semester English educational program. This research focuses on how social media influences the students' competences in writing skills. The problems are how it influences their ability to develop their ideas in writing; develop the reading & writing materials; change the students' opinion on social media in writing class. Questionnaire was designed to get the students' thought on social media matter, their intention of social media for study, particularly in reading and writing topic and the influence of social media on their ability in developing the idea in writing class. The instruments used in this research were social media as Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram as a text in reading & writing class. The population consisted of 80 students from two classes of English educational program. Data was analyzed using Research & Development Method (R&D) and the Linkert Scale to get the percentage of students' perception. The findings of this paper indicate that students more enjoy and engage in writing class using social media as their assessments; using social media to develop ideas on a topic; and being more creative in writing skills. However, control and development are still needed on this topic.

*Key words:* English educational program, writing assessment, social media

*Penelitian ini menyelidiki media sosial sebagai penilaian untuk siswa EFL di universitas negeri Medan (UNIMED) program pendidikan bahasa Inggris semester kedua. Penelitian ini berfokus pada bagaimana media sosial mempengaruhi kompetensi siswa dalam keterampilan menulis. Masalahnya adalah bagaimana hal itu memengaruhi kemampuan mereka untuk mengembangkan gagasan mereka secara tertulis; mengembangkan bahan bacaan & tulisan; ubah pendapat siswa di media sosial dalam kelas menulis. Instrumen (kuesioner) dirancang untuk mendapatkan pemikiran siswa tentang materi media sosial, niat mereka media sosial untuk belajar, terutama dalam topik membaca dan menulis dan pengaruh media sosial pada kemampuan mereka dalam mengembangkan ide dalam kelas menulis. Instrumen yang*

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*digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah media sosial seperti facebook, whatapps dan instagram sebagai teks dalam kelas reasing & writing. Populasi terdiri dari 80 siswa dari dua kelas program pendidikan bahasa Inggris. Data dianalisis menggunakan Metode Penelitian & Pengembangan (R&D) dan Skala Linkert untuk mendapatkan persentase persepsi siswa. Temuan dari makalah ini menunjukkan bahwa siswa lebih menikmati dan terlibat dalam kelas menulis menggunakan media sosial sebagai penilaian mereka; menggunakan media sosial untuk mengembangkan ide tentang suatu topik; dan lebih kreatif dalam keterampilan menulis. Namun, kontrol dan pengembangan masih diperlukan untuk topik ini.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

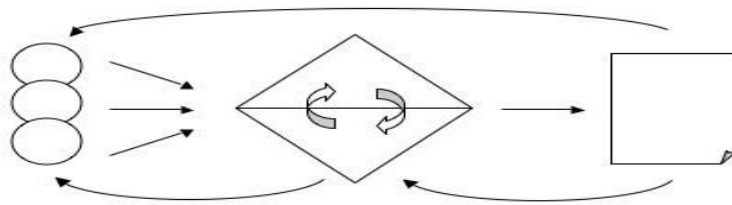
English is one of the foreign languages (EFL) used all over the world. It is quite difficult to set the students' mind in gaining the process of learning English, especially a freshman who never fully learns English in school. Students are expected to master four language skills in learning English. When integrating reading and writing, the lecturers need to be more creative in teaching these skills, meanwhile there are still a lot of lecturers who teach in traditional way, by only giving explanation and using an old hand out. The traditional way make the students have little chance to use English and explore their diction in English; therefore, they are often unable to fully comprehend lectures or actively participate in class discussions. Many are also hampered in their ability to express themselves in writing, (Kurzweil Educational Systems, 2004).

Writing is the most challenging area in learning the second language (Dar & Khan, 2015). University students are neither knowledgeable nor skilled enough to feel confident to communicate efficiently and effectively using English as a foreign language. Language teaching has a number of dimensions, which include the development of oral expression, written skills, literature, and creativity, (Irish National Teachers' Organization, 2004). However, Adas and Bakir (2013) note that students do not write very often and most of what they write is classroom-bound. The most important factor in writing exercises is that students need to be personally involved in order to make the learning experience of great value and make learning more meaningful and more exciting.

In writing, students do not only have to be able to write something but also they have to understand some aspects before and after writing. These aspects are influenced by some psychological situations, from inside and outside the students. Competences, knowledge, and method are also part of these aspects. For second semester of English education students of Universitas Negeri Medan, there are stages in studying reading and writing: literal reading, written language skills, contextual written language skills. Each stage has its own difficulties.

The purpose of studying written language skills is the students will be able to write their own idea and developing it into paragraph. There are three activities in writing, starting from pre-activities, writing activities, and post activities. The social media tools offer excellent opportunities to conduct the pre-writing, drafting, peer review, and revising steps of the writing process (Boas, 2011).

*Figure 1. Process-based activity set for L2 writing*



Pre-writing tasks	During writing	Post-writing tasks
Pre-writing tasks build/review sub-skills for the final writing activity.	Tasks during the main writing process encourages self-editing or peer-review.	Post-writing tasks allow for reflection, sharing, or publishing of the final product.

source: <https://coerll.utexas.edu/methods/modules/writing/>.retrieved 06th April, 2018.

Before writing, students must be able to understand the text in order to develop the idea in writing. So, their writing competences are also influenced by their ability in reading. Similarly, by adopting a social perspective, Carter and Nunan (2002) state “a reading practice which attends to the ideological underpinning of text, as signaled not so much by what the writer chooses as a topic, but how people, places, and events are talked about” (p. 220).

The researcher observes that the students have the problems for each activities. In pre-writing, the students get confused in building the idea, while in writing they cannot develop the idea into paragraph that causes the unfinished product. Based on the preliminary data from the students’ questionnaire and interview, it is found out that the learning material is not suitable with the students’ need. It is all text and narration, less picture. The students will be more interested in studying reading and writing if the materials use some contents from social media. It is found out that the students are more engaged in reading the quotation or text in Instagram since the feature is more colorful and up-to-date, as you can see in the table 1 and table 2.

Table1. The important of studying English

As an English education students, why do you need to study written language skills?	Academic purposes	20	5	25%
	The important of English this day	20	13	65%
	Enjoy studying English	20	2	10%
	Parents’ will	20		
The most frequent skill used in the classroom?	Reading	20	5	25%
	Writing	20	14	70%
	Listening	20	9	45%
	Speaking	20	12	60%
	Uninteresting topic to be developed	20	9	45%

What kinds of difficulties in studying written language skills?	The content is not real situation with these day	20	12	60%
	Unfamiliar vocabulary and monotonous	20	11	55%

From above the data, 65% of students need to learn English especially the writing skill; some like to learn through the social media. However, it is very important to support them in increasing their skill in writing. In addition, 70% students believe that writing skill is very important to learn, and it is often agreed that writing is very often used the students in the class.

In terms of students' difficulties in learning English, from the table above 55% shows that the students got difficulty when the text provided so many strange words of vocabularies and the picture given is really monotonous for them. Therefore, they feel difficulty to understand the text and do the exercises. Further the students expect various contents in the materials to motivate them in learning and mastering English language. The following table shows students' desire in learning English.

Table 2. The students' expectation in studying English

What kinds of materials that you prefer?	The past form text in black & white	20	3	15%
	The real situation text that deal with kids these day	20	5	25%
	Both	20	12	60%
Do you think social media will help you improve your writing	Yes	20	20	100%
	No	20	0	0
Do you think the learning materials used now be able to answer the students' need?	Yes	20	8	40%
	No	20	12	60%

From the table above, more than 50% of students want the topic and the teaching method related to the technology which is being developed right now and can increase their knowledge by following the current news and issues. Then, 100% of students want the topic related to the social media which will be interesting to and increase their interest in learning process in the class.

Technologies enhance learning, increase learning demand, and offer flexible delivery with respect to time, space, and place (Westera, 2012). Creativeness, innovativeness, collaboration, and competitiveness are highly essential for successes in the global markets of today. People and societies constantly require information to improve their knowledge. Technology enhances learning, increases learning demand, increases customization and facilitates flexible delivery with respect to the time, pace and place (Westera, 2012).

Social media can be the facilitator of lifelong learning that can be used as a tool bridging formal and informal learning contexts (EACEA, 2013). Using social media, students get more connected and engaged in studying any topic, especially writing.

One of these opportunities learners can possess is to use technology as a tool for improving their writing skills. Firstly, being active in the electronic community helps learners

create, analyze, and produce ideas easier and more efficiently. Secondly, using emails and sharing files give students the chance to collaborate with peers and teachers. Thirdly, using technology will motivate learners in their writing skill (Tsou, Wang, and Li, 2002). Fourthly, technology programs have been encouraged as an effective way that could be used to replace or enhance direct human input (Ware & Warschauer, as cited in Tsou, 2008).

Social media has become one of online discourse categories where people create something and share it to the world. In classroom, any topics can be developed by using internet, not only as the materials but also as the assessment to get students more involved in discussion. In State University of Medan, the most common social media used includes Facebook (FB), Instagram (IG), and WhatsApp (WA) application. Based on the result of the questionnaire, it was found that each application allowed students to communicate more active in English but less of correction. It also causes another problem in grammatical and meaning.

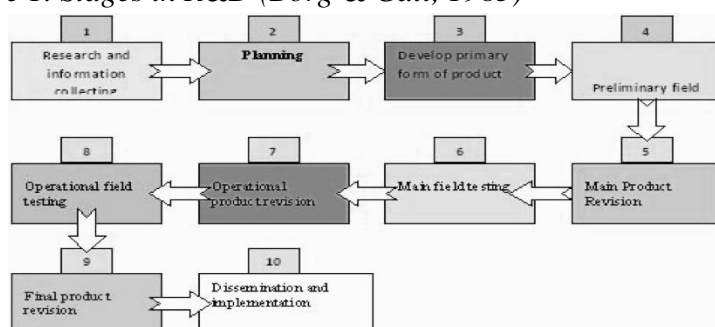
The interaction that exists in one of the social media can set an example in writing. The title, theme and content of a text in FB can be analyzed and used as an assessment in writing. The text from the internet must be well selected and be appropriate to the students' needs and syllabus. FB is not only used to do some assessments but also to practice their writing skill. Beside FB, the other social media used in this research are IG and WA. Why is it matter to choose these social media? Based on preliminary data, it was found that these three applications were the most dominantly used media among the learners.

From the data, it was found out that students get more engaged in discussion using social media than the traditional textbooks. The objective of this research was making students involve in learning using internet and social media application, which elaborated into two research questions: (1) What are students' thought of the FB, IG and WA as the students' assessments? (2) What kind of writing assessment design which can be developed from FB, IG and WA?

## METHOD

This research used Research & Development Method (R&D) by Borg & Gall (1983). There are ten stages in doing this research, starting from research and information gathering, planning, developing primary form of the product, preliminary field, operational field testing, operational product revision, main field testing, main product revision, final product revision, dissemination and implementation. Sumadinata (2010) states that if we follow all the stages, it will produce the perfect product.

Figure 1. Stages in R&D (Borg & Gall, 1983)



Questionnaire was adopted in this research, and it was designed in the form of Likert-scale. The questionnaire was adapted from *Badan Standar Nasional Pendidikan* and consist of four aspects: content appropriateness, language appropriateness, present appropriateness, and layout appropriateness.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

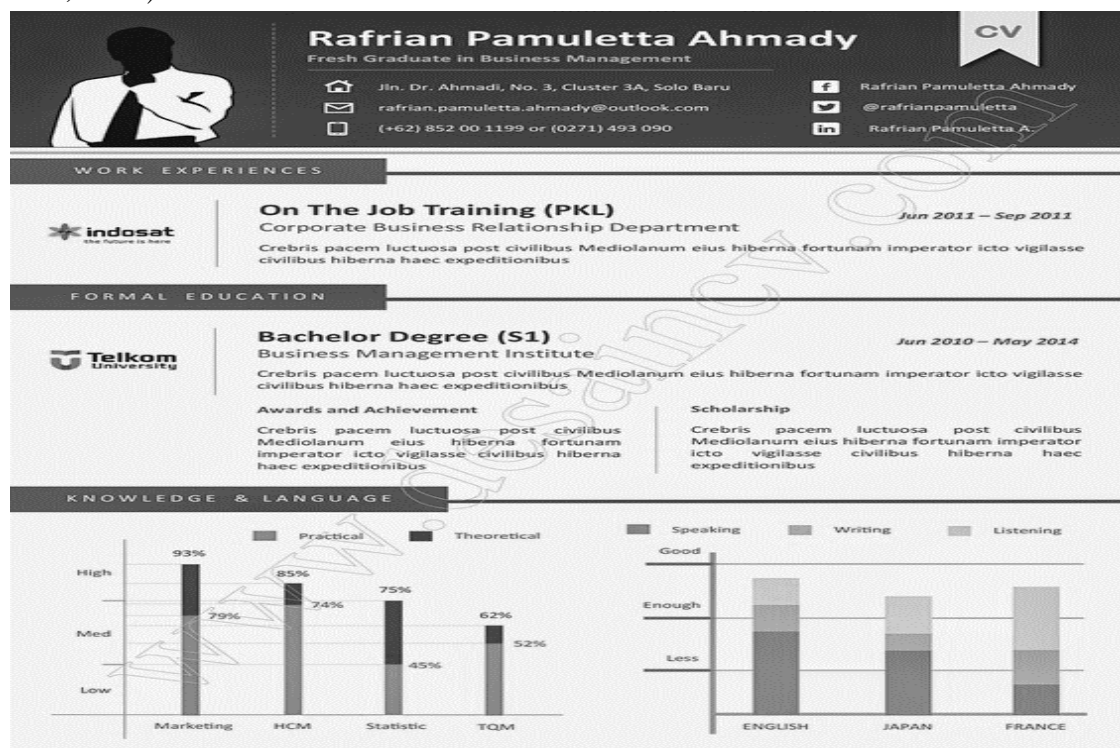
### Findings

#### *Designing New Material*

After administering the needs analysis, the English writing materials was developed through social media. The main point was the English writing materials given was related to the social media the students wanted. It was done not only to meet the students' needs in their learning process but also to make the students at ease in writing activity.

Test 1: the writing material was developed using internet. The text for Test 1 is related more to answering the question based on the thesis statement given which did not discuss about social media.

Figure 2. The example of materials (retrieved from <http://www.example-cv-creative/> August 08th, 2017)



#### *Validating New Materials by Expert*

After the first draft of the materials was developed, the materials were evaluated by the experts to know if the materials had been appropriate or not. The evaluation was conducted by giving questionnaires to the experts. There were two validators who were asked to validate the materials in terms of grammar and the appropriateness of the text. Also, they evaluated the learning material of reading, especially about the vocabulary which are

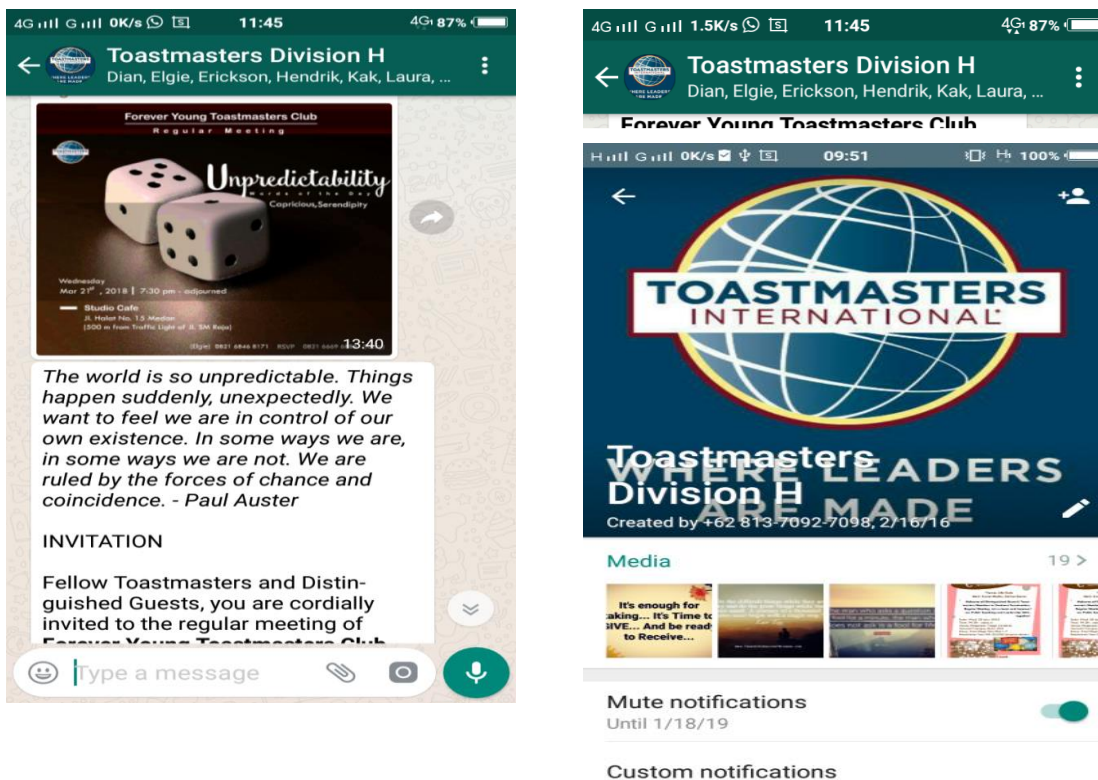
related to the program, activity of the task, and the layout of the materials developed. The developed English Writing materials were validated by the experts, and there were some revisions given as follows: (a) first recommendation was to check the grammatical error in the product, (b) to enrich the text, the validator demanded to add more material of social media.

### ***Revising New Materials Based on Experts' Suggestions***

After getting some suggestion, the researcher validated the product by giving more tests and designing the right materials for the writing class which consisted of the revision of grammatical check and more examples of text from social media.

*Figure 3. The example of test 2 (Toastmasters Division H. WhatsApp. March 20, 2018)*

Instruction: You should spend about 20 minutes on this task. The pictures below give information about the event held by one international club in Medan. Summarize the information by selecting and reporting the main features, and make your own paragraphs where relevant.

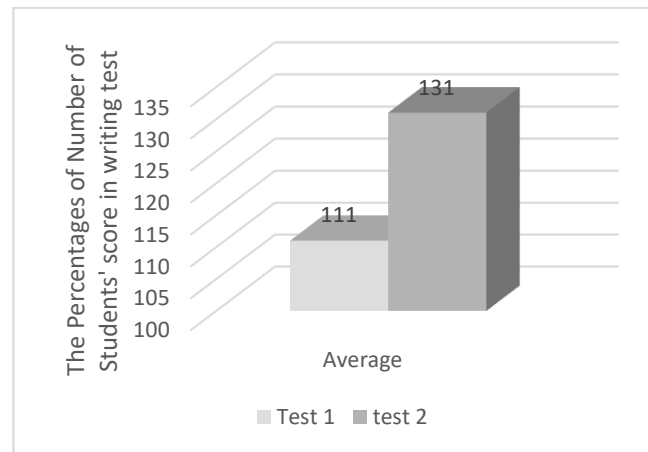


### ***Developing Revised New Materials (Final Product)***

There were three new developed reading materials. There are two tests which were distributed to the students. The first test was the test which was not related to the social media by answering the questions about those thesis statements given (test 1). Then, the second test is taken from social media (WA) which was related to the writing skill. To assess the students' paper was by implementing the writing score of British Council. The validation was from English Lecturer who validated the writing materials. It can be seen that mostly students got better score of the test 2 which increased about 14.28%. The average of the test 1 was only 5.55. On the other

hand, it happened in the test 2 which increased to be 6.55. In the test 2, the text was related to the social media, for instance, IG, WA, and FB.

Figure 4: The percentage of students' score in writing



The figure shows the average of students' tests. It can be seen that there is a significant improvement in the test 2 when the text was taken through social media. The difference of average was 20 point between test 1 and test 2.

## Discussion

Materials are anything used to help language learners to learn. Materials can be in the form of a textbook, a workbook, a cassette, a CD-ROM, a video, a photocopied handout, a newspaper, a paragraph written on a whiteboard: anything which presents or informs about the language being learned (Tomlinson, 2012). The materials can be adopted, developed, or adapted, or some combination of the three (Brown, 1995), but the materials presented have to consider approaches and syllabuses. Yallden (1987) define syllabus as a "summary of the content to which learners will be exposed". The students who have studied using social media as the materials have the different result than the students who haven't got the text from social media. It indicates the importance of social media as a factor to be considered in developing materials.

The findings show students assume that the majority of English materials provided by the teacher to learn in class was not-up-to date, conventional and a bit boring. That is caused by inappropriate materials which do not meet the students' need and the way lecturers teach and assess. In terms of materials, some students found it difficult to develop the idea in writing because of the lack up date of the text. Besides some students lack motivation and enthusiasm to learn reading & writing because of the gap in comprehend the text.

From the questionnaire and result of the research, most students were more engaged in studying reading & writing using social media. However, the number of textbooks they have been using so far is only based on hand out or old book. There is no effort of the lecturer to compile and design the appropriate materials to improve students' skills in English.

There are some strengths and weaknesses of using handout or old book as the teaching references. Findings show that using one of those social media with a large amount of internet



access made students easily finish their tasks and understand more on a topic. Moreover, using social media as a text can enrich the students' vocabulary in writing; they will find new things by searching and learning from around the world. This can attract them to engage more in using internet, especially social media in a good way.

With regard to weakness, using social media as a text in classroom causes a new problem if the lecturer cannot control the students' grammar in writing. Since the phrases used in social media tend to be more shortened, they can only be understood by youngsters. In terms of colorful textbooks, more than a half student like it. The students state that colorful materials will stimulate excitement and interest. In addition, the color of materials should be well arranged. Furthermore, the pictures used in the developed materials should be famous characters in the world. It can attract the students to learn more and write more fluently since they know the characters.

## CONCLUSION

This study shows that using social media such as WhatsApp, Instagram and Facebook as learning materials and assessment in learning reading and writing improve students' skill in both reading and writing. Students indicate the progress in sharing their ideas in the writing class. Based on the preliminary test, it was found that students' abilities in writing were still low. There were many reasons, such as; conventional method, monotonous materials, the lack of internet access, not up-to-date texts. However, these gaps can be partly solved by designing the attractive assessment using social media. Furthermore, it is expected for other researchers to do more research on this topic.

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