



The Use of Facebook Supplemented Face-to-Face Instruction to Enhance English Grammar and Reading Comprehension Performance and Attitudes of Low-Intermediate EFL Students

Kretsai Woottipong

Western Languages Program, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Thaksin University, Songkhla, Thailand
Corresponding author, E-mail: kretsai@yahoo.com

Abstract

This study investigated the impact of Facebook supplemented face-to-face instruction on Thai EFL students' grammar and reading comprehension performance and their attitude toward the use of Facebook as a supplementation for studying English grammar and reading. An experimental, one-group pretest-posttest design was employed in this study. The simple random sampling technique was used to select 60 students enrolled in a language requirement course at Thaksin University. The blended learning in which Facebook supplemented face-to-face instruction was employed in the experimental group. The grammar and reading comprehension tests and student interviews were used in this study. Using means, standard deviations and paired-sample t-test, the analysis revealed that the students performed better in reading comprehension and grammar. The students also had positive attitudes toward using Facebook to supplement the in-class learning of grammar and reading skill. As a supplementary learning tool, Facebook facilitated them to involve in discussions with the instructor and other students and study the learning materials at their own pace and time.

Keywords: Facebook, reading comprehension, grammar

1. Introduction

Facebook, a Web 2.0 application serving a large online community, has become one of the most popular social network platforms among users in the last few years as it facilitates users in posting information, discussing certain issues with friends, and working collaboratively (Mazman & Usuel, 2010). Most of the students deploy social networking sites such as Facebook in meeting new people, or doing group projects and assignments (Zanamwe, et al., 2013). In addition, students' language skills are facilitated by sharing of information or giving feedbacks among peers can have a positive impact on students (Griffith & Liyenage, 2008).

One of Facebook's features is to indirectly create a community of practice which is a key factor of student education in Social Constructivist theories. Students can construct new knowledge after they communicate with other people on Facebook. When students receive comments and suggestions, they can deploy the feedback provided to develop their language skills. Besides, when students discuss on Facebook, they do not have to use their real names. They can avoid in-class interaction thus reducing the level of anxiety (Murphy, 2009). This learning style can decrease the Affective Filter and finally enhance motivation and risk taking in language learning (Krashen, 1981, 1988). In addition, the usefulness given to students, Facebook can also enhance several teaching advantages to instructors. Facebook can enhance the Affective Filter Hypothesis. Based on Krashen (1981), motivation, attitude, self-confidence, and anxiety are key components in second language acquisition. High motivation, a good self-image, and a low level of anxiety reduce the Affective Filter and strengthen the amount of comprehensible input, which finally enhances language learning (Krashen, 1988).

The conceptual framework of this study is that Facebook can promote Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis and thus enhancing the comprehensible input. Students' social interaction such as discussion, collaboration or feedback on grammar problems and reading topics via Facebook help reduce the affective filter which can contribute to improving their grammar and reading comprehension skills.

It seems that Facebook has characteristics that enhance language learning, but only a few studies have focused on this pedagogical issue. To improve the lack of supporting studies in this area, the



researchers decided to use a Facebook site as a supplementation for low-intermediate EFL students to study English grammar and reading skill outside classroom.

At Thaksin University, class time spent on grammar and reading practice is limited. In a university curriculum, reading skill constitutes only one of many objectives for learning English. For example, most students spend three periods of sixty minutes each per week learning English in the classroom. This time is shared between writing, reading, speaking and listening instruction, with only 25 percent of the time allocated to developing grammar and reading comprehension skills. And most students have little further opportunity to read anything in English outside of the classroom. With Facebook supplemented face-to-face instruction, it can be designed to help students practice grammar and reading comprehension skills and teachers can use it to create a grammar and reading course that solves the problems of class time limitation. For these reasons, Facebook supplemented face-to-face instruction can be a tool to help students develop their English grammar and reading comprehension skills.

2. Objectives

The purposes of this study were to investigate the impact of Facebook supplemented face-to-face instruction on Thai EFL students' English grammar and reading performance and their attitudes toward the use of Facebook as a supplementation for studying English grammar and reading.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Research design

In order to achieve the research objectives, the study utilized an experimental design known as one-group pretest-posttest design.

3.2 Sample

The population consisted of 897 first-year students who enrolled in Read and Write in Basic English in the second semester of the academic year 2017 at Thaksin University, Thailand. A sample group of 60 students was drawn from this population by the use of simple random sampling. The group of students was selected from four faculties that are Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Faculty of Business Management, Faculty of Science, and Faculty of Education. Thirty-five students in this group were female and twenty-five of them were male. Their ages were between 16 and 20 years. Their Ordinary National Education Testing (O-NET) score in the English section was less than 40 points. Regarding their background in Facebook use, the study found that 57 students used Facebook every day while three of them used it three or four times a week. 58 students used Facebook via mobile phone and only 2 students visited the Computer Center of the university.

3.3 Instrument and its quality

3.3.1 Course content

Interchange 5th edition (pre-Intermediate) was the textbook taught in this course. The experimental group received face-to-face instruction with Facebook supplementation. Facebook was open for the students from January to May 2018. The students were allowed to post questions on the main page, leave messages, or chat with the instructor and other students on Facebook. Thai language was used to communicate their English grammar and reading comprehension problems.

3.3.2 Reading Pre- and post-test

A reading pre- and post-test was designed to measure the impact of the treatment (face-to-face instruction with Facebook supplementation). The instruments were initially validated by experts of EFL university lecturers. The content of the test was evaluated through Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC). In this study, the value of IOC is between 0.6-1.0, which was acceptable. The revised tests were tried out with 30 second-year students who had previously studied in this course in order to check the level of difficulty of test items (p) and the discrimination index (D). The test items with value of level of difficulty between .20 to .80 and the discrimination index higher than .20 were chosen. Next, the test was then tried



out with first-year students who were taken from a different group of the main sample. Kuder-Richardson Formula 20 (KR20) was used to check the test reliability. The value of this reliability test was 0.87. The pre-tests were administered to the sample prior to the treatment started and the post-tests immediately after the end of the intervention.

3.3.3 Interview protocol

An interview was administered to gain in-depth information about the attitudes of the students toward the impacts of using Facebook as a supplementation for studying grammar and English reading skill. In this study, 4 volunteer participants participated in a semi-structured interview. The interviewing process took 25 minutes. The data were collected with an MP3 player. Thai was used in the interview.

3.4 Data collection

The students in the sample group first took the pre-test. The experimental group learned with Facebook supplemented face-to-face instruction in three periods each week which were arranged for the instruction. When finishing the course, the experimental group was assigned to do the post-test took 3 hours. Pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental group were obtained to evaluate the learning progress to determine the effectiveness of Facebook supplemented face-to-face instruction by using t-test at 0.05 levels. After completing the course, four students from the experimental group were interviewed regarding their attitudes on usage of the instruction. Students' opinions obtained from the interview were evaluated.

3.5 Data analysis

The data obtained from different methods of the study were analysed and interpreted by quantitative and qualitative analysis. Quantitative data includes the data obtained from the post-test. The t-test was used to compare grammar and reading competency of the experimental group. Qualitative data includes the data obtained from student interviews. The audio-recordings of student interviews were transcribed by the researcher. When the transcription was completed, participants received a copy of the transcript to examine and delete any statements. Then, the data obtained from the interview was coded so that the differences and similarities between all the answers were seen.

3.6 Procedures

3.6.1 The participants were taught by the researcher. The content included 4 units for the semester per the guidelines identified in the course syllabus were taught to the students. The students were supplemented with the access to Facebook inside and outside the classroom.

3.6.2 Each of the four units was taught in two weeks (about 3 hours per week). During the six hours, the instructor first taught the reading text and assisted students to answer questions (e.g., about new vocabulary, topic sentence, general and specific details) in the Student's Book. Each reading passage and its exercises were taught around three hours. The researcher normally read or asked the questions, and the students answered them.

3.6.3 The rest of the three hours were spent for teaching grammar. The instructor explained the grammar topic per the guidelines in the Activity Book, supporting the rule with examples before guiding the students to do the exercises in the textbook. The reading comprehension skills of scanning, skimming, guessing meaning of vocabulary from context clues, and finding the topic sentences were the targeted subskills, while the focused grammar points taken from the table of contents of the textbook included Past Simple tense, Present Simple tense, Present Continuous tense, Present Perfect tense, Future Simple tense and Comparisons with adjectives.

3.6.4 The participants were taught to study the material posted on Facebook at the beginning of each week over the course of the treatment. The researcher explained that this material was supplemented to the face-to-face grammar and reading comprehension instruction. The researcher accessed Facebook at least



twice a day to reply to questions, reply to grammar and reading comprehension forums, check students' logs and Facebook-related activity, and encourage students to participate in discussion and activities.

3.6.5 The teaching content was posted on Facebook to supplement face-to-face classroom instruction. Video podcasts and multiple-choice self-assessment tests for reading and grammar were posted weekly. Furthermore, reading and grammar activities on the topic of the week were posted on the Forums in Facebook for the students to communicate with the researcher and their classmates.

3.6.6 The interview was to gain in-depth information about how Facebook exactly enhanced their language competence. The interview data were transcribed and analyzed by content analysis. The data from the interview responses were used to support the results of the pre-test and post-test.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Research objective 1

For the first research question, the results gained from the pre-test, the post-test and the interview responses were used to answer the first research objective. As presented in Table 1, a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the pre-test and post-test was revealed ($t = 6.78$, $p = .00$). This suggests that the students improved in English grammar and reading.

Table 1 Result of paired samples for overall reading comprehension at the pre- and post-tests in the experimental group

Overall reading comprehension (100 marks)	Pre-test (N = 60)		Post-test (N = 60)		t	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
	47.91	12.81	72.63	6.26	6.78	.000*

Note: * = $p < .05$.

As presented in Table 2, there were statistically significant differences in the mean scores in the each subskill of reading section. This confirms that the students improved in each English reading subskill: scanning ($t = 6.13$, $p = .000$), finding the topic sentence ($t = 6.64$, $p = .000$), guessing meaning of vocabulary from context clues ($t = 5.88$, $p = .000$) and skimming ($t = 6.02$, $p = .000$).

Table 2 Result of paired samples for each reading subskills at the pre- and post-tests in the experimental group

Reading subskills (60 marks)	Pre-test (N = 60)		Post-test (N = 60)		t	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Scanning (15)	8.89	9.71	13.48	6.06	6.13	.000*
Finding the topic sentence (15)	6.11	10.32	10.99	5.77	6.64	.000*
Guessing meaning of vocabulary from context clues (15)	7.25	11.58	11.07	8.34	5.88	.000*
Skimming (15)	5.76	10.65	9.12	5.96	6.02	.000*

Note: * = $p < .05$.

As presented in Table 3, there were statistically significant differences of the mean scores of the grammar section ($t = 5.98$, $p = .000$). These findings confirm that the students had significant improvement in grammar after the treatment.

Table 3 Result of paired samples for grammar section at the pre- and post-tests in the experimental group

Grammar section (40 marks)	Pre-test (N = 60)		Post-test (N = 60)		t	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
	19.90	8.60	27.97	6.11	5.98	.000

Note: * = $p < .05$



4.2 Research objective 2

The interview responses showed that all of the four interviewees had positive attitudes toward Facebook. In terms of effectiveness of Facebook, most of the interviewees regarded Facebook as an effective means for studying English reading skills. Two interviewees mentioned that Facebook was not originally developed for language learning, but they could deploy it as a mean. They explained that when they were allowed to study and discuss with the teacher and Facebook friends, they found that their English reading comprehension was much better. They dared to consult classmates on Facebook more than those they met in the classroom. This is because they didn't use real names on Facebook so other people would not know who they were.

Regarding features of Facebook, all of interviewees agreed that Facebook promoted their communication capacity with their teacher and other classmates. Four interviewees said that it was convenient to have discussions on Facebook. They explained that Facebook functions such as chatting, posting comments, and uploading and downloading files contributed to the enhancement of their language learning.

The findings showed that the students had a statistically significant difference in the scores of all four reading subskills and grammar. The improved performance in grammar and reading comprehension may be due to the video podcast and self-assessment in which the students involved in the treatment and the messages that the instructor sent to encourage them to continue accessing Facebook.

On the video podcast, students read and listen to explanations about the skill itself and applied the knowledge they learned to answer questions on the assigned reading texts. They could view an answer key to the exercises on the posted materials and to additional practices. Furthermore, they could do as many self-evaluation tests to increase their opportunities to reread the posted materials.

Each grammar topic covered in the class was posted in the grammar forums. Most students actively participated in the discussion forums. Students were able to review the learned contents, viewed their peers' replies and get involved in discussion of grammar problems which provided opportunities for them to learn from their peers' errors and instructor's feedback.

According to Shih's study (2011), learners improved in paragraph organizations, content, vocabulary, spelling, and grammar after receiving Facebook integrated blended learning. The students reported that Facebook enhanced peer assessment and stimulated them to get involved more in their language learning. The findings conducted by Al-Shehri (2011) also revealed that Facebook created a positive language learning atmosphere and enhanced ability to analyze ideas and facts from many sources of information. Thus, the findings of the present and previous studies confirm the efficiency of Facebook as a medium for language learning. In this study, the mentioned positive impacts might be due to the opportunities for students to discuss problems they faced during reading activities on Facebook. The present study found that most of the students had discussions about topic sentences and sentence structure on Facebook, and this might be one of the reasons that helped them improve their reading comprehension. These results are consistent with those previous studies showing that Facebook is an effective tool for language teaching and learning (Alias, 2012; Yunus & Salehi, 2012; Mills, 2011; Moon, 2011; Schwartz, 2009).

5. Conclusion

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the Facebook-enhanced instruction plays a significant role in improving students' grammar and reading skills. When compared to the traditional face-to-face method, the use of Facebook as a supplementary makes the grammar and reading course more interactive and effective for both instructor and students, and helps to expand students' learning opportunities outside the classroom.

Thus, Facebook should be promoted and deployed as an online learning tool for students to discuss their grammar and English reading comprehension difficulties. Facebook provides them alternatives for discussions with the teacher or their classmates. They can study the learning materials at their convenience.



They could chat and leave messages or even post their questions on Facebook for the teacher and other classmates to check them in advance.

6. References

- Alias, A. A., Manan, N. A. A., Yusof, J., & Pandian, A. (2012). The use of Facebook as language learning strategy (LLS) training tool on college students' LLS use and academic writing performance. *Procedia-Social Behaviour Sciences*, 67, 36-48.
- Al-Shehri, S. (2011). Connectivism: A new pathway for theorising and promoting mobile language learning. *International Journal of Innovation and Leadership on the Teaching of Humanities*, 1(2), 10-31.
- Griffith, S., Liyanage, L. (2008). An introduction to the potential of social networking sites in education. *Proceedings of the Emerging Technologies Conference*, University of Wollongong, Australia.
- Krashen, S. D. (1981). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. Oxford: Pergamon Press Inc.
- Krashen, S. D. (1988). *Second language acquisition and second language learning*. New York: Prentice-Hall International.
- Mazman, S.G. & Usluel, Y.K. (2010). Modeling educational usage of Facebook. *Computers & Education*, 55(2), 444-453.
- Mills, N. (2011). Situated learning through social networking communities: The development of joint enterprise, mutual engagement, and a shared repertoire. *CALICO*, 28(2), 345-368.
- Moon, A. L. (2011). *The impact of Facebook on undergraduate academic performance: Implication for educational leaders*. Doctoral Dissertation. The Central Michigan University Mount Pleasant, Michigan.
- Murphy, E. (2009). Online synchronous communication in the second-language classroom. *Canadian Journal of Learning and Technology*, 35(3). Retrieved from <http://www.cjlt.ca/index.php/cjlt/article/view/539/262>
- Schwartz, H. L. (2009). Facebook: The new classroom commons? *The Chronicle Review*. Retrieved from http://gradstudies.carlow.edu/pdf/schwartz-chronicle_9-28-09.pdf
- Shih, R. C. (2011). Can Web 2.0 technology assist college students in learning English writing? Integrating Facebook and peer assessment with blended learning. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 27(Special issue 5), 829-845.
- Yunus, M., & Salehi, H. (2012). The effectiveness of Facebook groups on teaching and Improving Writing Students Perceptions. *International Journal of Education and Information Technologies*, 6(1), 87-96.
- Zanamwe, N., Rupere, T., Kufandirimbwa, O. (2013). Use of social networking technologies in higher education in Zimbabwe: A learners' perspective, *International Journal of Computer and Information Technology*, 2(1), 8-19.