The Effect of Using Social Networking Assisted Interaction between Peer and Teacher in English Language Learning

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Annabel Bhamani Kajornboon, Chulalongkorn University Language Institute, Thailand

Abstract
Given the popularity of social networks among learners, developing ways to use them and make them effective in English language teaching and learning would be helpful. This research has investigated the effects of using social networks to assist interaction among learners and their peers and teacher. The researcher is also the English class teacher, making this study an example of action research - “learning by doing.” The research is based on the Social Learning Theory (Bandura) which assumes people in society learn from each other. Participants joined the most popular social network: Facebook. Data was collected from the learners’ writing assignments on Facebook. The findings found the use of Facebook in the teaching and learning of writing English has to a certain extent been effective. However, it is necessary to do more research to find ways to make it more effective.

Keywords: social networking, Facebook, writing, interaction

Introduction
The education world is moving toward the use of technology in education. Teachers can no longer shy away from the digital world. There is a cycle of change due to the Internet and Information Technology (Kajornboon, 2004). The use of social networking is very popular among English language learners. According to Srinivas (2010), social networking is one tool which can assist teachers and learners to access information and facilitate the learning of English.

E-BizMBA (2013) has reported the most popular social network is Facebook, with an estimated of 750 million visitors each month. Therefore, teachers ought to follow their learners and launch their courses into the virtual world. This research has focused on the effect of using Facebook to assist interaction among peers and teacher in the writing of English. The participants (subjects) are first year medical students in the Faculty of Medicine, Chulalongkorn University.

Review of the Literature
Use of Facebook
Presently, Facebook is used as a social network to keep in touch and keep up with other people. Initially, Facebook.com was used with “.edu” email addresses by university students. Carlson (2010) stated that in 2004, Mark Zuckerberg founded Facebook when he was a sophomore at Harvard University and a couple of years later Facebook was opened to the public. It has been used as a social network more than an education tool.

Students use Facebook primarily for ‘social searching.’ That is, students use Facebook to learn more about a person they have met. It is also used for social and emotional support and as a resource to find information. Joinson (2008) has explained students send messages to friends and maintain social ties.
There are many ways to use Facebook in education. Online College.org (2011) has described Facebook can be used for collaborative learning, and has become a passion for students. In addition, students like to share, collaborate or work as a team. Furthermore, Kessler (2010) has explained students can critique on each other’s work and assignments with fairly easy access. Mashable Social Media (2010) has suggested students can also ask their teacher questions or chat and use Facebook as a message board for free.

Another use is student writing assignments. According to Cody (2010), one example is called the “Teachers’ Letters to Obama Facebook.” A teacher decided to post an open letter to U.S. President Barack Obama. The teacher invited other teachers to write letters too. As a result, over 600 teachers joined the Facebook project. Most of the letters supported President Obama, but the teachers wanted their voices to be heard by the president.

Also, Facebook is a marketplace for textbooks. It is a social network where books can be sold and bought. The next function of Facebook is the creating of groups. Online College.org (2009) has proposed using Facebook for academic purposes; these can be groups for an entire class or smaller study groups. There would be communication and sharing of information. The literature review of Facebook has shown there are many ways to use Facebook as a social network and for education in general. However, there is a gap for using Facebook in writing English as a foreign language and for medical students. Hence, this research is investigating ways to use Facebook in writing with medical students.

**Grammar Mistakes**
The literature review about grammar mistakes include many types of errors. Gary-Grant and Gingerich (2012), Orman and Purdue Online Writing Lab (n.d.) have presented misuse of relative pronouns – nominative and subjective pronouns. That is the misuse of ‘who’ and ‘whom’. Also, there is misuse of vocabulary. For example, the misuse of ‘affect’ and ‘effect’; ‘bring’ and ‘take’; and ‘lie’ and ‘lay’. Additional mistakes include misspelled words, misuse of nouns, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs and verb tenses, and misuse of infinitive/gerund, and misuse of articles (a, an, the). In addition, misuse of mechanics include apostrophes, commas and periods (full stops), as well as capital letters. These errors have been focused on in the correction of the writing assignments.

**Social Learning Theory**
The present research is based on the social learning theory. McLeod (2011) has explained that social learning theory emphasizes that learning happens within a ‘social context.’ It believes people in society learn from each other, such as with concepts, observational learning, modeling, and imitation. The phenomenon of observational learning or modeling of this theory is usually called the social learning theory. The use of Facebook is a social network and participants can learn and model from each other.

**Action Research**
Action research focuses on the people involved in the research. It takes place in the classroom in a real-world situation with the aim to solve real problems. According to Ferrance (2000), action research is “learning by doing.” The researcher or teacher identifies a problem, does something
to resolve it, measures how successful the efforts were, and tries again if unsatisfied. This is the essence of action research and this present research has taken place in the classroom to solve a problem.

**Methodology**

In the present research, there were three phases. Phase 1: Facebook users were asked to check another student’s writing assignment. Phase 2: Students categorized the mistakes and made corrections. Phase 3: Six students were interviewed online to assess the effect of using Facebook in the teaching of writing.

**Participants**

The present research has been conducted with one first-year English class in the Faculty of Medicine at Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand. The students’ ages ranged from 18 to 19. There were a total number of 32 participants.

**Instructional Context**

CULI Chula course syllabus has stated the objectives of the Experiential English I course include the following: at the end of the course students should be able to communicate effectively in daily life using the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing); and collect information from various kinds of sources and compare, analyze and synthesize the acquired information to broaden existing knowledge, and present important issues in oral and/or written form.

The classes run for three hours per week during the first semester of the academic year. There were four writing assignments. The participants posted their assignments on Facebook and received feedback from their peers and teacher.

**Coding**

The coding of the grammar mistakes of this study was based on Gary-Grant and Gingerich (2012), Orman and Purdue Online Writing Lab (n.d.). The Cambridge Dictionaries Online, Dictionary.com, and the Dictionary and Thesaurus Merriam-Webster Online (n.d.) were used to correct the misuse of vocabulary.

The Coding of Grammar Mistakes is as follows:
I. Misused vocabulary
II. Misused tenses
III. Misused singular/plural nouns
IV. Misused punctuations (commas and periods)
V. Misused pronouns, possessive pronouns
VI. Misused articles (determiners): a, an, the
VII. Misused prepositions
VIII. Misused verbs
IX. Misused nouns/adjectives
X. Misused capital letters
XI. Misused infinitive/gerund
XII. Misused superlatives
XIII. Misspelled words

The participants coded the mistakes according to aforementioned categories. The mistakes have been presented from the most common to the least common.

Findings

1. Misused vocabulary
   Example 1:
   (SW) Student’s writing: Ipad may refract you
   (C) Correction: Ipad may distract you.
   Explanation: distract (v.)--to make someone stop giving their attention to something
   refract (v.)--when water or glass, etc. refracts light or sound, etc., it causes it to change
direction or to separate when it travels through it
   Example 2:
   (SW): Another downside is that Ipad may lead you to the wrong way.
   (C): Another downside is that Ipad may misdirect you.
   Explanation: misdirect (v.)--to use something wrongly or for the wrong purpose
   wrong way (adj.)--there is something wrong, incorrect, inaccurate.

2. Misused tenses
   Example 3:
   (SW): This talk show is usually focus on …
   (C): This talk show is usually focused on …
   Explanation: Use the simple past to express the idea that an action started and finished at
   a specific time in the past.

3. Misused singular/plural nouns
   Example 4:
   (SW): My king goes everywhere to help his inhabitant.
   (C): My king goes everywhere to help his inhabitants.
   Explanation: The plural form of inhabitants is needed because there is more than one
   inhabitant in Thailand.

4. Misused punctuations (commas and periods)
   Example 5:
   (SW): such as reviewing your lesson.
(C): such as reviewing your lesson.
Explanation: The comma (,) is placed at the end of the word, then a space is needed.
Example 6:
(SW): We cannot think of nothing but products from Apple.
(C): We cannot think of nothing but products from Apple.
Explanation: The period is placed at the end of the last word of the sentence, followed by two spaces.

5. Misused pronouns, possessive pronouns
Example 7:
(SW): My mother teaches me to do your best and not to …
(C): My mother teaches me to do my best and not to …
Explanation: Agreement in person. When writing in the “first person” (I), the possessive pronoun is “my.”

6. Misused articles (determiners): a, an, the
Example 8:
(SW): So, Thai people have the better quality of life.
(C): So, Thai people have a better quality of life.
Explanation: Use a or an when talking about one thing in general, without saying which one.

7. Misused prepositions
Example 9:
(SW): Your close friend may get a scholarship to study in somewhere that is far from Thailand.
(C): Your close friend may get a scholarship to study somewhere that is far from Thailand.
Explanation: In general the preposition in is used to indicate inside the building, or for an enclosed space or area.

8. Misused verbs
Example 10:
(SW): Most of them have older …
(C): Most of them are older …
Explanation: The main verb “to have” is used to show possession of objects, characteristics, relationships or other qualities. The main verb “to be” is used to show the role or position that one has at work, family or other organization.

9. Misused nouns/adjectives
Example 11:
(SW): MultiTouch has high accurate.
(C): MultiTouch has high accuracy.
Explanation: Accurate is an adjective. Accuracy is an uncountable noun. A noun has to be used in this sentence.

10. Misused capital letters
Example 12:
(SW): The work It’s …
(C): it’s
Explanation: Common nouns are not capitalized.

11. Misuse infinitive/gerund
Example 13:
(SW): Ipad can distract you from what you should be do.
(C): Ipad can distract you from what you should be doing. (object)
Explanation: A gerund is used because it is the object or complement of a sentence.

12. Misused superlatives
Example 14:
(SW): Oprah Winfrey’s talk show is the higher rated TV program in America.
(C): Oprah Winfrey’s talk show is the highest rated TV program in America.
Explanation: The superlative adjective is used when talking about three or more things. It expresses the extreme or highest degree of a quality.

13. Misspelled words
Example 15:
(SW): now a days
(C): nowadays
Explanation: Nowadays is one word.

The most common mistakes are misused vocabulary, followed by misused tenses and misused singular and plural nouns. In addition, there were errors in punctuation of commas and periods as well as misused pronouns and possessive pronouns. There were also misused articles (determiners): a, an, and the. Then there were misused prepositions. In addition, there were misused verbs, nouns/adjectives, capital letters, infinitive/gerund. Lastly, there were misused superlatives and misspelled words.

Phase III involved 6 participants’ comments about this present research. Student A has suggested that Facebook can focus on writing and speaking. Student A has stated: “Teaching English via Facebook should focus on speaking and writing because these parts require interaction between students and teachers. Students can spend their time practicing English freely as they wish, and teachers can evaluate or grade their work any time. I find this very convenient for both sides. Facebook offers rapid access to send and evaluate essays or speaking files. I meant we can create a common page or account for teachers, and each teacher can access and evaluate students’ work. This can be better than the already very beneficial http://www.essayforum.com/ !! And, for the reading and listening part, teachers can upload their materials on Facebook, but I prefer not to listen to lectures. I think that it will be more beneficial if there is plenty of self-homework for students. Just like TOEFL sample questions.”
Student B has explained the use of Facebook would depend upon the equipment that is available. Student B's comment is as follows: “Well, I think that it depends on how well are the teaching tools developed on Facebook. Although teaching English on Facebook might potentially improve accessibility, it deteriorates the authenticity of textbooks. In short, there are advantages and disadvantages in using and not-using Facebook as an English teaching tool, and the question “which way is better?” Depends on the "quality of the tools on Facebook" not the Facebook itself. To illustrate, I won't waste my time reading or watching how to write a good essay via Facebook. I prefer to get one of the best "summary" on how to write a great essay within 1-2 papers and some examples to read; and here, Facebook can play roles in how I can send my essays to someone to grade, comment, and modify them.”
Student C has explained the use of Facebook can be effective. This is because documents, announcements and additional material can be uploaded onto Facebook. Also, it is an effective way to contact students. Student C has commented: “I think using Facebook as a tool for teaching English and learning resource is efficacious. You can upload documents; make announcements and any other material as a supplement. Thus, you will potentially solve the problem that many students want you to bring more copies because they lost them or your copies are insufficient. Furthermore, it is a fast way to reach students. I definitely like your idea [using Facebook] since it's a practical and easy way.”

Student D has commented that Facebook is ideal when interaction is required. However, it should be a closed group. Student D has pointed out: “Facebook is ideal for developing English skills that require interaction. However, as far as I'm concerned, using formal language in Facebook still looks weird to me. Anyway, I guess its fine to stay formal but you might like to keep it private to your groups, your colleagues will think that you're nerdy otherwise.”

Student E: “I like it. I think it is fun.”

Student F: “It is useful. I can work at home.”

The interviews indicated that the participants enjoyed it and found it to be useful. In addition, they can work from home. The equipment plays an important part in making it successful. One student thought that using Facebook would be appropriate with speaking and writing. In addition, Facebook is helpful because materials can be uploaded and shared. However, it ought to be used only by the participants in the class. It should not be opened to other classes or the public.

**Limitations**
Facebook is available for education and can be an empowering tool if properly used. It has to be employed cautiously. There are materials that are both useful and inappropriate. Therefore, rules or guidelines for the use of Facebook have to be set. It can be beneficial if used in the right climate, since most students are already engaged in using it.

Further research ought to be conducted. This can include conducting class projects, writing book reviews, and making power point presentations. In addition, the participants can practice other skills, such as reading, speaking and listening with other students on Facebook.

**Conclusion**
First year medical students in the Faculty of Medicine, Chulalongkorn University were the participants in this present research. It was initially conducted because students’ have an interest in using Facebook. When the researcher went into the class, one of the students in the classroom was using Facebook. She believed that she was the initiator of using Facebook in the class. The timing was perfect. It was a “blessing in disguise.” This present research was conducted to investigate the effect of using Facebook to assist interaction between classmates and the teacher in writing English.
The participants read each other’s writing assignments on Facebook. The participants and teacher categorized the mistakes and made the corrections. From the findings, it has been found that participants had the most problems with vocabulary. Next, the participants had problems with tenses. They used incorrect tenses and singular and plural forms of nouns. The participants’ comments suggested using Facebook is fun. The assignments can be completed at home and assignments can be corrected during students’ free time. They do not have to do it immediately.

In addition, participants can communicate synchronously. Materials and documents can be uploaded and participants can work on it later or at home, such as writing or speaking assignments. Lastly, it is important that the hardware work appropriately. From the students’ evaluation, the use of Facebook is a fairly effective tool.

References


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