

Pre-Service EFL Teachers' Perception of Using Facebook Group for Learning

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Abstract

The current development of ICT has been revolutionizing education. The revolution has now overflowed learning beyond the four walls boundary of the classroom. By using ICT, students today can learn anytime and anywhere. This study aimed to explore pre-service EFL teachers' perception of the use of Facebook Group (FBG) in learning. Employed a mixed methods research designed, quantitative and qualitative data were collected from 56 (29 first-year and 27 second-year) students of the English Education Department of Universitas Kristen Indonesia Jakarta using a questionnaire and interview. The finding revealed that the majority of the participants had positive perception towards using FBG as a learning platform. However, since their experience in the informal language learning environment through FBG was new, their view towards the use of FBG for interpretative communication activates was lower than for interpersonal communication.

Keywords: *Facebook, EFL, pre-service teachers, interpretative communication, interpersonal communication.*

INTRODUCTION

As a result of the exponential development of technology, the educational sector keeps on experiencing changes. One of the current revolution changes is the penetration of social networking site (SNS) to the teaching and learning process. Pardede (2012) accentuated that innovations in ICT have been increasing the range of possible solutions that can improve teaching and learning inputs, processes, and outcomes. In line with this, Riley (2000) stated that teaching and learning that use technology effectively can lead to greater academic achievement and make a real difference.

Many educators complain that students' attention and time are absorbed too much by social networking websites (Tan, Ng & Saw, 2010). Yet, no matter what adults think, social networking keeps on being an indispensable component of youths' daily life. Fewkes and McCabe (2012) accentuated, "social networking is second nature to our students" (p. 93). Realizing this, the attempt to make Facebook an ally rather than an enemy is growing worldwide. Educators keep on trying to use social networking technology as an effective learning tool. Most social networking sites, and Facebook, in particular, are powerful digital tools with the real potential to positively affect students' learning (Cook et al., 2008). They are particularly very potential to use, especially in

second or foreign language learning because they encourage students to be active participants in a learning community (Alm, 2006). Manan, Alias, and Pandian (2012) suggested that blending the conventional face-to-face learning with online learning activities can help solve teachers to solve the problem related to class time inadequacy and to make learning more interesting to the students.

Although the use of FGB in second or foreign language learning is relatively new, various current studies have been conducted on this practice. The results of many studies (Jones & Shao, 2011; Pardede, 2011; Pinkman, 2005; Shih, 2011; Wang & Vasquez, 2012) showed its great potentials to improve students' overall interest in language learning. Other studies (McCarthy, 2012; Suthiwartna-rueput & Wasanasomsithi, 2012); Tarantino & Graf, 2011; Yunus & Salehi, 2012) indicated the use of SNS impacted on motivation among students in higher education. Besides, the study of Mehmood and Taswir (2013) revealed that constant communication on social networks has generated linguistic habit changes; the study of Faryadi (2017) indicated that the use of Facebook develops students' comprehension skills, vocabulary acquisition, satisfaction and motivation, critical thinking. Although Facebook use in the second or foreign language teaching and learning has been investigated in many countries, studies focusing on pre-service EFL teachers' perception of its usage in Indonesia is very rare. As an attempt to fill in the gap, this study aimed to explore pre-service EFL teachers' perception towards the use of FBG in learning.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Facebook and Facebook Group

Facebook is a popular social networking site and online communication tool which allows users to interact and collaborate within a pre-defined virtual community (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Using it, users can create a public or private profile to connect and collaborate with people who are part of their extended social network. It is the largest social networking site, with 2.072 billion monthly active users in January 2018 (Social Report, 2018). Due to its user massive growth and usefulness as a collaborative learning tool, the majority of high school and university students use this site daily for both academic and social goals (Kirschner & Karpinski, 2010). Wise et al. (2011) reported that students spent about one hour per day on Facebook for engaging in social interactions.

According to Technopedia (n.d.), a Facebook Group is "is a page that any Facebook user can create that others can join, allowing group members to interact based on a common interest, affiliation or association" A Facebook group allows members to create a community by promoting, sharing and discussing common topics. A Facebook Group has some important significant features. First, it has the ability for administrators to message members of the group directly. Second, all members of a group can engage in a single chat window. Third, members can post "Docs": basic text documents with a minor amount of markup to the group. The documents also have a revision history which members can navigate back through (O'Neill, 2010).

Having such significant features FBG has powerful potentials to use as a learning management system (LMS). Through the LMS, teachers are not only able to send information or post-class announcements. In the LMS they can also start online discussions, post articles to develop a reading comprehension exercise, start online chats between students and English native speakers, and many other activities (Kabilan et al., 2010). TeachThought Corporation (2012) even present 100 ideas on how to use

Facebook for educational purposes, such as attending remote lectures and presentations from all around the world, playing educational games like puzzles and crosswords, and participating in challenges posted by educational outlets, importing and sharing class blogs, posting words and definitions for vocabulary review, sharing resources and materials for class projects, sharing ideas about class discussions in English, or posting students' journals and sharing them with the class members.

Benefits of FBG for EFL Classrooms

By using FBG, teachers can gain several benefits. First, it can help teachers to engage students outside the classroom (Pilgrim & Bledsoe, 2011). Second, it also provides teachers with ideas for classroom practice and information about developments and issues in EFL teaching. Various educational create and publish Pages on Facebook to promote their organizations and share useful resources for educators (Kabilan et al., 2010). By following EFL educational pages through Facebook, teachers can obtain effective classroom resources for free, develop and maintain friendships and collegial or professional relationships for mutual benefit, and receive valuable educational information. Facebook, therefore, offers many benefits for teachers.

The use of Facebook also offers several benefits to students. First, it endorses human collaboration and social exchange between participants (Mills, 2009) which "enhances communication and language learning" (Godwin-Jones, 2008, p. 7). In such a way, Facebook can encourage communicative competence development in English language learners (Blattner and Fiori, 2009). Some studies have proved that using Facebook in EFL classrooms can support learners to develop their oral production as well as their writing and reading skills (Bosch, 2009; Mills, 2009; Madge et al., 2009). Second, Facebook also offers students meaningful learning experiences that provide them with the opportunity to practice their language skills in a more incidental and informal manner (Grgurovic, 2010). Third, Facebook provides an opportunity for authentic interaction and communication that they have not experienced before. Using Facebook makes it possible for students to practice English with native speakers in a more natural and friendly environment. According to O'Hanion (2007), if students talk to English native speakers, they will feel forced to increase their language skills. Thus, students' language skills develop simply because they write, read, listen, and speak more in English.

Some Current Studies on Facebook Use in EFL Learning

Several studies on Facebook's inclusion in second and foreign language learning have indicated positive influences on student motivation, engagement, and attitudes. Some of the studies (Mazer et al., 2007; McCarthy, 2012; Suthiwartnarueput & Wasanasomsithi, 2012); Terantino & Graf, 2011; Yunus & Salehi, 2012) showed that Facebook has an impact on motivation among students in higher education. Mazer et al. (2007), for instance, suggested that students' motivation and participation are greatly heightened when engaging course material is presented through more personalized platforms such as Facebook. Other studies (Blattner & Fiori, 2009; Kabilan, Ahmad, & Abidin, 2010; Mills, 2009; Wang & Vasquez, 2012; Yunus & Salehi, 2012) affirmed that the inclusion of Facebook together with other Web 2.0 technologies improve students' satisfaction and investment, especially among ESL/EFL learners. Various studies examining Facebook's integration into traditional L2 learning environments (Hiew, 2012; Suthiwartnarueput & Wasanasomsithi, 2012; Gamble and Wilkins, 2014) collectively

reported that the use of Facebook increased students' positive attitudes toward using that SNS.

In light of the previous discussion, this study aimed to explore pre-service EFL teachers' perception towards the use of FBG in learning. Focusing on the students' needs and interests, this study was intended to discover how pre-service EFL teachers perceived the usefulness of specific pedagogical activities conducted on Facebook. The research questions that guided this study were stated as follow: (1) What are L2 1 pre-service EFL teachers' opinions toward the general ease of FBG use in an educational context? (2) What are pre-service EFL teachers' attitudes toward FBG usefulness for engaging in specific language learning activities?

METHOD

This study employed the explanatory sequential mixed methods design (Creswell & Clark, 2011). It was conducted in the odd semester of 2018/2019 academic year in the English Education Department of Universitas Kristen Indonesia. The participants were the 29 first semester students who attended the Integrated Skills 1 Class and 27 third semester students who attended the Integrated Skills 3 Class. The two classes were assigned to learn in a blended learning environment by integrating an FBG to the face-to-face classes. After using the FBG for two months the students were asked to fill in a questionnaire to gauge their perception of the learning activities through the FBG.

The instrument employed to obtain the data in this study was a closed-ended survey questionnaire consisting of 21 statements adapted from the questionnaire developed by Gamble and Wilkins (2014). To address the research questions, some adjustments were made to Gamble and Wilkins' questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into three sections. Section 1, consisting of four items, dealt with the participants' demographic data. Section 2, consisting of 10 items, focused on the participants' perception of FBG's potential to function both socially and educationally (item 1 and 2); participant's ability to operate FBG (Item 3); and FBG's suitability as a learning management system (item 4 to 10). Section 3, comprises of 7 items, was designed to gauge the participants' views of the applicability of FBG for conducting specific activities for language learning, including the four language skills other related tasks like note-taking and peer-editing. In Section 1, data was gauged by asking the participants to choose the most suitable option. In Section 2 and 3, the participants were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement to each statement on a 4-point Likert scale that ranged from strongly disagree, score 1, to strongly agree, score 4. To examine the questionnaire's reliability, both Section 2 and Section 3 were tested using the Cronbach's Alpha Test. The result showed that the Cronbach Alpha Coefficient of Section 2 was 0.82 while Section 3 had 0.89. Both indicated a high degree of reliability among the 20 items.

To get more insights for clarifying and elaborating the data obtained through the questionnaire, a semi-structured open-ended interview was administered to get qualitative data. Seven participants were randomly selected from the sample to participate in the interview which was carried out two weeks after the survey using the questionnaire. The obtained data were analyzed using the descriptive analysis technique.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Participants' Demographic Data

With regards to their time length of using FBG, as shown by Figure 1, the majority of the participants had used the social media for more than 2 years. Almost half of them had used it 3 to 4 years and the other 32% for more than 4 years. This indicated that they were quite skillful in using FBG.

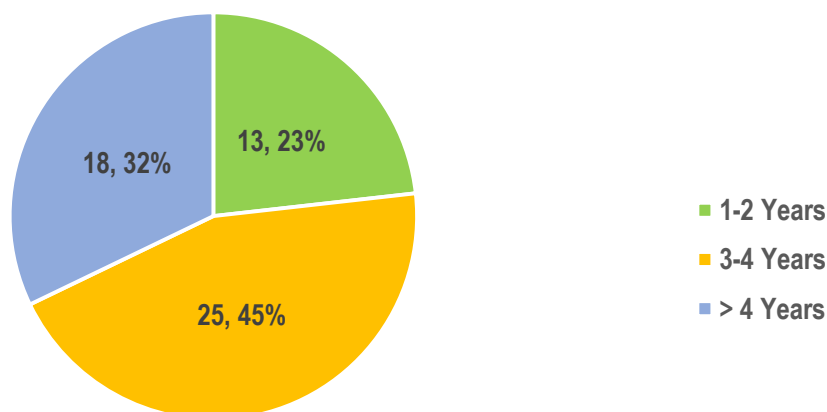


Figure 1: Time Length of Using FBG (N= 56)

Regarding the participants' frequency of using FBG, as shown by Table 1, they committed to access the FBG regularly. Although 33.93% of them used it only up to twice a week and the other 42.86% used it 3 to 4 times a week, more than a half of them used it 3-4 times a day, and the other 25%, 5-6 times. Based on the information obtained through the interview, the respondents regularly accessed the FBG in order not to miss information and to do every assignment on time. Many of them, however, did some other activities unrelated to the class, such as chatting with friends in their personal FB account after finishing every class activities.

Table 1

Participants' Frequency of Using FBG (N= 56)

No	Basis	f (%)			
		1-2 x	3-4 x	5-6 x	> 6 x
1	Weekly	19 (33.93)	24 (42.86)	9 (16.07)	4 (7.14)
2	Daily	10 (17.86)	30 (53.57)	14 (25)	2 (3.57)

Perception of FBG's Potentials for social and educational Functions

As shown in Table 2, the participants viewed the potentials of FB to use for social and educational uses highly positive. However, they perceived the potential for social use is higher than for educational practice. The mean of the responses for social use was 3.2, while for educational use was 3.02.

The participants' high positive attitude towards the use of FBG for educational purposes was clarified by the interviewee's responses. According to them, FBG ease of use and the possibility to access and post comments, papers, audio and video files make it interesting and effective to use for social and educational purpose. However, since the

activities and files in the FBG were opened to the whole group members, some of them feel it unsafe.

Table 2

Perception of FBG's Potentials for social and educational Functions

No.	Statements	f (%)				M
		SD	D	A	SA	
1	FB can be used both socially and for educational purposes	3 (5,36)	6 (10,71)	24 (42,86)	23 (41,07)	3,20
2	FB is safe to use both socially and for educational purposes	5 (8,93)	8 (14,29)	24 (42,86)	19 (33,93)	3,02

In terms of ease of use, Table 3 shows that 89.28% of the participants agreed and strongly agreed that FBG was easy to operate. This indicated their favorable attitude toward the use of FBG. The mean score for this response was very high (3.32). This is closely related to the finding that the majority of them had used FBG for more than 3 years (See Figure 1).

Based on the information obtained through the interview, some of the participants stated they could go “crazy” if the internet connection was interrupted when they were dealing with the activities in the FBG.

Table 3

Perception of the Ability to Operate FBG

No.	Statements	f (%)				M
		SD	D	A	SA	
1	Making posts, upload pictures and videos on FB are easy	1 (1.79)	5 (8.93)	25 (44.64)	25 (44.64)	3.32

Suitability of FBG as a Learning Management System

With regards to FBG's suitability as a learning management system (LMS), Table 4 shows a relatively high favorable view. The mean score of their responses to this aspect was more than 3.00. The participants viewed FBG was highly suitable to check class notes and homework assignments posted, to access links to resources the lecturer provided and to check for school-related updates and notices.

It is quite interesting to see that the participants view in the use of FBG to keep in contact with their lecturer was relative as positively high as to keep in contact with their classmates. This finding indicated that the use of FBG developed a rapport with fellow students and their lecturer. Based on the information obtained through the interview, some of the participants explained that although they realized their lecturer a person with authority, while interacting on Facebook they felt the boundaries between teachers and students seemed to have disappeared.

All items in this table include interpersonal communication activities users can conduct in FBG. The participants' favorable views towards these activities indicated their high positive feelings towards the use of FGB to support interpersonal communication which they accepted necessary in their learning process. This verified Selwyn's (2007) argument that Facebook can be used not only educationally for collaborative learning purposes, but also to support student interactions as well as those between students and their instructors. It also supports Lemeul's (2006) hypothesis that

social media like Facebook offer students and educators a direct platform to communicate conveniently with each other.

Table 4

Perceptions of FBG's Suitability as a Learning Management System

No.	Statements	f (%)				M
		SD	D	A	SA	
1	FB is a good place to keep in contact with classmates	5 (8.93)	9 (16.07)	21 (36.21)	21 (36.21)	3,04
2	FB is a good place to keep in contact with the lecturer outside of the class	4 (6.9)	9 (16.07)	21 (36.21)	22 (39.29)	3,09
3	FB is a good place to check class notes or homework assignments posted	3 (5.36)	5 (16.07)	23 (39.29)	25 (35.71)	3,25
4	FB is a good place to ask for help about homework assignments	5 (8.93)	9 (16.07)	22 (39.29)	20 (35.71)	3,02
5	FB is a good place to check for school-related updates and notices	5 (8.93)	7 (12.5)	21 (37.5)	23 (41.07)	3,11
6	FB is a good place to access links to resources the lecturer provided	2 (3.57)	7 (12.5)	23 (41.07)	24 (42.86)	3,23
7	FB is a good place to post and respond to surveys	4 (10.71)	10 (19.64)	22 (33.93)	20 (35.71)	3,04

Applicability of FBG for Specific Language Learning Activities

Regarding the applicability of FBG as for specific language learning activities, Table 5 reveals a moderate view of the participants. Although the participants who responded “Agreed” and “Strongly Agreed” to each statement in this table was higher than 60%, the mean scores of their responses to the statements were less than 3.00. Their highest positive responses went to the use of FBG to read articles and take notes to prepare for the next class, listen to audio files and take notes on them, and watch and discuss YouTube videos. Their lowest positive responses went to the use of FBG to post writing assignments like paragraphs or essays.

If the items in Table 4 include interpersonal communication activities, the items in Table 5 includes interpretative communication activates. The findings that the participants’ positive responses to the use of FBG for interpretative communication were lower than those to interpersonal communication activities indicated that the participants’ favored of using FBG as a platform for specific language learning activities, but they found it more enjoyable to use for conducting interpersonal communication.

The discrepancy between the use of FBG for interpersonal communication and interpretative communication activates, to a certain extent, was caused by the fact that conducting specific language learning activities informally through the FBG was a new experience. According to Manan et.al. (2012), students who viewed that a foreign language skills development necessitates a more academic and formal structure needs time to enjoy informal online learning. In short, since the practice of using FBG as the platform of specific language learning activities was relatively new to the participants, they might need more time to adapt to it. This is clarified by some responses obtained through the interview, as indicated in the following excerpts.

Table 5

Perceptions of FBG's Applicability for Specific Language Learning Activities

No.	Statements	f (%)				M
		SD	D	A	SA	
1	FB is a good place to discuss different topics with classmates	6 (10.71)	11 (19.64)	19 (33.93)	20 (35.71)	2,95
2	FB is a good place to read articles and take notes to prepare for the next class	5 (7.69)	11 (16.92)	29 (44.62)	20 (30.77)	2,98
3	FB is a good place to listen to audio files and take notes on them	6 (10.71)	10 (17.86)	20 (36.71)	20 (36.71)	2,96
4	FB is a good place to watch and discuss YouTube videos	5 (8.93)	11 (16.92)	21 (37.5)	19 (33.93)	2,96
5	FB is a good place to have discussions with "guest speakers"	7 (12.5)	13 (23.21)	19 (33.93)	17 (30.36)	2,82
6	FB is a good place to peer review/ edit classmates' writing assignments	6 (10.71)	11 (16.92)	20 (36.71)	19 (33.93)	2,93
7	FB is a good place to post writing assignments like paragraphs or essays	8 (14.29)	13 (23.21)	18 (32.14)	17 (30.36)	2,79

"Using Facebook is an interesting way to get information about the class and to submit assignments. However, posting my writing, editing classmates works, or challenging someone else's ideas seemed a bit difficult to do." (Interviewee 2)

"The application of Facebook to support the class is a good idea. I found many activities like getting information, listening to audio files, and submitting assignments much easier. I could do them anytime and anywhere. However, I still felt inappropriate to show someone's mistakes when I was asked to edit an assignment or to comment on a friend's idea." (Interviewee 5).

"I love doing the learning activities in FBG. However, I might need more time to adapt, because I still feel more comfortable to learn face-to-face in the classroom" (Interviewee 6)

"Using Facebook is easy. Engaging in the discussions or projects in it is also easy. However, I am often worried if my ideas are not worthy enough. This prevented me to actively involve in discussions on Facebook." (Interviewee 7)

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The participants' perceptions expressed in this study regarding the use of FBG in EFL learning were generally positive overall. However, their responses to the use of the SNS for interpretative communication activities were lower than those to the interpersonal communication activities because some of them still predominantly believed that English language skills learning necessitates a more academic and formal structure. Therefore, to adapt to the use of FBG in EFL learning, they more time.

Since this study employed the cross-sectional survey, the data obtained belonged to the participants' perception at a single period only. As a consequence, this study could not reveal the participants' perceptual changes caused by the use of FBG in EFL learning. Future studies, therefore, are recommended to employ a longitudinal survey so that the changes in the participants' perception could be described.

Besides, the participants in this study were students of a single English Department. To get more definite results, the findings need to be replicated by involving more respondents from various educational institutions.

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