ทัศนคติของนักศึกษาที่ใช้ภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษาต่างประเทศที่มีต่อ บทเรียนการเรียนรู้แบบร่วมมือกันผ่านทางเครือข่ายสังคมออนไลน์เฟซบุ๊ก เพื่อช่วยส่งเสริมทักษะทางการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษ

English as a Foreign Language Students' Attitudes toward Facebook Based Collaborative Learning Lessons to Enhance English Writing Skills

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บทคัดย่อ

เครือข่ายสังคมออนไลน์เฟสบุ๊กได้เข้ามาเปลี่ยนแปลงวิธีการเรียนและการสอนภาษาอังกฤษใน หลายทาง ในงานวิจัยนี้ กลุ่มเครือข่ายสังคมออนไลน์เฟสบุ๊กได้ถูกใช้สำหรับนักศึกษาระดับชั้นปริญญาตรี เพื่อพัฒนาทักษะการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษผ่านทางการเรียนรู้แบบร่วมมือกันและกิจกรรมการเขียนแบบกลุ่ม งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาทัศนคติของนักศึกษาที่มีต่อบทเรียนการเรียนรู้แบบร่วมมือกันผ่านทาง เครือข่ายสังคมออนไลน์เฟสบุ๊กเพื่อช่วยส่งเสริมทักษะทางการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษ ผลการวิจัยที่ได้จาก แบบสอบถามและการสัมภาษณ์แบบกึ่งโครงสร้างแสดงให้เห็นว่านักศึกษามีทัศนคติที่ดีต่อบทเรียน FBCL ที่ค่าเฉลี่ย 4.25 และค่าเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน 0.448 จึงกล่าวได้ว่านักศึกษามีความพึงพอใจต่อบทเรียน FBCL และเห็นว่าบทเรียนนี้มีประสิทธิภาพและเหมาะสมต่อการพัฒนาทักษะทางการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษ

คำสำคัญ : บทเรียนการเรียนรู้แบบร่วมมือกันผ่านทางเครือข่ายสังคมออนไลน์เฟสบุ๊ค/ ทัศนคติของ นักศึกษา/ทักษะการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษ

Abstract

Facebook has been changing the way of learning and teaching English language in various ways. In this study, Facebook groups were used for undergraduate students to improve their English writing skills through collaborative learning with group writing activities. This research study aimed to investigate the students' attitudes toward Facebook based collaborative learning lessons to enhance English writing skills. The results of the study from questionnaire and semi-structured interviews revealed that the students had positive attitudes toward the FBCL lessons ($\overline{X}$=4.25, SD=0.448). This implied that the students were satisfied that the FBCL lessons were effective and suitable to enhance English writing skills

Key words: Facebook Based Collaborative Learning Lesson/ Students' Attitudes/ English Writing Skills.

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Introduction

English is considered as a lingual-franca in the ASEAN community which has been open since the end of the year 2015. Therefore, each ASEAN citizen needs to be capable of using English to communicate with other people in the competitive labor market of the community. In addition, English is an obligatory subject in general education systems from elementary to higher education in Thailand (Somphong, 2012). However, English learning and teaching in Thailand has been focused on reading and grammar, and other skills including listening, speaking, and writing have been ignored due to the testing items on university entrance exams. English ability of Thai students is low and not enough to communicate effectively since they have had little exposure to English speaking environment outside the classroom, ineffective teaching methods, and low achievement level of English language teachers as well (Wannaruk, 2003, ETS, 2010; Khamkhien, 2010; Simpson 2011; Poonpon, 2011; Marukarat, 2012).Thai students should take this chance to improve their English language skills to be ready to join the competitive working environment.

Due to the fact that most students at Suranaree University of Technology (SUT) in Thailand have a low knowledge of essential vocabulary in reading textbooks in English (Ward, 2000; Saitakham, 2010), and hardly have opportunities to develop writing skills in the classrooms since their English learning in the classroom was paid more attention to communication skills such as listening and speaking. Most of the students did not have motivation in learning English. In preparing students at Suranaree University of Technology (SUT)to be ready as an ASEAN member, they had to improve their English skills to communicate effectively in the ASEAN community, especially in writing skills.

However, learning and teaching English writing skills at SUT may not be easy because of many reasons. One major disadvantage to teaching a large class size is it presents many obstacles that hinder optimal learning. Teachers do not have the time to focus on the individual needs of each student in a crowded class. Students who are struggling with writing skills are unable to receive the remedial one**.** They have limited time in classroom instruction, and lack self-confidence in asking questions in classroom. To solve the problem, it would be a great idea to train students to work in small groups**.** When they work in groups it can be seen that students help each other learn. Using technology also can help increase student engagement and ownership of work. It ensures that everyone has time to connect with the teacher.

In searching for the appropriate approach to teach SUT students to improve their writing skills, three approaches to teaching writing in the ESL/ EFL context, including product approach,

process approach, and genre approach were reviewed. Each approach has its strong and weak points in helping students learn how to write in English. In some classes, this approach may be useful while that approach may be fruitful in other. Based on the proficiency level of students of higher education at SUT of English 1, strong points and weaknesses from each approach should be taken into consideration with the hope of finding out the most suitable teaching framework to assist them in learning how to write in English. Although writing skills are considered essential in EFL, it is not assessed or evaluated in the classroom or in the official examinations of the university. The English teaching focus at SUT is communication skills, such as listening and speaking. Therefore, this study looked into their incoming level of English, their purpose in learning English, and the technology available to them to learn English and in which they maybe interested. One of the most popular social media sites to SUT students was Facebook since each of them has at least one Facebook account for their social networking life. Consequently, Facebook can be implemented for learning and teaching English writing skills at SUT and has a positive effect on improving language learning and writing skills, learners have a favorable attitude toward utilizing Facebook (Yu, 2014; Shih, 2013; Suthiwartnarueput & Wasanasomsithi, 2012; Yunus et al., 2011).

In reviewing the collaborative learning that was applied in teaching writing via Facebook, it is a learning method that uses social interaction as a means of knowledge building (Dennen, 2000); it was thus applied in students' group writing activity to let students have more chance to interact, share, contribute, help, and learn with each other to improve their writing skills. Furthermore, in Shukor and Hussin's study (2015), they found out that the majority of participants had positive attitude toward the Facebook collaborative writing group. Therefore, this research study applied Facebook groups and collaborative learning to assist students in learning English and found a way that hopefully made them interested in learning it and improved their English learning. Then, the investigation on students' attitudes toward the Facebook based collaborative learning lessons to enhance writing skills was conducted in this study.

Research Methodology

The study was designed to collect student participants' attitudes toward the Facebook based collaborative lessons that were complemented with the main course in the classroom instruction.

Research Question

This study was conducted to answer the following research question: "What are the students' attitudes toward the Facebook based collaborative learning lessons to enhance their English writing skills?"

Participants

The population of the study was the first year engineering students who took English 1at

Suranaree University of Technology in Trimester 2/ 2014. Samples of the study was fifty-two engineering students who took English 1 course at SUT. They had more chance to practice their English writing skills in Facebook groups which attracted students to be more concentrated on learning English independently and autonomously. Then they were assigned to work in small groups for 8 weeks and these students were also purposively selected by being a representative from each group for the semi-structured interviews.

Instruments

Questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part was about participants' demographic information. The second part was a five-point Likert-liked scale (1: strongly disagree; 2: disagree; 3: undecided; 4: agree; 5: strongly agree) to elicit the students' attitudes toward the Facebook based collaborative learning lessons. The questionnaire was also tested with 40 students who joined the try-out studies to check its reliability and validity before the main study was conducted. The internal consistency reliability of the piloted questionnaire was calculated using Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient. It showed that the reliability of the questionnaire was 0.798, which was considered as acceptable. It was also examined by 3 experts for the index of item objective congruence (IOC) analysis which ranges from +1 to -1. It showed that the average IOC score of the questionnaire was 0.65, which was considered as acceptable.

Semi-structured Interviews

The data collected for the study from one source did not give sufficient evidence to draw conclusions from the findings. In order to be flexible for the study, semi-structured interviews were employed in this study. The interview lasted from 5 to 10 minutes per each representative from each group (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). To have a better understanding and convenience, interviews were conducted in Thai, the students' native language. The interview questions were examined by three experts for the index of item objective congruence (IOC) analysis which ranges from +1 to -1. It showed that the average IOC score of the interview was 0.67 which was considered as acceptable.

Data Collection and Analysis

All the students completed the questionnaire. After the questionnaire, 13 student representatives, one from each of the 13 groups joined the interviews. The 13 interviews were conducted, recorded, and transcribed for data analysis.

In order to interpret the students' attitudes toward the FBCL lessons, the data from the questionnaires were tallied and calculated for frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation (S.D.). To examine the levels of the students' attitudes after taking the FBCL lessons, the levels were classified into "agree," "undecided," and "disagree." Content analysis was employed with open and axial coding to interpret the data from the interviews. And axial coding is the process of putting relating codes according to categories and properties.

Results and Discussion

Results of the Questionnaire on Participants' Attitudes toward the FBCL Lessons

The first part of the questionnaire describes students' demographic information about their gender, years of learning English, their self-assessment of EFL writing skills and computer skills, and their frequency of using Facebook. The results of the first part are presented with a descriptive analysis of frequency and percentage in Table A.

Table A. Results of Participants' Demographic Information

	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	25	48.1
	Male	27	51.9
Years of learning English	< 10	4	7.7
	≥ 10	48	91.3
Writing skills in English	Poor	21	40.4
	Fair	27	51.9
	Good	4	7.7
Computer use skills	Poor	1	1.9
	Fair	22	42.3
	Good	25	48.1
	Very good	4	7.1
Facebook use	Rarely	1	1.9
	Sometimes	8	15.4
	Often	12	23.1
	Very often	31	59.6

According to Table A, of the 52 students responding to the questionnaire, 27 (51.9%) were male students while 25 (48.1%) were female. Of the participants, all were majoring in engineering and were in their first year at the university. In investigating their experiences in learning English, 48 (91.3) of them had learned English for more than 10 years while 4 (7.7) had learned for less than 10 years. Moreover, 31 (59.6%) of them reported that they were fair or good at writing in English while 21 (40.4%) reported that they were poor at writing in English.

With regard to their self-assessment of their ability to use computers, 22 (42.3%) indicated that they were fair at using computers, 29 (45.2%) indicated that they were good and very good at using computers while only 1 (1.9%) indicated that they were poor at using computers. Participants' experiences of using Facebook were also reported. Interestingly, 43 (82.7%) indicated that they used Facebook often and very often while 8 (15.4%) indicated that they used it sometimes and 1 (1.9%) indicated that they rarely used it. The participants in this study were familiar with Facebook.

The second part of the questionnaire involved students' attitudes toward the FBCL lessons. The data obtained from the five-point Likert scale were calculated for their arithmetic means ($\overline{X}$) and standard deviation (*SD*) and were interpreted according to the following criteriasince the researcher combined "agree" and "strong agree" to "agree", and "disagree" and "strongly disagree" to "agree":

3.68 – 5.00 = agree

2.34 – 3.67 = undecided

1.00 – 2.33 = disagree

The results of the analysis are shown in Table B.

Table B. Results of Participants' AttitudesToward the FBCL Lessons

Items	$\overline{X}$	SD
1. FBCL lessons can make English learning enjoyable.	4.42	.499
2. FBCL lessons can meet my learning objectives.	4.19	.487
3. FBCL lessons do not make me feel isolated or alone in practice writing in English	3.98	.3131
4. FBCL lessons can enhance student-student interaction	4.44	.539
5. FBCL lessons are convenient to learn and review the lessons	4.40	.495
6. Materials in FBCL lessons are suitable for my English proficiency level.	4.23	.469
7. FBCL lessons provides a variety of activities for writing in English	4.29	.498
8. The activities in FBCL lessons are interactive.	3.98	.242
9. The activities in FBCL can improve learning in groups/ with your classmates	4.40	.495
10. The activities in FBCL lessons can improve my writing skills effectively	4.19	.445
Total	**4.25**	**.448**

According to data shown in Table B, the total mean score is 4.25 which shows that students had positive attitudes toward the FBCL lessons because they strongly agreed with the items stated in Table B. With regard to each aspect, the highest mean scores were 1) FBCL lessons can enhance student-student interaction ($\overline{X}$ = 4.44, S.D.=0.539), 2) FBCL lessons can make English learning enjoyable ($\overline{X}$ = 4.42, S.D.=0.498), 3) FBCL lessons are convenient for learning and reviewing the lesson material ($\overline{X}$ = 4.40, S.D.=0.495), 4) The FBCL activities can improve learning in groups/ with your classmates ($\overline{X}$ = 4.40, S.D.=0.495). In contrast, the aspects receiving the two lowest mean scores were 1) FBCL lessons do not make me feel isolated or alone in practice writing in English ($\overline{X}$ = 3.98, S.D.=0.312 and 2) The activities in FBCL lessons are interactive ($\overline{X}$ = 3.98, S.D.= 0.241). However, the total mean score of all of the statements ($\overline{X}$ = 4.25) was higher than 3.68, which showed that students had good attitudes toward the FBCL lessons.

4.1.6 Results of Semi-Structured Interviews

After the questionnaire was collected, the semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain more qualitative data which revolved around five main aspects: (1) participants' interests in learning English via FBCL lessons in Facebook groups, (2) their collaboration in group' guided writing, (3) improvement of their writing skills in English via FBCL lessons, (4) their suggestions for FBCL lessons, and (5) distractions they might have while participating in FBCL lessons. In this part,

the 13 students were representative and selected randomly for interview from the 13 groups drawn from the 52 students of the main study. All of the data were recorded and transcribed for data analysis.

Theme 1. Participants' Interests in Learning English via FBCL

Lessons in Facebook Groups.

All thirteen (100%) students who were interviewed liked the FBCL lessons and they all agreed that they liked learning English via FBCL lessons because they all said that the FBCL lessons were convenient for them to access using personal computers or mobile devices they had available anytime, anywhere. In addition to the convenience, three (23.08%) of them also mentioned the FBCL lessons were enjoyable ; three (23.08%) of them agreed that the lessons helped them work in groups and they could learn more while working within groups; two (15.38%) confessed that the lessons helped them improve their English skills; and two (15.38%) remarked they could improve their English grammar through the FBCL lessons.

This confirmed that the FBCL lessons were convenient for their participation. Moreover, the participants were asked about what they like most about the FBCL lessons; 8 (61.54 %) of them liked the Listening Comprehension part. In this part, they could watch the videos that helped them learn more vocabulary from the speakers in the video clips. Then they had to do the listening comprehension exercises after watching the videos. They indicated that they liked to listen to native speakers. Also, 4

(30.77%) of them liked the preparation stage of the group writing activity such as working with their group-mates and having discussions with their group members to help each other answer the guided questions. Then they had chances to practice speaking with their group members. During this preparation stage, they also made video clips of their interviews to show that they worked in their groups to prepare for their group's guided writing. And one (7.69%) of them liked the guided writing activity because it helped the student understand more about vocabulary and grammar and to write better.

Here is an example of students' answers in which they indicated that they liked the Listening Comprehension part.

✓ *"I can improve my grammar, vocabulary through listening comprehension with the videos. I can learn from conversations of native speakers on the videos." (S3)*

And there were students' answers in which they mentioned they like making the video during their preparation for the group's guided writing. One of them mentioned that he liked the guided writing activity

✓ *"I like guided writing most because I can write much better, understand grammar, know more new vocabulary and I can write more accurately." (S11)*

Theme 2. Participants' Collaboration in the Groups' Guided Writing

The participants were asked again about how they felt about the FBCL lessons when they learnt with their group members via the FBCL lessons. Thirteen (100%) of them had positive feelings toward group work in the FBCL lessons. They indicated that most of them felt "good, enjoyable, interesting, helpful, closer to their group members, had fun" while collaborating together in their small groups during the FBCL lessons.When they were asked whether working in groups improved their writing skills, 13 (100%) of them agreed that working in groups improved their writing skills. It seemed that they collaborated during every step of their guided writing throughout the FBCL lessons.

Theme 3. Improvement of Participants' Writing Skills in English
via FBCL Lessons

When they were asked whether the FBCL lessons could help them enhance their writing skills or not, 13 (100%) of them agreed that the FBCL lessons helped improve their writing skills. Furthermore, the participants were asked about whether the FBCL lessons could help them improve English grammar points from the main textbook of the course. Thirteen (100%) of them agreed that the FBCL lessons improved their grammar knowledge; they understood more and could apply what they learned directly in their guided writing.

✓ *"Yes, it helped improve my writing skills because I get better understanding about grammar, and the FBCL lessons provide structures and examples to help my writing as well. When I understand grammar better, I could apply those grammar points in writing assignments and my writing became better." (S13)*

Theme 4. Participants' Suggestions for FBCL Lessons

When the participants were asked what more could be included in the FBCL lessons to improve their English writing skills, all of them agreed that the lessons were OK already, but they suggested adding some additional activities for practicing listening, speaking, vocabulary for their writing, as well as more fun activities to be added to the FBCL lessons.

In addition, they were asked whether they would like to learn English through FBCL lessons in other English courses, all of them agreed that Facebook was useful to study. They also liked to use Facebook to learn in other courses or English skills as well. When they were asked which English skills should be taught on Facebook, 12 (92.31%) of them would like to learn with listening skills, 7 (53.85%) would like to learn speaking skills, 7 (53.85%) indicated reading skills. However, 1 (7.69%) student reported that he would prefer to learn speaking skills in the classroom to learning online or on Facebook.

Theme 5. Distractions while Participating in FBCL Lessons

When they were asked whether they were distracted while using Facebook to learn in the FBCL lessons, 9 (69.23%) of them mentioned that there was no distraction while using Facebook to learn the FBCL lessons. They also used Facebook to contact and to have discussions with their group members about their group work when they were asked about other things that they did on Facebook while they were studying via the FBCL lessons. And they confirmed that it was not a problem for them to complete their assignments.

✓ *"No. There is no interruption from the other things online. I know that I need to complete the assignments first. But sometimes, I also use Facebook to contact friends about my group work from the FBCL lessons" (S12)*

In contrast, 4 (30.77%) of students implied that they were distracted while using Facebook during the course since their group members or friends sent messages to them via Facebook while they were doing their assignments.

Discussion of the Results of the Questionnaire and Semi-structured Interviews on Participants' Attitudes toward the Facebook Based Collaborative Learning (FBCL) Lessons

This part discusses students' attitudes toward the FBCL lessons as revealed through the results from the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews that took place after the experiment. As a whole, the findings from the questionnaire and

the interviews indicated that the students had positive feedback toward the FBCL lessons as they indicated that they liked to study English writing skills with the FBCL lessons. The following parts are explanations on why the students had positive feedback and why they liked the FBCL lessons.

First, students showed their interests in learning English writing skills via the FBCL lessons in Facebook groups. They expressed in the results of the questionnaire that the FBCL lessons were convenient for them to learn and review the lessons ($\bar{X}$ =4.40). And in the results of the semi-structured interviews, 100% of the students interviewed also agreed that they could access the FBCL lessons conveniently with any kind of personal computer or mobile device which they had available anytime, and anywhere. Students just needed a computer or mobile device with an Internet connection to join the FBCL lessons. This convenience for students might be partially from the usefulness of Facebook as it is regarded as a more advanced interactive media site (Shih, 2013) and one of the useful, enjoyable, and commonly used social networks among university or college students. The positive impact of Facebook on students were also indicated by Blattner and Lomicka (2012), Shih (2011, 2013), Suthiwartnarueput and Wasanasomsithi (2012), Wang, Woo, Quek, Yang, and Liu (2012), Yunus and Salehi (2012), and Yunus et al. (2011). The result of this study was also in accordance with the result by Surakhai and Pinyonatthagarn (2014) on the high level of students' satisfaction toward

learning with Surakhai web-based English writing instructional model. Thus, the convenience of using Facebook helps increase students' interests in learning with the FBCL lessons.

Second, the FBCL lessons allowed students to work in groups which helped them improve their EFL writing skills. From the results of the semi-structured interviews, 100% of students had positive feelings toward the group work activities of the FBCL lessons. The results also revealed that students felt good, had an enjoyable experience, had fun, found it helpful, and grew closer to their group members when they collaborated with others in groups during their participations in the FBCL lessons as Dennen (2000) concluded that working in groups or collaborative learning happens when social interaction is applied to build new knowledge. Moreover, all the interviewed students agreed that working in groups improved their writing skills. They showed that they collaborated with each other at every stage of writing journals in groups. This point was consistent with the results from the questionnaire as students very strongly agreed that the FBCL lessons could enhance student-student interaction ($\bar{X}$ =4.44); the activities in the FBCL lessons could improve their ability to work in groups ($\bar{X}$ =4.40); and the activities in FBCL lessons can improve their writing skills effectively ($\bar{X}$ =4.19). As Blattner and Lomicka (2012) suggested that Facebook has a great potential and incentives for personal writing, self-reflection, interactive learning, or collaborative learning. Shih

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(2013) and Yunus, et al. (2011) stated that learning in Facebook groups and peer feedback significantly enhance students' interest, interactions, and knowledge. In short, the FBCL lessons enhanced students' interests in working in groups which led to improved EFL writing skills since they had positive feelings from working in groups.

This part explained the reasons why students had good attitudes toward the FBCL lessons. It is probably from the students' interests or the convenience of learning on Facebook which could also help their interactions with others, improve their group work skills, and then improve their writing skills.

Suggestion for Further Research

From the participants' positive attitudes toward the FBCL lessons to improve writing skills, it issuggested that the development of the Facebook based collaborative learning lessons to enhance EFL students' writing skills should be designed for other online writing instructions, or for other English skills such as listening, speaking, reading skills on Facebook as the participants revealed in

the interviews. More studies could be conducted to apply more learning theories such as constructivism or connectivism to Facebook or other popular social media sites to see whether it would be effective in teaching and learning English skills or not. Further studies on Facebook based collaborative learning should be conducted in different learning contexts such as in other countries of the ASEAN community or Asia such as Vietnam to verify whether it is appropriate and effective regionally or globally.

Conclusion

The results of the study from the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews responded to the research purpose of the investigation of students' attitudes toward the FBCL lessons. The findings also revealed that the students had positive attitudes toward the FBCL lessons ($\overline{X}$ = 4.25, SD=0.448). It thus implied that the students were satisfied that the FBCL lessons were effective and suitable to enhance EFL students' writing skills.

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