

**THE USE OF FACEBOOK IN THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF
RESEARCH REPORT WRITING IN A MALAYSIAN COLLEGE**

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ABSTRACT

This study attempts to explore the use of Facebook in the teaching and learning of research report writing in a Malaysian college. The aims are to examine the kinds of language teaching and learning activities carried out via Facebook, the use of Facebook in facilitating the teaching and learning of research report writing and the limitations of using Facebook in teaching and learning. A total of 35 students and one lecturer were involved in this study. The data was collected from document analysis and field note of Facebook entries and semi-structured interview with the participants. Data triangulation was used to provide a more complete understanding of the research findings. The findings indicate that reading, writing and discussion activities can be held via Facebook and all of the participants agreed that Facebook helps them in research report writing. There are few limitations of using Facebook as a tool in teaching and learning which are late response, less interactive role of the lecturer and limited internet connection. Nevertheless, all of the limitations can be solved with full cooperation from the lecturer, students as well as the institution. This study implicates that the use of Facebook can be used for teaching and learning to enhance students' interactions outside the classroom.

PENGGUNAAN FACEBOOK DALAM PENGAJARAN DAN PEMBELAJARAN PENULISAN LAPORAN KAJIAN DI SEBUAH KOLEJ DI MALAYSIA

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji penggunaan Facebook dalam pengajaran dan pembelajaran penulisan laporan kajian di sebuah kolej. Objektif-objektif kajian ini adalah untuk melihat jenis-jenis aktiviti yang dilakukan di dalam Facebook, penggunaan Facebook dalam membantu proses pengajaran dan pembelajaran dan juga limitasi penggunaan Facebook. Tiga puluh lima orang pelajar dan seorang pensyarah terlibat di dalam kajian ini. Data diperolehi melalui analisis dokumen, nota lapangan entri Facebook dan juga temu bual. *Triangulation* data digunakan untuk mendapatkan pemahaman yang lebih tepat tentang dapatan kajian ini. Kajian ini menunjukkan aktiviti-aktiviti membaca, menulis dan perbincangan boleh dilakukan melalui Facebook dan peserta kajian bersetuju dengan penggunaan Facebook dapat membantu mereka di dalam penulisan laporan kajian. Ada beberapa keterbatasan yang dihadapi peserta kajian dengan menggunakan Facebook dalam proses pengajaran dan pembelajaran iaitu lambat mendapat maklum balas, peranan pensyarah yang kurang interaktif dan kekangan capaian internet. Dapatan kajian ini menunjukkan Facebook dalam pengajaran dan pembelajaran boleh digunakan untuk meningkatkan interaksi pelajar di luar kelas.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ICT - Information Communication Technologies

CALL - Computer Assisted Language Learning

SNSs - Social Network Sites

ESL - English as a Second Language



LIST OF APPENDICES

- A Interview Questions (students)
- B Interview Questions (lecturer)
- C Participant consent form



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter begins with the discussion of the background of the study and this is followed by the problems related to teaching and learning of research report writing. The chapter further explains the objectives, research questions, definition of terms, theoretical

framework and the significance of the study which has led to the conduct of this research on using Facebook in teaching and learning of research report writing.

1.1 Background of the Study

English language has always played a significant role in Malaysian tertiary education. The Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) of Malaysia, in fact, cites one of its objectives as being able to produce competent graduates to fulfill the national manpower needs that has particular common skills including the communication skills (Perangkaan Pendidikan Negara, 2013). English communication skills, mainly for speaking and writing skills, have become a factor that ensures the local graduates' employability. Studies have shown that Malaysian students realize the importance of English for their future employment (Saadiah Darus, 2009). However, their English proficiency level is still being highly debated and criticized by many employers.

The teaching of English in higher education can be very challenging for lecturers who are not experts in the students' professional fields yet they have to master the language as well as subject matter in order to teach the language skills (Brown et al.,

2007). For the tertiary level, there are three abilities which are required for the educators to prepare students in order for them to successfully communicate. According to Nowlan (2008), they include the ability to use jargon characteristics of the specific occupational context, generalized set of academic skills such as conducting research or responding to a memoranda and to use language of everyday informal talk to communicate effectively. Hence, teaching English for college students needs full commitment from the educators in order to cater to the demands of the students as well as future employers (Lockyer & Patterson, 2008)

It is compulsory for Malaysian students in institutions of higher education to take English courses such as English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses. EAP here refers to the learning of English in order to meet the academic standard required of students studying in an institution of higher learning. Research report writing is arguably the most important language skill in EAP courses in which the students' grades are largely determined by their performance in written assignments, academic reports, term examinations and graduation theses (Wingate & Tribble, 2012). Therefore, equipping tertiary students with knowledge of research writing is really essential. The reality of teaching and learning reveals the lack of effectiveness in traditional classroom where students are not participating well in the process of learning (Roblyer et al., 2010). Teachers have to adopt suitable strategies for teaching English particularly research writing for tertiary students (Ganobcsik-Williams, 2004). Once these strategies are

applied and their goals are understood by the students, the competence of writing academic English can be improved.

From the pedagogical perspective, Malaysian students are used to spoon-feeding style of teaching and learning (Joseph Kee-Kuok Wong, 2004). Similarly, Mohamad Jafre Zainol Abidin et al. (2011) also share the same idea by saying that regardless of various teaching tools that have been used, the teaching and learning process especially in Malaysia remains very much teacher-fronted where independent learning is still not much being applied. This might cause difficulty for the students to get effective learning experience and to be more responsible towards their own learning (Oradini & Saunders, 2007). The needs for alternative in teaching and learning could enhance the ability of students to acquire the target language (Saadiyah Darus, 2009.)

Therefore, there is a need to find the solution to the above problem by creating an online environment for students to use English language and learn how to write a good research report outside of the classroom. The current global developments especially in computer technologies have opened up more opportunities for educationists to design and implement Information Communication Technologies (ICT)-based lessons to make teaching and learning more interesting, motivating as well as meaningful (Kenning, 2007).

The use of technology has been implemented to expand coverage and accelerate the teaching of English (Van Bruggen, 2005). For instance, Dohn (2009) suggests that Web 2.0 applications may trigger some 21st century skills namely critical thinking and problem solving, collaboration and communication, global awareness and information literacy which is crucial for in research report writing (Rashidah Rahamat et al. 2011). Likewise, Nowlan (2008) suggests that ICT usage for students' activities promotes the autonomous language learning that helps in developing students' language skills. Students learn and enjoy learning more when they are actively involved in the learning process (Lockyer & Patterson, 2008). Learning should promote social and communication skills through collaboration and exchange of ideas and messages. Hence, the internet shows great potential for enhancing collaboration between people (teacher to students, students to students or teachers to teachers) and the role of Social Network Sites (SNSs) such as Facebook has become increasingly relevant in recent years (Thompson, 2006). Prensky (2001) portrays students nowadays as digital people who are very much into the technology. Therefore it is practical to use it for educational purpose.

Teaching and learning of research report writing in the English subject can also carried out through the internet or computer-based environment (Saradetch, 2012) as the language needs to be practiced all the time and the internet will ensure the process is continued after the class ends. The instructors or lecturers are not only concerned with instructions in the classroom, but also in preparing learners to take responsibility for their

own learning outside the classroom (Bicen & Uzunboylu, 2013). In striving to provide learners with opportunities to continue learning outside the classroom, many lecturers take the advantage of technology which allow learners to work at their own pace, to have the freedom to choose their own materials and their own pedagogical path which is seen as essential in the process of research report writing (Pinkman, 2005). Pinkman (ibid) also believed that once learners take responsibility of their own learning, they will be more able to capitalize on learning environments both in and out of the classroom, and thus making them effective and lifelong learners.

The researcher believes that SNSs nowadays provide a platform which can create and maintain environments to motivate learners to continue learning even after the class ends. Learner independence is easy to achieve through using social network sites as it provides the opportunity to learn, practice, communicate and gain information outside the classroom between the students. Moreover, computer technologies nowadays boost the technologies of internet where many websites can be surfed and used not only for entertainment and business but also for education. SNSs such as Facebook, allow individuals to present themselves, articulate their social networks, and establish or maintain connections with others through its various features which make it more interesting for the teenagers but at the same time still contribute towards their learning (Ellison et al. 2007).

Teaching and learning using computer has been used by many researchers. For example, in a study by Melor Yunus et al. (2012) Facebook was used in the teaching ESL writing. However, these areas still have a lot of potentials to be researched as technologies develop very fast and operate differently according to the contexts. Research into the use of Online Social Networks (OSN) in higher education is gaining more momentum, there remains a dearth of research that aims to understand the different ways lecturers are appropriating these social technologies for educational purposes (Suraya Hamid et al. 2011).

Students are prepared for the use of ICT in learning and it gives the English language teacher the opportunity to blend the use of ICT with their conventional teaching (Rashidah Rahamat et al., 2011). Most of the students own at least a hand phone or other mobile devices such as an MP3 player, a laptop or a game station, and they are surrounded with technological gadgets which keep on changing at a very fast rate. Realizing that teenagers nowadays are familiar with technologies, the use of technologies among teenagers or school students can be benefited for their learning process apart from the traditional method of attending classes (Rashidah Rahamat et al. *ibid*).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

There are several pertinent problems related to writing academic purposes. Firstly, according to Nor Hashimah Jalaludin et al. (2008), Malaysian English teachers are facing a big challenge especially in teaching writing as it is the most complex and problematic and yet crucial skill for most second language learner to learn (Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001). Particularly in report writing where the students need to do analyses of a situation or problem, making recommendations for future action certainly the lecturers must focus on both the content and the form of writing, that is language used, the text structure, the construction of argument, grammar and punctuation (Ganobcsik-Williams, 2004). Sargunan (2011) in addition claims that writing task in the ESL (English as a Second Language) classroom still instills fear and frustration as it is the one that required greatest effort on both part of the teachers and students. In the Malaysian context where English is not the language of communication, particularly in the context in which the college is being studied, students made full use of face-to-face hours to learn English. However, due to limited use of English outside the classroom, students might not have the opportunity to improve their proficiency and to practice educational writing.

Secondly, there is less classroom participation among the students in their learning experience. In formal learning situations, the role of teachers is immense as they

are the main source of knowledge, though the interaction between students is also very important (Pritchard, 2008). The teachers who can initiate an active participation of students in the teaching and learning of report writing can prevent the students from becoming just listeners to their teachers talk, and just copy notes all the time. However, it needs a great effort from the teacher as Hewitt and Forte (2006) stress that in each classroom, rules and norms influence interactions the students which later affect their participation in the activities (Hirschy & Wilson, 2002) and if there is any sense that students will feel humiliated or ridiculed in class, they will not speak up. There should be an alternative platform for the students to participate actively if they failed to do so in the classroom. Besides that, over-correcting the work of students by the teachers in the class de-motivate the students to do well (Hisham Dzakiria et al. 2006) and by having an alternative platform this problem can be reduced. Suraya Hamid et al. (2011) examine that SNSs are used to complement the traditional face-to-face teaching delivery and made it more relevant by introducing newer technologies to provide an enriched learning experience and source of materials for students.

Thirdly, many English language lecturers have limited contact hours between them and the students in teaching and learning report writing which are just during the lecture hours. Most of the students only get to meet their lecturers 3 times weekly and this is not enough particularly for students of weaker ability. Nowlan (2008) believes that contact hours for students and lecturer is another obstacle to be faced in which it is not

enough to enable the students to practice English and getting guidance for research report writing. Equally, Sargunan (2011) says that writing practices demanded a lot of time for the students to cope with the cognitive overload. Therefore the process has to be broken into various stages and this allows them to deal with one thing at a time. Dzakiria Hisham et. al. (2006) carried out an interview with students in their attempts to understand the alternative pedagogy used as compared to traditional classroom. From one of the findings, the students indicated that they did not get immediate response and feedback when the lecturers were not around on campus. Therefore, there is a need to have an alternative platform to cater to the students' needs. Moreover, the limited contact hours did not sufficiently and effectively provide opportunities for the students to express themselves. Hence, autonomous or independent learning is much needed to ensure the students can do practices on their own in the hope to fulfill the insufficient contact hours provided by the institution.

In addition, too many students in one class has made it difficult for lecturers to pay individual attention to every student (Dzakiria Hisham et al. *ibid*). Even in whole class discussion, only a few and normally the same students would participate and the others will be just listeners (Fauziah Ahmad, 2006). However, Hamann and Wilson (2002) as cited in Muñoz & Towner (2009) found that students who do not participate in a traditional lecture format still can outperform other students in a web-enhanced class.

Hence, this shows that internet based learning modules can be a tool for teachers to help students in improving their English proficiency.

Moreover, the students who have problems with extended absences from long terms illness or participating in national or international extracurricular commitments usually would miss the lectures and find difficulties in getting lessons that they have missed (Suraya Hamid et al., *ibid*). A web-based collaborative learning, for example, Facebook will help the students to gain information even though they were not present in the class.

Based on all of the problems discussed above, there is an immense need for an alternative platform for the teaching and learning of research report writing especially to provide more opportunities to improve students' proficiency and to practice report writing. Moreover, these problems also lead for the researcher to choose Facebook as the alternative tool in teaching and learning of research report writing based on its capability to cater the problems.

Although the implementation of Facebook in education especially in teaching and learning scope were carried in numerous study but there are only few data to provide