

# PREPARING STUDENTS BEFORE CLASS: A STUDY ON FACEBOOK (Persediaan Pelajar Sebelum Kuliah: Kajian Di Facebook)

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## Abstrak

Facebook merupakan salah satu laman sosial yang bukan sahaja popular sebagai medium bersosial tetapi juga peranannya dalam bidang pendidikan. Facebook telah mendapat perhatian di kalangan para pendidik dan pengkaji yang menjalankan kajian tentang peranannya sebagai alat pengajaran. Namun begitu, peranan Facebook dalam menggalakkan pembelajaran masih dalam kajian. Kajian ini mengkaji penggunaan Facebook dalam menyediakan pelajar sebelum hadir ke kuliah. Kajian ini melibatkan 47 orang pelajar semester tiga yang mengambil kursus Diploma Perguruan Pengajaran Bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa kedua (TESL) di Kolej Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Selangor (KUIS) dan lima orang telah dipilih secara rawak untuk ditemubual. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa penggunaan Facebook telah membantu persediaan pelajar sebelum menghadiri kuliah kerana ia menyumbang kepada penglibatan dan motivasi pelajar untuk mengambil bahagian secara aktif dalam perbincangan.

**Kata kunci:** Laman sosial, Facebook, persediaan sebelum kelas, kuliah

## Abstract

Facebook is one of the popular social networking websites which is not only popular because of its usage as a socializing platform, but also its role in educational setting. It has received much attention among educators and researchers who have been investigating the role of Facebook as a teaching tool. However, the roles that it can play in promoting learning are still being explored. This study investigated the use of Facebook, in preparing students before coming to lecture-based classes. This study involved 47 semester three students of Diploma in Teaching (Teaching English as a Second Language) of International Islamic University College Selangor (KUIS) whereby five of them were randomly selected to be interviewed. The data for this study was collected through interview sessions of five subjects. It was found that the use of Facebook has helped to make students more prepared as they became more engaged and motivated by participating actively in classroom discussion.

**Keywords:** Social Networking Website, Facebook, Preparation for Class, Lecture

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The development of technology has changed human lives in many ways. The way people communicate has also evolved due to this and this is further affected by the inventions of social networking websites. Social networking websites has been very popular as a new medium to socialize especially among teenagers. This phenomenon is also shared by students who are studying in higher learning institutions. Some studies has shown that the percentage of Facebook users among university students was anywhere between 85 and 99% (Hargittai, 2008; Jones & Fox, 2009; Matney & Borland, 2009). It can be seen that the percentage is very high and this perhaps depicted the utilization of Facebook in the students' lives and the high tendency to spend their leisure time by utilizing Facebook.

Due to its popularity, vast academic studies were also done in looking at the use of Facebook as one of the academic tools used in teaching and learning settings (Grosseck, Ramona & Tíru, 2011; Tower, Latimer & Hewitt, 2014; Milošević, Živković, Arsić & Manasijević, 2015, Sulaiman Ainin, M. Muzamil Naqshbandi, Sedigheh Moghavvemi, Noor Ismawati Jaafar, 2015, Reyes González-Ramírez, José L. Gascó & Juan Llopis Taverner, 2015, Yuwakosol, 2017). As stated by Sánchez, Cortijo & Javed (2014), the researchers were done in addressing the needs of the new generation students who are considered as "digital natives or members of the Net generation" (p. 1). This is because, as they received too much exposure to technology, their preference might also change especially when it comes to learning new knowledge.

Junco conducted a study on university students and found that students' academic performance, particularly GPA, correlated negatively with the time spent on using Facebook (2015). The finding shows the impact that Facebook can give to students' academically. This is perhaps due to the utilization of Facebook as a social tool rather than for academic purposes (Grosseck, et. al., 2011; Sánchez et. al., 2014).

This phenomenon could impact positively in terms of individual social activities but quite negatively in the aspect of real communication settings especially in classroom communication activities. Students have become more passive in the classroom since they are used to communicating silently using keyboards rather than voicing out or exchanging ideas orally. This could give impacts to the achievement of the overall education objectives, as well as the development of individuals' communication skills.

The excessive use of Facebook among the students cannot be evaded as it has become one of their ways of communicating and socializing. Nevertheless, since most of them are using it to socialize, perhaps the educators can manipulate the use of Facebook by integrating it in the process of teaching and learning to make the students more engaged and motivated in the process.

## 2.0 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Revising and reviewing notes before coming to class can possibly affect students' readiness to learn a subject or a topic. This is because of the concept of schema – a conceptual framework that organizes information and allows a person to make sense of the world (Lefton & Brannon, 2008). In the context of learning, a schema provides the students background information on the topic that they are going to learn which may assist them in the process of learning. This is because prior knowledge affects the way the students view new information (Svinicki, 1994). Prior knowledge may also aid students in having greater understanding of the topic as those with greater background knowledge understand and remember better (Committee on Developments in the Science of Learning, National Research Council, 1999; Schneider & Pressley, 1997).

Nonetheless, regardless of the importance mentioned, some students still do not realize its significance and thus resorting to not preparing before coming to class. This makes them underprepared and not able to relate to the topic being discussed. This is perhaps due to what Bean (1996) mentioned that "Many of today's students are poor readers, overwhelmed by the density of their college textbooks and baffled by the strangeness and complexity of primary sources and by their unfamiliarity with academic discourse" (p. 133). Their under preparedness is portrayed through their passive attitude by not being able to respond during classroom discussion. This then resulted to teacher centered classroom with little or no participation by the students.

Relating this issue with Facebook, based on a study by Junco (2011), it was found that the time spent on Facebook correlated negatively with the time spent for class preparation. This means that students who spent more time using Facebook would spend less time to revise or view the material before coming to class. By looking at this phenomenon, as the students spent much time doing non-

academic work via Facebook, it is worthwhile to investigate how Facebook can help students to prepare better so that they will be able to learn better in lecture classes.

### 3.0 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study was conducted in adding up to the literature in terms of students' perception on the use of Facebook as a preparation tool for a lecture class and how Facebook can help the students to be better prepared for class. Preparation before class can be done through a variety of mediums; paper-based or electronic-based, depending on the students' preference. As Facebook is mainly used for social purposes, it is worthwhile to discover the students' perception towards the utilization of Facebook in the academic field.

### 4.0 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

There was a limitation of the study that need to be given attention. The investigation was only conducted on TESL semester three students who were undergoing TESL Methodology course in KUIS. Due to that, the data was only collected based on those who enrolled in the course. So, the data collected cannot be generalized to other contexts and institutions.

### 5.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The development of numerous media for the purpose of communication, especially online, has assisted in making the process a lot easier and faster. The advantages can be observed not only in terms of communication and socialization skills, but also in the aspect of interaction for the purpose of gathering information as well as acquiring knowledge. As a result of its ubiquitous roles in many aspects of life, online resources are becoming more useful to help progress in everyday matters.

The term "useful" is used because electronic resources complement, but seldom replace, more conventional teaching techniques (Brinkley et. al., 1999). The execution of electronic and online resources is helpful in the learning process but should also be accompanied with face-to-face interaction in order to ensure the learning process to be successful. Furthermore;

Electronic tools can make classes more efficient; lectures more compelling, informative, and varied; reading assignments more extensive, interesting, and accessible; discussions more free ranging and challenging; and students' papers more original and well researched. Only you, however, can judge if these techniques advance your own teaching goals.

It can be assumed here that the application of online resources will add value to the lesson in the sense that it makes lessons more interesting in class. Apart from that, it will also help to engage students' attention in class. For the purpose of this study, the online tool that will be used in enhancing learning experience among students is Facebook, an online social networking website.

#### 5.1 Facebook as Social Networking Website

Initially, in February 2004 Mark Zuckerberg and some of his friends created Facebook in order to provide the channel for Harvard students to socialize. It was then gradually opened to general public in 2006 (Sheldon, 2008; Urista, Dong & Day, 2009). Facebook has gained its popularity and the number of Facebook users has been increasing since then. Facebook is quickly turning into one of the most popular tools for social communication (Ross et al., 2009).

One can create a user profile, add other users as friends, post status updates and photos, share videos and receive notifications and many other tasks upon registration to the website. In addition, they can also start to communicate with the friends in their friends' list. There are few ways on how people can communicate through Facebook. The first way is through private message. The users can send messages privately to other individuals with their agreement to be friend with them (Kolek & Saunders, 2008). Furthermore, they can also make use of the wall function which is similar to notice board where the users can post anything of their interests. The users are also able to join common-interest user groups (Hew, 2011), organized by workplace, school or college, or other characteristics. In addition to that, the feature

in Facebook also permits the users to share pictures and video in the group which can be commented on. The people in the group can give comments on anything posted in the group and these features help individuals such as educators to make lessons to be more interesting and lively.

In order to cater to the need of this study, the feature of videos sharing of the relevant topics prior to lesson was used as the students were asked to view the videos in order to prepare students for the learning process that took place in the lecture.

## 5.2 The Use of Facebook in Assisting Learning

Internet-based communication tools, including Facebook, have received great attention especially among researchers in exploring their other functions other than tools to socialize. This also includes growing interest in investigating the role of Facebook in assisting teaching and learning process. In one of the studies conducted, it was reported that, majority of the students thought that Facebook allowed them to learn conveniently and some even agreed that using Facebook for educational purposes offered opportunity for learning (Milošević et. al., 2014). The findings of the study are further supported by Ponnudurai and Jacob (2014) as well as Fewkes and McCabe (2012). Both studies reported the positive feedback of students towards using Facebook for educational purposes. Similarly, Muhammad Kamarul, Norlida and Mohd Jafre (2010) found that the students thought that Facebook could be applied to assist English learning online. One of the possible reasons is perhaps due to their frequent use of Facebook and the easy access of Facebook via their android phone or laptop through wireless connection. This is also equivalent with a more recent study by Sulaiman Ainin et. al. (2015). Through a survey, it was revealed that students perceived the use of Facebook as a positive indicator of their academic performance. This means that the more they used Facebook, the higher their academic performance would be. Correspondingly, it was reported that students agreed that the use of Facebook in the course had brought some advantages which positively impact their performance (Reyes González-Ramírez, 2015).

Adding up to students' perception on the use of Facebook for academic purposes, a study conducted by Donlan (2014) figured out a contrasting finding. It was reported that the readiness of the students to use Facebook for academic purposes depended on the presence of tutors as they still saw Facebook as something personal. They perhaps were not ready for their social activities to be revealed to others especially their tutors which may affect others' perception on them. Correspondingly, Madge, Meek, Wellen and Hooley (2009) asserted that the students' perception depended on the context on when Facebook was used for academic purposes. According to them, students did not favor Facebook to be used for formal teaching activities.

Other than the students' views on the application of Facebook in learning, the use of Facebook group as a form of study support increased students' self-efficacy in learning as they received assistants from their friends online (Tower et. al., 2014) and reduced anxiety (Ponnudurai & Jacob, 2014). This suggested that the almost immediate feedback given by their peers can tower up their positive view on their ability in the subject matter. The anxiety level may be lowered as they are discussing with someone at the same level with them. One of the benefits that the students can acquire through the use of Facebook as study support is the availability of friends with variety level of knowledge. This means that there will be different types of feedback that they will be able to get through discussion with their friends by using Facebook.

The use of Facebook in assisting learning was also reported in a study conducted in South Africa. According to Bosch (2009), Facebook was used to share information and ideas related to projects, lectures as well as notes (Bosch, 2009). This shows the utilization of the added value that Facebook can offer which is the availability of sharing feature in Facebook. This feature can positively impact the learning process because the feature allows students to share pictures, documents as well as resources online (Sánchez et. al., 2014). Online resources can be accessed at any time with the availability of internet connection, which will eventually lead to greater level of collaboration and communication among the students (Milošević et. al., 2014). This will then lead to better performance among them. Similarly, Manca and Ranieri (2013) in their review of articles discovered that the main educational uses of Facebook were supporting discussion and allowing students to learn from each other through mutual understanding and critical thinking exercises, developing pieces of multimedia content, sharing resources, delivering content to expand the curriculum and expose students to external resources and finally, supporting self-managed learning.

Research on Facebook in lecture-based class has also been conducted and it was claimed that it was not an easy task to be done. Dyson, Vickers, Turtle, Cowan and Tassone (2015) stated that the action of integrating Facebook in the learning process may depend on some factors which included the timing of content delivery, the integration of social media content with course assessment and the students' own

perspective on using social media for academic purposes. The incorporation of Facebook in some circumstances may not be as successful as expected as some external factors may interfere along the process. In other words, instructors may need to be more critical and creative during the planning stage in order for the integration to be successful.

## 6.0 METHODOLOGY

The methodology that was employed for this study is qualitative in nature. A primary research was conducted and original data was collected using interview sessions. This method was used to allow first hand data collection which is more reliable and accurate.

### 6.1 Participants

47 students who were their third semester of Diploma in Teaching (Teaching English as a Second Language) were involved in this study. They enrolled in TESL Methodology class. Five of them were randomly selected to be interviewed.

### 6.2 Instrumentations

The instruments used for this study was unstructured interview. The sessions were conducted in the researcher's office whereby the students were interviewed individually. Five questions were asked which included questions on the use of Facebook in preparing for a lecture and the role of Facebook in helping students to be better prepared for a lecture. Each session was conducted around 15 minutes.

### 6.3 Procedures

The classes that were observed were TESL Methodology classes. The lecture sessions took place for 2 hours every week over a 14-week semester. The study however, was conducted for the topics under TESL Approaches.

The students were informed about the task that they needed to do to prepare for the class during the first day of lecture. A Facebook group was created and all students were asked to join the group. The lecturer would then post videos on the teaching approaches that were going to be taught for each lecture. The video was posted two days earlier to allow the students to view, give comments and ask questions. The students were given the freedom to view the videos as many times as they want.

Then, five students were randomly selected and interviewed. They were asked five questions. They were reminded to practice honesty and precision while answering the questions to maintain data reliability.

## 7.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 7.1 Students' Usage of Facebook

In looking at the aspects of students' general uses of Facebook, two out of five respondents were active users of Facebook while the rest rarely accessed Facebook. In terms of their access of internet, all of the respondents accessed Facebook through their mobile phones and used their own data plan.

### 7.2 Students' Perception of Facebook as a Medium to Spread Information

When the respondents were asked about their perception on the use of Facebook to spread information, four out of five respondents agreed to that statement. One of them stated that:

“Yes, because you can post anything on that particular page and people nowadays always use Facebook as a medium to say something, post something”.

Another respondent asserted that:

“Yes I think it's a good way to access information since mmm...majority use Facebook nowadays mmm...so it's a became everyone can access the information in one place so getting information will be easy”.

The other respondent affirmed that:

“Yes, especially in spreading information mmm... I tend to shared information but not share my thoughts opinion of something”.

Another one continued as claiming:

“...we need to inform the students to check the FB frequently if you want them to see it”.

However, the remaining one respondent thought that it could depend on the users themselves. The respondent stated that:

“Sometimes yes, sometimes no. Because sometimes they, the user of FB, spread the wrong information”.

It could be stated that most of the respondents thought that Facebook is an effective medium to spread information as many people use Facebook as a medium to communicate. In addition to that, as many people are users of Facebook, the information can be delivered efficiently. Nevertheless, if the information is with regards to academic matters, as stated by one of the respondents, the users may need to be reminded. This is perhaps due to how Facebook is perceived as a tool to socialize rather than to be used academically (Grosbeck, et. al., 2011; Sánchez et. al., 2014). On the other hand, one of the respondents stated that the effectiveness of Facebook as a medium to spread information can be misused as users may spread the wrong information.

### **7.3 Students' Perception on the Use of Facebook as a Preparation Tool for a Lecture Class**

All of the respondents were very positive when they were asked about the use of Facebook as a preparation tool for a lecture class. Two of the respondents commented on the same aspect which is the interactive aspect of Facebook. They stated that:

“...the students can share their thoughts; we can reflect on ourselves together, lecturer and the students”.

“...the documents that the lecturer post can be viewed many times and we can comment on them”.

The remaining three respondents claimed that the use of Facebook had made them become more prepared. They asserted that:

“...students can prepare for your studies and they can prepare so when they came to the lecture they can answer the questions asked”.

“...it works well because we can prepared for the lecture”.

“..I can view it before class”.

Based on the responses, it could be assumed that the use of Facebook as a tool to help students in preparing for lecture has helped them in two ways. As Facebook is interactive in nature, it is easier for the students to share their ideas and reflect on their understanding of the topic. In addition to that, students will be able to enhance their understanding as the material can be viewed many times. Questions can also be asked directly if they have any confusion and get feedback from the lecturer. Consequently, the features mentioned have then made them become more prepared and can contribute to classroom discussion.

The positive attitudes shown by the respondents supported the study by Fewkes and McCabe (2012) as well as Ponnudurai and Jacob (2014). It was found in both studies that majority of the students reported positive attitudes towards using Facebook for educational purposes. This is also consistent with a study by Muhammad Kamarul et. al. (2010). They found that the students believed Facebook could be utilized as an online environment to facilitate the learning of English.

It is, however, in contrast with a study conducted by Donlan (2014) who found that students were not ready to use Facebook with the observation by the tutor and saw Facebook as a personal domain. Similarly, Madge (et. al., 2009) discovered that students thought Facebook was not to be used for formal teaching activities although it was sometimes used for learning informally. It can be perceived here that the different context as well as students' background can affect the students' response towards how they perceive Facebook as an academic tool.

#### **7.4 The Role of Facebook in Helping the Students to be Better Prepared for Class**

The response from the students in how Facebook can help the students to be better prepared for class can be categorized into two aspects. One of the aspects mentioned was engagement. Some of the responses were:

“It helps we to focus more in class because we know already and the lecturer gave a lecture, so we know, we already know, we didn't feel confused about it”

“...we already know, already read the notes and we can know, we can discuss the..the..the..notes with friends”.

“..we understand the information in that video so we can be more understand and the participation in class will be more active”.

They also mentioned about how the use of Facebook could improve their motivation. They claimed that:

“..it is quite easy to grasp the information, yes I think when we are using it I mean watching the videos, yeah, in a way it change the attitude towards the subject. Because if you don't have the prior knowledge, we cannot indulge in conversation, into discussion”.

“...for me, I am visual person. I got easily understand through audio, kinesthetic and everything. Instead of, no, yes, if through reading I might got different views so I have to listen, I have to listen explanation not just reading. It won't help me a lot in reading”.

Based on the interview, it was found that using Facebook has helped the students to be better prepared for class as it helped in making them more engaged and motivated. In terms of engagement, the students became more focused in class, able to contribute to discussion as well as can participate actively in the class activity. The findings are in contrast with a study conducted by Dyson et. al. (2015). They affirmed that Facebook intervention did not yield higher self-report of course engagement or understanding for the course. This perhaps due to the difference in terms of media used to deliver the content of the course. As mentioned earlier, the researcher of this study used videos to introduce the content of the lecture which may be more attractive to the students. Another aspect mentioned was the aspect of motivation. The use of Facebook has helped to improve the students' attitude towards the subject which at the same time boosts up their motivation to learn the subject.

## **8.0 CONCLUSION**

The role played by social media in the society cannot be doubted. Social networking website, particularly Facebook, has been found as an effective medium to communicate and has the prospective to be manipulated for educational purpose. Although it is initially designed as a tool of communication, it has now emerged as one of the potential teaching tools used by some educators in changing the pace of the traditional classroom which at the same time can cater to the needs of “digital natives or members of the Net generation” (Sánchez et. al., p. 1, 2014). As the results show, the use of Facebook is effective as it is interactive in nature and makes the students more prepared. The students thought that they had become more prepared with the use of Facebook as they became more engaged and more motivated to learn the subject. As affirmed by Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, “a more engaged student will earn better grades and has a higher chance of persisting through to graduation” (p. 188, as cited in Junco, 2011), it is an advantageous move to further experiment the use of Facebook in helping the students to prepare before class in a larger scale.

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