

FACEBOOK DOES IT REALLY WORK FOR L2 LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

The abundance of the information and communication technology has endowed institution of higher education educators and e-learning users with the focused apparatus that can be employed as instructive devices in the classrooms. This paper provides an account of how Facebook was incorporated as a pedagogical means in the ESL settings and reports on the students' stance and perception on the use of this social intermediate to enhance their L2 learning. Data was collected via a survey questionnaire concerning a particular group of transfer students at the tertiary stage. By the means of planned framework and structure, the students carried out several stages of the activities entrenched specifically for the English subject that they enrolled during the summer semester. The questionnaire was then administered and analysis of data in the signified affirmative responses from the students vis-à-vis to the use of Facebook in learning activities. They professed that the utilization of Facebook had generally enhanced their L2 skills such as reading and writing, expanded their social circles, improved their communication skills and minimized their apprehension when learning and using the language among their peers. The paper concludes by stressing the advantages that can be attained as a result of the implementation of Facebook in language learning contexts.

Keywords: Facebook, L2 learners, perceptions, apparatus, pedagogical means

INTRODUCTION

The tremendous progression in communication and network technologies has resulted more pioneering instructional delivery and learning solutions in order to cater to the growing trends in the context of education. This is justified on the basis of cost efficiency and accessibility where face to face coaching is not feasible and practical. Numerous researches and studies have proven that the combination and integration of both conventional and web-based online approaches by utilizing the social network websites in a classroom learning which can benefit the learners. The overwhelming response towards social network websites among students can be regarded as an emerging trend for teachers, lecturers and instructors to use this as an interesting educational tool to gauge the students' interest. Facebook and Twitter currently have become a budding culture among the online communities across the continents. Due to this extensive social media application among the students, it is empirical to look at how Facebook can be converted into a tool within the classroom context among the L2 learners. According to Bakar "E-learning or web-based learning environment is an evolution in education and English language learning" (Bakar, 2009).

At a minimum, instructors can use Facebook to facilitate instructor-to-student and student-to-student course communication, share and respond to questions and needs, receive announcements and updates, and manage out-of-class project collaborations. Using the apps, instructors can extend the utility of Facebook to mimic some of the basic features of Learning Management Systems like Blackboard. We shouldn't discount Facebook when it has proven to be a worthwhile classroom tool. Facebook group doesn't require the professor or students to "friend" each other to participate. "So Facebook can basically be used to facilitate a discussion group, which can certainly be done with an LMS like Blackboard or Moodle or with various other tools, but the nice thing about Facebook is that many students are already familiar and comfortable with it – it's a "known entity" to them. Another positive thing, which addressed a concern of mine in this environment, was that there was a 'wall' between this academic use and the personal uses students have for the tool – by being in the group you didn't have to friend anyone or expose your personal information. Furthermore, Students are able to ask their

peers, teachers or faculty members questions on what they feel challenged by in their academics. According to (Pinkman, 2005), (Nadzrah Abu Bakar, 2010), (Bakar, 2009) and (Seitzinger, 2006) Facebook has helped students to be more collaborative in class environment and even motivate them in learning. Facebook has been most popular since around 2005 where students use them as a study guide line or a website that can help their academics. It creates a better understanding and the “transfer of learning to new situations” (Seitzinger, 2006).

Students feel less motivated to learn a language because it is less interesting (Bakar, 2009). According to (Pinkman, 2005), teachers are more concerned about how their students learn rather than their methods of teaching. Also it said that if a student is independent inside and outside of a school they would understand more out of their learning environment (Pinkman, 2005). Coined by both Vygotsky and McLeod, Social Constructivism is the understanding of knowledge where the student participates in a discussion or activities to construct their own understanding of a concept (Vygotsky, 1978), (McLeod, 2007) and (Nadzrah Abu Bakar, 2010). One solution that is found to be achievement and attracted by student is by having a computer around. This can lead them to be more understanding and teachers are able to help their learners by having more knowledge and skills that can make them independent in their learning (Nadzrah Abu Bakar, 2010) and (Pinkman, 2005). Moreover, one of the networks that have been used extensively around the world is Facebook, e-learning that can help students’ attitude towards learning. The main goal of this research is to understand or to establish whether students use Facebook as a guideline towards the learning of language.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

This study focuses on the medium in which transfer students are able to benefit from in terms or language learning. One way to solve learner motivation to gain knowledge is by having a computer around them and using social networking as a guide (Bakar, 2009), (Seitzinger, 2006), (Nadzrah Abu Bakar, 2010), and (Pinkman, 2005). According to (Nadzrah Abu Bakar, 2010) Facebook is a webpage that is used to express or share thoughts, ideas and information. However, Facebook has been a medium for communication where one can interact with other users. Facebook has a “more communicative role than that of the less interactive Call Applications,” (Pinkman, 2005). The reason is because it allows learners to look back on their learning materials and improve on it (Seitzinger, 2006). This can also promote student’s interest and motivate them to be more interactive with their friends and to think in-depth or out of the box (Nadzrah Abu Bakar, 2010). Another reason is because it leads the student to develop a better writing constructively. It has been proven that students or transfer students who use Facebook or e-learner webpage have a better and higher reading and writing skills (Nadzrah Abu Bakar, 2010). Students who intend to study abroad are able find out what is expected when learning English via Facebook. Through feedback, they are able to voice out their concerns regarding the learning of English and they would be able to make immediate changes if necessary to correct their linguistic skills. Finally, this study would benefit future research in the field of learning of English using social network websites, in particular, Facebook.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Facebook is defined as a social network that is used around the world for either nonacademic or learning process (Bakar, 2009), (Nadzrah Abu Bakar, 2010), (Pinkman, 2005), and (Seitzinger, 2006). Facebook has helped many students to be more independent, understanding with the teacher and more academic. It’s an “opportunity to recycle language learned in class”, (Pinkman, 2005) and easy way for teachers and peers to communicate (Bakar, 2009). This also helps us to understand much better about the learning progress that has not been taught in class. It also gives them a head start of learning something which is more understandable and productive. This creates gateways for people around the globe to be optimistic in their scope to achieve their goals (Seitzinger, 2006). However, there are certain contentious issues against Facebook – many people in the world today believe that Facebook is not a website or an academic learning platform for teachers use. According to (Nadzrah Abu Bakar, 2010) throughout the existing studies and researcher reviews on educational tools and Facebook, there is still a need for researches to be done. The reason is that e-learning or teaching and learning online is a new and late popularity that is only utilized in some schools around the world (Nadzrah Abu Bakar,

2010). Furthermore, e-learning, Facebook or any web-based educational system is still a disadvantage to certain students especially to the ones who do not speak the same language as the teacher (Nadzrah Abu Bakar, 2010).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the useful tools to learn English in Facebook?
2. How does it support to practice writing skills?
3. What are the effective reading materials in Facebook discussions?
4. How often do students use the dictionary to identify unusual vocabulary while using Facebook?
5. What is the expression that they reveal towards their opinions in Facebook discussion?

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are multiple resources available nowadays for one to develop one's education. An example which utilizes the widespread phenomena that is technology would be using the Internet to learn. To correlate education with the availability of social networks such as Facebook, Twitter and Tumblr, which are playing an increasingly important role in this generation's social lives, is to kill two birds with one stone. Not only does a learner get to relax (as social networking tend to be an activity associated with leisure and low stress levels) after a long day, but they also get to learn and educate themselves simultaneously. As such, social networking sites can be a very pivotal tool in education, especially to learn languages. According to (Ivan, 2009), learners can use the increasingly innovative resources present in the social networking sites to learn or brush up on a language. There are groups dedicated to learning languages on social networking sites such as Facebook (that are aptly named so) that provide their members with consistent updates containing new information. Learners can also gain access to links pertaining to the language shared on the sites by other learners. Active discussions can also be prompted to encourage the flow of conversation between the practicing learners, who can share knowledge and help each other with any required corrections. The user-friendliness of the site, availability of instant (if not quick) feedback and real time communication are only a few of the benefits for one to learn a language via a social networking site.

The methods utilized to teach the language is by connecting a learner with the language's native speaker. Since the learner actually interacts and thus, practices the use of the new language, they tend to learn faster. According to (Saeed, Yang, & Sinnappan, 2009) the learners of this era are more open to accommodating to different learning methods; they are willing to experience new technology in study routines and they are also willing to collaborate with each other and their educators through multiple communication channels. However, the authors also agreed that the results may vary based on what type of learner they are. Besides that, (Schuhmann, & Skopek, 2009) stated that overall, students are satisfied with distance learning, but in the end, on-campus students find less value in it than off-campus students. The power of proximity, preference, convenience and value for money are the main factors that influence the on-campus students' responses. However, off-campus students obtain limited social interaction and opportunities to connect with others. They also recognize that on-campus students get more attention and privileges from their educators due to the face-to-face interaction between them.

Additionally, according to (Conn, Roberts, & Powell, 2009), learners who frequently utilize computers find it easier and more convenient to learn through them. Prior experience with a computer can increase the frequency of positive behaviours and openness towards computer-mediated learning and its benefits. (Richards, 2009) stated that learners require prior experience and exposure to computer-mediated learning to develop the voluntary attitude that prompts constructive dialogue and discussion when using that learning channel. Computer-mediated learning can help accelerate the development of 2nd language skills but it has to engage and interest the learner. As computers are integral to today's society, working on a learner's 1st language with a native speaker who might be located far away can improve the learner's 1st language skills. All in all, the integral value of the Internet should advocate the use of social networking sites to learn a language, especially since it is a resource that is wide-

spread and readily available in this increasingly urban world. However, the presence of slangs and jargons (such as chat speak and informal abbreviations) on the Internet can actually hinder the progress in learning a language. Learners teaching the language to other learners should be aware of the way they use the language to communicate to avoid any misunderstandings and unintentional grammar and spelling mistakes.

Collaborative learning is based on Vygotsky's work in developing the theory of social constructivism. Vygotsky believes that learning is derived from social activity. Students that are assisted by mentors or other well performed students will be able to acquire the necessary skills to work independently in the future. According to (Kristinsdottir, 2001), Vygotsky's claim in his research paper is that social interplay comes before the development of knowledge and mental state. In other words, the latter are the final outcome of human communication and conduct. His theory played an important role in building the fundamentals of the theory of knowledge. (Cooper, 2009) pointed out that there are three major themes proposed by Vygotsky in his theory. Firstly, he believes that social learning goes before development unlike the claim made by Piaget that says it is the other way round. Then, he mentioned that cognitive development is also contributed by the culture of a society and he also focuses on the importance of language in enhancing learning which can be used as a blueprint for planning curricular and lessons. Learning is also dependent on social factors that encompass electronic learning materials, experiences and classroom norms thereby contributing to the development of cognitive tools like language, culture and social interchange among people (Mcleod, 2007).

Vygotsky strongly agrees with the idea that language abilities emerge from social interplay so that the child can communicate his or her thoughts and feelings. Then, these language abilities would be internalized as thoughts or inner speech hence thoughts are the outcome of language (Wortham, 2006). A modern application of Vygotsky's theories is known also as "reciprocal teaching". It is used to increase and elevate the learning capability of the students from understanding reading materials. By applying this learning method, teachers alongside with their students can incorporate four main skills and they are summarizing, questioning, clarifying and predicting. The teacher's role in the process is reduced over (Mcleod, 2007). Collaborative learning can be done in schools, colleges or universities where the participants are physically present or working over a project via the Internet. (The Benefit of Online Collaborative Learning, , 2011) suggested that with the advancement of technology in recent times, online collaborative learning is gaining popularity. Its fame is not only credited to technology advances but also because of its benefits.

Blended Learning

Blended learning, which has been coined as hybrid or adjunct learning is a teaching model designed with a mixture of classroom and online approaches. The term "blended learning" (BL) has gained a considerable amount of interest from educational systems in the last decade as a definition of specific forms of teaching featuring web based online instructions. The definition of BL is distinguished and varied. For example, BL is referred to as the integrated combinations of traditional learning with web-based online approaches, the combination of media and tools deployed in an e-learning environment and the combination of a number of pedagogical approaches, irrespective of the learning technology used in cases, (Whitlock, & Jefts, 2003), (Alavi, & Gallupe, , 2003), (Arbaugh, 2005) and (Peterson, 2003). In addition, (Singh, 2003) provided a clearer description that properly elaborates BL as a much richer set of learning strategies or dimensions that can be blended in ways such as: offline with online, self-paced with live and so on. BL courses blend face-to-face interactions of the traditional teaching methods with online learning; uniquely involving the introduction of project based learning, access to online resources as well as the delivery and submission of assignments and curricular activities. This provides us with a platform to revolutionize the educational systems to better equip students' learning progress. But according to (Buzetto-More & Sweat-Guy, 2006), in order to achieve a blended or a hybrid class, actual student learning as well as assessment, to a certain extent, must take place in the cyber world. A percentage of traditional "classroom time" has to be forgone to make room for online learning activities. When this is achieved, we could change students' attitude towards learning; by providing relevant learning scaffolds, accommodating a heightened interaction as well as increasing the learners' autonomy.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

This study was conducted during the summer 2011 semester and focused on transfer students of the American Degree Transfer Program of Sunway University. A total of 50 transfer students took part in this study.

Instrument

A survey questionnaire was designed for the purpose of this study and it is a form of piloted-survey questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of two major parts: Part A and Part B. Part A referred to the demography of the participant to obtain the participant's background information. Part B contained six sections that were labelled alphabetically from Sections A-F, the details of which are as follow: Section A examined the participants' perception towards Facebook in general (6 items); Section B looked at how the participants perceive the benefit Facebook has on their writing skills (2 items with 5 sub-items); Section C examined the participants' perception on the effect Facebook has on their reading skills (6 items); Section D observed the participants' opinions on how Facebook affects their grammar (5 items); Section E looked at how the participants perceive the effect Facebook has on their social interaction skills (6 items); and Section F examined how the participants feel about the effect Facebook had on their critical thinking skills (4 items).

The questionnaire employed the 4-point Likert scale with 1 being 'Strongly Agree' and 4 being 'Strongly Disagree'. An online survey questionnaire was first created using an account on www.surveymonkey.com. Subsequently, the questionnaire was distributed on 5 July 2011 by posting the link on the wall of the American Degree Transfer Program's group, Sunway ADTP 2011, on Facebook. This is to ensure that the respondents consist only of transfer students of the American Degree Transfer Program of Sunway University. Facebook was used as a medium for distributing the questionnaire because this method would be able to attract many respondents within a shorter span of time. The responses were then analyzed using descriptive statistics in the form of frequency analysis and percentages. The results were then tabulated.

PART A:	Participants' background information: 5 items. E.g. Gender, age, student statue
PART B:	Facebook in general: 6 items. E.g. 'I like Facebook.'
Section A	
Section B	Facebook and writing: 2 items with 5 sub-items. E.g. 'I think it is a good idea to use Facebook to practice writing skills in English.'
Section C	Facebook and reading: 6 items. E.g. 'I get more information when reading my friends' postings.'
Section D	Facebook and grammar: 5 items. E.g. 'In general I feel that my English grammar has somewhat improved.'
Section E	Facebook and social interaction: 6 items. E.g. 'I am able to give suggestions freely in the Facebook discussion.'

Figure 1. Survey Questionnaires Structure

Procedure of Implementation of Facebook Activity

The steps taken to implement the Facebook activity can be broken down into 3 steps: The Facebook activity consisted of 3 tasks, which are reading, writing, and discussion, all of which had to be submitted on at the end of the class session. Students of the class ENGL 1050 (Thought and Writing) were required to complete the tasks given individually. The lecturer acted as an advisor and moderator on the discussions and the progress of the entire activity. The details of each task are as follow:

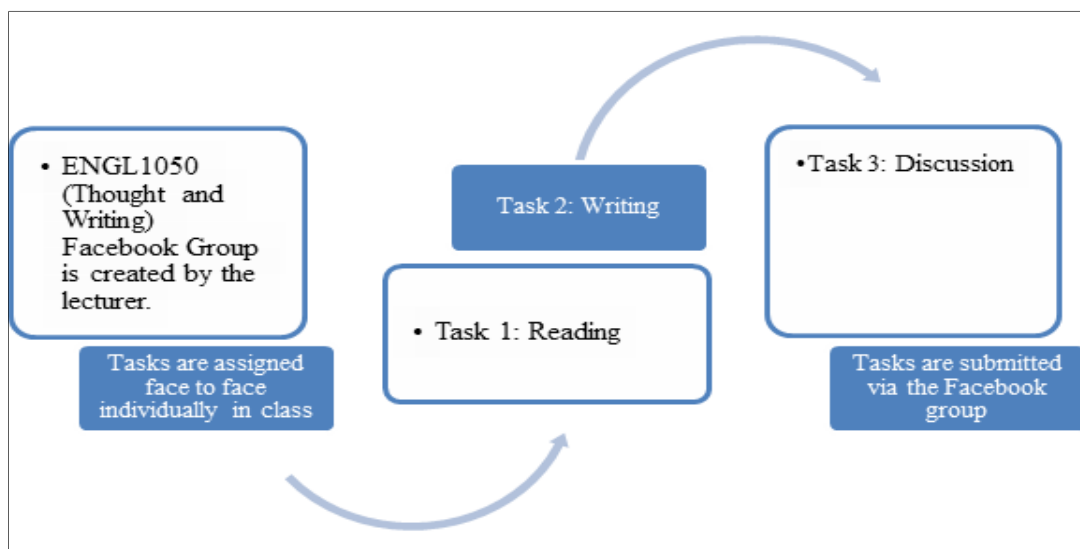


Figure 2. Framework of Facebook activity

Creating a Facebook Group

As a means to gather the students of the class on Facebook and for the tasks given to be completed on Facebook, a Facebook group was created by the lecturer and the students were then invited to join the group on Facebook. The Facebook group was named 'ENGL 1050 summer 2011.' The group consisted of 16 members, including the lecturer. The members were all transfer students of the American Degree Transfer Program of Sunway University and were all from different majors, such as Psychology, Engineering, Computer Science, and Communication.

Assigning the Tasks

The 3 tasks were uploaded onto the Facebook group by the lecturer with clear instructions. The students were required to complete the 3 tasks individually. The students also could only communicate with each other via Facebook chat. The reading and writing tasks' answers were posted on Facebook by creating a new document by each student with the student's name as the title of the document. The discussion section was done by having the students posting their views and opinions on the wall of the Facebook group and they were to comment on each other's posts.

Task 1: Reading

In this task, 2 passages adapted from novels written by D. H. Lawrence and Henry James respectively was given. The passages discussed each author's perception of the effects that London would have on a newcomer. The students were then given 13 multiple choice questions regarding both passages to find out how many the students were able to understand and infer from both passages. Examples of the questions given are 'The author of passage one makes his point mainly by the use of...' and 'It can be inferred that James would be less likely than Lawrence to...' The activity in this task adheres to the improvement of reading skills as the questions are based on the passages given and the answers could all be inferred by reading the passages. This shows that to correctly answer the questions in Task 1, the students will have to be able to understand both passages and to learn to infer both the authors' works.

Task 2: Writing

Ten (10) topics were given in this writing task. Each topic consists of one prompt and a question that was related to the prompt. The students were to choose one of the prompts and to then answer the question put forward at the end of the prompt. This writing task is to explore how the students are able to express themselves based on the topic they have chosen. One of the topics given is 'prompt: "That which we obtain too easily, we esteem too lightly. It is dearness only which gives everything its value." Thomas Paine. Assignment: Do we value only what we struggle for? Plan your response, and then write an essay to explain your views on this issue. Be sure to support your position with specific

points and examples. You may use personal examples or examples from your reading, observations, or, knowledge of subjects such as history, literature, science.) By completing Task 2, the students had the opportunity to practice their writing skills, from sentence constructions to sentence openers. They were able to apply what they had learnt in class in their writing. Besides that, the students could also compare themselves with their peers and learn new styles of writing by reading each other's essays.

Task 3: Discussion

Only one topic was given in this discussion task. The students were required to post their opinions on the subject on Facebook and to then comment on each other's posts and discuss further on the topic. This task was to evaluate how well the students were able to interact with each other in a healthy and educative manner. The topic given in this task was 'Time has a doomsday book on whose pages he is continually recording illustrious names. But as often as a new name is written there, an old one disappears. Only a few stand in illuminated characters never to be effaced. HenryWadsworth Longfellow. Discuss: Are there some heroes who will be remembered forever? Or are all heroes doomed to be forgotten one day? Plan your response, and then write an essay to explain your views on this issue. Be sure to support your position with specific points and examples. (You may use personal examples or examples from your reading, observations, or, knowledge of subjects such as history, literature, science.)' A sample answer was then given to stimulate the students' mind-set towards the topic. Students of ENGL 1050 voiced their opinions by posting them up on the group's wall on Facebook and also by commenting on each other's posts. Throughout the discussion, the students were required to be civil and mature in their response, as well as to do some basic research to provide evidence for their claims.

Table 1. Sample's Result

N = 50		
Gender		
Male	30	60%
Female	20	40%
Age		
Average Age	19.54	
Student Status		
Fulltime student	49	98%
Part-time student	1	2%
Undergraduate Student	45	90%
Postgraduate Student	5	10%
Birthplace (by country)		
Malaysia	46	92%
Korea	1	2%
USA	1	2%
London	1	2%
India	1	2%
Ethnicity		
Malay	14	28%
Chinese	28	56%
Indian	6	12%
Korean	1	2%
Mongolian	1	2%

Submission of Work

All work done by the students was submitted onto Facebook. Students who failed to do so were marked as absent for that lesson. The reason for such an attendance-taking is because if they do not submit their part on the tasks given, they steer completely away from the main objective of the lesson, which was supposed to be an online class for the day. Each student created a new document on Facebook for the answers of the reading and writing tasks with their name as the title of the document. They were then required to participate in a discussion on whether heroes will be remembered forever on the Facebook group's wall for Task 3.

RESULTS

This section discusses about the result of the survey by analysing the students' (N=50) responses to the questionnaires. The review will focus on the notable findings of the questionnaire in sections A-E. To make the review easier, the questionnaire will be referred as A1 or A2 which is section A line 1 and 2 respectively.

Section A: Responses towards Facebook in General

The questions in this section require the students to indicate their perceptions towards using Facebook as a language learning tool in general. As a whole, the students indicate a positive attitude towards using Facebook as a language learning tool. 74% chose "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" for A2 "...more confident communicating in English through Facebook...". 54% chose "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" in A4 "builds up my confidence in using English". This shows that the "effects" of Facebook towards students are more on the positive side. As for the other questions, 50% chose "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" in A1 "Facebook is a useful tool", 94% chose "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" in A3 "prefer Facebook in English", 74% chose "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" in A5 "don't have to worry of my friends' opinion on my language". This shows the positive "attitude" of students towards Facebook as a language learning tool.

Table 2. Section A

Section A: Responses towards Facebook in General	Strongly Disagree %	Disagree %	Agree %	Strongly Agree %
Facebook is a useful tool for learning English	12	38	42	8
I am more confident communicating in English through Facebook than face-to-face communication	10	26	52	12
I prefer Facebook in English	0	6	38	56
Facebook builds up my confidence in using the English language	6	40	36	18
I don't have to worry of my friend's opinion on my language when I use Facebook in English	6	20	54	20

Section B: Responses towards Facebook in Writing

In this section, students are prompted to indicate their perception towards Facebook as a tool to help improve their writing skills. In B1, B4, B5 and B6, students indicate a more positive attitude towards "Facebook promotes collaborative learning", "I can express my ideas", "I can be more creative with my writing" and "I am more confident with my writing ability" with a 60%, 84%, 78% 56% of "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" respectively. But, on the other hand, in B2, B3 and B7, the students show a negative attitude towards "I think it's a good idea to use Facebook to practice writing skills", "I learn to write better" and "I can write longer" with a 54%, 58% and 60% of "Strongly Disagree" and

“Disagree” respectively. This indicates that although Facebook helps in expressing ideas and creativity but it doesn’t improve writing skills as a whole.

Table 3. Section B

Section B: Responses towards Facebook in Writing	Strongly Disagree %	Disagree %	Agree %	Strongly Agree %
Facebook promotes collaborative learning.	4	36	50	10
I think it's a good idea to use Facebook to practice writing skills in English	12	42	40	6
I learn to write better in English using Facebook	12	46	38	4
I can express my ideas freely in Facebook	2	14	62	22
I can be more creative in expressing my ideas in Facebook	2	20	58	20
I am more confident with my writing ability using Facebook	14	30	40	16
I can write longer in English thanks to Facebook	24	36	30	10

Section C: Responses towards Facebook in Reading

This section indicates the perception of students towards Facebook in reading. From the table, the students don’t think that Facebook encourages them to read nor it will help in improving their reading skill. Putting that aside, students learn to get more and are able to correctly select information from reading the comments in Facebook. Other than that, they also think that Facebook encourages them to read related articles to support their points and they would also think critically on the topic. This shows that students learn how to get information correctly and think critically when they read a post. They would also do other research to support their posts in Facebook. However, Facebook doesn’t encourage them to read and doesn’t improve their skills in reading.

Table 4. Section C

Section C: Responses towards Facebook in Reading	Strongly Disagree %	Disagree %	Agree %	Strongly Agree %
I get more information when I read my friends' posts	2	14	58	26
I read related articles to support my points in the Facebook discussion	6	26	52	16
Facebook encourages me to read more in English	12	44	32	12
Reading my friend's comments helps me to think critically on the topic discussed	8	24	54	14
My reading skills improved from using Facebook	18	40	34	8
I learn how to select information from my readings in Facebook discussions	8	36	48	8

Section D: Responses towards Facebook in Grammar

In general, students indicate a positive response towards Facebook in Grammar although 52% chose “Strongly Disagree” and “Disagree” for D1 “In general I feel that my English grammar has improved”. The other questions D2, D3, D4, D5 shows a more positive response with 78% in C2 “I can use different word forms in English”, 58% in C3 “I am more active in checking up meaning of difficult words in the dictionary when using Facebook”, 64% in C4 “my skills in guessing meanings of word improved” and 62% in C5 “I learn more new words when reading my friend’s posts” chose “Strongly Agree” and “Agree”. The students generally feel that they have not improved their grammar. On the other hand, students feel that their skills in guessing meanings of a word have improved and they could use different word forms in English. Moreover, they also learn more new words and are more active in checking up meaning of difficult words in the dictionary.

Table 5. Section D

Section D - Responses towards Facebook in Grammar	Strongly Disagree %	Disagree %	Agree %	Strongly Agree %
In general I feel that my English grammar has somehow improved	10	42	38	10
I can use different word forms in English	4	18	48	30
I am more active in checking up meaning of difficult words in the dictionary when using Facebook: My skill in guessing meanings of word improved	16	26	36	22
I learn more new words when reading my friends' post	10	26	50	14
	12	26	46	16

Section E – Responses towards Facebook in Social Interaction

In this section, students show a positive response towards social interaction in Facebook.

Table 6. Section E

Section E - Responses towards Facebook in Social Interaction	Strongly Disagree %	Disagree %	Agree %	Strongly Agree %
I am able to give suggestions freely in the Facebook discussion	4	12	62	22
I feel comfortable expressing my opinions in the Facebook discussion	4	16	54	26
I learn how to give opinions in the Facebook discussion	0	26	52	2
Facebook discussion encourages me to learn English.	12	42	36	10
Facebook discussion improves my discussion skills in English.	6	42	44	8
I think critically on the topic discussed before I post my comments/ideas	4	22	50	24
I am able to use my critical thinking skills when using Facebook	8	22	44	26
I now realize that thinking skills are important when reading academic articles	2	8	56	34
I now realize that thinking skills are important when writing	2	6	50	42

Students are able to give their suggestions and express their opinions in Facebook freely based on E1, E2 and E3 with a 84%, 80% and 74% on “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” respectively. According to the table, Facebook also generally improves the discussion skills of students in C5 with a 54% on “Strongly Agree” and “Agree”. Moreover, students are able to use their critical thinking skills when using Facebook based on E6 and E7 with a 74% and 70% on “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” respectively.

Students also realized the importance of thinking skills when reading academic articles and writing. This is proven in E8 and E9 with a 90% and 92% on “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” respectively. However, there is only one negative response in this section which is in E4 “Facebook discussion encourages me to learn English” with a 54% on “Strongly Disagree” and “Disagree”. This shows that, the students learn and are comfortable with expressing opinions and giving suggestions. They also realized the importance of thinking skills and are able to use critical thinking skills when a topic is discussed which also improves discussion skills. However, students do not feel that Facebook discussion encourages them to learn English.

DISCUSSION

This survey research has deliberately explored on Sunway College ADTP students feedback on how Facebook could be a helpful learning tool in the English Language. Generally, the findings and results of this research showed positive feedbacks and promoted language learning activities among students. This developed the construction of new knowledge in the English language between learners in the social network Facebook. According to the, “*7 Things You should Know About Facebook,*” Facebook’s structure encourages users to view relationships in a extensive context of learning, even as affiliations change—from high school to college to graduate school to the workplace (Ellis, 2009). Detailed analysis of the sections from the result tables and charts showed that students’ responses were largely more positive, and they had concurred that their English and communicating skills improved when they interact through Facebook in the first section, which is section A. This shows the positive “attitude” of students towards Facebook as a language learning tool. This section of survey on the students showed that most of them agreed that Facebook gives them better confidence and higher self-esteem in communicating in English. Research by the website Science Daily states that online social networking sites, such as Facebook, can help students become academically and socially integrated as well as improving learning outcomes, according to a study by researchers in China and Hong Kong (ScienceDaily, 2011).

The result from section B surveys the response of students towards their writing skills through Facebook. The survey from section B shows that Facebook does improve their creativity and expressing of ideas. Depending on the creativity of the students, social networking sites could be a fun way of sharing and organizing information (Ramirez, 2009). Although Facebook improves the student’s creativity and expressing of ideas, it does not improve their writing skills in Facebook. In contrast, research shows that social networks such as Facebook do improve writing skills. Dr Spencer Jordan, who lectures in creative writing at the University of Wales Institute, Cardiff’s (Uwic) School of Education, said web technologies were proving to be an ideal way of encouraging young people to write confidently about things they enjoy, and this improves writing skills. (Norman, 2009). Section C showed that students do not think that Facebook encourages them to read or improve their reading skills. On the contrary, research showed that successful social networks (such as Facebook) can be highly effective vehicles for much informal learning. This is often largely unrecognized because these sites are considered to be centered on leisure activities and individuals participate for fun and enjoyment (Roy Williams, 2008). But based on the results from the survey, 12.00% of the students strongly disagree and 44.00% disagree, which is more than the statistics supporting that Facebook encourages or improves reading skills. However, students stated that they learn how to get information correctly and think critically when they read a post. They would also do other research to support their posts in Facebook. Social media is about community and conversation. If you genuinely participate with social sites you’re engaging in the discussion and debate going on. Debate is about critical thinking. Someone raises a question and it challenges you to think to prove your point (Bradley, 2008).

Section D shows the results on Grammar when using Facebook as an English tool, and the majority of the response was in general positive. However, some students feel that they have not improved their grammar when using Facebook as an English learning tool. This is because some students use the “chat language” and commonly used in social networking chat facilities, such as 2mor (tomorrow), msg (message), and gtg (got to go), while in English grammar lessons (English grammar) (Raphael, 2010). In spite of this, students feel that their skills in guessing meanings of a word have improved and they could use different word forms in English. Moreover, they also learn more new words and are more active in checking up meaning of difficult words in the dictionary. In section E, the results show the response of students towards Facebook in social interactions. Students are able to academically interact with one another and leave comments to improve each other’s ideas in English. Besides that, Facebook improves interpersonal communication between students. Students are improving their communication through social networks, such as Facebook, a skill the study found is essential for a successful career (Williams, 2008). They are able to communicate easily in English with no face to face interaction. This is called computer mediated communication. Learning is an on-going process, and is better achieved through social interaction. For students who are weak in the English language, they could learn more through discussions in Facebook. Looking at bombastic words will entice them to search for the meaning so that they would not be left behind or left out when communicating in English through Facebook. Facebook has been proven to be a useful tool in learning the English language. Discussions in Facebook walls helped the students improve their English language skills. They have to understand the meaning in order to keep up and communicate with other students and friends, some of the students had to learn, adapt and improvise their language skills in English. Based from the data and results that were collected, Facebook has proved its usefulness in developing and improving English language skills.

CONCLUSION

To recapitulate, the verdict of this study provides evidence that the social network website, Facebook, to a certain extent positively helps transfer student’s attitude towards language learning in general, in terms of reading and writing expressively, in their grammatical skills and finally in their benefits from social interaction. To facilitate hybrid learning, Facebook has useful tools such as Pages like the “Learn English | British Council” and “VOA Learning English” to provide platforms that support the learning of English via educational videos, tutorials, discussions, etc. Consequently, the Group feature on Facebook offers users the avenue to learn English collaboratively with others in groups like the “English Learning Club” or even “ENGL1050 Summer 2011”. Delving into specifics, incorporating this innovative platform for blended learning into the classroom enhances the transfer student’s knowledge and language skills, provides opportunity for them to take lead of their language learning more collaboratively, progressively boosts their critical-thinking as well as analytical skills, and gradually materializes a whole new dimension to learning within classrooms. Furthermore, these students hone their writing skills every time they post a message or comment on Facebook, from the most heated discussions to the most concise phrases they express themselves with. Concurrently, transfer students are bound to come across elaborate reading materials within discussions and thereby employ the use of dictionaries moderately as indicated in the Results of Section D3. However, there is always the likelihood of students steering off course due to distractions incorporated into Facebook; instead of using it for the purpose of learning language: the array of Facebook applications, the wonders of instant-messaging and the recent implementation of the video calling feature. Provision with the prospect of using Facebook inside classrooms, transfer students are induced to take the initiative to learn more autonomously thereby equipping them with an attribute of significance applicable not only within their course of study but way beyond that.

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