

USING FACEBOOK GROUP TO FACILITATE TEACHING ENGLISH FOR EVERYDAY COMMUNICATION

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ABSTRACT

Social media sites such as Youtube, Twitter, and Facebook have been worldly wide known of playing important roles in the lives of “Net-Generation” students, who have engaged in digital and highly social network for several years. Regarding to that, integrating one of these social media sites to curriculum can be useful in language teaching, especially Facebook which allows users to exchange profiles, photos, and videos with others (Terantino and Graf, 2011). In accordance with that using social media sites in teaching a foreign language communication course should also yield outstanding results. This research; therefore, set its objective to investigate effects of using of Facebook Group in Facebook to facilitate teaching the course English for Everyday Communication. A survey was carried out with 50 students enrolling the course English for Everyday Communication in the second semester of academic year 2013 at Chiang Mai Rajahat University, Chiang Mai, Thailand. The data were collected through the students’ activities in class and their participation in the Facebook Group. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to analyze the collected data, including pre-test, post-test and questionnaires on satisfaction of self-improvement. The finding showed that using Facebook Group to facilitate teaching the foreign language course can assist students to learn more effectively. Furthermore, students felt more confident to perform activities using English. Further to that, it enhances students’ interest and language learning motivation.

Keywords:

English Language Teaching, English Language Learning, Social Network, Facebook Group

INTRODUCTION

The 21st century is the digital era and things have been changing a lot. Technology becomes more important to our livings. Learning to collaborate with others and connect through technology are essential skills for successful future. Likewise, English Language is an essential tool to achieve effective communication and others core skills because it is used all over the world so it is important that educators prepare their students to gain these skills. Integrating Facebook into English language classroom as a supplementary learning tool can provide students a real and natural setting of communication and it can enhance their motivation. Integrating Facebook into English language classroom is also related to connectivist learning theory. Connectivism is “a model of learning that acknowledges the tectonic shifts in society where learning is no longer an internal, individualistic activity. How people work and function is altered when new tools are utilized” (Siemen, 2005). Thomas Baker stated in his article “Connectivism: A Theory of Learning for a Digital Age”, (2011),

that the definition of connectivism by Siemens means that learning has changed in three ways that are what we learn with, how we learn, and where we learn. The digital learner can learn anywhere, anytime with other people using digital tools to create their contents they want to learn.

In this study, a Facebook Group was used as a supplementary tool for students who studied the course English for Everyday Communications. They were assigned to search for related topics such as greeting, making a phone call, describing people, asking and giving directions and then share it in the group so that class members can learn and practice it. They were also assigned to record and broadcast their practicing role-plays.

The objective of this study is to investigate effects of using Facebook Group in Facebook to facilitate teaching the course English for Everyday Communication. The research questions for this study are:

1. Can Facebook Group as a tool in learning enhance students' ability in using English for communication?
2. Will they feel more confident after the treatment?
3. Will they develop their motivation in learning English?

Facebook and Facebook Group

Facebook is an online social networking service. At the beginning, it was exclusively for college students but it has become one of the most popular social network sites now. In Thailand, there were 18.5 million Facebook users in 2013 (Steven Millward, 2013). Not only numbers of users has increased, its usefulness has grown, too. Educators are starting to realize that Facebook has become powerful potential in the classroom as a collaborative learning tool. When Facebook is used as a supplementary of the course, students will learn the

21st century skills particularly, searching for related topics and sharing it in the group.

Moreover, it is so convenient that class resources are available anywhere and students can get access to extra assignments. Furthermore, students can learn actively and interact with classmates and teacher more and easily. Shy students can feel more comfortable to discuss and give their opinion on Facebook (Barseghian, 2011). Interaction through Facebook is not a face- to face interaction so that students felt less anxiety (Murphy 2009) which resulted in increasing motivation in language learning (Krashen, 1988).

According to Facebook, groups are “for members of groups to connect, share and even collaborate on a given topic or idea”. The main purpose of groups is to help Facebook users socialize around any topic or community. There are some important significant features. Facebook Groups have the ability for administrators to message members of the group directly. Group chat is probably one of the most significant features of the Facebook Groups product. All members of a group have the ability to engage in a single chat window. The ability to post “Docs”: basic text documents with a minor amount of markup are available. Documents also have a revision history which users can navigate back through (O'Neill, 2010).

Facebook Group is selected to use in this study because the lecturer, as the administrator can control admission of members to the group, students can share information related to the topic they were studying to all members in the group with one share.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Participants

The participants in this study were 50 undergraduate students enrolled in English for Everyday Communication course in the second semester (October-March) of academic year 2013 at Chiang Mai Rajahat University, Thailand. Twenty three of them were females while twenty eight were males. 27 students already had Facebook accounts but 23 of them didn't. They were told to sign-in for a Facebook account after the first week of the course.

Research instruments

The research instruments were the Facebook Group, the pre-test and post-test, and the learning satisfaction survey questionnaire.

1. Facebook Group

“A Facebook Group is a page that any Facebook user can create in order that others can join, allowing group members to interact based on a common interest, affiliation or association (Cary Janssen, 2010). The Facebook Group was selected for this study because as the administrator, I can make group private and manage members and allow or limit messaging between members while they can post messages to all members at one. Students were informed that they can ask or share links or information related to the topics studied in the class. They

were allowed to use both Thai and English language when they commented.

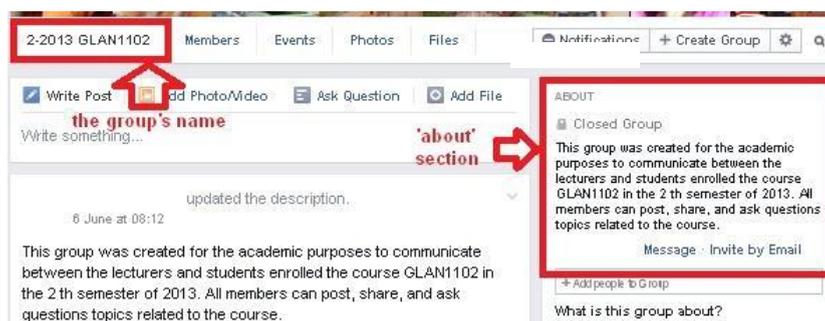


Figure 1: the group's name and "About" section of the group.

2. The pre-test and post-test

The pre-test and post-test were constructed by the instructor. Each of them consisted of 30 items and contained two main parts; vocabulary and conversation based on the topics used in everyday life. The pre-test was undertaken in the 1st week and the post-test was done in the 12th week.

3. The learning satisfaction survey questionnaire.

The learning satisfaction survey questionnaire was used to gather students' feedback of using Facebook in the course English for Everyday Communication. The survey consisted of 5 questions using a Likert's scale (5=strongly agree, 4=agree, 3=neutral, 2=disagree, 1=strongly disagree) and 1 open-ended question. The questionnaire was about the use of the Facebook Group in general and their attitudes towards effects of using Facebook Group in the course English for Everyday Communication.

Procedure

The data were collected during the second semester of academic year 2013. The pre- test was undertaken in the 1st week of the semester to find out the students' background knowledge in English communication. The course's group, 2-2013 GLAN1102, was created on the lecturer's Facebook: www.facebook.com/kesinee.srirat . Students were told to join the group and they could post messages and share resources related to the topics they already studied. In the 12th week, they took the post-test. The purpose of the test was to find out to what extent the students' English Communication skills improved after using Facebook Group as a way to share resources and interact with their classmates. Then scoring data was analyzed using T-test. Students did the learning satisfaction survey questionnaire after they finished the post-test.

RESULTS

1. Enhancement of students' ability in learning English for communication.

The results gained from the pre-test and the post-test were used to answer the first research question 'Can Facebook Group as a tool in learning enhance students' ability in using English for communication? As shown in Table 1, a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the pre-test and the post-test was found. This suggests that the students improved in English for communication.

Test	N	Total scores	Mean	SD	Percentage
Pre-test	50	30	15.05	3.52	50.16
Post-test	50	30	20.37	3.06	67.90

Table 1: A comparison between the mean scores of the pre-test and the post-test.

2. Confidence

To gather students' motivation and attitudes towards using Facebook Group on the course English for Everyday Communication, the students were asked to complete the survey at the end of the semester. The survey consisted of 5 questions using Likert scale (from strongly agree to strongly disagree) and 1 open-ended question. Students responded to questions about their use of the class Facebook Group in general and their perception about advantages and disadvantages of the Group. The results of the survey were positive. In term of enhancing confidence, 65.9 % of students are of the opinion that Facebook Group could enhance their confidence to speak English because they are able to express their feelings in English and their friends. In order to communicate in Facebook Group, students need to read their friends' posts and then write their own comment or feedback to the post so that they read and write more in Facebook (O'Hanion, 2007). Communication in the Facebook made students feel that were socializing with their friends not studying English. This is in accordance with Lankard (1995), who stressed that in incidental

learning occurs when the primary intent of the activity is to accomplish the task, not to learn. (p.5)

Further to those quantitative data, some qualitative data support that students felt confident to speak English because they had less anxiety. Here are some of their answers to the open-ended question.

Students 23: "I felt very nervous when I had to speak to the teacher in English but I was confident to speak English when I practice with friends."

Students 36: "When the teacher looked at me while I was performing the role-play, I felt shy and nervous and that made me fail to speak out."

Students 41: "I felt relaxed to speak English when the teacher assigned students to record their role-play activities then post them on the Facebook Group of the class instead of performing it in front of the class or the teacher."

3. Motivation

73% of the students agree that Facebook could be an environment for enhancing their motivation to communicate in English. Here are some examples of the students' answers to the open-ended question.

Student 1: "When some of my friends can use English, I feel that I have to try to practice more and more"

Student 7: "when some friends posted or shared some information in English, I have to read a lot and found new words so it motivated me to try to look for their meaning."

Students 42: "I was curious to know what the links that my classmates shared in the Group were about, so I have to do my vocabulary list."

These results are supported by Shih (2013) who found that integrating Facebook and peer assessment can enhance students' learning motivation, interest, and interaction in order to exchange information and share knowledge (p.58). Likewise, Kaliban (2010), reported that his students agreed that Facebook could be an environment for enhancing their motivation to communicate in English (p.6)

CONCLUSION

This research aimed to find the outcomes resulted by using 'Facebook Group' in teaching an EFL communication course to Thai students by a Thai teacher at Chiang Mai Rajabhat University, Chiang Mai, Thailand. The findings showed that the participants who are non-English majored students, made quite outstanding participations-sharing, discussing, and arguing in English, successively. The reason is believed to be because they were assisted to join both the contents of the topic of study and the English sentences to use at the mean time through cooperative learning. With this regard, the future study may focus on investigating the factor that influences the students' cooperation in learning in Facebook Group – how they activate, assist and evaluate the tasks.

Further to that, the findings of the study reveal that through cooperative learning they made more progressive – notice on language fluency and grammatical accuracy. Likewise, employing Facebook Group together with connectivist learning in other types of classes should encourage success in learning and teaching English course in other foreign language setting. The limitations of this study are the increasing of the internet service, which resulted in time constrain of both learning activities and school-semester schedule.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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