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**SOCIAL MEDIA USE: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF FACEBOOK'S IMPACT  
ON COLLEGIATE EFL STUDENTS' ENGLISH WRITING IN THAILAND**

By

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DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
Seton Hall University  
2014

South Orange, New Jersey

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SETON HALL UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES  
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APPROVAL FOR SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE

Doctoral Candidate, **Tharinee Kamnoetsin**, has successfully defended and made the required modifications to the text of the doctoral dissertation for the **Ph.D.** during this **Spring 2014**.

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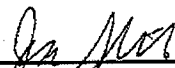
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## **Abstract**

In this technology era, a new trend of using Social Media or Social Networking Sites (SNSs) has been recently highlighted. Social media influences people's lives in many aspects including education and English language learning. The purpose of this study is to examine whether using Facebook online impacts the type (formal or informal) of English EFL students use for in-class writing or not, as well as to understand the students' perceptions on how the use of Facebook helps to facilitate or inhibit their English writing skills.

The study was conducted by using qualitative research methods to explore EFL college students' writing behavior on the Facebook platform and understand the perspectives of students involved in using Facebook. The data collection methods were observation and interviews.

Participants consisted of 32 students, mostly freshmen college students. The site for this study was Center Bangkok University (CBU, pseudonym) in Thailand, a university located in Bangkok. The study took place during a 5-week period from November 11, 2013 until December 12, 2013. The interviews were conducted with 16 students from the 32 and two teachers, each lasting about 45-60 minutes. After the data was coded and analyzed, three major findings that answer the research questions were emerged.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES .....	viii
LIST OF FIGURES .....	ix
Chapter I INTRODUCTION .....	1
Background .....	2
Social Media and College Students' Life.....	5
Facebook.....	6
The Application of Social Media and Facebook in College Learning and EFL Settings.....	7
Research Context and Motivation .....	9
Research Problem .....	13
Purpose of the Study.....	16
Conceptual Framework.....	16
Research Questions.....	17
Significant of the Study .....	17
Definition of Terms and Abbreviations.....	18
Chapter II LITERATURE REVIEW.....	19
Introduction.....	19
Technology.....	19
Social Media.....	21
Facebook.....	23
Facebook in College Teaching and Learning .....	26
The Application of Facebook in English Language Learning (ELL) Settings .....	27
Studies Review.....	28
Advantages of Facebook in English Language Learning (ELL) Environments.....	30
Advantages of Facebook in English Language Writing.....	32
Disadvantages of Facebook in English Language Learning (ELL) Environment.....	35
Disadvantages of Facebook in English Language Writing.....	36
Conclusion.....	38
Directions for Further Research.....	39
Conceptual Framework.....	40
Chapter III METHODOLOGY.....	45
Research Design .....	45
Site Selection .....	46
Selection of Student Participants .....	47



General Background of the Participants .....	49
Teacher Participants.....	51
Research Procedures.....	51
Research Instrument.....	53
Data Collections.....	54
Observation.....	55
Interviews.....	58
Interview Questions for Students .....	61
Interview Protocol for the Teacher.....	62
Data Analysis Procedures.....	64
Writing Observation.....	65
Interview Via Chat.....	66
Role of Researcher and Reflexivity.....	68
Validity.....	69
Limitation.....	70
Chapter IV RESEARCH FINDINGS.....	72
Overview of the Chapter .....	72
Findings from Observation Data.....	73
Students' Writing on Facebook Page VS Students' Writing in a Classroom.....	73
The Comparison of Writing on Facebook to Classroom Writing.....	85
Findings from Interview Data.....	94
Students' Perception of the Use of Facebook .....	94
Breaking space-time constraints.....	94
Providing pleasant experience.....	96
Negative viewpoints of using Facebook.....	99
Students' Perspective on the Use of Facebook as English Learning and Writing Facility.....	100
Learning outcomes from Facebook use.....	101
Impeding or Assisting Writing .....	111
Facilitate. ....	111
Mixed feeling: Both facilitate and impede. ....	113
Make little difference. ....	113
Can students differentiate the formal and informal writing? .....	115
Where do students learn informal writing? .....	116
Teachers' Perception on Students' Writing and the Use of Facebook in EFL Classroom.....	118
Summary.....	122
Chapter V CONCLUSIONS.....	125
Summary of the Research Methods.....	126

Discussion of Major Findings.....	127
Implications for Practice.....	130
Theoretical Implication .....	133
Recommendations for Future Research.....	135
Conclusion.....	137
References.....	139
Appendix A Nine Studies of Facebook in English Language Learning Environment.....	150
Appendix B Effectiveness of Facebook in English Language Learning Environment from nine studies.....	155
Appendix C Instructions for the Teacher/Assistant .....	156
Appendix D Facebook Tutorial Page.....	157
Appendix E The English I tutorial group is set privacy as a secret group.....	158
Appendix F Greeting Messages for the Five Weeks.....	159
Appendix G Criteria for Coding.....	161
Author's Biography .....	162

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1	<i>Demographic Information of the Participants</i> .....50
2	<i>What Are the Privacy Options for Groups?</i> .....55
3.	<i>Types writing students used in the two different environments</i> .....75
4	<i>Average Number of Types of Students' Writing on Facebook Page VS Students' Writing in a Classroom</i> .....84
5	<i>Codes for Students' Writing Errors</i> .....86
6	<i>SI's Grammatical Mistakes on Facebook Writing</i> .....87
7	<i>SI's Grammatical Mistakes in Academic Writing</i> .....87
8	<i>The Error Types Students Made on Facebook Page VS the Error Types Students Made on Academic Writing</i> .....88
9	<i>Comparing the Total Number of Students Who Made These Types of Errors of Writing on Facebook Platform and in Academic Writing</i> .....90
10	<i>Number of Posts VS Numbers of Mistake Types</i> .....93
11	<i>Examples of Questions and Posts on Facebook Tutorial Lab</i> .....103
12	<i>Examples of Quotes and Poems Students Shared</i> .....106
13	<i>Examples of "Asking Questions" Format</i> .....108
14	<i>Examples of Posts and Responses</i> .....108
15	<i>Students' View on Using Facebook Writing Platform as a Means of Facilitating or Impeding Their Academic Writing</i> .....114
16	<i>Informal Type of Writing Shared by the Participants</i> .....117

**LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure	Page
<i>1</i> Example of a Student's Writing on Facebook .....	12
<i>2</i> Introducing the Conversation Prism .....	24
<i>3</i> Socio-Cognitive Diagram .....	41
<i>4</i> Socio-Cognitive .....	42
<i>5</i> Framework Model.....	44
<i>6</i> The Methodological Steps for the Study .....	69
<i>7</i> The Common Features of Informal Writing Widely Used on Online Chats or Social Network Sites.....	74
<i>8</i> S1's In-class Writing (Descriptive Writing).....	78
<i>9</i> S9's In-class Writing (Descriptive Writing).....	80
<i>10</i> S11's In-class Writing (Descriptive Writing).....	81
<i>11</i> Thinking and Behavior.....	134

## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

Today the people of the world live in a generation of continual digital revolution. They use information and communication technologies (ICTs) and the Internet virtually every day. Technology plays an important role in people's lives especially today's college students. Technology has become routine among college students, permeating many aspects of their lives, including learning. As Ralston (2012) poignantly pointed out, technology is a fact of life as a medium of daily communication affecting language learning,

Facebook, Twitter, texting, Second Life, e-mail — the list goes on. In the past few years, technology has saturated the life of the college student. These new mediums have opened the door to shorthand typing, abbreviations, emoticons and instant message lingo, causing some people to fear the decline of the formal English language. The question of whether it is making a difference in student's formal writing is debatable. (para. 1)

Does technology affect students' academic writing? If so, how? For English language learners (ELLs) who are not yet proficient in English, does technology enhance or harm their English writing skills? There have been growing concerns about whether the use of online communications is beneficial or detrimental to the teaching of writing in the English language setting (Warschauer, 2007). Some scholars pointed out the benefits, while some were calling for the removal of such online technologies from the classroom (Guy, 2012; Lederer, 2012). Recently social media, or social networking sites (SNSs) (often used interchangeably) such as Facebook, have called attention from policymakers

and educators as to whether institutions of higher learning should adopt SNSs as a teaching and learning tool in an EFL setting (Yunus & Salehi, 2012).

With this in mind, this study focused on the influence of technology on English as a foreign language (EFL) learners' academic writing. More specifically, the intent of the study is to examine what type (formal or informal) of English EFL students use on an online tutorial program via a writing platform - such as Facebook- as well as to understand the students' perceptions of how the use of Facebook as a writing platform helps to facilitate or inhibit English writing skills.

This chapter introduces a general overview of the topic of study that relates to technology and English as a foreign language (EFL) learners and their academic writing. First, how technology has been used in the EFL setting is discussed, followed by a brief description of the terminology of social media, social networking sites, and Facebook. Then, information regarding the application of social media and Facebook in college learning and in EFL settings is presented, followed by a discussion of the research context and motivation for the study. Finally, the chapter concludes with a presentation of the essential parts of the study including research problems, purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study, and definition of terms and abbreviations.

## **Background**

A growing body of research has shown that using different types of technology in a variety of forms, such as computers and the Internet, facilitates EFL students' language learning. Evidence from the literature reveals that the following types of technology have frequently been used in EFL settings:

- computer-based assisting language learning<sup>1</sup> for writing and communication purpose (Al-Jarf, 2004; Hegelheimer & Fisher, 2006; Hirvela, 2006; Sullivan & Pratt, 1996; Warschauer, 1996, 2007), and often computer assisting language learning uses were limited to inform, to drill and practice exercises (Liu, Moore, Graham, & Lee, 2002);
- online discussion to investigate EFL students' participation in an information-sharing task (Omar, Embi & Yunus, 2012) and to investigate their interaction with native speakers (Hanna & Nooy, 2003);
- using web 2.0 technology (e.g., live materials RSS (Really Simple Syndication), Flickr, last.fm, podcast, videocast, blogs, wikis, social networking) as an EFL pedagogical tool in a blended learning environment (Manan, Alias, & Pandian, 2012; Miyazoe & Anderson, 2010) to (a) assist college students in learning English writing (Shih, 2011), (b) to motivate, make students become more comfortable and increase students' social relationships outside of the classroom (Promnitz-Hayashi, 2011), and (c) to enhance critical reflection and community of practice (Yang, 2009);
- email to improve writing (Biesenbach-Lucus & Weasenforth, 2001; Wang, 1996; Warschauer, 2007) and for EFL instruction (Liaw, 1998);

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<sup>1</sup> Computer assisting language learning means learning language in any context with, through, and around computer technologies (as cited in Kern, 2006, p. 184)

- chat rooms and instant messaging for writing purpose (Gonzalez, 2003; Yuan, 2003); or
- mobile learning technology (MALL – Mobile Assisted Language Learning such as cell-phones, PDAs, iPods) as educational materials to facilitate grammar and foreign language learning (Ally, Schafer, Cheung, McGreal, & Tin, 2007; Chinnery 2006; Thornton & Houser, 2005).

These aforementioned studies pointed to many advantages of using such specific technologies in EFL classrooms and social media as an online communication tool that has been increasingly utilized in the EFL setting.

Social media is generally defined as “forms of electronic communication as web sites for social networking and microblogging through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content such as videos” (Merriam-Webster dictionary, n.d.) and “integrates technology, social interaction, and content creation to collaboratively connect online information” (Types of social media, 2013, para. 1). In fact, there is a very limited understanding of the exact meaning of the term *social media* (Kaplan & Haenlei, 2010) and various definitions exist. Because it is a broad term covering a large range of websites (Nations, n.d.), its classifications differ by the extent of the area on which is being focused.

For example, the most commonly used types of social media in government are classified by 10 types: blogs (e.g., WordPress), social networks (e.g., Facebook), microblogs (e.g., Twitter), wikis (e.g., Wikipedia), video, podcasts, discussion forums, RSS (Really Simple Syndication) Feeds, photo sharing (e.g., Flickr), and employee ideation programs (Types of Social Media, 2013). Based on a set of theories in the field



of media research (social presence, media richness) and social processes (self-presentation, self-disclosure), Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) created a classification scheme that consists of six different types of social media: collaborative projects (e.g., Wikipedia), blogs (e.g., Twitter), content communities (e.g., YouTube), social networking sites (e.g., Facebook), virtual game worlds (e.g., World of Warcraft), and virtual social worlds (e.g., Second Life). Despite variability in the classifications of social media types, what they have in common is that Facebook is classified as social networking sites (SNSs) type of social media.

### **Social Media and College Students' Life**

Social media have grown quickly for academic use and infiltrated the education arena (Chen & Bryer, 2012). Data from the Pew Internet and American Life Project 2009 indicated that 93% of young adults between the ages of 18 and 29 used the Internet (Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, & Zickuhr, 2010). By using the Internet, many activities can be conducted online: web surfing, email, live chatting, instant messaging (IM), blogging and gaming (Cotten, 2008), and the online meeting places or social networks (Mazer, Murphy, & Simonds, 2007). These online activities have become an essential part of academic life on college campuses (Jones, Johnson-Yale, Millermaier, & Seoane Perez, 2008). Chen and Bryer (2012) pointed out that based on data from the EDUCAUSE Center for Applied Research in 2009 and 2010, more than 90% of college students reported that they used SNSs. Similarly, Poellhuber and Anderson (2011) found that college students between the ages of 18 and 24 used social media more frequently than other age groups, and Facebook and YouTube were the two most commonly used networking sites.

The use of social media in higher education is mainly two-fold: (a) the administrative purpose of facilitating registration, support services and socialization (Madge, Meek, Wellens, & Hooley, 2009), and (b) the educational purpose (Eteokleous, Ktoridou, Stavrides, & Michaelidis, 2012) of fostering the educational outcomes and facilitating the process of teaching and learning (Cassidy, 2006; Chen & Bryer 2012; Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2007; Gumpert & Chun, 1999; Liu, 2010; Madge et al., 2009; Mazer et al., 2007). Adopted as a communication tool among students and professors, social media/SNSs have increasingly become a new means of communication and collaboration; thereby the rising use of SNSs among college students has become a global phenomenon (Eteokleous et al., 2012; Madge et al., 2009).

### **Facebook**

Facebook has become the most popular social networking site among college students and worldwide. Facebook is used in multilingual languages; 70 languages (Wikipedia, n.d.) around the world including many EFL countries. According to Mark Zuckerberg, the CEO of Facebook, Facebook's number of active users hit one billion as of September, 2012, with a larger number of active users than any other social networking sites (Davies, 2012; Grandoni, 2012; Guynn, 2012; Tsukayama, 2012). Given the fact that the world population is about 7 billion, about one in every seven people uses Facebook. The United States alone has the largest number of users; approximately 167.4 million people (53.9%) use Facebook (Wikipedia, n.d.).

With the increasing popularity of SNSs such as Facebook, which allows users to maintain connections, interact with friends, and meet new people (Ellison et al., 2007),

Facebook has been utilized by a number of higher education institutions as a communication tool. For example, Ellison et al. (2007) found that 94% of American college students were Facebook members, and they highlighted that Facebook primarily bonded students on campus together.

### **The Application of Social Media and Facebook in College Learning and EFL Settings**

Social media has been used in many arenas and for different purposes. For example, it is used in news media to provide news to audiences, or in business for advertising products or surveying customers' needs. Social media are also used in the educational setting (e.g. college learning, EFL settings). College students use three top-used social media tools: Facebook, Wikipedia and YouTube, for social engagement, direct communication, speed of feedback, and relationship building (Liu, 2012).

In college learning settings social media and Facebook (a) can be used as an educational tool that instructors use to foster collaboration and discussion, boost student interaction, and enhance student engagement and build better communication skills (Eteokleous et al. 2012; Lederer, 2012); (b) can enhance communication among students and teachers (Eteokleous et al., 2012; Lederer, 2012; Mazer et al., 2007); (c) can help to reduce stress and increase satisfaction among students (Zaidieh, 2012); (d) can promote, enhance, and support the teaching and learning process (Eteokleous et al., 2012); and (e) can help prepare students network and find employment (Lederer, 2012).

In the EFL area, some researchers have suggested that social media and Facebook have advantages for English language learners (ELLs) learning at the college level. For example, they are used as an EFL pedagogical tools in blended learning environments

(Manan et al., 2012; Miyazoe & Anderson, 2010) to (a) assist EFL college students in learning English writing (Shih, 2011), (b) make students become more comfortable and increase students' social relationships outside of the classroom (Kabilan, Ahmad & Abidin, 2010; Promnitz-Hayashi, 2011), (c) enhance critical reflection and community of practice (Yang, 2009), (d) provide the potential for collaborative and cooperative learning (Shih, 2011), and (e) help students learn new vocabulary (Hiew, 2012; Kabilan et al., 2010; Omar et al., 2012; Shih, 2011; Yunus & Salehi, 2012; Yunus, Salehi & Chenzi, 2012). Considering that social media and Facebook are involved with computer use, research has found that the computer-based language learning used in EFL classrooms can help improve students' writing abilities, their uses of grammar, their uses of appropriate language, and general language abilities. It is also positively associated with students' self-esteem, senses of achievement and improvement, and increased student motivation (Al-Jarf, 2004; Hegelheimer & Fisher, 2006; Hirvela, 2006; Sullivan & Pratt, 1996; Warschauer, 1996; Warschauer et al., 2000).

Despite these positive advantages, social media and Facebook can also be a disadvantage to students in some ways; they (a) can be a distraction in the classroom and be used to trigger cyberbullying or malicious behavior on college campuses (Lederer, 2012; Yunus et al., 2012), (b) may affect students' learning outcomes and physical and mental health because they spend too much time using social media or Facebook, (c) may result in dishonest and unreliable friendships because individuals can present only a positive self-image and (d) can result in miscommunication because the writing can be lacking in the opportunities for expression, explanation, and clarification that are found in face-to-face interactions (Zaidieh, 2012). A negative effect of social media in terms of

learning English is that it may not provide a suitable environment for formal teaching and learning (Kabilan et al., 2010; Omar et al., 2012; Shih, 2011) because it creates student distraction and creates a habit of using too many short forms in writing (White, 2009; Yunus, et al., 2012). Moreover, Manan et al. (2012) pointed out that engaging with social media may also increase the usage of English of poor quality because students tend to use non-standard English when interacting with each other online. Thus, the evidence regarding the effectiveness of social media, Facebook on EFL learners' writing has been inconclusive.

### **Research Context and Motivation**

The context for this study was the English language education at Center Bangkok University (CBU, pseudonym) in Thailand, where English is used as a foreign language. According to the Ministry of Education ("Towards a learning society in Thailand", n.d.) in the 2001 Basic Education Curriculum, English was placed in the core curriculum for foreign language learning and required for all levels of study. Students are required to study English at least 1 hour a week in primary schools and at least 3 hours a week in secondary school. For decades Thailand has placed great emphasis on English language learning as part of the national curriculum, which focuses on a communicative approach that complements the student-centered learning philosophy ("Towards a learning society in Thailand", n.d.). In 2006, the Ministry of Education made an effort to reform language teaching and learning by implementing 5-year plan to make English language teaching and learning a central theme across all levels of education ("Towards a learning society in Thailand", n.d.).

In recent years, the Ministry of Education has urged all schools and universities to place more emphasis on communication in English, pushing for many English programs such as, English Speaking Year 2012, to educate and train students to be more proficient in English and to be ready to become part of the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations)<sup>2</sup> Economic Community (AEC) by 2015 (The Government Public Relations Department, 2011). As Thailand is a part of the ASEAN Community, English language is a major medium for communication among the member countries. Thais are urged to learn English because of the high demand for English in business, trade, and interactions with foreign countries.

There are a number of reasons for the importance of the acquisition of English proficiency in Thailand. First of all, being proficient in English is a symbol of being educated and cultured in Thailand (Wongsothorn, 2000). Also, it represents the social status of the person. When a person has a command of English, it shows that they are educated, and this provides better opportunities for job prospects and economic mobility. Being able to communicate in English is such a great deal in Thailand currently because most jobs require basic English knowledge. Second, one of the major economic areas in Thailand is tourism, as reflected in its important role in the Thai's Gross National Product (GDPT) (Harun, 2012). Since the tourism industry is one of the main contributors to the

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<sup>2</sup> The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN, was established on 8 August 1967 in Bangkok, Thailand, with the signing of the ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration) by the Founding Fathers of ASEAN, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. Brunei Darussalam then joined on 7 January 1984, Viet Nam on 28 July 1995, Lao PDR and Myanmar on 23 July 1997, and Cambodia on 30 April 1999, making up what is today the ten Member States of ASEAN (The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, n.d., para 1)

Thai economy, Thais depend on tourists and use English to communicate with people from all over the world. Many careers require English proficiency and, in order to be a part of the competitive citizens in a global economy, people need to know English. Apart from the economic standpoint, Suwannasom (2010) suggested that language proficiency was required in Thailand due to “communication, acquisition of knowledge, academic studies and career advancement, as well as appreciation of the English language and understanding of its culture” (p.3).

However, despite the requirement that English be studied at all levels of education, Thai students lack English proficiency skills, especially in the area of speaking and writing. Although the current Thai education system is well-funded, the English skills of students who graduate from college are still inadequate (Kirkpatrick, 2012). Sukanake, Heaton, Chantrupanth and Rorex’s (2003) study found that Thai college students are not confident about speaking English and lack English listening skill. Although many experts have attempted to build a new curriculum, change English learning trends, adopt new approaches, bring new methodologies to or apply technology in teaching and learning, the inadequacy of English proficiency skills of students has remained a major concern among educators and researchers in Thailand for years.

Applying technology in English classrooms is one of the approaches to reforming English education in Thailand. Thai educators and language teachers have sought to improve English teaching and learning by incorporating information and communication technologies (ICTs) in the classroom (Suwannasom, 2010). Technology, in a variety of forms such as email, web-based projects, CALL activities, Internet, and also technology-mediated language teaching were suggested for Thai EFL classrooms (Charupan,

Soranastaporn & Suwattananand, 2001; Prapphal, 2001; Suwannasom, 2010) based on the premise that it would enhance student motivation and allow them to use an authentic context in communication in a relaxing learning environment since they have time to think, to write, and to answer. However, there is a dearth of research of the use of social media like Facebook in the Thai EFL classroom despite the large number of Thai students that are Facebook users.

Thailand has a large number of Facebook users. As of January 25, 2013, on the list of countries using Facebook Thailand ranks 13th in the number of users (Checkfacebook, 2013). Of the 67 million people in Thailand, 18.3 million use Facebook, accounting for 27.3% of the population, and about one-third of the Facebook users are traditional college age students between 18-24 years (Socialbakers, 2013).

Since English language education is one of the foundations of Thai education system, as an English instructor I have been involved with students' writing and have observed Thai students' frequent use of social media in the past several years.



*Figure 1.* Example of a student's writing on Facebook



Figure 1 is an example of an EFL student's use of English on a social media writing platform, Facebook. I have observed that sometimes EFL learners use English informally in their academic writing. They use inappropriate forms or informal language in writing class, such as 'i don't know' instead of "I don't know." Some students admit that they did not realize that they should not use those informal forms in writing because they had seen it often and used it regularly. I have not only seen Thai students use informal writing via email like 'im' instead of "I am," but I have seen English native speakers do so as well. There has been a concern among Thai language teachers about the improper Thai and English language use of Thai students, especially college students. Sometimes a new word is created and rapidly used on social networking sites overnight. Students tend to use new words and informal writing that sometimes may cause confusion in their writing. Thai language teachers, along with an older generation who are conservative about language use and culture, are concerned that the phenomenon of informal writing on social media may hamper the proper use of languages.

Many asserted that this phenomenon is fueled by the rapid and widespread use of social media. In short, as a Thai who has been taught to use proper Thai language in both speaking and writing, and as an English language teacher, I argue that social media influences and may alter the way college students of today use English, especially in Thai and English writing.

### **Research Problem**

Although past experience informed me that Facebook usage seemed to have a negative impact on EFL students' writing, such experience is only anecdotal. There are many studies that have found that using Facebook helped students improve their language

learning and writing (Kabilan et al., 2010; Shih, 2011; Yunus & Salehi, 2012; Yunus, Salehi & Chenzi, 2012).

In Thailand, incorporating technology into EFL classrooms is not something new. In fact, educators and language teachers have paid great attention to the utility of technology in language education. Recent studies researchers suggest using technology in Thai EFL classrooms to facilitate English language learning by: using online diaries method to focus on literacy practice and self-expression (Meechai, 2010), using blogs to motivate students to write (Boonmoh, 2010) and the use of WebQuests in an EFL reading class for examining critical thinking and language use (Puthikanon, 2009). Despite its popularity and incorporation into EFL settings as a vital means of providing learning opportunities for EFL learners beyond the boundaries of classroom, Facebook has not yet been a focus of empirical investigations. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct empirical research that examines how social media is used or can be potentially used in EFL learning environments. Many college students in Thailand use social media/Facebook and spend a large amount of time online, but the extent to which students and instructors use social networks for educational purposes is relatively unknown (Chen & Bryer, 2012). Less is known, in fact, about the use of social media in the context of EFL learners' writing. Much of the prior research that examined the application of Facebook in the ELL environment was conducted in Malaysia, Japan and Taiwan. Although Thailand has a high number of college students who use Facebook, there is little empirical research on the impact of using Facebook in Thai EFL classrooms.

Some scholars are concerned that Facebook could have a negative effect on students' English writing skills; however, they do not have an in-depth or concrete study

to support and validate their argument. Support for this argument is often cited as a by-product of another study, not the results of a study that specifically focused on this context. White (2009) and Yunus et al. (2012) mentioned that Facebook creates the habit of using short forms in writing, but they do not have empirical evidence that such habits affect students' academic writing. Manan et al. (2012) suggested that social media may increase the poor quality of English usage, but they failed to provide conclusive evidence to support its effect on students' academic writing. Also, Dixon (2012) confirmed that his study did not directly find that Facebook engagement offered clear advantages to writing for EFL learners or non-native speakers (NNS). The amount of time they spent on Facebook per day, the ways that they engage with the site, and how that related to measures of writing success for EFL learners or NNS were found to have no significant relationship. His study only found that there was no significant relationship between Facebook engagement and writing success for EFL learners' writing. There is no explanation as to why engagement with Facebook resulted in no significant relationship with writing success for EFL learners.

While the current body of research contributes to the understanding of both advantages (helping students' improve writing skills; Kabilan et al., 2010; Shih, 2011; Yunus & Salehi, 2012; Yunus, Salehi & Chenzi, 2012) and disadvantages (creating bad habit of short forms in writing which leads to grammar mistake; White, 2009; Yunus, Salehi & Chenzi, 2012) of Facebook on EFL learners' writing, what is absent from the literature is a focus on understanding EFL Thai students' experiences of using Facebook and their perception of how it affects their English proficiency. Understanding students' views on making teaching more effective will help learning become more interesting and

meaningful, and can lead to successful outcomes. In order to understand the issue and to be able to take further action, an in-depth study from the learners' point of view is needed to examine if SNSs, in fact, effectively help students with their English language learning (Wu & Hsu, 2011) or if it has a negative impact. Boyd and Ellison (2008) suggested, "vast and uncharted waters still remain to be explored" (p. 224) in SNSs research and language learning.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The intent of this qualitative research was to explore college students in Thailand's use of social media and Facebook as a shared online space to engage EFL students in English language learning, and how Facebook facilitates or impedes these students' academic writing skills. Specifically, I was interested in examining Thai EFL students' use of English (formal or informal) on Facebook, and how they make sense of their experience as related to language learning. My aim was to observe their writing behavior on Facebook and to evaluate if this experience has any impact on their academic writing. It is important to understand how students are engaged in writing on Facebook, what impact it has on their English writing skills, and how they perceive the use of Facebook in academic English writing.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework used in this study draws on a socio-cognitive approach; the learning theory that is concerned with learning that occurs in a social environment (Fahim & Mehrgan, 2012). In this theory, cognitive learning is constructed through social interaction, behavior or performance, and environment (Bandura, 1986; Fahim & Mehrgan, 2012; Vygotsky, 1978). Learning involves human social behavior in

certain environments, how people think, and how their thinking affects their behavior and their performance in the environment.

### **Research Questions**

- What English writing style do the EFL college students in Thailand use on the online tutorial lab via Facebook? More specifically, does this writing style differ from the writing style used in a regular classroom?
- Do these students view the Facebook writing platform as a means of facilitating or impeding their English learning and academic writing?

### **Significance of the Study**

As Facebook is widely used around the world and for educational purposes (Zaidieh, 2012), gaining knowledge about the role that social media plays in EFL students' academic writing will be beneficial to students, practitioners, and administrators. The findings of this study will expand practitioners' knowledge of how Facebook influences students' writing and will also help them understand students' points of view on the use of social media in language learning. "Understanding the way individuals behave on such sites is a potentially valuable source of information for educators and researchers" (Chen & Bryer, 2012, p. 87). Students' perspectives might be a useful source for Facebook to become a valuable and effective medium for teaching and learning language. This study offers insight for language educators who will need to know how to utilize Facebook as an effective and efficient way to enhance students' academic writing. The purpose of applying technology in higher education is to improve the quality of teaching and learning; which can be one way to enhance relationship between students and faculty (Gumport & Chun, 1999).

In addition, this study benefits policymakers in curriculum reform. Once they understand how Facebook impacts EFL college students' learning and writing, they can make proper policies that will allow universities to provide higher quality education to a broader base of English language learners (Gumport & Chun, 1999). Scanlon and Neumann (2002) suggested that university administrators, faculty, and staff should be concerned about the impact of technology in shaping a new generation of students' conceptions of academic work. Having a better understanding of the role Facebook plays in educational setting and of students' perspectives toward Facebook will provide policymakers with empirical data that will help them to understand the effectiveness of Facebook on students' language learning. Also it will help policymakers at the institutional aware of applying Facebook into teaching and learning in EFL educational setting: how to promote the use of Facebook to make learning and teaching more effective and to reduce its negative impact on students' academic learning outcomes.

### **Definition of Terms and Abbreviations**

**Social media.** Websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking (Social Media, n.d.).

**Social network.** Dedicated website or other application that enables users to communicate with each other by posting information, comments, messages, images (Social network, n.d.).

**Facebook.** The proprietary name of the social networking website (Facebook, n.d.).

**EFL.** English as a foreign language; English taught in a country where English is not used as an official language.

## **Chapter II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Introduction**

Technological advances have provided new forms of socialization, information exchange, and communication; in particular, the web and social media have been increasingly replacing traditional media such as newspapers, magazines and television during the last decade. Social media has grown quickly in both personal and academic use, and many studies have been undertaken to examine the use and application of social media in college classroom settings, including the English language learning (ELL) setting, to a lesser extent.

The purpose of this chapter is to review the roles that social media and Facebook play in the ELL setting with a particular focus on the relationship between Facebook and English as a foreign language (EFL) learner's writing. This chapter includes six sections: (a) the definition of social media and clarification of the differences between social media and social networking sites, (b) a brief description of Facebook, (c) discussion of the effectiveness of technology and of Facebook in college teaching and learning, (d) a synthesis of the empirical research on the effectiveness of Facebook in ELL environments, (e) a description of the influences of Facebook on EFL learners' writing, and (f) the conceptual framework of the study.

#### **Technology**

Before specifically discussing social media, this chapter presents information about the use of technology in general in higher education, and its effect on college student learning. Technology plays an important role in the learning process and

outcomes in higher education settings. It not only provides access to information we use, but it influences the product and process of learning (Gumport & Chun, 1999).

Many forms of technology have been used in the field of education. One of the forms is Web 2.0 which was developed from Web 1.0. Web 1.0 generally includes authentic materials, text, pictures, audio, video, webpages, discussion forum, email, chat, photos, music and video. Web 2.0 refers to live materials, RSS (Really Simple Syndication), Flickr, podcast, videocast, blogs, wikis blogs, online discussion boards, social networking, and so forth (Alm, 2006; Shih, 2011). Web 2.0 technology offers structures that can be used in learning environments. Its applications offer new channels for learners to receive informative and constructive feedback (Alm, 2006).

Several empirical studies have examined the effectiveness of technology in college classrooms. The positive effects that have been found are (a) enhancing the relationships and interaction between students and faculty, and students with peers, which in turn results in positive students' outcomes; and (b) boosting student motivation (Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2007; Mazer, Murphy & Simonds, 2007). O'Sullivan, Hunt and Lippert (2004) found that a web site with multiple immediacy cues shaped perceptions of the communicator. A form of self-disclosure, willingness to be open, of teachers leads to higher level of anticipated motivation and affective learning of students, and gives positive attitudes about course content and instructor (Mazer et al., 2007; O'Sullivan et al., 2004).

Some negative effects of technology on college students learning also occurred. Technology (a) can make students isolated from peers and society, (b) affects students' well-being, and (c) affects students' academic outcomes. Excessive use of Information



and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and the Internet may withdraw students from other social involvement activities and create difficulty in maintaining real-life interpersonal relationships (Anderson, 2001). It can also affect student well-being, as found in increases in refers to sleeping problems, depression, stress, health conditions, and illnesses, and decreases in self-esteem, (Anderson, 2001; Cotten, 2008). Although sometimes it may not impact college students' well-being directly, it can impact student self-concept, self-efficacy, and perceptions of their abilities in relation to technologies and college life (Cotten, 2008). In terms of academic outcome, technology could affect students' grades (Scanlon & Neumann, 2002) and class completion (Anderson, 2001; Kuh at al., 2001). There is evidence of the misuse (cheating and plagiarism) of ICTs and the Internet by college students. Such misuse includes: cutting and pasting material into papers from websites without giving a credit to authors and purchasing term papers from online sources (Jones et al., 2008; Scanlon & Neumann, 2002). Plagiarism has been a concern for the public and the educational field (Scanlon & Neumann, 2002). As stated, technology has effects on college students' learning. The next section provides the definition of different types of technology, social media, and it clarifies the differences between social media and social networking sites.

### **Social Media**

This section provides the typology of social media, clarifies the differences between social media and social networking sites, and provides a brief description of Facebook. The term *social media* was first known in 1994-1995, when the first web-based social networking site, Geocities, was founded (Goble, 2012; Kithcart, 2011). Later, in 1997, AOL instant messenger and Sixdegrees.com were launched; however,

social networking sites really hit when *Friendster* launched in 2002, and a year later *LinkedIn* and *MySpace* were launched. Then, the most popular site, Facebook, was launched in 2004, followed by another well-known social media technology, Twitter, in 2006 (Goble, 2012; Kithcart, 2011). Facebook has become the most successful social media because of its features platform that set itself apart from other social media (Goble, 2012), and that made the word, *social media*, become well known.

The terms *social media* and *social networking* are used interchangeably. Social media refers to social software in the form of web sites and other online communities, such as social networking and microblogging created by a large group of people (known as users) to share information, ideas, personal messages, conversations, or to develop social and professional contacts (Social media, n.d.). Davis III, Deil-Amen, Rios-Aguilar, and González Canché (2012) defined social media technology (SMT) as web-based and mobile applications that allow individuals and organizations to create, engage, and share ideas or existing content in various forms of communications in digital environments. In short, social media is the online communities in which people interact with each other. Social media users can create and organize a profile for themselves, edit and comment on each other's posts and share information with others.

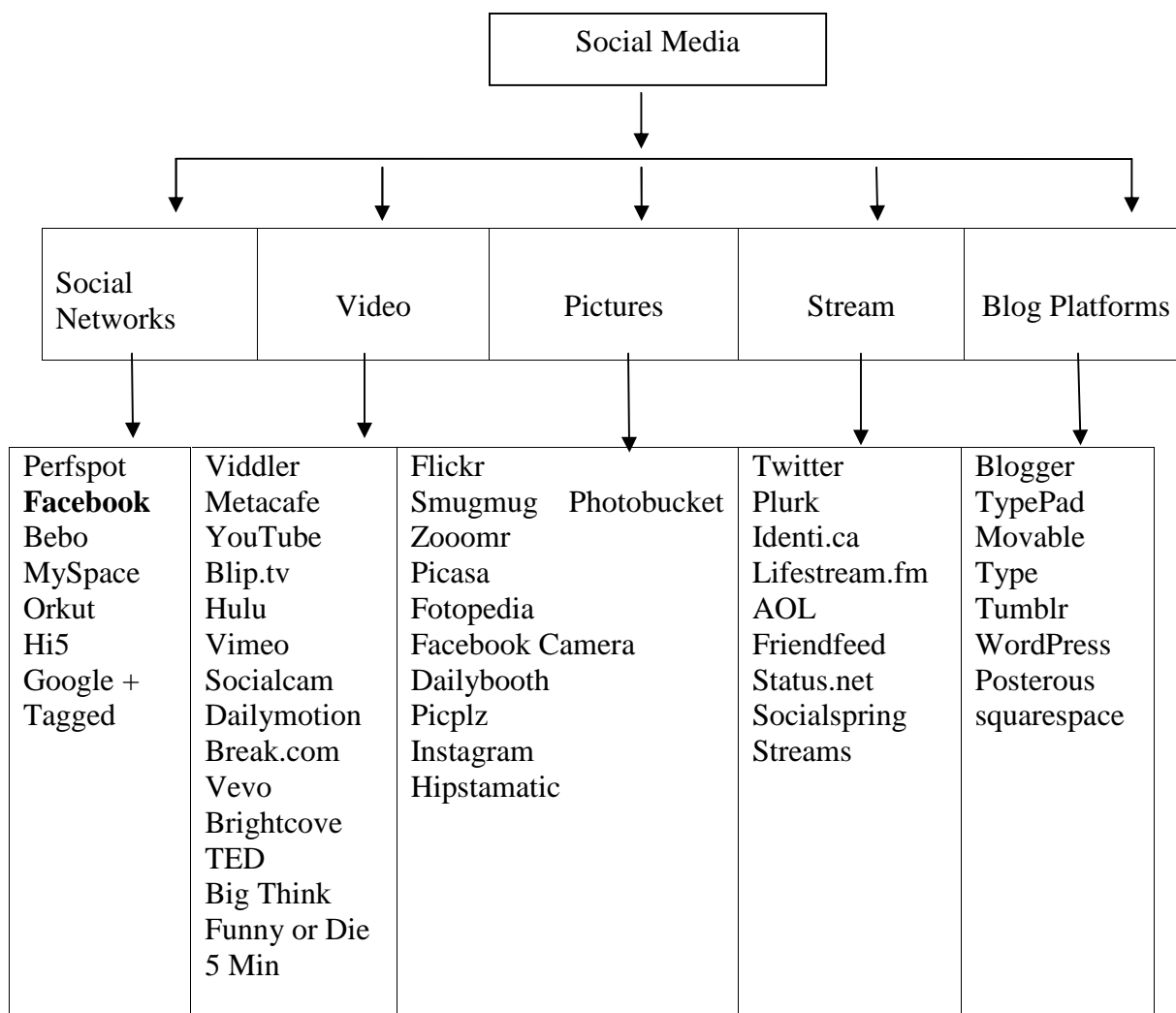
The difference between social media and social networking sites (SNSs) is that social media is a broader term, whereas social networking sites are one category of social media (Davis III et al., 2012).

Social networking sites are applications that enable users to connect by creating personal information profiles, inviting friends and colleagues to have access to those profiles, and sending e-mails and instant messages between each other.

These personal profiles can include any type of information, including photos, video, audio files, and blogs. (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 63)

Social networks include Perfspot, Facebook, Bebo, MySpace, Orkut, Hi5, Google+, and Tagged (Solis, 2012). They are unique web-based services that allow people to “(1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (Boyd & Ellison, 2008, p. 211). This enables users to be visible and to communicate with people who already are part of their extended social network and maintain or strengthen their current offline social networks (Boyd & Ellison, 2008).

Figure 2 shows some categories of social media including social networks, videos, pictures, streams, and blogs, as well as examples of each category (see more in the Conversation Prism V. 4.0 of Brian Solis and JESS3, 2012).



*Figure 2.* Adapted from Solis (2012), “Introducing the Conversation Prism,”  
<http://www.briansolis.com/2012/07/please-help-us-update-the-conversation-prism-v4-0/>

### **Facebook**

Among a number of social networking sites, Facebook is the most widely used social networking site used by various ages from children to adult. When it was created in 2004, it was used to facilitate social interaction among college students (Pempek, Yermolayeva & Calvert, 2009). According to the Harvard Institute of Politics (2011) more than 90% of students at 4-year colleges reported that they were Facebook users.

Facebook has become the most popular site and source for news updates and online communication, with more active users than any other social networking sites (Davies, 2012; Grandoni, 2012; Guynn, 2012; Tsukayama, 2012).

In order to be a member of Facebook, users first need to register. Then, users are able to create a personal profile to be used when they interact with others, add other users as friends, exchange public or private online messages, express common interests between users, build and maintain connections, and invite others to join a community (Davis III et al., 2012; Pempek et al., 2009; Wiki, n.d). According to Shih (2011), Facebook provides users with a variety of means to communicate and interact with each other and to make new friends all over the world.

The primary feature of Facebook is a *wall* on which each user maintains a *profile*. The wall is a webpage containing basic information and personal information (Pempek et al., 2009), and it also shows friends, photos, likes, subscriptions, and statuses. The *status* feature plays an important role on Facebook because users use their status to inform others about what they are currently doing or what is happening to them. Users can do many things with their Facebook page. First, users can upload pictures into photo albums and can tag pictures to friends, or if friends do not want to be tagged, they can untag them. Besides uploading pictures, users can also post links or videos from other websites, such as news and YouTube videos that they want to share with their friends or that they think may be of interest to others. In terms of privacy issues, users can control who can view their web page and how much information their friends can see by controlling their privacy settings. Also, Facebook members can create and join in communication as groups, which can be formed on any topic; create invitations to events; or post online

notifications for meetings, parties, and other gatherings. There are many apps (applications) on Facebook; one of them is notes, on which users can post notes, like diaries that are linked to their profile pages (Pempek et al., 2009). Facebook can become the main strength as a learning tool because of the simplified sharing bar tabs labeled is user friendly; the functions are straightforward and easy to use (Manan et al., 2012).

Besides updating status and comments on others' posts, users can also interact by sending private messages to the inbox like email. They can also chat with their friends online. The Facebook users will receive automatic notification every time there is a post on their wall, or when they receive a message, or have any kind of activity related to their account. The notification service keeps the participants updated with the group activities because they will remain there until they are viewed (Manan et al., 2012).

However, the drawbacks of using Facebook group for the purpose of teaching and learning is that the latest posting will move up, leaving the important previous postings below (Manan et al., 2012). Due to this, previous important information may be overlooked and replaced by the updated posts. The latest version of Facebook, the Timeline, allows people to look at the users' entries chronologically. That means that the solution to keeping previous important information up to date is to remind friends on the latest posts, to look at the previous posts or to repost the message. In the next section, how technology, including Facebook, has been used in the college learning and teaching setting is reviewed.

### **Facebook in College Teaching and Learning**

Facebook, as a web 2.0 technology, has been adopted as a communication tool in higher education to facilitate teacher-student interaction, allowing them to connect online

regarding class questions, assignments, upcoming events, useful links, and samples of work outside of the classroom (Muñoz & Towner, 2009). As Facebook is adopted and is used in higher education, both the positive and negative effects of using Facebook among college students are documented. According to Yunus and Salehi (2012), language learning is not limited to the four walls of the classroom anymore; in fact, most language learning occurs informally. Improvement in software development has made it possible for English speakers of other languages (ESOL) or language learners to use the Internet to assist them in improving language skills (Chartrand, 2012). Multimedia technologies, as a non-traditional method of educational instruction that students can relate to, help increase students' motivation .

A study by Eteokleous and her colleagues (2012) began to fill the gap that exists in the literature on whether social networking sites can promote, enhance, and support teaching and learning processes. They examined best practice policies for Facebook integration for educational purposes, and suggested that students have positive attitudes towards the use of social networking sites for educational purposes because they increase the interaction for both teacher-student and student-student communication and a learning community. Students in the study mentioned a positive learning experience; Facebook assisted students in educational collaborations and other courses (Eteokleous et al. 2012). Research has indicated that Facebook can enhance effective learning, communication, collaboration, student motivation, and students' opportunities to interact more frequently with their educators and classmates (Eteokleous et al., 2012).

### **The Application of Facebook in English Language Learning (ELL) Settings**

While the application of Facebook in EFL settings was briefly discussed in an earlier chapter, this section provides more complete information. In fact, there is a lack of literature examining SNSs in higher education settings (Brady, Holcomb & Smith, 2010) and even less of that literature is focused on student experiences using Facebook in EFL classrooms. There are many studies related to Facebook and there are many studies about EFL writing; however, there are few studies that study both Facebook and EFL writing together. There is not much research directly associated with the use of SNS or Facebook in the language learning environment. Although Facebook is not new, it is still not utilized in EFL classroom settings. A review of literature revealed that there were scant studies of the use of Facebook in the ELL classroom, and fewer than a dozen studies which focused on writing.

The following section presents an overview of the extant research regarding the effectiveness of Facebook in the ELL environments. The reviewed nine studies provide information related to Facebook, EFL setting, and students' writing. These studies were conducted by the same groups of scholars, and student samples were from three countries: Malaysia, Japan and Taiwan.

### **Studies Review**

There are studies that look at the use of SNSs like Facebook in college classrooms (Muñoz et al., 2009) and in language classrooms (Alm, 2006; Isbulan, 2011; Kabilan, Ahmad & Abidin, 2010; Promnitz-Hayashi, 2011; Simpson, 2012; Yunus & Salehi, 2012; Yunus, Salehi & Chenzi, 2012). Some educators attempt to use SNSs as an instructional tool for English language learners (ELLs). Integrating Facebook with pedagogy as a teaching method reflects a learner-center approach because activities using



a SNS allow students to learn at their own pace (Promnitz-Hayashi, 2011; Shih, 2011; Zaidieh, 2012).

The positive and negative impacts that Facebook has in the ELL environment are discussed in the nine studies, especially in positive terms. The nine studies summarized that the majority of studies indicated that Facebook is useful in learning new vocabulary among English language learners. Also these studies conclude that Facebook (a) provides the potential for collaborative and cooperative learning which promotes interactions between learner-instructor and learner-learner (Shih, 2011), (b) assists students in overcoming their linguistic limitations and helps students expressing their opinions and sharing their own thoughts (Promnitz-Hayashi, 2011; Shih, 2011; Wu et al., 2011; Yunus & Salehi, 2012; Yunus, Salehi & Chenzi, 2012), (c) reduces stress because of the unique environment which is fun and flexible that users can access synchronously and asynchronously (Shih, 2011; White, 2009; Yunus et al., 2012), (d) creates motivation (Kabilan et al., 2010; Promnitz-Hayashi, 2011; White, 2009; Wu et al., 2011; Yunus et al. 2012), (e) builds confidence (Kabilan et al., 2010; Promnitz-Hayashi, 2011; Wu et al., 2011; Yunus et al. 2012), and (f) helps students learn English organization, grammar and structure, content, vocabulary, spelling and improves students' writing skills by learning from each other through posting writings on Facebook (Hiew, 2012; Kabilan et al., 2010; Omar et al. 2012; Shih, 2011; Wu et al., 2011; Yunus & Salehi, 2012; Yunus et al., 2012).

Not only have the studies found positive impacts, but they also have some concerns about using Facebook in ELL environment. The three disadvantages mentioned more than once in those studies are (a) it is not a suitable environment or it is

inappropriate for formal teaching and learning activities (Kabilan et al., 2010; Shih, 2011), (b) it creates students' distractions (Yunus & Salehi, 2012), and (c) it creates students' habits of using short forms too much or informal writing, which leads to grammar mistakes (White, 2009).

As the positive and negative aspects of Facebook in the EFL area indicated above, the following section presents the advantages and disadvantages of Facebook in more details. The first part focuses on advantages of Facebook in ELL environments. In the second part the advantages in English language writing are discussed. The third part is about the disadvantages in ELL environment, and the last part is about disadvantages in English language writing.

### **Advantages of Facebook in English Language Learning (ELL) Environments**

The general advantages of Facebook can be categorized as follows. First, because of its unique and fun environment, Facebook lowers students' stress levels and enhances learners' engagement and interaction. According to Wu and Hsu's (2011) study of the influence of SNSs on EFL learners in a university in Taiwan and Yunus, Salehi and Chenzi's (2012) study on integrating SNSs into EFL writing classroom in a university in Malaysia, English language learners were found to enjoy interacting with peers in English and felt comfortable expressing their opinions and sharing their thoughts. Students reported that Facebook was informal, thus students felt less pressure and more confident in using it to state their opinion on most topics (Wu et al., 2011). Supported by Omar, Embi and Yunus's (2012) study of EFL learners' interactions on Facebook, and Yunus and Salehi's (2012) study of students' perceptions on the effectiveness of Facebook groups on teaching and improving writing in Malaysia, integrating social

networking services in the ELL writing classrooms enhanced online classroom interaction between students and teachers and promoted interaction in English learning environments. Another support by White's (2009) study of the use of Facebook to improve motivation and academic writing in Japan, online discussion provided students with the opportunity to interact with the teacher and peers, and it helped students feel less stress. Zaidieh's (2012) study of challenges and opportunities in the use of SNSs in education in Malaysia had similar findings in that students felt comfortable and had less pressure with the time they had to answer questions because they did not have to answer questions immediately like in a classroom setting.

The second advantage of Facebook in an ELL environment is that using Facebook helps enhance students' critical thinking. Existing research shows that Facebook plays a positive role in promoting students' creative thinking skills (Yunus et al., 2012). Student activities created and cultivated their brainstorming ability as well as thinking skills (Yunus et al., 2012). The majority of students in Yunus et al.'s (2012) study in Malaysia found that one of the strengths of integrating social networking tools into the EFL writing classroom was that the use of Facebook group discussion was beneficial for brainstorming ideas before writing and completing essays.

Third, previous research has found that using Facebook for a discussion group increased the level of effort and level of motivation of students (White, 2009). Because of the opportunity to engage in multi-level interactions, students became more motivated to participate in in-class discussion and freely express opinions. Through interactions with Facebook friends, the students are able to build confidence, increase their motivation and had a positive attitude toward language learning (Kabilan et al., 2010; Wu et al., 2011;

Yunus, et al., 2012). In addition, Facebook helps remove many barriers for students (McCathy, 2010) and might provide greater benefits for users who have low self-esteem and life satisfaction (Valenzuela, Park, & Kee, 2009). Promnitz-Hayashi (2011) suggested that activities in Facebook helped a lower language proficient student to become more comfortable participating in online discussions in an enjoyable and motivating way. It is easier for students to read and control the length and difficulty of their questions and post videos. They could make the activities as easy or challenging as they wished, making activities student-centered rather than teacher-centered. The findings of White's (2009) study of the use of Facebook to improve the motivation and academic writing of Japanese students indicated that students were motivated and they made some effort to improve their writing skills. When they did not understand difficult words posted by group members they went to look up the word in the dictionary, then came back to reply and used words more carefully because they knew that someone was checking or reading their comments.

Finally, Facebook helps to broaden students' knowledge (Yunus et al., 2012). Students make use of Facebook for academic pursuits and career goals (Pempek et al., 2009). This could broaden students' knowledge by opening new ways of academically-oriented interactions among professors, alumnae, and students. Students can post on walls and professors and alumnae can join in and offer input to these discussions through which students express and develop more intellectual facets of their lives (Pempek et al., 2009).

### **Advantages of Facebook in English Language Writing**

In addition to the general advantages of Facebook in the ELL setting, Facebook also has positive effects on English language learners' writing. In terms of writing,

previous research has documented advantages of using Facebook in the ELL writing classrooms. First, educators and many students in the ELL field believe that it helps improve students' writing (Kabilan et al., 2010; Shih, 2011; Yunus et al., 2012). According to Shih (2011), students majoring in English in a university in Taiwan who participated in an English writing class via Facebook were provided opportunities to do many things on Facebook, such as improving their own grammar, sentence structure, content, organization of writing, and vocabulary. Some students in Kabilan et al.'s (2010) study of an online environment for learning of English in institutions of higher education in Malaysia expressed that they learned new sentences or new writing structures when they saw friends share feelings and ideas, and when they commented on each other's comments. Students learned grammar and improved their writing skills by (a) reading the comments and posts from their peers, (b) being able to identify their own and their friends' writing mistakes and correct them, (c) discussing incorrect grammar with Facebook friends, and (d) by responding to classmates' comments and post (Shih, 2011; Yunus et al., 2012).

Similar to Kabilan et al. (2010), Shih (2011), and Yunus et al. (2012), White's (2009) study supported their studies that by setting up a discussion group, students can use a greater level of grammatical complexity in their writing, and can reduce mistakes; which they are unlikely to be able to do orally in a traditional classroom setting. In White's (2009) study 19 freshmen university students who were familiar with the traditional grammar translation method participated in his research. The method employed by White was that every week, for 5 weeks, a question was provided for discussion on Facebook, and individual feedback was given for improving their writing

skills. Students' progress was checked using four elements: spelling mistakes, grammar mistakes, words written, and motivation. Each week words written, grammar mistakes, and spelling mistakes were counted. When common grammatical mistakes occurred, they were posted on the group wall for discussion. Then students were asked to find a grammar mistake in a certain line and to correct previous mistakes. At the end of week 5, some positive improvements in grammar and spelling by students were evident. Students reduced mistakes because they had learned from the posts what mistakes they had made. They were aware of it and used it as grammar advice for further writing.

In examining how a blended learning approach that involves the use of Facebook can affect the English writing skills of English majors, Shih (2011) found that students learn writing skills by reading their friends' essays and by reading each others' paragraphs. In addition, from student interviews he found that combining Facebook and peer assessment was an effective way for English language learners to learn English writing skills. The benefit of the brainstorming process via Facebook that Yunus et al. (2012) found was that it facilitated students writing by helping them organize thoughts before the actual writing took place. By providing learners with an authentic and personalized context, Facebook can improve students' writing skills by linking academic writing to outside communication (Yunus et al., 2012).

Apart from writing skills, many language learning researchers have suggested that Facebook helps English language learners to learn new vocabulary by reading peers' comments (Kabilan et al., 2010; Omar et al., 2012; Shih, 2011; Wu & Hsu, 2011; Yunus et al., 2012). In Kabilan et al.'s (2010) study, students indicated that they learned new vocabulary by using Facebook in their language learning class. Because students wanted

to know what others said about them, they made an effort to find out the meaning of unknown words by using a dictionary (Omar et al., 2012).

Finally, research has shown that using Facebook also helps English language learners to reduce spelling errors through the use of the spell-check feature (Yunus et al., 2012). By using activities online, asking students to find spelling mistakes in a certain line and make a correction also results in reducing spelling errors (White, 2009).

### **Disadvantages of Facebook in English Language Learning (ELL) Environment**

Although some researchers reported positive outcomes regarding the use of Facebook in the language classroom, some research has found negative effects of the use of Facebook in the ELL classrooms. First, unlike many other research studies, Wu et al. (2011) did not only report the advantages of using Facebook in the ELL setting, but they also suggested that students' motivation to write may be lower when using Facebook than when they were in a regular classroom. This is because Facebook is an open environment; it allows other people (group members) to see students' English writing. Students worried that others would see their writing mistakes, so it lowered their motivation to write.

Another pitfall of using social networking in ELL classes is distraction. For example, students might not concentrate on learning when they are on Facebook because they might want to look at other activities or update their Facebook homepage instead of focusing on their academic work (Yunus et al., 2012).

Finally, for some students Facebook is not considered a suitable environment for learning English. Traditional students, who are accustomed to books or hard copy materials, might view Facebook as an unsuitable environment to learn English because

broken English is often used on Facebook and that does not help them with their communication skills (Kabilan et al., 2010).

### **Disadvantages of Facebook in English Language Writing**

Despite evidence for the positive impact of Facebook on students' writing, there are also studies of its negative impacts. Shih (2011) stated that many scholars had suggested that Facebook may not always be appropriate for formal teaching and learning activities. In Shih's (2011) interviews with students, some students noted the disadvantages of using Facebook to learn English writing. This is because students heavily relied on the online correction. When they had no help from the online correction tool they often used incorrect vocabulary and misspelled words in a regular classroom writing.

Madge, Meek, Wellens, and Hooley (2009) noted that undergraduate students generally viewed the use of Facebook as most appropriate for social or informal learning purposes, rather than for academic work or formal teaching purposes. Gonzalez (2003) also reported a problem with using online communication; that it negatively affects the student's use of language, grammar, and spelling. She suggested that online communication often leads to the use of short phrases and incomplete sentences, and that it often becomes informal conversation that may negatively impact academic writing. Because writing on Facebook is different from writing in a classroom, students might not see the connection between the two forms of writing (academic writing and informal writing). They consider writing on Facebook as a type of informal writing for communication, not for academic purposes.



The habit of using English in informal short forms is prevalent among English language learners, and it affects students' academic writing. One participant from Yunus et al.'s (2012) study stated that using short forms and abbreviations is not a positive learning experience because students may get used to the habit and then use it in the formal writing tasks in school. Selwyn (2009) pointed out that Facebook failed to improve students' writing because students use informal writing structures rather than formal academic writing styles.

The common features of informal writing considered inappropriate in a writing class that have been widely used on online chats or social network sites areas follows:

1. phonetic spelling use for transcription of standard pronunciations are such as “nite” for “night”, “guyz” for “guys”, “luv” for “love”, “wanna” for want to, (Danet & Herring, 2007, p.97).
2. emoticons or smileys use for conveying a feeling are such as facing a hard situation -\_-!, being happy :) or :-), being sad :( or :- (.
3. multiple punctuation marks or letters use for a prosodic affect are such as no more!!!!, Yes!!!!,aaaaahhhhh, soooo. (Crystal, 2001, pp. 34-35)
4. capitalization use: all capitals for ‘shouting’ such as “I SAID NO,” asterisks for emphasis such as “the \*real\* answer” (Crystal, 2001, p. 35).
5. special abbreviations or acronyms used for saving time and making it convenient, such as b4/B4 (before), lol/LOL (laughing out loud), oic/OIC (Oh I see).
6. common shortenings used for easy use and convenience are ‘u’ (you), ‘i’ (I), ‘r’ (are), ‘thx’ (thanks), ‘pls’ (please), ‘tmr’ (tomorrow).

For example Selwyn's (2009) students wrote:

“hey hun!! just to let you know i have come home for a bit as i am ill so wont be in education seminar tomoz!! but will be back next week so see u then!! have fun!! love!! Xxxx”(p.162).

“WELLL....!!!! lol. i think we should just STARE at him next time :) but atleast you always say something right! im just \*blank\* LOL. xXx” (p.162).

These examples from Selwyn show that the student did not have a correct sentence structure and misused phonetic spelling, capitalization, multiple punctuation marks, abbreviations or acronyms and shortenings, and use emoticons and asterisks symbols to emphasize meaning. Shih (2011) also found that some students made incorrect corrections to others' writings, which points out a danger of the use of Facebook in academic writing.

The summary of nine studies of Facebook in English language learning environment is provided in Appendix A, and the effectiveness of Facebook in English language learning environment as reflected in the results from the nine studies is provided in Appendix B.

### **Conclusion**

This review of literature presents both advantages and weaknesses of using Facebook in ELL settings. The research shows, in general, that Facebook facilitates English language learners in writing, but there are mixed results in the empirical literature. Several researchers, such as Hiew (2012), Omar et al. (2012) and Promnitz-Hayashi (2011), found only positive effects of the use of Facebook on English language

learners' writing, while others, like White (2009), Wu et al. (2011), Yunus & Salehi (2012), Yunus, Salehi & Chenzi (2012), and Shih (2011), discussed the negative impacts that it had on students' academic writing. Evidently, social media like Facebook has both positive and negative effects on college learning and in ELL settings; however, no research could be found on the effects or influences of Facebook on English language learners' writing. In terms of writing in the ELL setting, the research showed inconsistent of the finding in the literature. Since there is not empirical evidence regarding the impact of Facebook use in ELL classrooms, applying Facebook to the ELL classrooms should be considered carefully for its disadvantages or advantages. Because we cannot pinpoint yet whether it has more positive or negative impact, faculty and institutional administrators need more information to understand how social media like Facebook plays a role in English college language students' learning. In order to confirm whether Facebook should be used for academic writing purposes, further in-depth research is warranted.

### **Directions for Further Research**

To decide if Facebook is an appropriate tool for English language learners, Yunus et al. (2012) suggested future research examine how effectively Facebook and Facebook groups improve students' writing skills. Educators in the EFL field already acknowledge that students see Facebook as a social tool and do not make a connection to Facebook for academic or for formal teaching and learning (Shih, 2011). When educators understand how Facebook affects students' learning, they can then utilize Facebook in ELL classrooms in the proper manner. Therefore, researchers should conduct further studies on how Facebook is helpful or hinder ELL students' academic writing. This knowledge is

important because it will be helpful to the ELL educational field and how the instructors can make the use of Facebook appropriate and most beneficial to students.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Miles and Huberman (1994) defined a conceptual framework as something that, “explains either graphically, or in narrative form, the main things to be studied – the key factors, concepts or variables and the presumed relationship among them” (p. 18). As the conceptual framework describes the relationship between specific variables identified in the study, the concept of this study is to look at two variables: students’ writings in a classroom and students’ writings on Facebook pages. The literature reviewed both advantages and disadvantages of using Facebook of EFL students, and one of the disadvantages cited is that students use informal writing when using Facebook. The purpose of this study is to observe what impact Facebook has on EFL learners’ academic writing, and if there are any differences between the writing on Facebook and academic writing in class, noting what relationship they have.

This study examines EFL students’ writings in a certain environmental context, the online social community. The framework used in this study is drawn from the theory that can best explain the relationship or phenomenon being investigated in the study: socio-cognitive theory (Atkinson, 2002; Cheng, 2010; Fahim & Mehrgan 2012; Matsuoka & Evans, 2004; Warschauer & Meskill, 2000). Socio-cognitive refers to behavior in the environment. Social cognitive theory explains human action is

...a result of interplay of cognitive, behavioral, and environmental factors impacting on the individuals to act within a social and cultural context. Social cognitive theory considers how people think and how their thinking affects their

behavior and their performance in the environment. Social cognitive learning theory is concerned with the assumption that much of human learning occurs in a social environment. (Fahim & Mehrgan, 2012, p.161)

Vygotsky (1978), Bandura (1986), and Fahim and Mehrgan (2012) had similar ideas that cognitive learning was constructed through social interaction, behavior, performance, and the environment. Learning is connected with behavior of social interaction in certain environments. Adopting these perspectives, I observed students' writing behavior in the social community of Facebook.

### Socio-cognitive

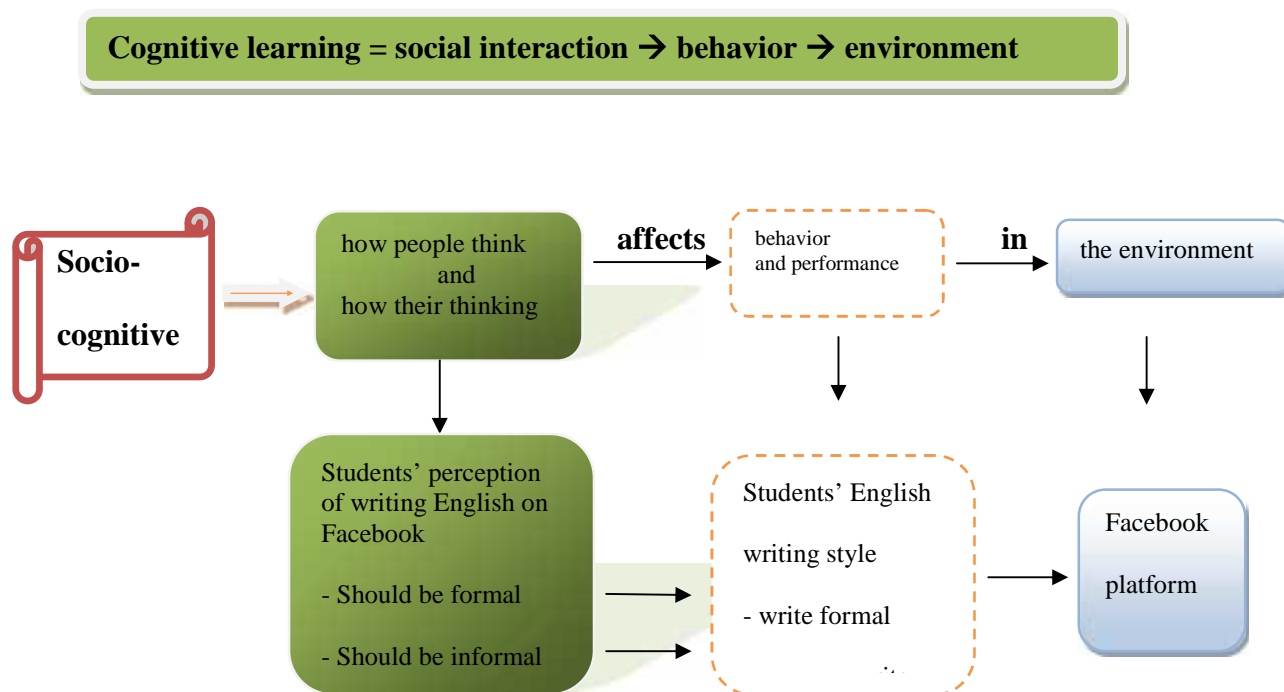


Figure 3. Socio-cognitive diagram

The “approach in using computers was rooted in socio-cognitive approach which emphasizes meaningful interaction in authentic discourse communities. Computers were used as a tool for interactive communication among learners, as well as accessing and

organizing information” (Suwannasome, 2010, p.40). This perspective suggests a comprehensive framework for examining the role of the computer and ICTs roles in online, social networking environments. A socio-cognitive approach was proposed by Atkinson (2002), and the approach has the perspective that knowledge is constructed on two theoretical perspectives: cognitive and social (Cheng, 2010; Fahim & Mehrgan 2012; Matsuoka & Evans, 2004).

The cognitive perspective focuses on things going on in the inside world, known as *be*, and the social perspective focuses on things going on in the outside world, known as *have* (Matsuoka & Evans, 2004, p. 8). Thus, when people look at the social-cognitive approach, they are looking at how people *be-have* (see Figure 4). In terms of writing, the cognitive perspective views writing as a problem-solving process (Cheng, 2010; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005; Hyland, 2003). The social perspective views writing as task interpretation, goal setting, and as an altering demands process (Cheng, 2010). Writing is a process of social interaction.

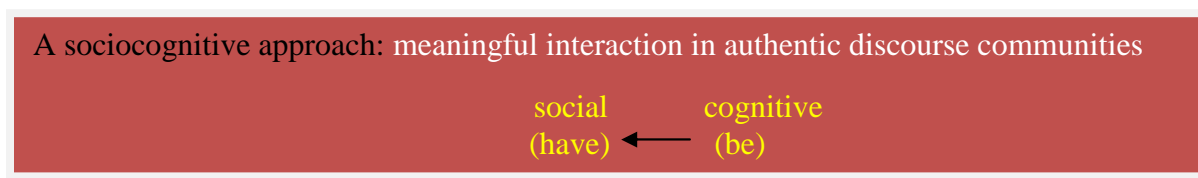


Figure 4. Socio-cognitive

This study aims to explore human action and behavioral and environmental factors related to those actions. It explores students’ writing behaviors in different environments in an effort to understand whether writing behavior in one situation has any influence on writing behavior in another situation. Sociocognitive theory is considered a

suitable framework for this study because Facebook is a platform environment that is used for discourse and social interaction (people, social setting, interaction), and it is a platform environment in which students' writing performance/behavior can be seen and evaluated.

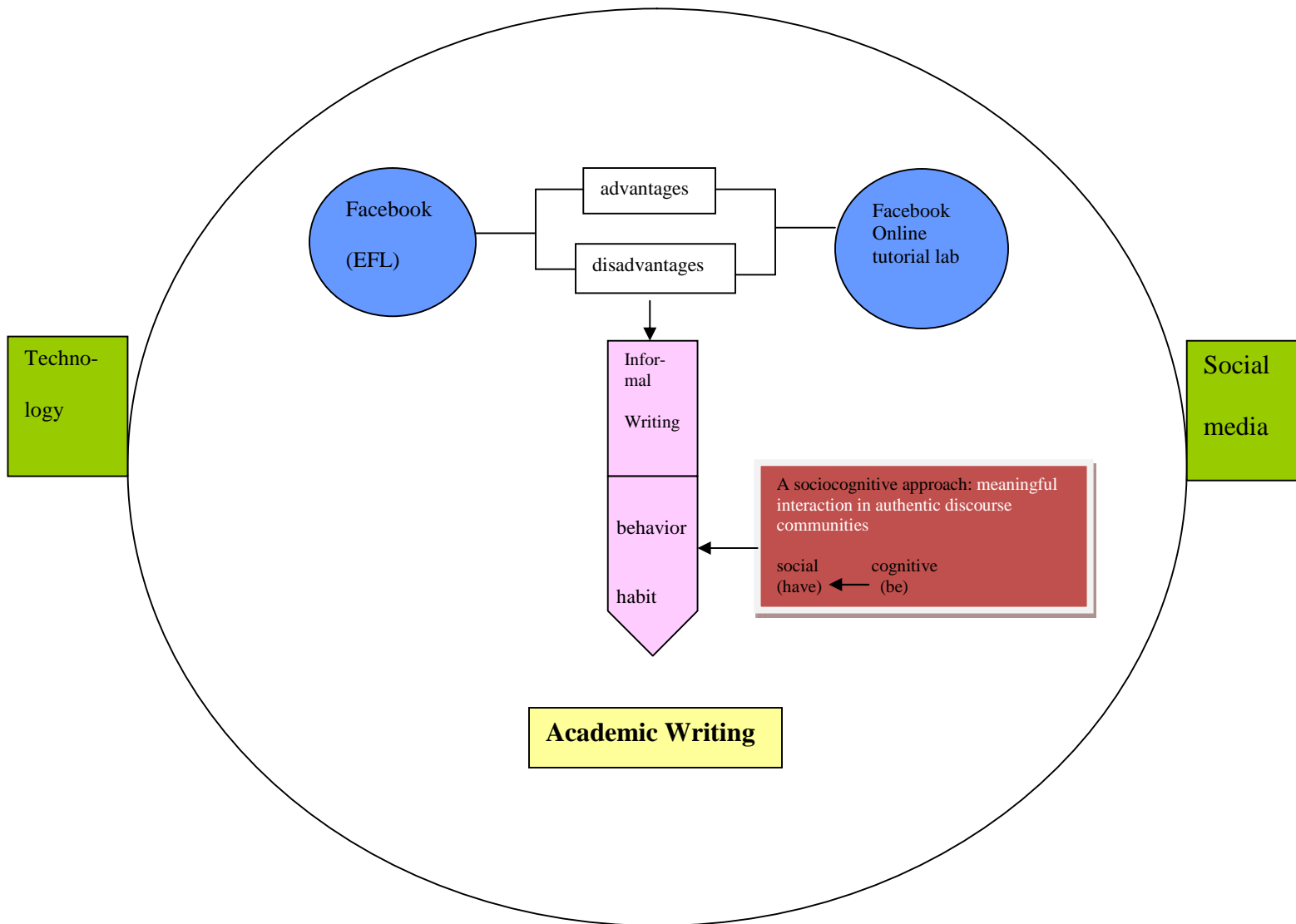


Figure 5. Framework Model



## **Chapter III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this study is to explore what type (formal or informal) of English writing style college students in Thailand engage in when they write on the Facebook platform, and if using Facebook has any impact on their academic writing. The following research questions frame the study:

- What English writing style do the EFL college students in Thailand use on the online tutorial lab via Facebook? More specifically, does the writing style used in the tutorial lab via Facebook differ from the writing style used in a regular classroom?
- Do these students view the Facebook writing platform as a means of facilitating or impeding their English learning and academic writing?

To structure this inquiry, I conducted a qualitative study that used field observations and interviews. In this chapter, I discuss the research design and methods in detail, including: site selection, selection of participants, data collection (observation, interview), data analysis procedures, role of the researcher and reflexivity, validity, and limitations.

#### **Research Design**

This study uses qualitative methods to investigate the use of Facebook as an electronic tutorial (e-tutorial) lab or an online tutorial lab for discussion among participants as a supplemental tool to help students improve their English proficiency and to understand students' writing patterns and perspectives in two different environments (in-class academic writing and writing on Facebook). Qualitative research is suitable for

this study because it “is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell, 2009, p.4). Data collection aims to draw out individuals’ experiences and perceptions using observations and interviews.

### **Site Selection**

This study was conducted at the Center Bangkok University (CBU, pseudonym) in Thailand. I chose this university because it is a university where English is used as a medium of instruction across the campus. It has an English-based curriculum. Almost half of the students at the university took English courses during the first semester of 2013 academic year. The university enrolls more than 25,000 students, with the majority being undergraduates.

English courses are part of the foundation courses that the university offers, and they include Intensive English, Basic English I, Basic English II (these three courses are similar to remedial English courses in the US), English I, English II, English III, and English IV. Students must successfully pass English IV as one of their degree requirements. The Intensive English Course (IEC) is offered in three different configurations: 30 hours, 60 hours and 120 hours in length, and they are usually offered in the summer before the regular semester starts in order to prepare incoming freshmen students with different levels of English proficiency and so that all students are ready for higher levels. The IEC measures students’ English proficiency so that each student can be placed at the appropriate level when the regular semester starts. After passing the Intensive Courses, Basic English I and II are offered for those who need additional instruction in English. Many students in the first semester of every academic year take

Basic English followed by the academic requirement courses: English I, English II, English III and English IV, each of which contains 2 components: (a) the academic or writing component, and (b) the listening and speaking component. Students need to pass both components in order to complete each course. However, some may not need to take Basic English I or II if they have a good English background and did well in the IEC. These students may just start with English I. Completion of English requirements culminates in passing the English IV course.

### **Selection of Student Participants**

The number of students who enroll in English courses each semester varies by the total enrollment of undergraduates and their levels of English proficiency. For example, in academic year 1/2013 (first semester of the year 2013, May-October), 10,707 students enrolled in English courses, and about 2,180 students took the English I course in 93 sections (CBU, 2013). In each section there are approximately 25-30 students.

The participants for this research were students who enrolled in a foundation English I course (BG 1001 English I) in a special session/transitory session of the 2013-2014 academic year (October 2013 to December 2013) at CBU. Normally, CBU runs with an academic year calendar similar to other universities in Thailand (first semester runs from May to October, October is a break between semesters, second semester runs from November to March and summer session is from March to May). Instead of a regular semester from November to March, this special/transitory session was held from October to December because CBU is changing their academic calendar year to the

ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations)<sup>3</sup> academic calendar. As an ASEAN community member, Thailand will be in the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) which is the similar organization to the European Economic Community (EEC) whose goal is to strengthen the power of a group as a single market that is highly competitive in terms of economic development and integrated into the global economy. This regional economic group integration will be official in 2015 (Association of Southeast Asian Nations, 2012; Petri, Plummer, & Zhai, 2010; Pornavalai, 2012). A transitory session was held so a second semester of the 2013 academic year (2/2013) could start from January to May 2014, and June to August 2014 could run as a summer semester. As a result, the first semester of 2014 academic year (1/2014) ran from August to December 2014 across the ASEAN community and all the ASEAN members had the same academic calendar and are ready for ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in 2015.

For this study I observed two English I sections that had less than 60 students total, in order to yield a better quality of observation and interaction with students. Since I needed to sign in on the Facebook tutorial page every day, responded to students' comments and questions, and recorded these activities, if there were too many participants, the interaction of quality time with the individuals could be overloaded and the quality of work could be reduced.

English I students were selected because English I students were first year college students whose English was considered to be at an intermediate English-proficiency level

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<sup>3</sup> The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN, was established on 8 August 1967 in Bangkok, Thailand, with the signing of the ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration) by the Founding Fathers of ASEAN, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. Brunei Darussalam then joined on 7 January 1984, Viet Nam on 28 July 1995, Lao PDR and Myanmar on 23 July 1997, and Cambodia on 30 April 1999, making up what is today the ten Member States of ASEAN (The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, n.d., para 1)

or lower. These students had just finished high school, and their English had not yet been influenced by the English department at the university. Their English proficiency was more advanced than those in Basic English I and II, so I was able to communicate with them better than those who had very low English proficiency. Students needed to be able to communicate among themselves and with me in English, since only English was used on the Facebook platform. English III and English IV students were considered to be at a higher English proficiency level because their English would have been influenced by many English courses through the English instruction at the university.

### **General Background of the Participants**

The student participants in English I were from different groups of faculty, such as Faculty of Music, Faculty of Architecture and Faculty of Art. The age of these participants ranges from 18 to 19, with about 10 years of learning English on average. The student participants of one section were known as the Brown Group and the other section of participants were known as the White group. Within the Brown group there were 27 students on the name list; however, 11 did not participate at all because of withdrawals or not wanting to participate. Another four students only participated a few times. Therefore, only 12 students who regularly participated, and this included one Chinese student and one Chinese Indonesian student who did not speak Thai. Within the White group there were 25 students, and 20 students (including five Chinese students) participated regularly. Four students never showed up and one joined the Facebook session for only 1 week. These students were all first year (freshman) students at CBU, except for one student who was in her second year. Some of the students were new comers in first semester but others were in their second semester. Although they were in

the same level English class, some of them had good English skills, good writing skills, and good communication. On the other hand, some students did not have good English skills when compared to peers at the same level. The demographic information of the participants is provided in Table 1.

Table 1

*Demographic Information of the Participants*

Students	Gender	Nationality	First Language	Schools	Final Grade for English I
Brown Group					
S1 Andrew	M	Thai	Thai	School of Music	B-
S2 Britney	F	Thai	Thai	School of Management	C+
S3 Casandra	F	Thai	Thai	School of Management	WP
S4 Diana	F	Thai	Thai	-	-
S5 Emily	F	Thai	Thai	Faculty of Arts	C+
S6 Frida	F	Thai	Thai	School of Management	B
S7 Gina	F	Thai	Thai	School of Architecture and Design	A
S8 Henry	M	Thai	Thai	School of Management	A
S9 Ivan	M	Thai	English	School of Management	A
S10 Jane	F	Thai	Hindi	School of Architecture and Design	A
S11 Natasha	F	Chinese-Indonesian	Chinese	-	-
S12 Tanya	F	Chinese	Chinese	Communication Art	A
White Group					
S13 Alice	F	Thai	Thai	-	-
S14 Becca	F	Thai	Thai	-	-
S15 Cate	F	Thai	Thai	Faculty of Arts	B-
S16 Ella	F	Thai	Thai	-	-
S17 Frank	M	Thai	Thai	Faculty of Arts	WP
S18 Grace	F	Thai	Thai	Faculty of Arts	WP
S19 Hannah	F	Thai	Thai	Faculty of Arts	B+
S20 Irene	F	Thai	Thai	School of Management	A-
S21 Jessica	F	Thai	Thai	School of Management	B+
S22 Kevin	M	Thai	Thai	Faculty of Arts	WP
S23 Lucy	F	Thai	Thai	Faculty of Arts	WP
S24 Megan	F	Thai	Thai	Faculty of Arts	WP
S25 Nicole	F	Thai	Thai	-	-
S26 Paula	F	Thai	Thai	Faculty of Arts	A-
S27 Quenna	F	Chinese	Chinese	School of Management	A
S28 Rita	F	Chinese	Chinese	School of Management	C+
S29 Undina	F	Chinese	Chinese	School of Management	C
S30 Vivian	F	Chinese	Chinese	School of Management	B+
S31 Xemina	F	Chinese	Chinese	School of Management	WP
S32 Cherly	F	Thai	Thai	School of Management	B+

Notes. Dash represents the missing information from the students.

### **Teacher Participants**

The teacher of the White group was a Thai teacher who was about 60 years old. The White group teacher did not use social media in her personal life nor in the classroom. She had been teaching English at this institution more than 15 years. Another teacher was for the Brown group. She was an Italian teacher who had been teaching English as a second language for 8 years and at the time the research was conducted it was her first full year of teaching English at CBU. She used social media and Facebook in her regular life.

### **Research Procedures**

I contacted the English institution at CBU to select instructors who taught English I courses in transitory session 2013. After obtaining the names of these instructors I contacted them via email and phone calls, and I asked their permission to use their classes for my study. In regular semesters, one instructor usually teaches between three and five sections. However, in the transitory session 2013, the English institution at CBU could not assign the same teacher to teach two sections because it was a shorter semester than the regular semesters, and there were fewer sections during this semester (CBU, 2013). Only 13 sections of English I were offered. Four sections that could be used were suggested by the director of English I. I contacted the four lecturers for those four sections via email. None replied, so I called them. The results of my telephone contacts were that: one lecturer could not be reached out, one lecturer was not comfortable having me use his section at the time; one lecturer did not want to participate because it was a short semester and she had so much to do, and the last one agreed to participate after some information was exchanged. Since I needed one more section, I contacted one more

teacher who had not been suggested at the beginning because her section did not have as many students. However, after the adding/dropping period, there were more students enrolled in her class. I was able to use her class and she agreed to participate. As a result, I was able to recruit two sections; one section with one teacher who did not use Facebook herself, but was willing to allow her class to participate in the study, and another teacher who did not feel comfortable explaining the project to her students, but finally she allowed her class to participate in the study. Since I was not in Thailand and since there is a considerable time difference, it was very inconvenient to explain the project to the students by myself. Therefore, I recruited an assistant to explain this project to the students in the two classes, to give the students their assigned names, to guide them in what they had to do, and to assist them when they had questions.

In the English I course the rubric score was 100, including 10 scores of a special project. I sought the permission of the two instructors to conduct this study under the special project. In general, the special project was any project that the instructors assigned to students. I created an online tutorial lab on the Facebook site for students to participate in, and students were given 10 points as an incentive to complete the special project. The tutorial was adopted in this research because I wanted to help students with their English as well as using them as participants. It was a win-win situation.

The assistant was familiar with the process and was briefed about the study. Via email I provided her with instructions about the research project (see Appendix C). She was prepared to answer students' questions about the process of signing up (using a name code given) for the Facebook account, and how they would participate in this study. She made an appointment with the instructors of the two sections and went in to the classes



and explained this special project to the students. The special project consisted of three parts: (a) participating in Facebook tutorial lab (post or write comments at least once a week for a period of 5 weeks), (b) allowing me to obtain a copy of the first in-class writing (in English I class, the course requires students to submit four writings), and (c) participating in online interviews (only for students who were selected, for more specific details see the interview section). After explaining what the special project was, the teacher of each class asked students if they were interested in participating. In the Brown group, not everybody wanted to participate. In the White group all of the students participated. The consent forms were distributed for students to sign at this time and were returned to my assistant.

My assistant asked the participating students to create a Facebook account (although they already had one, they were asked to create a new account for course use only). In order to sign up to become a Facebook user, Facebook requires a first and last name. Students were asked to use name codes that were provided by me to sign up for the account. I assigned the name code as identifiers by using two different colors as the last name for each section. This is so I would be able to identify the students and the section to which they belonged.

### **Research Instrument**

The items that were used for this study were Facebook page (see Appendix D) and 14 open ended questions (see Interview section) which aimed to provide an understanding of students' experiences of using Facebook and their view of it as a means of learning and writing in English. The students were encouraged to interact and reply to each other's comments on Facebook.

### **Data Collections**

For the data collection procedure, field research (observation) and interviews were employed in this qualitative research. Field research means that a researcher goes “into the field” to observe a phenomenon. In this study, the field refers to the Facebook site that I observed students’ writing behaviors. Trochim (2006) stated that in qualitative research the researcher usually observes and records actual behaviors by taking field notes which later can be coded and analyzed in a variety of ways. Participatory observation provides personal first-hand experience to the researcher who seeks to explore the natural scene and blend in with the natural activity that he/she has access to the same places, people and events as the subjects (Woods, 2006). Thus, I observed and participated (as a tutor) in activities at the same time.

Through talking with people, qualitative research allows researchers to learn about individuals’ thoughts and feelings through formal interviews or casual conversations (Woods, 2006). However, talking with people does not have to only take the form of speaking. Conversation can also occur in written form, such as online chatting. Sometimes the written form allows people to reveal more freely or express feelings and thoughts better than in spoken form. In this research, interviews with students were conducted via online chatting in order to make them feel more comfortable and for convenience, due to the distance between the researcher and the participants. Some Thai students are very shy and are not confident when they have to speak in English. I attempted to reduce students’ fears and make them feel more comfortable by giving them the choice of being interviewed in Thai or in English. Because of that, students who were not comfortable being interviewed in English could be interviewed in

Thai, and in this way they could focus more on answering questions rather than focusing on their English.

### **Observation**

The procedures of data collection from the field observation were: (a) students received instructions and created a new Facebook account using the name codes assigned by me, (b) they sent a friend request on Facebook to me, Terri Green (English tutorial), and (c) I accepted and then added them to the tutorial group, English I Tutorial Lab.

When everyone became friends in this group, everybody could interact with each other in English. Only the group members were allowed to see the activities on this site, it was only open to these students. I protected the privacy of this group by creating a secret group (see Appendix E). Facebook has three privacy options for group membership: open, closed, and secret (see Table 2). The Table 2 shows who can join these groups and what people can see about them. In a secret group, people who could join were the ones who I added to the group (I added only students who participated in the study), only members of the group can see the group name and who the group members are, only members can see posts in the group, only members can find the group through a search, and only members can see stories about the group on Facebook (like in News Feed and search) (Facebook Help Center, n.d.).

Table 2

#### *What Are the Privacy Options for Groups?*

	<b>Open</b>	<b>Closed</b>	<b>Secret</b>
Who can join?	Anyone can join or be added by a member	Anyone can ask to join or be added	Anyone, but they have to be added

*(table continues)*

Table 2 (*continued*)

	<b>Open</b>	<b>Closed</b>	<b>Secret</b>
Who can see the group name and who's in it?	Anyone	Anyone	Only members
Who can see posts in the group?	Anyone	Only members	Only members
Who can find the group in search?	Anyone	Anyone	Only members
Who can see stories about the group on Facebook (like in News Feed and search)?	Anyone	Anyone	Only members

Facebook (n.d.) <https://www.facebook.com/help/220336891328465/#What-are-the-privacy-options-for-groups>

However, data collection only went well for a few days of the first week. Once more participants were added, many students in the group started receiving spam. Then they could not log in and the posts/responses disappeared. Only the messages stating that the accounts had spam were left at the posts/responses, but actual messages were not there anymore. Students were panicked and so was I. Many of us tried to create a new account. Some had to create two or three accounts, and the same thing happened again. The project was stopped. I heard from my assistant that some students were backing out. They were not interested in participating anymore. I asked around. Finally, I found out what happened. I received information from friends that this could have happened because of Facebook protection: that the group I created involved all new accounts, some of which did not have friends, and now they were all added to the same group. This may have raised a red flag regarding the Facebook protection policy; creating the impression that unusual activities were going on in those accounts, and that was the reason why those accounts faced spam problems. Once I knew what could have caused the problem I tried to solve it by asking students to use their real Facebook accounts in order to make the procedure for the study seem more like normal Facebook activities. Students agreed.

Some even liked it more because they could use their real account, which was more convenient for them. They did not have to log in to an account that they did not use regularly. Students sent friend requests to Terri Green (English tutorial) again. I accepted the requests and then added the students to the new tutorial group, English I fighting Project. I used the same account, but I wanted to make sure that we all would not face the same problem, so I created a new group under the name, English I fighting Project; a name that was proposed by one of the students. Although there were still some new accounts in this group, it worked. We all were able to do activities within this group. There was some confusion and some posts were missing during these 2 weeks, but I was flexible with it. As a result, some missing posts or responses were made up in the third week.

The online tutorial activity started November 11, 2013 and lasted until December 12, 2013 (a 5 week period). At the beginning of each week, I posted the greeting message and a reminder that each student needed to do at least three activities for the week on the Facebook page (see Appendix F).

As a tutorial setting, the Facebook online tutorial was created to be a friendly learning environment with a stress free zone. Besides posting about English I content, students could share anything related to English with the group. Also, they could post or ask any questions about English. Participants were given these instructions at the beginning of the first class, by my assistant. The posting assignment, students' writing was not limited in terms of length since content was not being focused on for this study but instead students' style of writing. The 15 or more activities allowed me to identify students' writing patterns or styles on Facebook. I needed to learn about their English

writing form (formal or informal), even though they wrote with short sentences or phrases, such as, “i think so/ I think so,” “ thank u/thank you,” “ur welcome/ you are welcome,” “OIC/Oh, I see,” “lol/laughing out loud,” and so forth. From these responses I was able to identify the style of their writing by using discourse analysis.

During the 5-week period I checked the Facebook online tutorial every day, answered students’ questions, and kept a record of their writing. I observed their writings on the Facebook page; looked at the kind of writing form used when they were online; identified whether they wrote in short or long English sentences, complete sentences; and whether the writing reflected formal or informal English. I took notes about the students’ English writing styles on Facebook by looking at their posts and comments. This observational data was recorded as field notes. After 5 weeks, the posts or discussions on Facebook were completed and the access to my tutorial was closed.

With the permission of the participating students, their teachers gave me copies of each student’s in-class writing essay for further analysis (see Data Analysis).

### **Interviews**

Before checking the students’ first essay writings, I interviewed students who tended to use an informal writing style for their academic writing. From the two sections together I had planned to interview 16 students if possible; five students who wrote informal English from each section. I had intended to randomly choose three students from each section that used formal English in their academic writing and on Facebook to interview. However, after checking the students’ first essay writings, I identified only one student who used informal writing in their academic writing. As a result, I interviewed 16 people, 8 from each group. Except for one student who used informal writing, the rest

were randomly chosen, some were good at writing and some were not. After I received students' writings from the teachers and identified who wrote informally in academic writing (which there was only one person), I interviewed each of them at their earliest convenience. Most interviews were scheduled for the last 2 weeks of the tutorial project. In order to understand the relationship between Facebook use and EFL students' English writing, I conducted the interviews based on the experience of students writing English on Facebook, how it had negative or positive impacts on their learning and writing, and I asked whether they thought it facilitated or inhibited their English writing skills and why the person used informal writing styles in his/her writing.

Although a closed question interview is easy to manage the data and is able to quantify the responses easily, it limits the response that the interviewee can give and limits the opportunities for them to think deeply or test their real feelings (Wisker, 2007). This study used the Facebook platform, so the interviews were conducted through Facebook chat; the participants answered questions via a secure online website in a synchronous (real time) communication. E-interviews or online interviews via Facebook were used in this study because the intent of this study was to observe a behavior or phenomena that took place online so that the phenomena could be explored where it took place (Salmons, 2010). Salmons (2010) suggested that using information and communications technologies (ICTs) to conduct an interview can be best because it is a convenient way to meet participants. Participants can be anywhere and the interview still can be done. In addition, interviews conducted in written form via the chat program fit into this research in terms of collecting data in written text form.

Online interviews using the Facebook chat program benefitted me by providing a record of my conversation with a student. Conversations automatically went to the private message page and could be seen only between the two people. All of the interviews conducted through Facebook chat were only between me and an individual student. We both wrote back and forth--like having a conversation--but by typing instead of speaking. After each interview I copied and transferred my conversation with the students to a word document file and I referred to it when I analyzed data. The Facebook chat program works like an MSN messenger interview. This type of interview is a synchronous communication of time and an asynchronous communication of place (Opdenakker, 2006). Opdenakker (2006) provided some advantages and disadvantages to this type of interviewing. Advantages of asynchronous communication of place are: (a) the extended access to participants, (b) saving costs and time because the both parties do not have to travel, (c) disturbing background noises are not recorded, (d) a higher chance that the interviewee will give a richer information because this type of interview proved that participants disclosed more information about themselves, and (e) due to the technology used, the outcome of chat interview can directly be downloaded on the computer, so there is no transcription time.

Using interviews via Facebook chat for collecting information was preferred in this study because, (a) social cues of the interviewee were not important information sources for the interview, (b) I had a small budget and little time for travelling, (c) standardization of the interview situation was not important, and (d) both me and the interviewee were competent enough in typing and using (and have access to) computers and internet. My questions were answered through the chat program. Since social media



is used worldwide, it is convenient for communication over long distances. In addition, when communicating with students through the Facebook chat program I was able to observe students' writing. Although the major focus was the interview, written words through chatting were additional data that was useful for this research.

### **Interview Questions for Students**

The interview was a 45-60 minute interview. Early in the interview process, I briefly informed the participant of the purpose for the interview, assured them that everything they said would be treated confidentially, and informed them of the amount of time that would be needed for the interview (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Creswell, 1998). The interview questions that covered the needed information for research question 2 were:

1. Please tell me what college year you are in.
2. How many semesters have you been studying English at CBU?
3. Tell me about your educational background and English background. (High school: regular school or international school, how long have you been studying English? etc.)
4. How long have you been using Facebook?
5. Can you describe your writing experience on the Facebook tutorial platform? (e.g. do you like it, is it difficult to write on Facebook platform?)
6. How are you doing on the Facebook tutorial session? Do you write a lot? Why or why not?
7. What do you think about the tutorial session provided on Facebook? Do you like it? Why or why not?

8. If this tutorial lab is offered every semester, will you participate?
9. What do you think you learned most about participating in the tutorial lab?
10. What do you think you learned most from participating in the tutorial lab in terms of writing skills?
11. When you post or write something on Facebook tutorial lab, what kind of English (formal or informal writing) do you use? Why do you choose to use this style of writing?
12. Do you use informal English (b/c, b4, thx, lol, i, u, soooo) in your writing sometimes? Where did you learn to write informal English from?
13. In your opinion, do you think writing on Facebook helps you improve your English writing skill, or do you think it impedes (make it worse) your writing skill? Why or why not?
14. If there are any, what are ways that can help you improve your writings or your essay writing in class?

### **Interview Protocol for the Teacher**

Also, I conducted a phone interview with one instructor and a Skype interview with another teacher (Skype is the software application Skype, another channel to communicate with someone in a spoken conversation over the Internet by webcam). These interviews were conducted via different means due to the participants' preferences. These interviews focused on the instructors' perceptions of the students' academic writings as related to their uses of social media. I interviewed the instructors because they were the people involved in the process; they were close to the students and knew the students' performances and progress. Their opinions contributed useful information to the

study. One of the instructors is a Thai native who did not use Facebook. The phone interview was in Thai. Interviewing the instructor in Thai helped to obtain more accurate data, since both the instructor and I could communicate better in our mother tongue. There was no miscommunication. Although we were fluent in English, communicating in Thai allowed our conversation to flow with ease and created a comfortable atmosphere. The other instructor was Italian and she used Skype; so she was interviewed in English via Skype.

The interview questions included the following:

1. Can you describe your experience as an English teacher concerning your students' writing for your classes?
2. In general, how would you evaluate your students' ability levels in terms of writing? In this semester how are they doing?
3. What seems to be the biggest problem with students' writing these days?
4. What do you think about the impacts of technology like social media on students' writing?
5. To be specific, in your opinion does Facebook have more disadvantages or advantages to students' learning English and writing? Do you think it helps students' improve their writing or not? Explain?
6. In your opinion, should teachers use Facebook as a teaching and learning tool in EFL classroom? Why?
7. You see students' performance from the beginning of the semester in

week one to week 5; do you think students improve their English skills at all? If yes, what skills and how?

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

As the data were collected, I organized it for analysis. For examples, raw data from the observations amounted to 30 pages, but after cleaning and leaving out what was not important, the final ready use data was less than 10 pages. Cleaning data before it was analyzed helped save a lot of time in the analyzing process. Like the teacher interviews, students had the option to be interviewed in Thai, so translation was needed. Of the 16 interviews, 11 were in English, 3 were in Thai, and 2 were mixed (both English and Thai). I translated the interviews with students and transcribed the phone and Skype interviews of the two teachers. Cleaning raw data allowed me to organize the data into categories for further coding. After the data were cleaned I put them into different electronic folders: students' writings on Facebook, students' in-class writings, student interviews, and teacher interviews. This data provided the thoughts and feelings of the informants regarding the use of Facebook and its positive and negative towards English language learning and writing.

During the data collection process, I wrote comments about what I learned from reading the responses of the students. Data analysis in this study was comprised of two parts: discourse analysis of students writing performances from the observation on Facebook platform and in-class writings, and coding the categories of the themes identified from the interviews. Discourse analysis allowed me to identify students writing styles and performances. The coding categories system for the interviews helped me to understand students' experiences and perspectives. The interviews of the students were

coded, categorized, analyzed, interpreted, and recorded by using quotes from the participants' opinions.

### **Writing Observation**

The first analysis was of the data from the writing observations. To be able to analyze data from written text, I applied discourse analysis. This type of analysis calls for the examination of the specific structure of discourse and the interactions between speakers in naturally occurring language, and it aims to extract the phenomena from the discourse studied.

The reason I used this approach to analyze students' writings on Facebook and in-class essays was because discourse analysis is an approach that can be used to analyze students' writings or written texts. Discourse and conversation analysis are approaches that study naturally occurring discourse, and texts and structures are the objects of analysis (Guest, Namey & Mitchell, 2013).

Discourse analysis (DA) is generally broader in what it studies, utilizing pretty much any naturally occurring text, including (existing) written texts, lectures, documents, and so forth... discourse analysis emphasizes how humans construct meaning through speech and text, and its object of analysis typically goes beyond individual sentences... The implications of discourse and conversation analyses for data collection and sampling are twofold. The first pertains to sample sizes and the amount of time and effort that go into text analysis at such a fine level of detail, relative to a thematic analysis. In a standard thematic analysis, the item of analysis may be a few sentences of text, and the analytic action would be to identify themes within that text segment. (Guest, Namey & Mitchell, 2013, p. 15)

Guest et al. (2013) suggested that participant observation is ideal for capturing a naturally occurring discourse, and during participant observations one can record naturally occurring conversations between individuals within the study population.

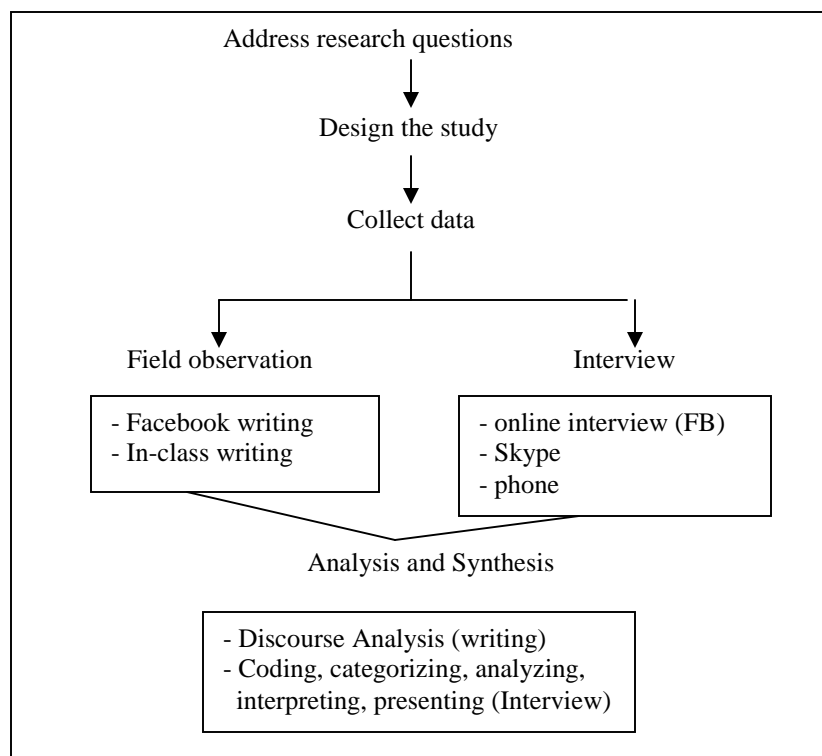
Observations of students' writings and discourse analysis fit the study because I was able to differentiate formal from informal writing. After observing students' writings on Facebook and their in-class writings, I identified the type of writing each student used on the Facebook platform and for their first in-class essay. In linguistics, text analysis in discourse concentrates on the formal features (such as vocabulary, grammar, syntax and sentence coherence) (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002). Thus, in the present study if vocabulary, grammar, syntax, and sentence coherence were used informally in the writing, it was considered as informal writing. Informal English writing codes are provided in Chapter IV.

Using the observation protocol helped me to identify the English writing types used by the students on the Facebook platform, as well as how they wrote and used English in this kind of environment. For in-class writing, I analyzed the writing form, or styles of students' essay writing, by using the same codes I used to analyze the writing on Facebook. In this way I identified whether or not a student used informal English writing that was inappropriate for their academic writing. In addition, by comparing English writing styles on Facebook and in-class essays, I determined if there was any difference between writing on Facebook and in-class academic writing. Through this analysis I answered the first research question.

### **Interview Via Chat**

In order to answer the second research question, Do these students view the Facebook writing platform as a means of facilitating or impeding their English learning and academic writing?, I analyzed data from the online interviews (via Facebook chat program) that I had with students.

I completed the analysis of the interview data from the 16 students by following Bogdan and Biklen's (1992) analytic strategy suggestions, which include: (a) getting feedback on ideas- try out themes on subjects; (b) working with words – play with metaphors, analogies, concepts; (c) display data - develop diagrams, continua, tables, matrices and graphs; (d) identify codes – develop coding categories; and (e) reduce information – sort material into categories. After doing the coding, categorizing, and analyzing, the interview data is presented. The methodological steps are shown in Figure 6.



*Figure 6.* The methodological steps for the study. (Does English writing on Facebook influence students' academic writing?)

### **Role of Researcher and Reflexivity**

I used techniques to observe things as undisturbed by my presence so my position in the Facebook tutorial lab was as one of the actors. I participated in the activities and tried to blend in this online community, involved in activities and conversations. Thus, my roles as tutor and facilitator were to help students with questions they had that were related to English or English I class. My role was not as a teacher whose role was to guide students and tell them how and what they should do or write. The advantage of being a tutor on the Facebook tutorial lab was that I could observe students' writing naturally as a helper to them who did not judge their writing. This made students feel comfortable participating in the activities and asking questions because they knew that I was there to help them, not to grade them. I only answered questions about the topics and I gave some helpful tips regarding their questions. I also commented on students' comments or, in other words, I participated in the students' conversations. In order to get the in-depth data in a natural way and maintain the environment as a stress free zone, my performance in these activities was neutral, I did not force myself to take a side (as a formal or informal writing person). Thus, my role was played by situations in order not to influence individual participants. I did not write informal English because I did not want to be a bad example for the participants. I tried to keep my performance in an academic atmosphere since this is a tutorial session. As an English language learner myself, there was a risk of biases in the interpretation of the data. One such bias was that I might interpret the data like an EFL student because I have been in their shoes. Another possible bias was that I might favor certain opinions because they agreed with my own. Bogdan and Biklen (2006) wrote that:



No matter how much you try, you cannot divorce your research from your past experiences, who you are, what you believe, and what you value. Being a clean slate is neither possible nor desirable. The goal is to become more reflective and conscious of how "who you are" may shape and enrich what you do, not to eliminate it. (p.38)

Thus, I was careful in my role not to judge or show bias toward students' opinions. In other words, I need to try to be very objective because my personal experience could have affected my study.

### **Validity**

In qualitative research, validity refers to the ability that the researcher has to check for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures (Creswell, 2009). In qualitative literature, the terms that refer to validity are: trustworthiness, credibility, quality, and rigor (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Davies & Dodd, 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nahid, 2003; Seale, 1999; Stenbacka, 2001). To ensure the validity of the data analysis process (interpretations, descriptions and explanations) I followed reliable processes and good strategies for qualitative study, as identified by Creswell (2009). Creswell (2009) suggested that after raw data is obtained (transcripts, fieldnotes, etc.), the first step is to organize and prepare the data for analysis. After that, researchers should read through all the data and then begin a detailed analysis by using a coding process, followed by the generation of a description of the setting, people, categories, and themes for analysis using the coding process, then write a qualitative narrative to represent the description and themes. The final step is to make an interpretation of the data.

I used multiple data sources to validate the findings and interpretations in this study. For example, I substantiated students' perspectives and experiences by field observations, in-class writing assignments, and teachers' interviews. I carefully studied every aspect of data I received. I checked whether the information I received from students was reliable or not by comparing with the data from observation both on Facebook platform and from in-class writing and from information I received from the instructors. I did not make a conclusion from looking at one side of the information only. In addition, since most of the data in this study are written text, I kept a hard-copy record of everything in written text: activities on Facebook pages, students' essays and interviews through the chat program.

### **Limitation**

In order to be able to participate in the online or Facebook tutorial page, participants needed to have internet access and they needed to log in to Facebook account. Although it was unlikely that participants would not have internet access, it was possible. Therefore, depending on internet accessibility and connection for the study could have reduced students' willingness to participate, and prevented some students from participating in the study. Thus, it was unpredictable how many students would participate throughout the study period.

In addition, using only one level of English proficiency is another limitation. Expanding the use of English proficiency levels might be able to yield a better result. Similarly, relying on two instructors and only two sections of English I students may have limited the outcome of the study because they are not various enough and they only can represent a certain group.

Not being able to control the study participants' previous experiences with social media, Facebook in this case, was another limitation. The amount of time and the style they used to write in English on Facebook may have contributed to different behaviors or English writing styles. Besides not being able to control the study participants' previous experience of the use of Facebook, I also cannot control students' English prior knowledge. Some might have firm knowledge or understanding to differentiate the two forms of writing.

Not limiting the response length or words written on the Facebook platform to be the same amount with academic writing is another limitation. This makes a comparison of grammar mistakes between the writings in two different environments difficult to analyze. The instructions to students needed to be clearer, more straight-forward, and more elaborate.

The long distance and time difference were difficulties for this study. It was very inconvenient to solve problems in long distance and with the 12-hour difference. Last but not least, during the data collection process, I faced an unexpected technology problem along with a limit of time of a short semester. This study seemed to be hectic, not smooth to me and the participants. Although I made sure that the group was set up correctly, learned how to use the tool and had a few tries, things still went wrong. Thus depending on technology that a person does not have a full control of it is another limitation because there is always a chance for losing data or facing unexpected problem.

## **Chapter IV**

### **RESEARCH FINDINGS**

The purpose of this study is to understand how the use of social media as a writing platform enhances or hinders the academic writing skills of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) college students in Thailand who are not fully proficient in English. More specifically, this study examined the impact of social media on these EFL learners' academic writings, with special attention to which type (formal or informal) of English writing style they tended to use when writing on an online tutorial program via the Facebook writing platform. Also, I sought to understand the students' perceptions of the use of Facebook as a means of facilitating or inhibiting their English learning and writing skills.

#### **Overview of the Chapter**

In this chapter, I present the findings of the study as pertains to the following research questions:

- What English writing style do the EFL college students in Thailand use on the online tutorial lab via Facebook? More specifically, does this writing style used in the tutorial lab via Facebook differ from the writing style used in a regular classroom?
- Do these students view the Facebook writing platform as a means of facilitating or impeding their English learning and academic writing?

The findings are organized into two main sections: observational data and interview data. For the observational data analysis, the first theme focused on EFL students' writings on Facebook as compared with EFL students' writings in a classroom.

This analysis was used to answer the first research question. For the interview data analysis, upon evaluating the 16 interviews, the second theme in response to the second research question described students' views on the advantages and disadvantages of using Facebook as a learning and writing tool.

The following section primarily focused at the observational data of students' writing both on a Facebook page and in a classroom. Two findings are presented: (a) both formal and informal type of English writing were used on the online tutorial program via Facebook; however, the formal type was more frequently used than the informal type, and only the formal type was used for in-class writing, and (b) there were the differences of students' writing on Facebook and in a classroom.

### **Findings from Observation Data**

#### **Students' Writing on Facebook Page VS Students' Writing in a Classroom**

The analysis of students' writing forms in this study was based on Crystal (2001), Danet and Herring (2007), and Meechai (2010)'s examples. The coding for informal writing was identified by, "visual cues: bold words, capital letters, emoticons, *netspeak* spellings and photos/graphic" (Meechai, 2010, p. 31). Netspeak refers to a type of language of the Internet which displays features unique to the Internet (Androutsopoulos, 2006; Crystal, 2001). The visual cues or the language of the internet is informally used and its purpose is for fast writing (typing). Figure 7 shows the common features of informal writing that are widely used on online chats and social network. There are seven common features to informal writing. In order to identify the informal type of writing from both the Facebook platform and in-class writings, these features were used.

Features	Examples
1. phonetic spelling use for transcription of standard pronunciations	"nite" for "night", "guyz" for "guys", "luv" for "love", "wanna" for want to (Danet & Herring, 2007, p.97).
2. multiple punctuation marks or letters use for a prosodic affect	no more!!!!, Yes!!!!,aaaaahhhh, soooo. (Crystal, 2001, p. 34-35)
3. capitalization use: all capitals for 'shouting' asterisks for emphasis	"I SAID NO" "the *real* answer" (Crystal, 2001, p. 35).
4. special abbreviations or acronyms used and common shortenings used for saving time, easy use and making it convenient	B4/B4 (before), lol/LOL (laughing out loud), oic/OIC (Oh I see). 'u' (you), 'i' (I), 'r' (are), 'thx' (thanks), 'pls' (please), 'tmr' (tomorrow).
5. emoticons or smileys use for conveying a feeling	Facing a hard situation -_-!, being happy ☺ or ☺, being sad :( or :- (

*Figure 7.* The Common Features of Informal Writing Widely Used on Online Chats or Social Network Sites.

In-class writing refers to the first academic writing that students were required to write in class. The first writing was a descriptive writing which was part of quiz I. Quiz I consisted of reading passages, a vocabulary section, and a descriptive paragraph writing, all to be completed within 1 hour and 20 minutes. Students had to manage their own time. The paragraph writing had 15 points: 1 point for a topic sentence, 8 points for content, 4 points for grammar and 2 points for organization. The purpose of the paragraph writing was to train students to write a good descriptive paragraph of about 150 words, beginning with a topic sentence. A topic was provided to the students. The Brown group was given the topic, "My English I Classroom" and the White Group's topic was "A Teacher I will Never Forget."

Table 3 shows the types of writing students used in the two different environments. Although Facebook was used for academic purposes as a tutorial lab,

many students did not treat it as a formal learning environment. A mixed use of informal and formal writing was found on the Facebook platform, as opposed to the academic writing where students only used formal writing. The most significant finding from this data is that students used different writing forms in the two different learning environments.

Table 3

*Types of writing students used in the two different environments*

<i>Types of Students' Writing on Facebook Page</i>				VS	<i>Types of Students' Writing in a Classroom</i>	
Students (S)	Numbers of posts/responses on Facebook tutorial lab	Writing on Facebook tutorial lab			Writing in a classroom (descriptive writing)	
		Numbers of formal posts/responses	Numbers of informal posts/responses		Formal	Informal (units)
S1	11	11	-	F *	- *	
S2	31	11	20	F	-	
S3	18	15	3	F	-	
S4	24	22	2	F	-	
S5	53	36	17	F	-	
S6	19	13	6	F	-	
S7	33	25	8	F	-	
S8	28	28	-	F	-	
S9	88	22	66	F	-	
S10	18	10	8	F	-	
S11	35	17	18	F	-	
S12	20	9	11	F	-	
S13	14	7	7	F	-	
S14	14	7	7	F	-	
S15	9	4	5	F	-	
S16	5	4	1	F	-	
S17	9	7	2	F	-	
S18	16	6	10	F	-	
S19	25	14	11	F	-	
S20	17	4	13	F	-	
S21	16	15	1	F	-	
S22	22	19	3	F	-	
S23	17	9	8	F	-	
S24	23	20	3	F	-	
S25	31	21	10	F	-	
S26	17	13	4	F	-	
S27	21	16	5	F	-	
S28	10	10	-	F	-	
S29	14	11	3	F	-	

*(table continues)*

<i>Types of Students' Writing on Facebook Page</i>				VS	<i>Types of Students' Writing in a Classroom</i>	
Students (S)	Numbers of posts/responses on Facebook tutorial lab	Writing on Facebook tutorial lab			Writing in a classroom (descriptive writing)	
		Numbers of formal posts/responses	Numbers of informal posts/responses		Formal	Informal (units)
S30	17	17	-	F	-	
S31	17	15	2	F	-	
S32	41	7	34	F	-	
Total	733	445	288	32	None	

*Note.* Dash represents none  
 F represents formal writing.  
 (F\*) represents all part is formal writing except one  
 (-\*) represents 1 unit/time of informal writing

Table 3 provides the numbers of posts/responses on the Facebook tutorial lab for each student. It is clear that the students used both types of writing for the Facebook tutorial lab (445-formal posts/responses; 288-informal posts/responses). Also it shows that the students used the formal type of writing only for in-class writing. Furthermore, the information in Table 3 shows that the level of participation in Facebook writing was varied. Although I asked students to write at least three posts/comments per week for 5 weeks (for a total of 15 activities) and encouraged them to post at least three activities every week, 8 students did not meet the minimum requirements. At the beginning of each week, I updated the group discussion of the past week and then posted a reminder message. The lowest level of participation had five posts/responses (S16), while the highest level had 88 posts/responses (S9). This shows a considerable variation in the level of participation for online writing activities.



Regarding Table 3, it is worth noting that student S1 did not use informal writing on the Facebook tutorial lab although he may have misused some capitalization and grammar points such as

S1: (1) **Yes** answer is **A** (a comma after yes is missing and there is no period at the end of the sentence)

S1: (2) “She did well.”

Question is “well” is an **Adjective** or **Adverb**?

(Adjective or Adverb should be in a lower case “a”)

S1: (3) **what** is a different between “do” and “made”. (what should be “What” and a question mark is needed at the end of the sentence instead of a period.)

Example: The Prime Minister “.....” a speech yesterday.

What **Verb** we use in this sentence between “do” and “make”. (Verb should be a lower case “v”)

S1: (4) All & Every

1.All plants need water and light.

2. Every door in the house is locked.

And this video will explain **what’s** the difference between **All & Every**. (This sentence should omit “what’s” and should be “all and every” instead of All & Every.)

S1: (5) I think this video is helpful because it will teach you how to find **a Errors**. (**a** should be omitted and **Errors** should be in a lower case alphabet.)

and **Don’t Forget** to prepared yourself for the **Final** exam. (This sentence should be all in lower case alphabets.)

Although student S1 did not use informal writing on the Facebook tutorial lab, he did not perform well in academic writing (9 points of out 15). In addition, he used the lowercase *i* one time, and it is considered informal writing in academic writing (Figure 8). Thus the use of formal writing on the Facebook platform may not be transferred to the use of informal for academic writing.

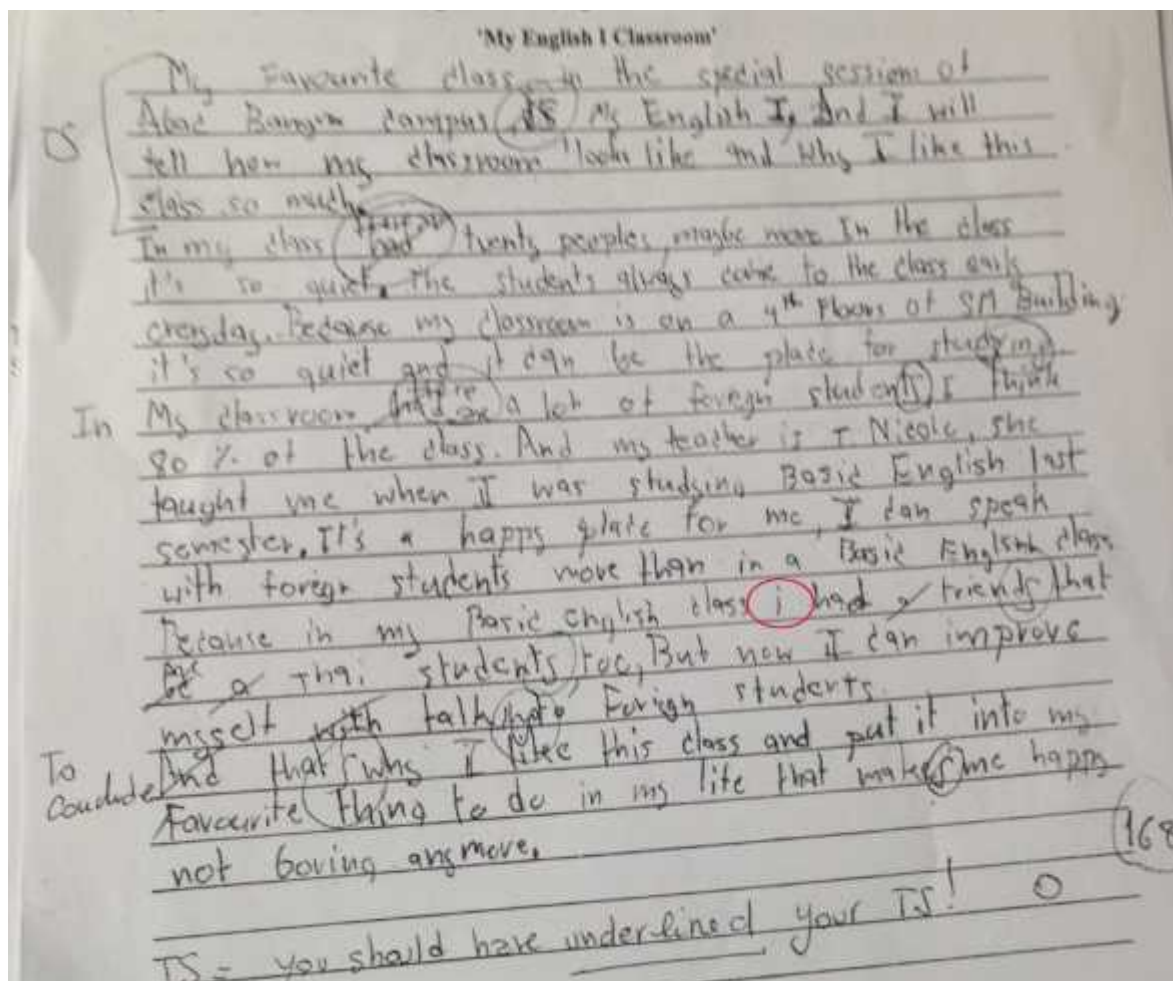


Figure 8. S1's in-class writing (descriptive writing).

The opposite side of the finding above - formal writing on Facebook platform might not be transferred to the use of informal writing in academic writing - a similar concept is presented in this part. The use of informal writing on the Facebook platform might not be transferred to the use of the formal writing in the academic setting either. Students who used informal writing style more frequently than formal writing style on Facebook did not necessarily do poorly in their academic writing. For example, student S9 used an informal type of writing (66 times) more frequently than a formal type (22 times) on Facebook as examples shown below:

S9: (1) I'm glad to hear that mate and I'm rooting for your final as well. Cheers naaa ;-)  
(*na* is an interjection in Thai)

S9: (2) Krab tooo!!!!  
(*Krab* is yes for male in Thai)

S9: (3) I have lost count already Terri Green so sad (´\_´)

S9: (4) Learn both ;- )!!!!!!!

S9: (5) Everyone, Let us all pass Eng 1 together with flying color !!! Fight Fight  
☹(´\_´")☹

S9: (6) Terri Green, I am curious to hear answer from u too since I can't explain it 555  
(555 is a short form of ha ha ha. In Thai 5 is pronounced ha)

S9: (7) Don't scared naa .. if bad I will change the score for you ☺

However, the frequent use of informal type of writing on Facebook by S9 did not result in using informal writing in academic writing. This student received nearly a perfect score on the essay writing (14.5 out of 15 points) that was done in formal writing style, as shown in Figure 9.

'My English I Classroom'

My English I Classroom is one of my favorite places <sup>in</sup> ABAC for 3 reasons. First, My English I Classroom is on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor <sup>(of school building)</sup>, you can get there by elevator. It's very convenient for me because our classroom is ~~also~~ near the elevator. There're some chairs and desks ~~out of~~ our classroom. So before we have our class, we can sit on the chairs and read books. Second, our English I Classroom is not too big, but lovely and neat. The classroom is cool and comfortable, as you know, the weather in Thailand is always hot so I prefer to stay <sup>in the</sup> ~~at~~ classroom. During the class, we can ~~sit~~ converse with our friends and help each other when we have questions. <sup>The</sup> Teacher always helps us and ~~also~~ writes down useful and helpful <sup>things / notes / sentences</sup> ~~knowledge~~ on the blackboard. Third, the atmosphere in our classroom is charming because all my classmates are hard-working and the teachers ~~are~~ put their love and best hearts into our classes. I really enjoy the time when we study together at ~~is~~ my English I classroom. My English I Classroom is a really nice place that I ~~am~~ appreciate ~~it~~ very much.

Figure 9. S9's in-class writing (descriptive writing). (14.5 out of 15 points)

Similar to S9, student S11 used an informal type of writing on Facebook more often than a formal type of writing, but she earned 15 points for her in-class writing. She made almost no errors as shown in Figure 10.

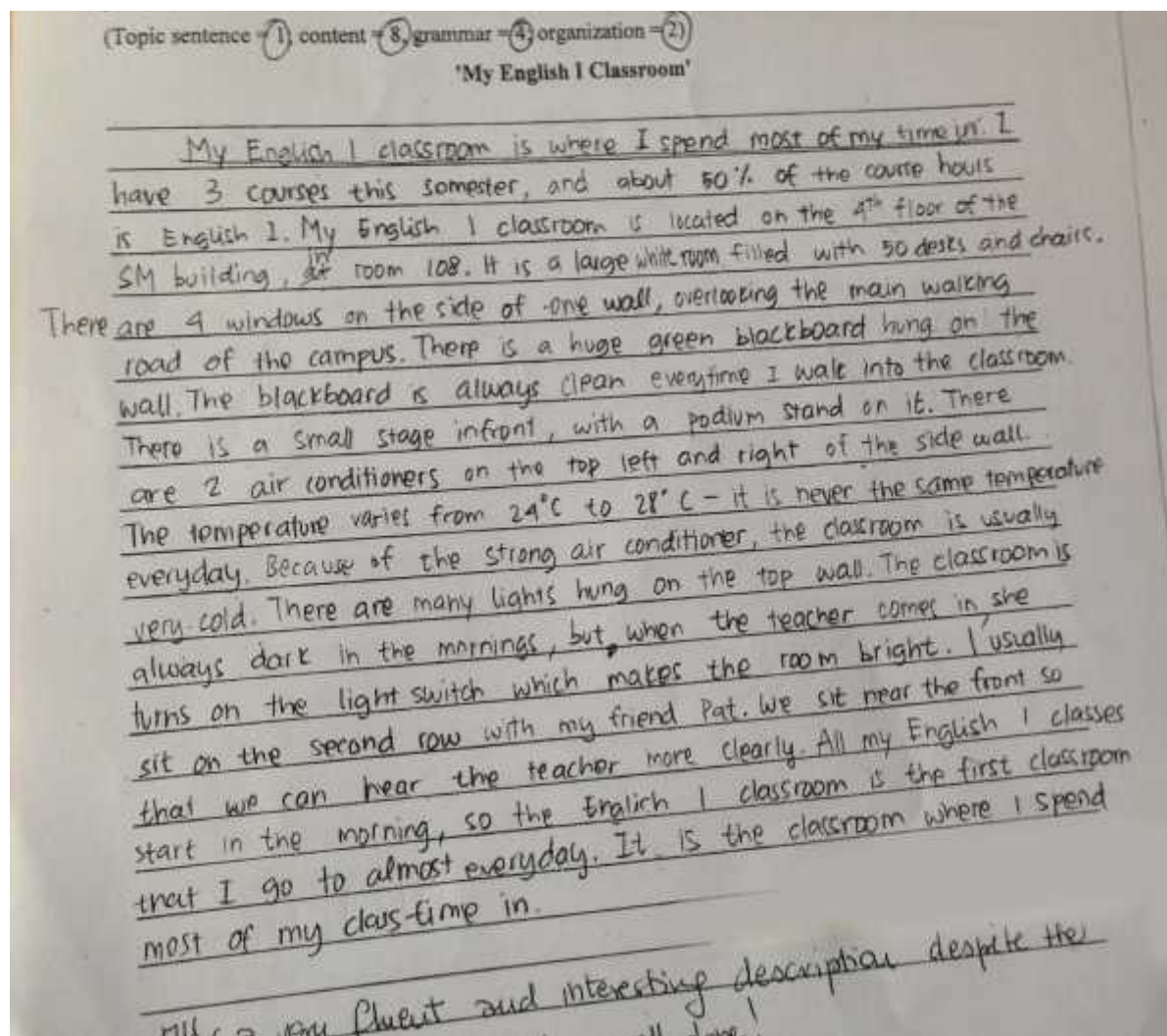


Figure 10. S11's in-class writing (descriptive writing).

These cases show that when students used formal writing on the Facebook platform it did not mean that they used formal writing in academic writing (e.g. S1 case), and although some students used informal writing on Facebook, it did not mean that the informal writing transferred to the traditional classroom (e.g. S9 and S11 cases).

Another finding that is worth noting is that several Chinese students (S27, S28, S29, S 30, S31) used less or no informal type of writing, even for online responses. Possible reasons for this occurrence are explained based on the data analysis with student interviews.

In summary, the majority of students ( $n = 32$ ) used an informal style of writing for the Facebook tutorial lab. Of those 32 students, only four never used informal writing; meaning that they used only formal writing when posting or responding on the Facebook platform. Approximately 88% of the participants used informal writing on Facebook. However, almost all participants used formal writing for their in-class writing assignments. To note on the degree of formality of students' writing in a classroom, in spite of grammatical errors and other issues with organization, students neither used improper nor informal writing styles for the academic assignments. When students' writings on the Facebook tutorial platform were compared with their academic writing in class, it was evident that students differentiated between the two types of writing in the two different learning environments. This finding reflects on the social cognitive theory that considers how people think and how their thinking affects their behavior and their performance in the environment (Fahim & Mehrgan, 2012). Students perceived the Facebook writing platform as an informal learning tool and therefore they used informal writing, as opposed to the more formal setting in the classroom in which they used only formal writing.

Since there was a mixed use of informal and formal writing on the Facebook platform but not in academic writing, the code switching phenomenon was noticeable regarding students' performances on the Facebook platform. Code switching is used

among the people who know or speak the same two languages (Crystal, 1987); it is the use of two or more languages in the same (or within a single) conversation, exchange, utterance, or communicative episode (Bentahila & Davies 1983; Heller, 1988; Myers-Scotton, 1993). Also code-switching refers to “functions to announce specific identities, create certain meanings, and facilitate particular interpersonal relationships” (Johnson, 2000, p. 184). Crystal (1987) postulated that an individual uses two languages in the same conversations or switches from one language to another because he or she wants to be able to express him/herself fully in a way that he or she may not be able to do in a single language. In doing so, he or she can compensate for the deficiency of the other language as well as express solidarity with a particular social group. In this study, the participants used code switching on Facebook platform. On Facebook pages sometimes students used some words that could only be understood among Thais as a way of identifying with a particular social group. For example, S9 wrote “I’m glad to hear that, mate and I am rooting for your final as well. Cheers naaa.” “Cheers naaa” is similar to, Please let’s cheer. *Naaa* is a Thai word giving a softer tone to a conversation, more inspiring and encouraging. The student used this code in order to express his feeling, and give his friend encouragement in a soft tone.

Moreover, code switching is used when students have the close interpersonal relationships by using informal English; it is used to mark switching from informal situations (using native languages on Facebook) to formal situations (using second language, English in academic writing) (Gudykunst, 2004). For example, S22 wrote “You welcome Kub,” and S32 wrote: “*thank for your advice ka.*” In Thai *Kub* and *ka* are the words added to the end of sentences to show politeness. *Kub* is used by a male

speaker and *ka* is used by a female speaker. Also, 555 often appeared in writings on Facebook. S32 wrote, “555555 good I will wait,” “S18: 5555555 i’m not sure,” “I want this 5555555555.” The notation, 5555555, has a certain meaning among Thais. It is equivalent to ha-ha-ha in English.

Table 4 shows the average number of posts and responses and whether a formal or an informal type of writing was used by groups and overall. The average number of posts/responses using a formal type of writing was more than the average posts/responses using an informal type of writing.

Table 4

*Average Number of Types of Students’ Writing on Facebook Page VS Students’ Writing in a Classroom*

Students (S)	Numbers of posts/responses on FB tutorial lab	Average posts/responses	Formal type of writing on FB tutorial lab	Average post in formal type	Informal type of writing on FB tutorial lab	Average post in informal type
Brown Group S1 – S12	378	31.5	219	18.25	159	13.25
White Group S13 – S 32	355	17.75	226	11.3	129	6.45
Total S1-S32	733	49.25	445	29.55	288	19.7

*Note.* FB is an abbreviation of Facebook

Overall, students used the formal writing style more frequently than the informal style to post/respond on the Facebook writing platform. Looking closely at the individual group, the Brown group participated in writing on Facebook (average 31.5 posts/responses per person) more frequently than the White group (average 17.75 posts/responses per person). Although the Brown Group has fewer students ( $n = 12$ ) than the White group ( $n = 20$ ), the numbers of posts/responses by the Brown group were more than of the White group. Comparing the students’ writing performances in a classroom setting between these two groups, the students in the Brown group performed better in



academic writing than those in the White group. It should be noted that S9 and S11 of the Brown group did very well in their academic writing. Overall, the more that students participated in the Facebook tutorial lab, the better their writing skills were in the classroom. For example, student S9 received 14.5 points and student S11 received 15 points out of 15. It is worth noting that both groups used formal writing more frequently than informal writing on Facebook. The Brown group used the formal type of writing on Facebook tutorial lab (219 posts/responses) more than the informal type (159 posts/responses). With similar results, the White group used the formal type of writing on Facebook tutorial lab (226 posts/responses) more than the informal type (129 posts/responses).

### **The Comparison of Writing on Facebook to Classroom Writing**

Discourse analysis was used to systematically compare students' writings in the two different learning environments. I used discourse analysis in examining a different genre of writing from lexicon and grammar to format, content, and organization as Wennerstrom (2003) suggested. The discourse analysis approach allows the researcher not only to examine grammar and lexicon usage in context (lexicogrammatical level) but also analyze texts as content of discourse beyond the level of the grammatical sentence (Wennerstrom, 2003). A discourse analysis approach "considers language structure at both the micro and the macro levels. The focus on genre provides a rich variety in the forms and purposes of the texts students encounter" (Wennerstrom, 2003, p. 14). According to Wennerstrom (2003), the micro level refers to linguistic features that relate to learners' own language development and the macro level includes a broader aspect of the value system of the culture that produced the discourse.

In this study I analyzed students' writings on Facebook and in the classroom that focused on the lexicogrammatical aspect by using grammar rules. Grammar rules that I used referred to the correct use of the following: (a) parts of speech (noun, pronoun, adjective, verb, adverb, conjunction, preposition, and interjection), (b) subject and verb agreement, (c) punctuation, (d) capitalization, (e) spelling, (f) spacing, (g) vocabulary or word choice, (h) singular and plural, (i) articles or determiners, and (j) the 12 tenses (simple present tense, simple past tense, simple future tense, present continuous tense, past continuous tense, future continuous tense, present perfect tense, past perfect tense, future perfect tense, present perfect continuous tense, past perfect continuous tense, and future perfect continuous tense). For content level (semantic focus), I analyzed if students' writings were communicative, understandable, and meaningful by looking at the meaning of the messages. I looked to see if the words, phrases, or sentences that the participants used carried meanings that made sense and were understandable to the receivers.

Table 5 provides descriptions of the codes that were used to identify students' writing errors as pertained to lexicogrammatical level and content of discourse level.

Table 5

*Codes for Students' Writing Errors*

<b>{GR}- grammar level</b>	<b>{CO}- content level = meaning</b>
↓	↓
[psp] – parts of speech	[non- com] – non-communicative (not understandable/wrong meaning)
[s-v] – subjects and verb agreement	
[pun] – punctuation	
[cap] – capitalization	
[spil] – spelling	
[spc] – spacing	
[voc] – vocabulary/ word choice	
[si-pl] – singular and plural	
[ar- de] – articles, determiners, quantifier	
[tns] – tense	

For example, S1 made grammatical mistakes on Facebook writing by using incorrect spacing (the code is [spc]), punctuation (the code is [pun]), and capitalization (the code is [cap]) as shown in Table 6.

Table 6

*S1's Grammatical Mistakes on Facebook Writing*

Spacing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Question :</li> <li>- Question is “well” is an Adjective or Adverb ?</li> <li>- Thanks for your answer !</li> <li>- get,got,getting” (Verb)</li> </ul>
Punctuation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- OK Thanks</li> <li>- Yes answer is A</li> <li>- what is a different between “do” and “made”.</li> </ul>
Capitalization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- OK</li> <li>- Question is “well” is an Adjective or Adverb ?</li> <li>- what is a different between “do” and “made”.</li> <li>- And this video will explain what’s the difference between All &amp; Every.</li> <li>- I think this video is helpful because it will teach you how to find a Errors. And Don’t Forget to prepared yourself for the Final exam.</li> </ul>

Table 7 shows S1’s grammatical mistakes in academic writing in terms of using incorrect: [voc], [pun], [psp], [si-pl], [tns], [cap], [s-v].

Table 7

*S1's Grammatical Mistakes in Academic Writing*

vocabulary/choice of word	- had (there are), be (are)
punctuation	- Because my classroom is on the 4 <sup>th</sup> floor of SM Building (.)

*(table continues)*

Table 7 (continued)

part of speech	- It can be the place for studying (study).
singular-plural	- a lot of foreign student (students)
tense	- I was studying Basic English last semester. (I studied Basic English last semester)
capitalization	- I had a friend that be a Thai student too, But (but).
subject and verb agreement	- That make (makes) me happy.

Table 8 provides the identified types of grammar errors and content errors that each student made in their writing on the Facebook platform and in their in-class writing. Where students made errors in their writing, codes were used according to the references in the Table 5.

Table 8

*The Error Types Students Made on Facebook Page VS the Error Types Students Made on Academic Writing*

Students (S)	Errors in writing students made on Facebook platform	Errors in writing students made on academic writing
S1	{GR}- [spc], [pun], [cap]	{GR}- [voc], [pun], [psp], [si-pl], [tns], [cap], [s-v]
S2	{GR}- [psp], [pun], [cap], [spc], [voc], [s-v]	{GR}- [psp], [ar-de], [si-pl], [voc]
S3	{GR}- [voc], [psp], [cap], [pun],	{GR}-[psp], [s-v], [voc], [tns], [ar-de], [si-pl]
S4	{GR}- [spc], [voc], [s-v], [cap], [psp], [pun], [ar-de], [spll]	{GR}- [psp], [si-pl]
S5	{GR}- [spc], [psp], [pun], [cap], [s-v], [spll], [voc], [si-pl], [tns], [ar-de]	{GR}-[psp], [ar-de], [voc], [tns]
S6	{GR}- [cap], [pun], [psp], [s-v], [spc], [si-pl], [ar-de]	{GR}-[ar-de], [psp], [s-v], [si-pl], [voc]

(table continues)

Table 8 (continued)

Students (S)	Errors in writing students made on Facebook platform	Errors in writing students made on academic writing
S7	{GR}-[pun], [spll], [psp], [s-v], [si-pl], [spc], [cap], [ar-de]	{GR}-[si-pl], [spll]
S8	{GR}-[pun], [cap], [psp], [spc]	{GR}-[ar-de], [s-v]
S9	{GR}-[pun], [cap], [psp], [ar-de], [s-v], [voc], [si-pl],	{GR}-[ar-de], [voc], [psp], [cap], [si-pl]
S10	{GR}-[pun], [cap], [psp]	-
S11	{GR}-[pun], [cap], [psp]	-
S12	{GR}-[psp], [pun], [spc], [voc], [ar-de]	{GR}-[psp], [voc], [si-pl]
S13	{GR}-[cap], [pun], [psp], [spc], [ar-de]	{GR}-[ar-de], [spll], [voc], [si-pl], [psp], [s-v], [tns],  {CO}-[non- com]
S14	{GR}-[pun], [cap], [psp], [spc]	{GR}-[psp], [s-v], [ar-de], [voc], [cap], [si-pl]
S15	{GR}-[pun], [cap], [psp]	{GR}-[psp], [voc], [si-pl], [tns], [s-v], [cap], [ar-de]
S16	{GR}-[pun], [cap], [psp]	{GR}-[pun], [psp], [tns], [si-pl], [cap], [s-v], [voc], [ar-de]
S17	{GR}-[pun], [psp], [cap]	{GR}-[s-v], [psp], [cap], [tns], [si-pl], [spll], [ar-de], [voc]
S18	{GR}-[voc], [s-v], [cap], [pun], [psp], [spc]	{GR}-[s-v], [tns], [psp], [cap], [voc], [ar-de]
S19	{GR}-[spll], [psp], [spc], [pun], [voc], [cap], [si-pl], [ar-de]	{GR}-[spll], [si-pl], [psp], [pun], [s-v], [ar-de], [tns]
S20	{GR}-[pun], [psp], [tns], [cap], [spc]	{GR}-[psp], [si-pl], [ar-de], [tns], [cap], [voc], [s-v]
S21	{GR}-[ar-de], [psp], [pun], [voc], [s-v], [cap], [si-pl]	{GR}-[ar-de], [spll], [psp], [tns], [s-v], [si-pl]
S22	{GR}-[cap], [si-pl], [s-v], [ar-de], [tns], [pun], [voc], [spc], [psp] {CO}-[non- com]	{GR}-[psp], [ar-de], [s-v], [tns], [voc], [si-pl], [pun], [cap]
S23	{GR}-[s-v], [cap], [tns],[si-pl], [pun], [spc], [psp], [ar-de]	{GR}-[psp], [voc], [spll],[si-pl], [s-v], [tns], [cap], [ar-de]

(table continues)

Table 8 (*continued*)

Students (S)	Errors in writing students made on Facebook platform	Errors in writing students made on academic writing
S24	{GR}-[cap], [ar-de], [pun], [spll], [psp], [si-pl], [voc]	{GR}-[si-pl], [s-v], [spll],[cap], [psp], [voc], [tns], [ar-de]
S25	{GR}-[spc], [spll], [psp], [si-pl], [s-v], [cap], [pun]	{GR}-[ar-de], [s-v], [si-pl], [psp], [cap], [voc], [tns]
S26	{GR}-[s-v], [ar-de], [pun], [spc], [si-pl], [voc], [psp], [spll]	{GR}- [psp], [s-v], [si-pl], [tns], [ar-de], [cap]
S27	{GR}-[psp], [cap], [pun], [spc], [ar-de], [s-v]	{GR}-[ar-de], [si-pl], [s-v], [tns], [psp], [voc] {CO}-[non- com]
S28	{GR}-[s-v], [pun], [psp], [si-pl], [ar-de]	{GR}-[tns], [psp], [cap], [ar-de], [s-v], [si-pl]
S29	{GR}-[cap], [pun], [spc], [psp], [ar-de], [s-v] {CO}-[non- com]	{GR}-[psp], [tns], [s-v], [pun]
S30	{GR}-[spc], [pun], [cap], [psp], [spll], [ar-de], [si-pl], [voc],	{GR}-[pun], [cap], [spll], [s-v], [tns], [si-pl], [psp], [voc], [ar-de]
S31	{GR}-[spc], [cap], [s-v], [si-pl], [psp], [pun]	{GR}-[pun], [psp], [s-v], [si-pl], [ar-de], [voc], [tns], [spc], [cap]
S32	{GR}-[pun], [spc], [spll], [psp], [cap], [si-pl], [s-v], [ar-de], [tns],	{GR}-[ar-de], [s-v], [tns], [psp], [cap], [pun]

*Note.* Dash represents none.

Results derived from the data presented in Table 8 are presented in Table 9.

Table 9

*Comparing the Total Number of Students Who Made These Types of Errors of Writing on Facebook Platform and in Academic Writing.*

Types of errors	The total number of students who made these types of errors of writing on Facebook platform	The total number of students who made these types of errors of writing in academic writing
{GR}- grammar level		
[psp] – parts of speech	31	28

(*table continues*)

Table 9 (*continued*)

Types of errors	The total number of students who made these types of errors of writing on Facebook platform	The total number of students who made these types of errors of writing in academic writing
{GR}- grammar level		
[s-v] – subjects and verb agreement	18	24
[pun] – punctuation	32	7
[cap] – capitalization	29	17
[spll] – spelling	9	8
[spc] – spacing	21	1
[voc] – vocabulary/ word choice	14	20
[si-pl] – singular and plural	15	25
[ar-de] – articles, determiners, quantifier	18	25
[tns] – tense	5	22
{CO}- content level	2	2
[non-com] – non communicative (not understandable/ wrong meaning)		

Although comparing and examining individual student data was not plausible because of inconsistency in the data, the analysis of students' errors indicated the following:

1. Comparing grammar errors between the Facebook writing and in class writing, my analysis found that students made more errors in tense in academic writing than in Facebook writing. However, this occurrence might have happened because on the Facebook platform students wrote fewer words and sentences that were fragmented or not connected to an entire paragraph or story than in the formal classroom assignments. This does not indicate that students wrote English better on Facebook than in class. Tense

mistakes were seen less on Facebook because they were made in short conversations, unlike in academic writing in which students write longer sentences in paragraph form.

2. Punctuation and spacing problems did not occur as often in academic writing as they did on Facebook. Measuring the number of punctuation mark and spacing can be easily done using technology because they are clearly identifiable. Typing on computer could make students made more mistakes in punctuation and spacing than in a hand-written format. Students may make mistakes in those areas more easily while using technology such as computers, smart phones, and iPads that provide a keyboard or a keypad for typing. In contrast to the previous point, typing on computer could make students made more mistakes in punctuation and spacing than in a hand-written format, the incorrect usage of parts of speech (noun, pronoun, adjective, verb, adverb, conjunction, preposition and interjection) occurs frequently in both types of writing. The findings suggest that the incorrect usage of parts of speech (noun, pronoun, adjective, verb, adverb, conjunction, preposition and interjection) – for example, the incorrect use of a preposition, *good luck to the final* (should be, good luck on the final) – may be based on students' knowledge of English rather than whether or not technology is involved.

3. Table 9 shows that the most common errors made by students on Facebook and in academic writing was parts of speech [psp] (noun, pronoun, adjective, verb, adverb, conjunction, preposition, and interjection) and the least common error made by students on Facebook and in academic writing was spelling [spll]. However, the least common errors that students made are in the content level. The students did not make many errors in non-communicative context except for two students who made these errors on the Facebook platform and another two in academic writing.



In addition, looking at the data from the Table 3 and 8 it is worth noting that students who had more than 15 posts / responses on Facebook are the students who had more types of grammar errors on Facebook than in-class writing. Students' active engagement in writing online platform seems to be associated with types of errors students make online. The more they write, the more types of errors contained in their writings. Table 10 presents the relationship between the numbers of posts up to 15 posts/ responses and more than 15 posts/responses with the number of the mistake types in grammar that appear on Facebook platform and in classroom writing.

Table 10

*Number of Posts Versus Numbers of Mistake Types*

Numbers of posts	Number of students that have mistake types on Facebook more than in-class.	Number of students that have mistake types of in-class more than Facebook	Number of students that have mistake types on Facebook writing equal in-class writing
1-15	1	7	None
More than 15	15	5	4

Table 10 shows that only one student who had 15 posts or responses or less had error types of grammar on Facebook more than in on the in-class paragraph writing. This means that the majority of students (who had 15 posts/responses or less) made types of grammar errors in class more than in Facebook. If students wrote more than 15 posts or responses on the Facebook tutorial platform, they were more likely to make more types of grammar mistakes than they did on their in-classroom writing. It is not surprising that the more students wrote on Facebook, the more they made mistakes on Facebook. Students might not have been as careful when they wrote on Facebook as when they wrote in the academic setting.

In summary, although Facebook is set up for academic purposes, students treated it as an informal learning place. The writing style the students used on the tutorial lab via Facebook differed from the writing style they used in the regular classroom, as evident in the finding that students used both types (formal and informal) of writing on the online tutorial lab via Facebook, but in their academic writing they only used a formal type of writing.

### **Findings from Interview Data**

This section presents findings from the interview data analysis in response to the second research question: Do these students view the Facebook writing platform as a means of facilitating or impeding their English learning and academic writing? First, I discuss students' general perceptions of the use of Facebook. Then I present students' views on whether Facebook helped or impeded their English learning and writing, followed by a discussion of the teachers' perceptions.

I organized students' overall perceptions of the use of Facebook into three categories: (a) breaking space-time constraints, (b) providing a pleasant experience, and (c) negative viewpoints toward learning via Facebook (see Appendix G). While the majority (11 out of 16) of the students held the view that incorporating Facebook into the English language learning setting helped them break space-time constraints and provided a pleasant experience, five participants described it negatively; less useful as a learning platform than a traditional classroom setting.

#### **Students' Perception of the Use of Facebook**

**Breaking space-time constraints.** This theme focuses on the students' experiences with the use of Facebook as an online tutorial lab. In order to understand

what the students thought about a tutorial lab on Facebook, I asked the question, What do you think about the tutorial session provided on Facebook? Do you like it? Why or why not? Many participants agreed that language learning on Facebook was helpful in removing space and time constraints, as compared with the traditional classroom settings. First and foremost, using Facebook was convenient. For example, Andrew Brown stated that doing tutorials on Facebook was convenient because people used Facebook every day. Jane Brown echoed Andrew's viewpoint.

I think it's a very good idea of using FB (Facebook) as the medium (to learn English). People would actually be interested as it is very easy to log into FB anytime of the day from anywhere. Using either papers or doing paper reports would have been a bad idea as people wouldn't be able to do it so conveniently...

Gina Brown and Tanya Brown supported the idea of using Facebook as a platform for English writing. They noted that it was more convenient and useful than a classroom lab. It was because they were able to visit the page whenever and wherever they wanted. Also, they stated that it allowed them to go back and check on previous discussions anytime so that they would not miss previous discussions. Moreover, Facebook helped them keep in touch with other peers in the group quickly. It provided an opportunity for the user to talk with friends with little time-constraints as well as to check other people's questions or find answers for their own questions. They also practiced their writing skills by reading and writing what had been posted.

Quenna White made similar comments regarding the use of Facebook for educational purposes. She stated that it was very useful because she received multiple responses to the question she posted regarding English writing. Thus, that was one of the

benefits from using Facebook for learning English writing skills. Cheryl White stated that she liked the idea of using Facebook as a tutorial because she could communicate, share ideas, and exchange information with peers in other classes. It allowed her to receive various and constructive feedback from her peers. Cheryl also pointed out that using a writing platform on Facebook was better for tutorial purposes because, if the institution provided a classroom lab, students would just chat in Thai. She preferred a Facebook lab to a classroom lab. Facebook required students to write in English, and thereby reinforced the students to practice their writing skills.

Three participants (Emily, Henry, Ivan) felt that using Facebook was an easy way to learn and study English. They explained that they did not have to learn to use Facebook because the page was user-friendly. They were able to do activities with little instruction. Ivan Brown stated that it was easy for students to access the Facebook tutorial page because almost all (CBU) students had Internet access. Using Facebook allowed the students to share or learn tips from each other. The Facebook tutorial appeared to be conducive to facilitating English learning.

Facebook is user-friendly, convenient, and accessible. Thus, it is evident that when students view Facebook as an accessible medium in which to study English language, they are more willing to participate in Facebook tutorial lab. The Facebook platform used in this study seemed to create interactive communication in an unlimited time frame. It also functioned as a learning tool that transcended space boundaries because there is no space-time restriction for engaging in activities on Facebook.

**Providing pleasant experience.** Considering the emotional aspect, students felt more comfortable doing tutorial via Facebook. Many students said that if they were

required to do the tutorial, they preferred joining the tutorial on Facebook, rather than doing the tutorial in a classroom. When I asked students what they thought about the tutorial sessions provided through Facebook, eight participants described it as a positive experience. Emily Brown, for example, stated that she enjoyed writing in Facebook tutorial session because it was fun discussing the study issues with her friends. She asked and gave some study tips to her friends. Similarly Jane Brown said,

It's very fun and interesting. I love coming to this group and posting things I have doubt about. Then I eagerly wait to read the replies and ideas by other people...

As it is using Facebook, it's even easier and more familiar... I do not exactly post or write a lot, but I like to help if I know something. It also depends on my questions. I do not mind writing 5-6 posts if I have that many questions or if I want to help someone whose questions haven't been answered yet.

Irene White also stated that it was enjoyable to attend online tutorial through Facebook because it enabled her to share information in English with her friends and to answer questions in English. Although her grammar was not perfect, she took the time to write and tried to improve her grammar.

The Facebook tutorial provided the students with a pleasant experience. Facebook as a writing platform permitted them to be more expressive of thoughts, ideas, and feelings in a written form. Henry Brown mentioned that he viewed writing on Facebook to be beneficial because he shared opinions and sought help by asking for others' opinions. Rita White also noted that she thought the tutorial session was interesting because it helped her express ideas (about class, English lesson and writing) more freely.

Ivan Brown, who had previously used Facebook in an educational community in the UK, supported the utility of Facebook as follows:

Learning English through Facebook is wonderful and I like it a lot. I like community feel. It reminds me when I studied in UK. It is community like... We always have those Facebook communities to post about social activities and study questions... In this tutorial program I write a lot because I can express a lot of my ideas...

Similarly, Quenna White stated that she liked the tutorial session provided on Facebook more than a tutorial in a regular classroom because it helped her improve English skills by reading and posting comments. As she put it,

tutorial session is more interesting than regular classroom where you do not have many chances to put forward (to express) your thought... I think this tutorial session is so interesting. I like to write a lot because I can get new knowledge.

Andrew Brown had similar idea to Quenna that learning through this channel gave him the opportunity to share his ideas as well as gain new knowledge. He acquired new knowledge by making attempt to locate information to answer his peers' questions. He mentioned that when he needed to find something to post on Facebook, he had to search first to make sure what he found was accurate.

While engaged with the online tutorial lab, students felt they had more freedom to express their ideas. They felt more comfortable writing and expressing ideas on Facebook than in a traditional classroom setting. In summary, a common theme across the student interviews was that students enjoyed using Facebook as a learning tool because it was a useful, fun and interesting learning platform. It was described as an important space for

learning in which ideas were heard and shared and new information was exchanged with peers. The Facebook tutorial was a useful means to provide extra time to students for paying attention to their English usage and to express their thoughts with little anxiety, which was conducive to gaining confidence in their English writing ability.

**Negative viewpoints of using Facebook.** Although many of the participants had positive experiences using Facebook in the English language learning setting and believed that it helped to break space-time constraints and provided pleasant experiences, some participants had a negative view. For example, Andrew Brown, although he had positive thought about using Facebook, thought that Facebook was for someone who did not have time to attend a regular class. He stated that a regular class was more efficient than learning via Facebook. Natasha Brown mentioned a disadvantage of using the Facebook platform, “I don’t usually write on Facebook because I feel that I can’t really express myself fully... since all my friends and family can see it.” Natasha did not feel comfortable with posting or commenting on Facebook because people she knew might see what she wrote. Given the choice of the tutorial in a classroom or on Facebook, Natasha preferred a tutorial session in a classroom because “it’s easier for me to learn face to face.” Similar to Natasha, Cate White and others (Paula White, Jessica White, and Cheryl White) preferred the tutorial sessions in a classroom. Cate said, “I like to learn grammar in a classroom because I have a lot of questions to talk with the instructor and the grammar is too hard for me to understand.” This is because learning face to face was much easier for her. Paula White and Jessica White also agreed with Cate that learning was easier when they could have a conversation with a teacher or friends face to face. Jessica White stated,

Students can ask (in a classroom) more than on Facebook. Also answering face to face can do it better in more detail and easier to understand. Sometimes students might not understand in little things but they don't want to ask on Facebook because they are shy or feel embarrassed in front of others.

Another negative view developed from using Facebook was mentioned by Cheryl White. When she was asked what she learned from participating in the tutorial lab via Facebook, she responded, "To be honest, not much." She disagreed with the use of Facebook in the classroom "... because other things will interrupt me from studying."

Though many participants liked doing the tutorial on Facebook and supported learning English via Facebook, six students said that they still preferred a traditional classroom setting. Physically, Facebook distracted students from their study. Also it lost other elements such as face to face communication. Psychologically, when students did not have confidence in their writing skills, their motivation for writing was lowered because students did not want to write when they knew many people (all classmates) could see their posts. In summary, there were some negative views of using Facebook as an English tutorial from a few participants, but no negative academic consequences from using Facebook were found.

### **Students' Perspectives on the Use of Facebook as an English Learning and Writing Facility**

The previous section focused on students' positive experiences and perceptions of using Facebook in general. Although some participants identified negative points, more than half of them agreed that using Facebook was beneficial in terms of its design (good lay out and user friendly), and emotional aspects (positive feeling). In this section, I focus



on how the participants perceived the use of Facebook as an English learning and writing facility. This section is organized into two themes: learning outcomes from Facebook use, and writing aspect: assistance or impediment.

**Learning outcomes from Facebook use.** Study participants pointed to positive learning outcomes of Facebook. The feedback fell into three categories: (a) students' improvements in English skills, (b) sharing and gaining of new English knowledge, and (c) being up to date. When students were asked what ways the tutorial lab via Facebook benefited them the most, their answers were as follows.

First, the participants' answers to the question suggested that Facebook assisted them in improving their English skills, such as grammar, vocabulary and writing. Andrew Brown, Nicole White, Tanya Brown and Gina Brown all responded that they learned grammar the most. For example, Gina Brown stated,

Grammar! I really learn about my grammar mistakes where I mostly use in my essay writing. This lab helps me to correct my grammar a lot because I would comment to the questions that I know the answers... I also like to read so I would know the mistakes I have or can repeat my knowledge of grammar again. We could actually benefit from it and knowing things or our mistakes which we have been forgetting.

More specifically in terms of grammar, Jane Brown pointed out that Facebook helped her in her writing with the use of tenses because she learned about the differences between past participle, present participle, and simple past. From using the Facebook tutorial lab, Jane received some helpful comments on how to make sentences, write a good narrative paragraph, and increase proper usage of the language and vocabulary. The posts and

comments helped Jane with her grammar because when she read posts from other people she adapted them into her own written assignments. She tried to improve her English by asking questions that later helped her in her writing.

Surprisingly, although Ivan Brown said that the lab did not help him much because the English that was used by other students was too basic or simple, he agreed that the lab was beneficial in terms of his learning of English grammar rules. He said that he learned some English grammar and English rules because some of his friends had asked interesting questions about them. He thought that by using the Facebook tutorial lab students had a chance to practice their English because they were asked to only use English words to communicate. As Irene White stated, “participating tutorial lab this time trains me in answering questions in English. I have gained English knowledge. Sometimes friends posted very good posts and for that I can involve in friends’ posts.”

Although not everybody mentioned that the lab helped improve their grammar, many students thought the posts about grammar were useful and most of the time every participant ( $n=32$ ) read the posts. In addition to learning grammar, students also learned new vocabulary on the tutorial lab. Jessica, Cate, and Irene White mentioned that they learned new vocabulary and that it helped them to write better sentences and to use correct English by improving their choice of words.

In addition to helping with grammar and vocabulary, another benefit of using the Facebook platform was the improvement of writing skills, which was specifically the intent of this study. Henry Brown mentioned that the Facebook platform helped him with his writing. From the tutorial via Facebook he learned how to write good narrative and descriptive paragraphs. He also stated that he learned to use transitions in a paragraph.

Paula White echoed Henry by noting that her writing benefited from the Facebook-based tutorial. She said,

I have to write to communicate and I can practice my writing skill at the same time. I think I can learn in writing most because I have to post the questions and post the answers in this lab so I have to write in English... It is good for me... I like it. I think it is very fun... when I don't understand something I can ask on the tutorial session... I like to read posts on tutorial lab. It helps me gain more knowledge.

Rita and Quenna White had similar thoughts to those expressed by Paula. Rita shared that she improved her communication and writing ability because she learned about the word usage and good sentences. Because of the tutorial, Quenna saw many English writing posts that were related to writing formats and the differences between words. She mentioned it helped improve her writing skills because the posts related to English writing and learning process.

According to the interviews the participants agreed that they increased their English knowledge (grammar, vocabulary, writing format, etc.) from this writing platform, not only from the answers from their friends, but also from the research they did in order to find information to answer their friends' questions. Students used this platform as a place to freely ask questions and discuss different topics. Table 11 shows examples of questions or posts that students addressed via their Facebook participation.

Table 11

*Examples of Questions and Posts on Facebook Tutorial Lab*

<b>The participants</b>	<b>Questions or posts</b>
Casandra Brown	Please explain how different 1) I bought a car 2) I have bought a car
Henry Brown	How to use whom in relative pronouns?
Jane Brown	Can anyone please explain me these terms: 1) past participle 2) present continuous 3) present simple
Casandra Brown	We have to use 'do' or 'does' with this word 1.people 2.everyone 3.everybody 4.anyone 5.anybody
Irene White	How to use linking verbs in a sentence?
Megan White	How to use which in the sentence?
Paula White	I'm confusing about perfect tense. I don't know when we have to use present perfect tense, present perfect cont, past perfect tense and future perfect tense. Can anyone explain to me please? Thank you.
Vivian White	How to change luxury to the adj.?
Andrew Brown	"She did well." Question is "well" is an Adjective or Adverb?
Hannah White	How difference between Past perfect and Past perfect continuous?
Jane Brown	What are relative clauses? How are they used?? How may we use them in our writing?
Jane Brown	Can some one please explain me passive voice and active voice?
Ximena White	What difference between "not any more" and "not any longer"?
Frida Brown	What kind different of 'local' and 'localize' how to use?
Frida Brown	'quite good' and 'quite well' is same ?
Tanya Brown	What is the difference between a lot of and lots of?
Whitney Brown	What is the different between the just and only?
Undina White	What is difference between "as ..as" and "so. .as"
Xemina White	What the difference between "take" and "bring"?
Andrew Brown	What is a different between "do" and "made". Example: The Prime Minister "....." a speech yesterday. What Verb we use in this sentence between "do" and "make"?
Quenna White	What the difference between "which" and "that"?
Rita White	What's the difference between authoritative and authoritarian ?
Megan White	How difference between take a bath and take a shower?
Vivian White	What is the different between because and because of ?
Frida Brown	What a different between celebratory and celebrated?
Jane Brown	What are the best techniques to write a narrative paragraph? English midterm was quite interesting! can someone please tell me a sentence on the word bargain (verb).
Ella White	How to prepare for grammar better and remember accurately?
Alice White:	How to make essay writing, I think that it's very hard for me?
Diana Brown	How to make a good writing?
Emily Brown	What is reported speech? How to use it?
Emily Brown	How to improve writing a grammar paragraph?
Rita White	How to write narration well?
Undina White	How to improve your writing skills?

As shown in Table 11, the posts are in the form of direct questions, choices for respondents, or requests for explanations. They are examples of questions that represent how Facebook, as an English learning facility, helped students improve grammar, vocabulary, and writing.

Second, in addition to helping the participants improve their grammar, writing, and vocabulary, Facebook, as English learning facility, also played an important role in increasing English knowledge among participants. Since the Facebook tutorial platform is an online social media that is linked to other medias, such as Youtube, it is a channel that students can use to share their English knowledge in vocabulary, grammar, and a variety of proses. The benefits of using these media sources were that they were interesting and easy to understand because they were visual and had colorful pictures. For example, Andrew Brown mentioned that he had learned something new when he had to search for something interesting to post on the wall. Many students admitted that they did some searching on the Google website for some interesting posts or to find answers to their friends' posts. Six students (Emily Brown, Gina Brown, Natasha Brown, Jessica White, Nicole White, Paula White) supported the use of Facebook as a learning facility because they found some tips to share with their friends and because it improved their English. On Facebook it was easy to share pictures that were relevant to English language and this made it easier for students to remember what they saw. Students learned new vocabulary and other English knowledge by reading the posts or conversations between me and their friends. This was because they were interested in reading those posts from someone they knew and the topics were related to them. Some students improved their use of English because they had gained many things from answering other students'

questions. They were not afraid or hesitant to write in English. For example, Jessica White reported that she previously was afraid that people would say that she was not good in English and did not know much, but participating in this tutorial platform she had to try to write in English. She said that she gained new English knowledge from other people's questions that she had never known before she participated. Likewise, Nicole and Paula White mentioned that they liked the tutorial session provided on Facebook because everybody could share English knowledge and discuss about English. As a result, they learned more because their friends shared something that was useful. The information students shared was in forms of images and videos, for example, preposition, vocabulary, grammar chart, and tenses charts.

In addition to the posts from media, students often shared quotes and poems as shown in Table 12.

Table 12

*Examples of Quotes and Poems Students Shared*

<b>The participants</b>	<b>Quotes and poems</b>
Becca White	Never let the things you want make you forgot the things you have.
Becca White	I never dreamed about success. I worked for it. Estee Lauder
Britney Brown	You can fool all the people some of the time, and some of the people all the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time.
Britney Brown	Every day may not be good, but there is something good in every day.

*(table continues)*

Table 12 (continued)

<b>The participants</b>	<b>Quotes and poems</b>
Henry Brown	Nothing comes by its own, only when you try and work for it, definitely it will come to you Ideas can change your life...
Henry Brown	Nothing will come back to us. Only thing we can do is make today the best as best we can...
Henry Brown	Sorry is a short word but its meaning is so powerful...  Simply say sorry means nothing but it should come from inside...
Jane Brown	I really like this poem. The description of morning in London is very precise and beautiful. I think this poem can help us understand some descriptive techniques for our writing.  Composed upon Westminster Bridge by William Wordsworth  Earth has not anything to show more fair:...  Dull would he be of soul who could pass by A sight so touching in its majesty: This City now doth, like a garment, wear The beauty of the morning; silent, bare, Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie Open unto the fields, and to the sky; All bright and glittering in the smokeless air. Never did sun more beautifully steep In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill; Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep! The river glideth at his own sweet will: Dear God! the very houses seem asleep; And all that mighty heart is lying still!

Another way to share information, the participants used an “asking question” format. Sometimes the students tried to draw attention from their peers by posting exercises, and asking them what the answers should be (see Table 13).

Table 13

*Examples of "Asking Questions" Format*

Andrew Brown	"Easy money" Question: Larry was always trying to think of ways to make "easy money" because he... A. didn't like working much. B. liked to work hard. C. couldn't make difficult money.
Casandra Brown	Choose the best word that has the same meaning as the word given. 1. The children abandoned their plan to go to Pattaya due to the heavy storm a.) began b.) ignored c.) abolished d.) started
Jane Brown	How to make a good sentence with these words-- 1) Frugality 2) Betrayal 3) Postponement
Jane Brown	What would be the back reference for THIS in the following paragraph—  A marriage arranger may, for instance, value the financial status of one couple, while the couple may value love above financial or social status. THIS is bound to cause problems in the marriage and it may eventually break down.

Other than using the styles mentioned above, students shared posted information or responses that they wanted to share (see Table 14).

Table 14

*Examples of Posts and Responses*

Becca White	idk = i don't know jk = joking lol = laugh out loud omg =oh my god !! Brb =be right back G2g =gotta go
-------------	---

*(table continues)*



Table 14 (continued)

Irene White	SMS = Short Message Service VS = Versus Corp = Corporation B-R-B = Be Right Back TTYL = Talk to You later
Kevin White	Etc. = etcetara Otw = on the way Ost. = original sound track Btw = by the way
Andrew Brown	Examples for "Already And Yet" "Already" 1. He has "already" arrived. 2. Have they "already" finished?  "Yet" 1. I'm not sure "yet", but I think I'll become a teacher. 2. Have you eaten lunch "yet"?
Andrew Brown	"get, got, getting" (Verb) TO GET + direct object = obtain, receive, buy  Example: ... 1.It "gets" dark very early in the winter. 2.He "got" her driving license last week. 3.It's "getting" colder.
Andrew Brown	10 Interesting Facts about the English Language Have you ever wondered what the little dot on top of an 'i' is called, or what the only two words in the English language that end in '-gry' are? No? Well, get ready, because you're about to!  In the English language, .....  ...the shortest word containing all five main vowels is 'eunoia', meaning 'beautiful thinking' or a state of normal mental health.  ...the longest word with only one vowel is 'strengths' (9 letters long).  ...there are only 4 words that end with '-dous': 'tremendous', 'stupendous', 'hazardous' and 'horrendous'.  ...the oldest word is 'town'.

(table continues)

Table 14 (continued)

	<p>...the longest one-syllable word is 'screched'.</p> <p>...the longest word with all the letters in alphabetical order is 'almost'.</p> <p>...the only two words that end '-gry' are 'hungry' and 'angry'.</p> <p>...the longest word without the main vowels is 'rhythms'.</p> <p>...the dot on top of the letter 'i' is called a 'tittle'.</p> <p>...the most commonly-used word in conversation is 'I'.</p>
Gina Brown	Cynical (adjective) - a person who sees little or no good in other people, believing that people do good things for bad reasons.
Jane Brown	Did you know there are only 4 words in the English language which end in 'dous' They are: hazardous, horrendous, stupendous and tremendous.
Jane Brown	'Bookkeeper' and 'bookkeeping' are the only 2 words in the English language with three consecutive double letters. That is 2 O, 2 K and 2 E

The use of the Facebook learning facility provided new knowledge to students in different forms, including the sharing and asking of questions. In addition, it was helpful in other aspects. A few students mentioned that Facebook should be used for an online information center. One thing was clearly seen: this tutorial lab served to exchange information among the participants. It was used for updating course information and course changes to the students. For example, in the third week of the tutorial lab, Grace White reminded her friends about the test for outside reading, "Don't forget tomorrow sec xxx we have to test outside reading." Some friends thanked her because they had forgotten about the test. Cheryl White also posted a message to ask her friends if there was any change to the next day's schedule. That was helpful to her because her friends answered her post. Another question Cheryl White asked was "Who knows when is the

next semester (referred to the semester started in January, 2014) end?” She asked this question because the next semester would be the first regular semester that CBU would run their semesters like the AEC (Asian Economic Community) countries, so many students were confused. This is considered a useful question because many students did not know the new schedule. In order to get updated information from her classmates, Emily Brown asked a question by posting, “We change day for QUIZ 2 right?” Then she received confirmation from Frida Brown that the date had been changed, “Yes, QUIZ 2 change to 11th wed, Dec. Prepare yourself,” which was also helpful to Nicole White. She responded, “OK. ja thx” (OK, Mam. Thanks).

In summary, in this study the Facebook platform was used as a learning facility because (a) it helped students improve their grammar, vocabulary, and writing, (b) through it students were able to share information and gain new knowledge, and (c) it kept students up to date about course changes and served as online information center.

### **Impeding or Assisting Writing**

This section provides the interview analysis for the second research question, Do students view the Facebook writing platform as a means of facilitating or impeding their English learning and academic writing? Having interviewed the 16 participants, I identified three major points. Everyone was asked the following question, “In your opinion, do you think writing on Facebook helped you improve your English writing skill or do you think it impeded (made it worse) your writing skill? Why or why not?”

**Facilitate.** First response from students was that it assisted them in learning. Emily Brown responded, in my opinion Facebook can help me improve my English writing because I can ask my friends about writing. It makes me improve English after

two years ago. I can ask any people the right thing (questions) about writing... Facebook English tutorial session helps me know about grammar and vocabulary... I like a tutorial lab on Facebook more than in a classroom because it makes me know people from another English class and there are many ideas to share.

Tanya Brown commented that Facebook assisted her in improving her English writing skills because she paid more attention to the grammar and vocabulary in the questions asked by her friends while using the Facebook platform. Similarly, it assisted Cate White with her writing because she learned new vocabulary that she used when she wrote. She was asked if she noticed any negative things about using Facebook as a learning facility, and she responded “Absolutely not.” Many participants gave similar opinions. Andrew Brown, Gina Brown, Irene White, Jessica White, Nicole White, and Paula White agreed that the Facebook tutorial was helpful, not an impediment. They gave different reasons why it was helpful to them. For example, Andrew Brown stated that he understood some grammar rules better after using Facebook as he had been using the incorrect form for a long time. English, writing skills, and vocabulary were used for communication on Facebook, so the use of Facebook meant that they were practicing those skills. The more they wrote, the better writing skill they will have. Jessica stated that she could write better, more correctly, and that her sentences were better than before (less grammatical errors). In general, Ivan Brown thought that Facebook tutorial helped his peers whose English were not as advanced although it might not help him as much. This was because Ivan Brown’s English was at a more advanced level than many others, to the extent that the English syntax and sentence structures used in most of the questions posted on this platform were too simple for him. Although the Facebook tutorial did not

help him improve his English, it definitely did not impede his English either. He supported the use of Facebook as a learning laboratory.

**Mixed feeling: Both facilitate and impede.** Henry Brown had a different point of view from that of his peers. He thought there were both benefits and disadvantages to writing on Facebook. He stated, “I think it is both useful and impeded... It is useful because it helps me to practice English and it impedes because of using an informal language.” He commented that it would not be useful to him if informal English (e.g., colloquium, incomplete sentences) was used frequently because he did not understand it. Similarity, Quenna and Rita White pointed out that there were both benefits and disadvantages. Quenna White said, “It really improves my writing skills, because everyone’s posts are in progress to help you... but it is also bad, each person has their own points of view, they will confuse you.” Rita White mentioned that it helped her improve her writing because she learned about word usage and good sentence structure. Thus, her participation in the tutorial on Facebook resulted in her completion of more exercises that ultimately helped improve her writing skills. As for the negative point to the Facebook-based tutorial, Rita stated that she thought that it could impede her learning and writing. Although several of her peers answered her questions, deciding which of the answers was correct was difficult for her given her limited English knowledge.

**Make little difference.** Unlike others, Jane Brown, Natasha Brown, and Cheryl White thought that the Facebook lab made little difference. Jane Brown and Cheryl White emphasized that it neither helped them improve their English writing skill nor did it harm their writings. Sharing the same opinion with Jane and Cheryl, Natasha Brown said,

I don't think Facebook makes a difference in writing skills... Because I feel that if a person is good in English, Facebook won't worsen it... If hes (he's) good, hes (he's) good... If hes (he's) bad then hes (he's) bad... If the person doesn't have good English, then Facebook won't help him get better or worse.

Based on these responses, the participants' views on whether Facebook facilitated or impeded their English academic writing are summarized in Table 15.

Table 15

*Students' View on Using Facebook Writing Platform as a Means of Facilitating or Impeding Their Academic Writing.*

View	Facilitate	Both facilitate and impede	No difference
The participants			
Andrew Brown	x		
Emily Brown	x		
Gina Brown	x		
Henry Brown		x	
Ivan Brown	x		
Jane Brown			x
Natasha Brown			x
Tanya Brown	x		
Cate White	x		
Cheryl White			x
Irene White	x		
Jessica White	x		
Nicole White	x		
Paula White	x		
Quenna White		x	
Rita White		x	

*Note.* X refers to an agreement that a student has in that category.

Ten participants indicated that Facebook helped to facilitate writing, three participants stated that Facebook both facilitated and impeded writing, and three students stated that it made no difference. The majority of students stated that using Facebook was beneficial to them, especially in writing. A few students noted that it impeded their

writing; however, they also noted some benefits. It is worth noting that none of participants believed that Facebook only impeded their writing. These views did not differ by any demographic characteristic or with academic performance. It was because students favor or support the use of social media in their daily lives. Social media was useful to them in some ways.

### **Can Students Differentiate the Formal and Informal Writing?**

As the first section indicated that using informal writing on Facebook did not influence students' academic writing, the evidence in this section supports the idea that students were able to differentiate between the two types of writing, formal and informal. For example, Gina Brown stated that she was taught to write essays formally in high school, and that at that time she did not know about the informal form of writing that people used. Therefore, she was not accustomed to using informal writing

Another student that never used informal writing for in-class writing was Ivan Brown. That is because he knew that informal writing was forbidden in the classroom, so he did not use it at all. Also, he did not consider the Facebook platform as a formal setting for academic learning, and he did not consider Facebook to be a platform for formal writing. Many students perceived that Facebook was an informal platform for learning. They used informal writing for the convenience and casual atmosphere. As many as seven participants responded in ways that were similar to Gina and Ivan. In her response to questions, Emily Brown could differentiate between informal and formal types of writing and stated that she never used informal writing in a class because she did not want to lose marks. The same was true for Nicole. Jane Brown knew the difference

between the two types of writing and was conscious when she used them so they did not influence her writing.

Natasha Brown knew that formal writing was used for writing essays and important work, so she only used formal writing when she wrote essays in class. However, the reason she used informal writing during Facebook sessions was because she considered it less academic; formal writing was not required. Irene White, Paula White, and Cheryl White each separated the two types of writing and did not use informal writing in class. When students posted on Facebook, although this was a tutorial session, informal writing was often prevalent in the form of emoticons and short forms. However, when they wrote in class, informal writing was not present at all.

### **Where do Students Learn Informal Writing?**

Students shared that they learned to use informal writing from friends, the internet, social media, and different websites. Emily Brown learned informal writing style from her friends, as well as others. Cheryl White learned to use informal writing from friends in her previous school who wrote those words to her and then she learned to copy them. Paula White first saw informal writing from other people's comments, and then she used it when she chatted with her friends. Andrew Brown stated that he used informal writing when he talked to his foreign friends because it was a short way of typing and easy to understand. Similarly, Henry Brown and Nicole White noted that they used informal writing because it was easy, short, and fast to type. They also learned to use them by looking at comments and chats from friends on Facebook.

Besides learning from friends, eight students learned to use informal writing from other sources. Natasha Brown said that she might have learned informal writing



unconsciously from phone texting, while Tanya Brown said that she had learned informal writing from chatting online with friends from other countries. Different from the others, Cate White learned informal writing from music and movies. Gina Brown learned it from social media. Jane Brown mentioned that she has learned it from Facebook. She commented as follows:

When I use my regular FB, I use informal writing all the time. I learned those informal forms from my school friends when I started using FB... by seeing someone else use it, and then I asked its meanings from my friends... I used it because it's easier and communication is faster at this age, hardly any one uses full words to write anything, specially on Facebook or while chatting, we all use shortened words, it's more cool... when I am in a hurry, I start writing chat language like once I wrote "idk" instead of "I don't know."

Ivan Brown said that he learned to use informal writing from long-term relationships with friends and Facebook. Informal writing seemed to be a trend on Facebook, especially among young adults and teenagers. Other students, such as Irene White and Jessica White, shared that they had learned informal writing from the Internet and social media, such as Facebook or Twitter. The student participants even gave tips for using abbreviations on social media as shown in Table 16.

Table 16

*Informal Type of Writing Shared by the Participants*

Becca White	Irene White	Kevin White
idk = i don't know jk = joking lol = laugh out loud omg =oh my god !! Brb =be right back G2g =gotta go	SMS = Short Message Service VS = Versus Corp = Corporation B-R-B = Be Right Back TTYL = Talke to You later	Etc. = etcetera Otw = on the way Ost. = original sound track Btw = by the way

Table 16 shows examples of the informal types of writing that students shared with their peers online. The common theme that emerged from the interviews was that friends and technology influenced the participants' uses of informal writing. For example, Quenna White said, "I don't write informal English, because I really don't know informal well. Most of my friends are Chinese. On the other hand, I think my English is not good."

It is noticeable from the analysis of the students' writings on Facebook in the first section that several Chinese students (S27, S28, S29, S 30, S31; Quenna, Rita, Undina, Vivian, Xemina) used less or no informal writing, regardless of participation in the online writing lab. They did not use informal writing on Facebook platform nor in their academic writings. A possible explanation for this is that many Chinese students have never used Facebook before, so they had no past experience with informal writing, so they did not tend to use informal writing in academic writing.

### **Teachers' Perception on Students' Writing and the Use of Facebook in EFL Classroom**

In addition to the students' perceptions, this section provides the instructors' point of view. In discussing how the instructors viewed students' writing and the use of Facebook in EFL classroom, three themes emerged: current problems with students' writings, advantages and disadvantages of students using Facebook, and the suggestions regarding the application of Facebook to the EFL classroom.

The teacher participants, Nadia and Nicky, shared their thoughts on the problem areas in students' English writing. Nicky discussed that students had the most problems

with writing sentences, organizing ideas, and connecting ideas. She stated that they did not know how to organize their ideas. According to Nicky, they often wrote incomplete sentences or sentences that were complete, but because they were translated from Thai to English the sentences had awkward meanings and sentence structures.

The other instructor, Nadia, pointed out that the biggest problems with students' writing were grammar, sentence structure, punctuation, and capitalization. When students kept repeating the same mistakes, it ingrained in their minds and it was difficult to change. She also stated that students sometimes used informal writing, like abbreviations, incorrect capitalizations, and inappropriate lower case in their academic writing. She thought that students had these problems in their English writing because they did not write a great deal in their daily routines, so they were not used to it. Nadia thought that in using technology, students chatted a lot and on Facebook they just shared photos, but did not use for academic writing.

Nicky was asked if students used informal language in her classroom. She said that she did not think so; she did not see a problem with the use of short forms in class. There were times that she saw Thai students use lowercase *i*, but she had never experienced Chinese students write *i* with lower case.

Overall, students' writing problems were sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and the organization and connection of ideas. Also, sometimes students used informal writing (abbreviation, lower capital, lower case) in their academic writing.

When I asked the instructors whether or not using Facebook technology helped students in writing, Nicky responded that it was a disadvantage. She noted that when

students were asked to write or do something for class assignments they sought help by using the Internet. She felt that students did not apply what they knew to their academic writing skills. They just read, copied, and then forgot.

Nadia also pointed out a disadvantage to using social media in that many students, including native English speakers, made mistakes in their writing. These mistakes in writing often made communication difficult instead of easier and faster. In addition, she noted that they were exposed to mistakes by their peers whose English was at a lower levels, but still similar to their own levels.

Another thing Nadia considered negative about using Facebook was an addiction to Facebook. Nadia used herself as an example. She stated that when she had nothing to do, for example, when she was on a bus, sat in a café, or was by herself, she was tempted to take out her smart phone and check her Facebook page. But she was mature enough not to do it when she was at work. Unfortunately, her students did not have the kind of maturity to know when they should use Facebook and when they should concentrate on their assignment. However, she did see an advantage to using Facebook to assist students to learn English. She stated,

Students can have a chance to meet a lot of people, to talk to and when they use English to communicate with them it is absolutely important because they can practice in their private lives. And learning English in a natural way and this is the best thing that they can do, learning and enjoy and doing something that students like so this is absolutely potentially. As the research is pretty much participate two groups with other students. They can share problem and try to find solution

together so this is all I think it's really inspirational for them and can be really, really important.

Both instructors provided insightful information about students' English writings. Valid points were made. Both positive and negative aspects of Facebook in EFL settings were made, thus, using Facebook in an EFL setting should be considered carefully.

The last theme concerns the instructors' suggestions for applying Facebook to an EFL classroom. When I asked Nicky what she thought about adopting technology into her English classroom, she replied that she was not sure about it because students did not really apply or use what they knew in their learning experience. For example, though students used an online dictionary to find the meanings of words they did not try to learn or remember them. Nicky remarked that it was detrimental when students copied, printed the whole thing, and submitted it to her. They did not read it and sometimes they did not even remember if they had submitted it. Thus, technology did not help them learn anything in this case.

The other instructor, Nadia, supported the use of technology. She responded that it may be better to start using it when students are younger. She suggested that a new curriculum should be developed.

School depends on national program sometimes. I think that it has to start from them, from national programs. The national programs should be changed according to the fact that modern technologies have to be used as teaching and learning tools in class... and it should start from primary school because it is very difficult to make change when they grow up.

Nadia supported the use of Facebook in the classroom and she shared that she thought that students loved social media, so putting those things together was one of the best ways for them to learn. If they could use Facebook, they could practice English. She stated, “doing it on Facebook is not lame, it’s cool!”

Another good point made by Nadia was in her response to being asked if she thought using Facebook was detrimental to students’ academic writing. She stated, “I don’t think it is. I think in the moment that if they get what is the difference between academic writing and informal writing, that won’t be a problem anymore. But first they have to get it.” According to the participants and Nadia, if students can differentiate between the two styles and they are allowed to use each form appropriately, they will not use informal writing in academic writing. Nadia suggested that if students happened to use informal writing in class, the instructor needed to tell them. Once they understood the error it would not be a real problem. She concluded that positive aspects seem to prevail negativity in the use of Facebook for students.

In short, these three themes were the views of the instructors with regard to technology, Facebook in EFL setting, and Facebook for academic writing. This information was different from that of the students, in that it provided insight from practitioners who applied it to their own practice.

### **Summary**

This chapter presented the findings related to the two research questions. The first section answered the first question. The finding indicated that both types of English writing were used on the online tutorial program via Facebook, but the formal type was used for in-class writing. Another finding is about the comparison of students’ writings

on Facebook with the students' writings in the classroom. The results were: (a) the data showed that students made verb-tense mistakes in academic writing more than in Facebook writing, (b) punctuation and spacing problems did not occur as often in academic writing as they did in Facebook writing, and (c) the more students wrote on Facebook, the more types of errors occurred on Facebook than in their in-class writings.

The second section was related to the second research question. First, it focused on students' perceptions of using Facebook in general and how it helped them with English learning and writing. In general, Facebook helped break space-time constraints and provided a pleasant experience, but some students held negative viewpoints. Regarding the learning and writing aspect, the findings revealed the following positive learning outcomes: (a) improvements in grammar, vocabulary, and writing, (b) an increase in the sharing of knowledge, and (c) increased online communication about coursework, class updates, and course changes. From the writing standpoint, for the majority of the participants, ( $n = 10$ ) Facebook was used as a means of facilitating their writing. Three of the interviewees viewed it as both facilitating and impeding writing, and another three did not see any differences in it. None of the students found that it only impeded students' writings.

In addition, I experienced that students used informal writing both on the Facebook platform and in the message box or chat channel. Only a few of them wrote formally. One Chinese student, Tanya Brown, wrote only formal English while interviewing with me. This is because she had not used informal English and Facebook before participating in this project. The same situation occurred with Quenna White who said that she did not use informal English because she did not know informal English.

Along with the interviews with a few more Chinese students, it was concluded that the Chinese students did not know how to use informal writing because they had never used Facebook before. In general, excluding the Chinese students, whenever the remaining students did not write for academic use, they likely used informal writing.

In summary, the participants differentiated between the two styles of writing more easily than I expected. As a researcher, I suspected that students might have problems differentiating the two types of writing. In fact, that was not the case. Their academic writing was not influenced by the informal type of writing that they learned from their friends and through social media and online.



## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSIONS

This study explored the impact of the use of Facebook on EFL students' academic writings in the Center Bangkok University (CBU, pseudonym) in Thailand. Since social media plays an increasingly important role in the daily lives of college students in the digital age (Cotten, 2008), it is important to pay attention to the use of social media in college teaching and learning. With online social networking sites expanding rapidly, there are growing concerns about whether using social media as an online learning tool is beneficial or detrimental to academic writing in English language classes (Warschauer, 2007). With this in mind, this qualitative study examined EFL college students uses of social media (Facebook), as a shared online platform in the context of an English foreign language course, and examined how Facebook facilitated or impeded these students' academic writing skills. Two main research questions guided this inquiry,

- What English writing style do the EFL college students in Thailand use on the online tutorial lab via Facebook? More specifically, does the writing style used in the tutorial lab via Facebook differ from the writing style used in a regular classroom?
- Do these students view the Facebook writing platform as a means of facilitating or impeding their English learning and academic writing?

This chapter includes a summary of the research methods, discussion of the findings in relation to a broad research literature, implications of the findings for practice, and theoretical implications. Recommendations for future research and conclusions are provided as well.

### **Summary of the Research Methods**

Using field observations and interviews, this qualitative study was exploratory in nature; it looked at the EFL college students' writing behaviors on the Facebook platform and assessed how they viewed the impact of Facebook on their academic writing. The 32 participants were students who enrolled in one of two sections of an English I foundation course in a special session/transitory session from October 2013 to December 2013 at CBU in Thailand. Participants were either 18 or 19 years of age with about 10 years of formal English learning, on average.

I observed students' writing on the Facebook tutorial lab in a secret group during a 5-week period from November 11, 2013 until December 12, 2013. On this tutorial lab students were instructed to post course related content, share anything related to English writing with the group, or ask any questions about English with no limit to the number of words. I also collected the students' in-class writing assignments. The data on students' writings came from two sources, the Facebook platform and in class writings that were compared and analyzed.

In addition, I conducted interviews with students via Facebook online chat. Sixteen students, 8 from each section, participated in an interview that lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. The interview topics were about students' perceptions of the influence of Facebook on their academic writing. I also conducted interviews with the two teachers of the two sections: a Thai female teacher who did not use social media in her personal life nor in her classroom, and an Italian female teacher who was from Italy and who had been teaching English at CBU for 1 year, and used Facebook regularly in her personal life.

### **Discussion of Major Findings**

The findings of this study contribute to the current body of literature regarding the impact of Facebook on EFL students' writing by finding through empirical study that the informal writing style on Facebook did not influence students' academic writings. Observation data analysis found that students were able to differentiate informal writing from formal writing in two different learning environments. Students used both formal and informal types of English writing on the online Facebook tutorial site, but only used the formal type for in-class writing. Although the Facebook page was set up for educational purposes in this study, students were not instructed to write either formally or informally and, as a result, most of the students (28 out of 32) wrote informally on the Facebook tutorial lab. In this study some students did not regard Facebook as a formal learning place. Their perception of writing on Facebook reflected the findings of Madge, Meek, Wellens, and Hooley's (2009) study that suggested that social networking sites might be more useful for informal rather than formal learning. Madge et al.'s study revealed that SNSs had no potential for academic work because students viewed this tool as a means of socializing with friends rather than engaging in academic work.

Many studies indicated that Facebook had both positive and negative effects on college learning and in ELL settings (Al-Jarf, 2004; Hegelheimer et al., 2006; Hiew, 2012; Hirvela, 2006; Kabilan et al., 2010; Lederer, 2012; Manan et al., 2012; Miyazoe & Anderson, 2010; Omar et al., 2012; Promnitz-Hayashi, 2011; Shih, 2011; Sullivan & Pratt, 1996; Warschauer, 1996; Warschauer et al., 2000; White, 2009; Yang, 2009; Yunus & Salehi, 2012; Yunus, Salehi & Chenzi, 2012; Zaidieh, 2012). The findings of the present study confirm that there are positive and negative effects of using Facebook on

students' learning and writing. Facebook is viewed negatively as a learning tool: a few participants explained that it distracted them from learning. It seemed difficult for them to concentrate on the course material because other features on Facebook, such as the frequent updates of information, interfered with their concentration. This finding is similar to that of Yunus, Salehi, and Chenzi (2012) in terms of the weaknesses of integrating social networking tools into ESL writing classroom.

With regard to the positive aspect, this study found that Facebook helped to break space-time constraints and provided pleasant experiences. Many students described Facebook as convenient, user friendly, easy to use, and fun. This finding was similar to that of Omar, Amin Embi, and Yunus (2012) who found that students regarded Facebook as good, useful, easy, convenient, interesting, and enjoyable.

Furthermore, Facebook helped improve students' writing skills. This study confirmed that the use of Facebook could lead to positive learning outcomes, such as improved students' writing skills including grammar and vocabulary (Hiew, 2012; Kabilan et al., 2010; Omar et al., 2012; Shih, 2011; Wu et al., 2011; Yunus & Salehi, 2012; Yunus, Salehi & Chenzi, 2012). Many participants in this study agreed that they benefited from using Facebook in that they received useful information instantaneously, including course updates and additional materials that were posted by their friends. Therefore, Facebook served as an efficient means to facilitate learning process by providing important English knowledge.

In addition, the findings of this study indicated that the majority of students reported that Facebook did not impede their academic writing. Students' academic

writing performance supports this finding that the use of informal writing on Facebook did not influence their academic writing.

In this study, the teachers provided both positive and negative comments about the use of Facebook in a classroom setting. There is a similarity between the instructors' views and students' views. Both students and teachers agreed that using Facebook was not detrimental to students' academic writing. A difference between the instructors' views and students' views was also apparent. Many students viewed that Facebook or technology assists them learn new things by providing information online, but one teacher differed with this view and thought it was somewhat harmful to many students because they did not apply the knowledge they learn online to their learning. They often copy and paste, then print and submit, but do not study. Students copied information that they found online, then pasted it into their document, and then printed the document and submitted it to the teacher without studying. Some students thought using Facebook in the classroom was inappropriate because it distracted them from learning. On the other hand, a teacher suggested that using technology or social media in a classroom could draw the attention of students and make English learning more interesting.

The two teachers provided insights regarding the problems with students' writings, the advantages and disadvantages of using Facebook, and suggestions for applying Facebook to EFL classroom settings. According to the instructors, students often had problems with grammar and sentence structure, with the organization of ideas, with connecting ideas, with informal writing appearing in their academic writing, and with punctuation and capitalization. The interviews with the two teachers revealed two disadvantages of the use of technology: (a) students used information online by copying

and pasting, but not learning, and (b) students were addicted to social media and did not use it appropriately in a classroom. Kabilan et al.'s (2010) and Yunus and Salehi's (2012) studies found similar results: that students often had a problem with copying-pasting from available online sources and addiction to Facebook.

In summary, this research offers the important finding that the Facebook platform can aid in serving as a learning site by helping to answer questions and updating coursework information or course changes. Although how the teachers viewed the use of Facebook differed from the view of students, the majority of the students found using Facebook as an online learning platform to be useful for improving their grammar, vocabulary, writing, and sharing knowledge. A traditional classroom environment was the more preferable learning site. Similarly, Kabilan et al. (2010), Omar et al. (2012), Selwyn (2007), and Shih (2011) noted that Facebook does not provide a suitable environment for formal language teaching and learning. However, a significance that this study contributes to the research literature is the finding that the Facebook platform can aid in serving as a learning site by helping to answer questions and updating coursework information or course changes.

### **Implications for Practice**

The findings of this study suggest important implications for educational policy and practice. First, with the fast advancement of technology, policymakers and university administrators should ensure that practitioners and instructors have basic knowledge of computer skills (computer literacy) and social media. Teachers should be aware that technology needs to be integrated into education. If using technology is conducive to learning, it can make learning easier and more interesting. In this study, one teacher did

not use Facebook in her regular life. It became clear in the interview that she never discussed Facebook with her students. It could be that she had no prior knowledge of Facebook or she had no interest in it. If a teacher has limited personal experience with technology and does not support the use of SNSs, it is a disadvantage to students because it is likely that SNSs will not be used in teaching.

Second, although it appears that Facebook cannot replace traditional classroom learning, incorporating Facebook into a classroom might make stress-free learning environment. The findings of this study suggest that Facebook provided pleasant experiences to the students because it was interesting and enjoyable, and it helped strengthen students' learning, motivations, and freedom. As SNSs have a great influence on people these days, Facebook could be beneficial because it draws students' engagements in learning. Therefore, it is suggested that educators and practitioners consider implementing Facebook as a supplementary learning tool to assist their teaching in a classroom as an additional activity for discussing course related content on regular basis, such as course assignment, course material, daily questions about the content, learning classroom and so forth. To enhance English language learning in college settings, social networking sites can be used as an online site to assist learning. For example, regarding Facebook Omar et al. (2012) stated, "as Facebook has become a significant part of students' lives, utilizing the tool in a pedagogically sound approach could benefit ESL learners in practicing the language outside their classrooms" (p. 72). For the full potential of using an online site channel, practitioners should be cognizant of how social media can facilitate interactions between students and instructors and enhance a collaborative learning environment.

Third, the important role social media plays in education cannot be underestimated. Introducing Facebook as a tutorial lab into EFL settings at CBU provided an opportunity for students and teachers to become familiar with social media in educational setting. As an informal learning tool to enhance learning, teachers may want to pay more attention to comprehensive communication rather than grammar. However, once students are familiar with using Facebook for educational purpose, instructors will need to pay continued attention to the mistakes students make in grammar. Also, teachers should provide answers or correct information using formal writing on the Facebook platform. By doing this, students can be guided to and connected with the use of formal writing.

Next, the extant research was conducted with small groups of the participants and none of the research in literature found the study of EFL learners and Facebook use involved with the administration in higher education. Administrators who play important roles in organizations or in the educational system should also get involved in applying social media to their work. This is because students can receive important and updated information easier and faster, since Facebook is considered as online information center. Based on the findings of this study, Facebook is useful in sharing and updating information about coursework or course-related content. The results of this study suggest that administrators should establish institutional policies related to the use of social media as a part of English course components. This will assist students in the courses by updating information they are required to know, and providing daily lessons, or materials that students need to have that they did not receive in the class. Omar et al. (2012) suggested activities on Facebook “should be given a reasonable weighting in the course



so that learners feel that their efforts are worthwhile” (p. 72). Involving social media in learning in the EFL setting might not be successful if it does not have the same practice guidelines or if lacks support from the administrations that are involved in policy development. Educators will not be able to bring its usefulness to fruition.

Practitioners and policymakers should keep in mind that, although the implementing of Facebook in EFL learning settings can be useful to learners, setting up Facebook as an additional tool in teaching and learning might bring extra work that requires an additional time commitment from instructors. Also, it would require instructors to have Internet access and to be willing to spend a substantial amount of time with students; checking and responding to their questions online. One of the challenges of social media in the EFL setting is how to use it to its fullest benefit, since there are many technical and contextual factors in using social media. However, the benefit of social media use in education is to provide that community-like feeling in the learning process that can increase interaction, critical thinking, and make education more valuable.

### **Theoretical Implication**

This study drew upon the socio-cognitive theory which posits that a perception dictates behavior and affects performance in the environment (Atkinson, 2002; Cheng, 2010; Fahim & Mehrgan 2012; Matsuoka & Evans, 2004; Warschauer & Meskill, 2000). The results of the study showed that students used a mix of formal and informal types of writing when they engaged with writing on social media. In contrast, they only used formal types of writing in formal classroom settings. As such, individual students behave and perform based on their belief. The cognitive thinking and social interaction between individuals in the social environment leads to individuals’ behaviors. For example,

students perceived that Facebook was an informal learning tool, thus they were more likely to write informally on the Facebook platform (see Figure 23).

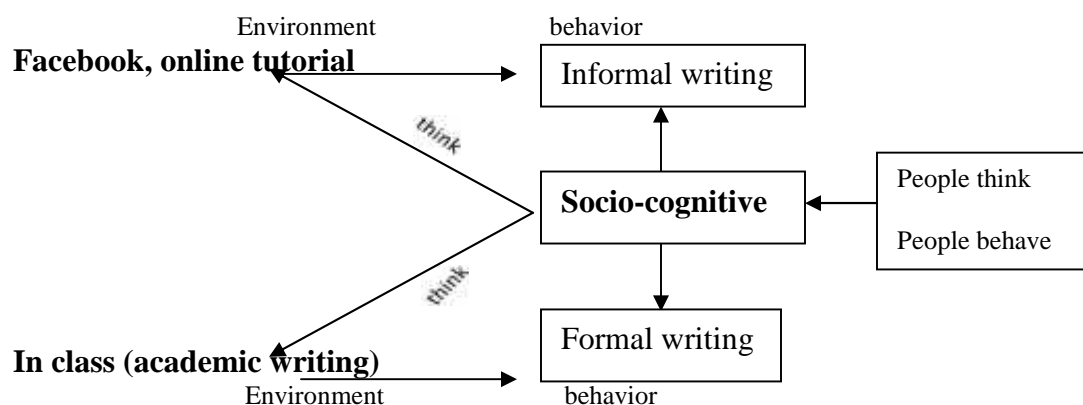


Figure 11. Thinking and behavior.

Social-cognitive theory postulates that the relationships between mind, interaction, and society are fundamental to learning. Using this conceptual framework to analyze the data, the implication derived from this theory is that educators should be aware of the power of the mind. The mind controls behaviors in the environment. For effective teaching and learning strategies, teachers should pay attention to learners' perspectives and attitudes toward the course, material, people, and the surrounding environment. For example, when students used informal writing a teacher should inform them of the appropriateness of writing style. Then the degree to which they used informal writing could be reduced. Guiding students in the right direction, such as telling them to use appropriate writing when they used informal writing, might help them change their perceptions and attitudes, which in turn could lead to a better outcome.

Overall, the socio-cognitive theory used for this study underscores the power of thinking to influence behavior or interactions in different environments. The repeated action, such as writing informally online, had no influence over the way the students

perceive the environment. However, it should be noted that this study did not look closely at the social interactions among the participants, which is one of the elements of the theory. Rather, the theory was used to focus on behavior (e.g. writing behavior) and environment (e.g. online tutorial lab/classroom).

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Based on the findings of this study several recommendations for future research are presented. First, this study focused mainly on students' writings on Facebook as an online learning platform and whether it influenced their academic writing. The main finding of this study is that students' informal writing on Facebook was not manifested in students' writing in a formal classroom. With this in mind, it is worth investigating how Facebook can assist English writing skills; for example, how it can assist students in writing a good paragraph and in organizing and connecting ideas between paragraphs well. In addition, there is no good model of using Facebook in assisting learning vocabulary in the existing literature. Second, future research in this area should include a larger number of teacher participants. In this study, views of the teacher who never used Facebook and of the teacher who used Facebook regularly in her personal life were different. There were only two teachers involved in this study; therefore, future research should increase the number of teachers with technology versus teachers more savvy with technology. Additional teacher input is needed to gain insight, ideas, and suggestions about the use of Facebook in English classroom assignments. Direct experiences and suggestions from teachers may give more constructive feedback and bring in new and practical information. Also, having teachers involved in the weekly correction and

checking on Facebook might be helpful because their comments could help improve English activities on the online tutorial lab.

In addition, as this study only included two groups of students from two sections, using more students in future research is suggested. At first, this study first was planned to involve about 60 students, but the number of participants did not meet this goal, since some students withdrew from the course and some were not serious about participation in the study as they did not show up regularly. As a result, the sample size was small. If more sections and more students are given, it might provide more solid information that might yield better or more transferable finding.

Fourth, future research should consider a longer period of time to study the use of SNSs, such as a regular semester-based study because it may yield richer data for the more accurate and better results of the study. Five weeks is too short to see improvement. This study did not focus on the improvement of the participants' learning and writing, but instead focused on the impact of Facebook on academic writing. If the study focused on the improvement of learning, 5 weeks may not be enough for credible findings.

Since this study did not focus on improvement in students' writing, future research should include different study designs, such as a quasi-experimental design. A pretest-posttest design could be used to measure the improvement and to measure the effect of Facebook on academic writing.

Another recommendation for future research is to observe actual writing in the classrooms and to apply a word limit to the writings on the two sources (Facebook and a classroom). This is for comparison. It is possible that observing more actual writings in a

classroom, and comparing writings from two different platforms with the same amount of words may yield different results.

The final recommendation for future research is to extend this study to other institutions that do not use English as a medium for teaching and learning. This is because students in these institutions may have different levels of writing proficiency than the students at CBU where English is used as a medium for teaching and learning. It would be worth conducting a study that includes multiple institutions with varying degrees of size and language medium teaching to increase generalizability of findings.

### **Conclusion**

This study shed light on students' academic writing behaviors on Facebook and addressed whether writing on Facebook influenced students' academic writing skills in the classroom. This study is significant in that it examined social networking as an academic resource (i.e. a tutorial online site) to facilitate meaningful interactions (English writing) among students in an authentic discourse community (on Facebook).

Facebook was useful for sharing knowledge among learners. Facebook can be an effective in enhancing student language learning if it is designed and used appropriately. Students' perspectives revealed that Facebook was a valuable and effective medium for learning language for specific purposes, such as assisting writing and providing updated information. Gumport and Chun (1999) mentioned that the purpose of applying technology to higher education is to improve the quality of teaching and learning. However, technology can be viewed as a double-edged sword in the educational setting. If the tool is used improperly, it can inhibit students from learning more than providing help (Liu, 2010). As Liu (2010) mentioned, education is not just about using another

fashionable technology tool, although there are some benefits to using Facebook for educational purposes. Thus, careful planning is necessary when using social media for educational purposes. Instead of using it as a learning tool alone, it can be used to assist writing or vocabulary, and to provide information.

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## Appendix A

### Nine Studies of Facebook in English Language Learning Environment

Overview	Data	Conceptual	Findings
<p>Hiew, W. (2012)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The research incorporated Facebook as it is the most prominent online SNSs among Malaysians</li> <li>- 46 respondents from public and private colleges and universities</li> <li>-The journal entries were analyzed using content analysis and categorized.</li> <li>- Frequency count was used to score the responses.</li> </ul>	<p>A qualitative method</p>	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Learners' perceptions towards the teaching and learning of English should be taken and reviewed seriously as it is a two-way process involving teachers and learners.</li> <li>-Teachers should take the initiative to ensure their teaching plans are effective while students' learning becomes meaningful through a myriad and mixture of teaching methods to cater to a majority of the students' learning styles and preferences.</li> <li>- An empathic teacher can motivate reluctant students to explore their maximum potential through consistent encouragement and self-assurance.</li> <li>-Besides, average and low proficiency students need to be proactive and consistently strive to improve their English language proficiency until they are able to achieve their maximum ability.</li> </ul>
<p>Kabilan et al. (2010)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Investigate if university students consider FB as a useful and meaningful learning environment that could support, enhance and/or strengthen their learning of the English language.</li> <li>-300 undergraduate students at Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Penang.</li> <li>-The procedure was done for three consecutive days, and for each day a total of 100 completed questionnaires were collected.</li> </ul>	<p>A quantitative survey</p> <p>(The instrument used in the survey was a questionnaire that consisted of two sections)</p>	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-It was found that the students believed FB could be utilized as an online environment to facilitate the learning of English.</li> <li>- It is suggested that future research should focus on the meaningfulness of FB to students' language learning experiences.</li> <li>- FB may have useful impacts on the aspects of (1) students' improvement of language skills and (2) students' motivation, confidence and attitudes towards English language learning.</li> <li>-The qualitative data analysis: (1) Improvement of language skills; (2) Confidence; (3) Motivation and; (4) Attitude, found that discussing this issue of improving and practicing of language skills cannot be done in isolation without intersecting with the students' motivation, confidence and attitudes towards English language learning.</li> <li>- This study has proven that learning of English in FB is feasible.</li> </ul>

<p>Omar et al. (2012)</p> <p>-Investigate ESL learners' participation in an information-sharing task conducted via Facebook groups and their feedback on the use of FB groups as the platform for the activity.</p> <p>-An intact group of 31 learners taking a communication course at a public university participated in the study.</p> <p>-The National University of Malaysia</p> <p>-Data analyzed in this paper were derived from a threaded online discussion and an open-ended questionnaire.</p> <p>-Descriptive statistical analysis was undertaken to obtain the frequency count and mean for posted messages across the groups and for the whole class.</p>	<p>-Descriptive statistical analysis</p> <p>-an open-ended questionnaire</p>	<p>case study approach</p>	<p>-In view of the positive feedback from participants, the OLD via FB groups can be regarded as a promising virtual tool and an environment that could promote constructive interaction among ESL learners.</p> <p>-It provides an alternative platform that can help support delayed responses in language use and practice.</p> <p>-Descriptive statistical analysis showed the learners' substantial contribution to the group discussion despite their limited language ability and technical problems.</p> <p>-It suggests FB would be a promising virtual tool and environment to promote interaction in English learning.</p> <p>-More activities using FB groups should be assigned for learners to practice and use communicative language.</p> <p>-Promoting awareness of available online tools and modeling effective use of the tools are suggested to help enhance learners' online interactions.</p>
<p>Promnitz-Hayashi's (2011)</p> <p>-This article discusses how simple activities in Facebook helped a lower language proficient class to become more comfortable participating in online discussions, giving their opinions and forging closer relationships with their fellow classmates to offer some initial observations on how the use of a SNS appeared to motivate learners to participate and take charge of online discussions</p> <p>-Twenty-seven lower language proficient</p>	<p>-Observation</p> <p>- Interview</p>	<p>-</p>	<p>- Students forming their own discussions on Facebook enabled the learning to become student-centered rather than teacher-centered and students were able to develop not only their computer literacy but also their social competencies.</p> <p>-These kinds of opportunities and environments may create conditions for facilitating the development of learner autonomy.</p>

<p>students in their first year college</p> <p>-Private university in Chiba, Japan</p>			
<p>Shih, Ru-Chu. (2011)</p> <p>-Investigated the effect of integrating Facebook and peer assessment with college English writing class instruction through a blended teaching approach</p> <p>- 23 first-year students</p> <p>- technological university in Taiwan</p> <p>- 18 weeks English writing class</p>	<p>Quantitative and qualitative</p> <p>-Pre-test and post-test of English writing skills,</p> <p>- a self-developed survey questionnaire,</p> <p>-in-depth student interviews</p>	<p>Blended teaching approach</p>	<p>Suggest that</p> <p>-Incorporating peer assessment using Facebook in learning English writing can be interesting and effective for college-level English writing classes.</p> <p>-Students can improve their English writing skills and knowledge not only from the in-class instruction but also from cooperative learning.</p> <p>- Facebook integrated instruction can significantly enhance students' interest and motivation.</p> <p>-Provide useful instructional strategies for teachers of ESL English writing courses.</p>
<p>White, J. (2009)</p> <p>-Discusses how Facebook can be used to enhance the motivational level of Japanese students who are more familiar with the traditional grammar translation method.</p> <p>- Nineteen first grade university students: 9 Japanese students, 5 Chinese, 1 Sri Lankan</p>	<p>-Qualitative analysis from observation of discussion</p> <p>- Informal interview</p>	-	<p>- Students tend to use a greater level of grammatical complexity and variety when using the discussion group.</p> <p>-Using Facebook as a homework activity increased the amount of homework submitted, reduced the level of mistakes and increased the level of effort of the students.</p> <p>-Students became more motivated in terms of in-class discussion and offered opinions in ways that were atypical for this level of learner.</p> <p>-Study showed some very positive improvements in grammar and spelling as well grammatical complexity.</p> <p>-Students became involved in their own learning and began to use English for informal communication.</p>
<p>Wu &amp; Hsu (2011)</p> <p>-Explore the influence of SNSs on EFL learners.</p> <p>-Aims to find out how social network affect EFL learners' language learning performance</p> <p>- 3-month action research that monitor EFL learners' engagements in the Facebook community of interest.</p>	<p>- Qualitative methodology (recording the postings on the community of interest on Facebook)</p> <p>- Interview</p>	<p>Social Cultural Theory</p>	<p>- The results of the current study presented an interesting phenomenon of students' engagements in the activities, which were greatly influenced by the nature of instructional activities and the feedbacks posted by their peers.</p> <p>- Suggests that through the interactions with their Facebook friends in target language, the students are able to learn new words, build confidence, increase their motivation and positive attitude toward language learning.</p>

<p>-The participants consist of forty-three freshmen of English major</p> <p>-A university in southern Taiwan.</p>			
<p>Yunus, Salehi &amp; Chenzi (2012)</p> <p>- Investigate the advantages and disadvantages of integrating social networking tools into ESL writing classroom and discuss the ways to plan activities by integrating social networking services (SNSs) into the classroom.</p> <p>-Fifteen third-year TESL students</p> <p>-State university in Malaysia</p> <p>- The researchers posted questions on the discussion board and the participants replied and reacted to the questions.</p> <p>- The researchers uploaded three open-ended questions on the online discussion board, and the participants were requested to answer the questions and interact with each other during the discussion period. After two weeks, the discussion was completed and the discussion contents were collected.</p>	<p>-Qualitative (three open ended questions )</p> <p>-The data were coded, categorized and interpreted</p>	-	<p>-Integrating social networking services in ESL writing classroom could help to broaden students' knowledge, increase their motivation and build confidence in learning ESL writing.</p> <p>-The students' difficulties in concentrating on the materials when they use computer, lack of enough equipment as well as access to internet, and teachers' insufficient time to interact with the students were regarded as the main disadvantages of integrating social networking tools into ESL writing classes.</p> <p>-SNSs enhance 1) outside classroom interaction and education between the students and the teacher; 2) they help to broaden students' knowledge; 3) they increase motivation and build confidence for students in using and learning English; 4) they train students' thinking skills and writing skills; 5) they help students to build and improve their vocabulary; 6) they provide a platform for the teacher to prepare the lesson efficiently such as pre-writing preparation; and 7) they provide large amount of information that can be shared between the teacher and students.</p> <p>-Students might not concentrate on learning when they use the computer online.</p> <p>-Informal short forms appear increasingly and they will affect students' actual writing.</p> <p>-Some social networking services make corrections automatically; if students get used to this, they will even forget how to spell a single word correctly.</p> <p>-There is no guarantee that all the information online is correct; it might mislead students in their language acquisition.</p>
<p>Yunus, &amp; Salehi (2012)</p> <p>-Examines the students' perceptions on the use of Facebook groups in teaching ESL writing.</p>	<p>- A quantitative and qualitative (mixed method) survey study (questionnaire</p>	-	<p>-Indicated that Facebook groups can be effective in teaching ESL writing.</p> <p>-The results showed that the students can learn new vocabularies from reading the comments of others in the group, and the</p>

<p>-43 students in TESL, in the Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM).</p>	<p>comprising 10 close-ended items)</p>		<p>spell-check feature helps reduce their spelling errors.</p> <p>-The finding may help ESL educators in incorporating ICT into their teaching repertoire.</p>
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## Appendix B

### Effectiveness of Facebook in English Language Learning Environment from Nine Studies

	Studies effectiveness	Hiew (2012)	Kabilan et al. (2010)	Omar et al. (2012)	Promnitz -Hayashi (2011)	Shih (2011)	White (2009)	Wu et al. (2011)	Yunus, Salehi & Chenzi (2012)	Yunus & Salehi (2012)
<b>positives</b>	promotes learner-instructor and learner-learner interactions			X	X	X	X	X	X	
	assists students in expressing their opinions and sharing their own thought				X	X		X	X	X
	provides the potential for collaborative and cooperative learning					X				
	reduces stress					X	X		X	
	builds critical thinking								X	
	creates motivation		X		X		X	X	X	
	builds confidence		X		X			X	X	
	assists making effort							X		
	helps broaden students' knowledge								X	
	improves students' writing skills		X				X		X	X
	helps students learn new vocabulary	X	X	X		X		X	X	X
	reduces grammar mistakes						X	X		
	reduces spelling mistakes						X			X
	helps in the brainstorming process								X	X
<b>Disadvantages</b>	is inappropriate for formal teaching and learning activities (not a suitable environment to learn English)		X			X				
	creates bad habits of relying on the online correction tools (vocab and spelling)									
	makes students' motivation to write lower							X		
	creates students' distraction									X
	creates habit of using too many short forms in writing (students use informal English leads to grammar mistake)							X		

## Appendix C

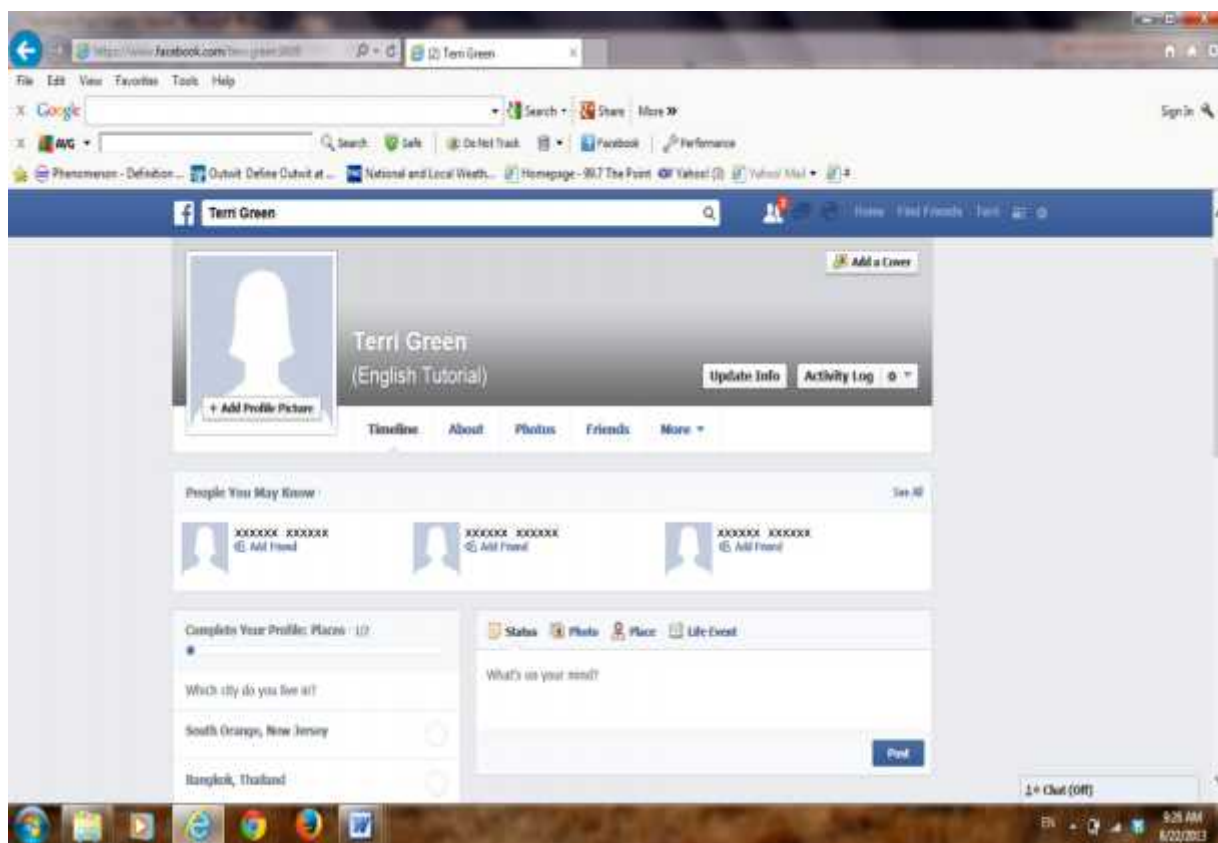
### Instructions for the Teacher/ Assistant

1. Introduce this project (online tutorial) to students as a special project. As an incentive let them know that if they participate in all 5 weeks activities, they will get 10 points for their special project. Explain to them that this project needs three things.
  - 1.1 Post and/or comment in English on Facebook page at least three activities a week. Students need to make sure that they participate in the activities or visit English tutorial lab at least once a week (in every week they need to post and write comments at least in the total of 3 activities on the wall). If they miss the week and come back and post it later, the participation point will not be counted for that week. That means they should finish the task in every week.
  - 1.2 Allow the researcher to have their copy of the first in-class writing.
  - 1.3 Some students may be chosen to participate in a 30-45 minute interview by chatting through Facebook.
2. Ask students if they want to participate. Distribute the consent forms to students who are going to participate.
3. Ask students to sign up for Facebook account by using the name codes provided.
4. Give students name codes (provided by me).
5. Assist students who do not know how to use Facebook.
6. Give me copies of students' first in-class writing.
7. During the project, assist students with questions they have.



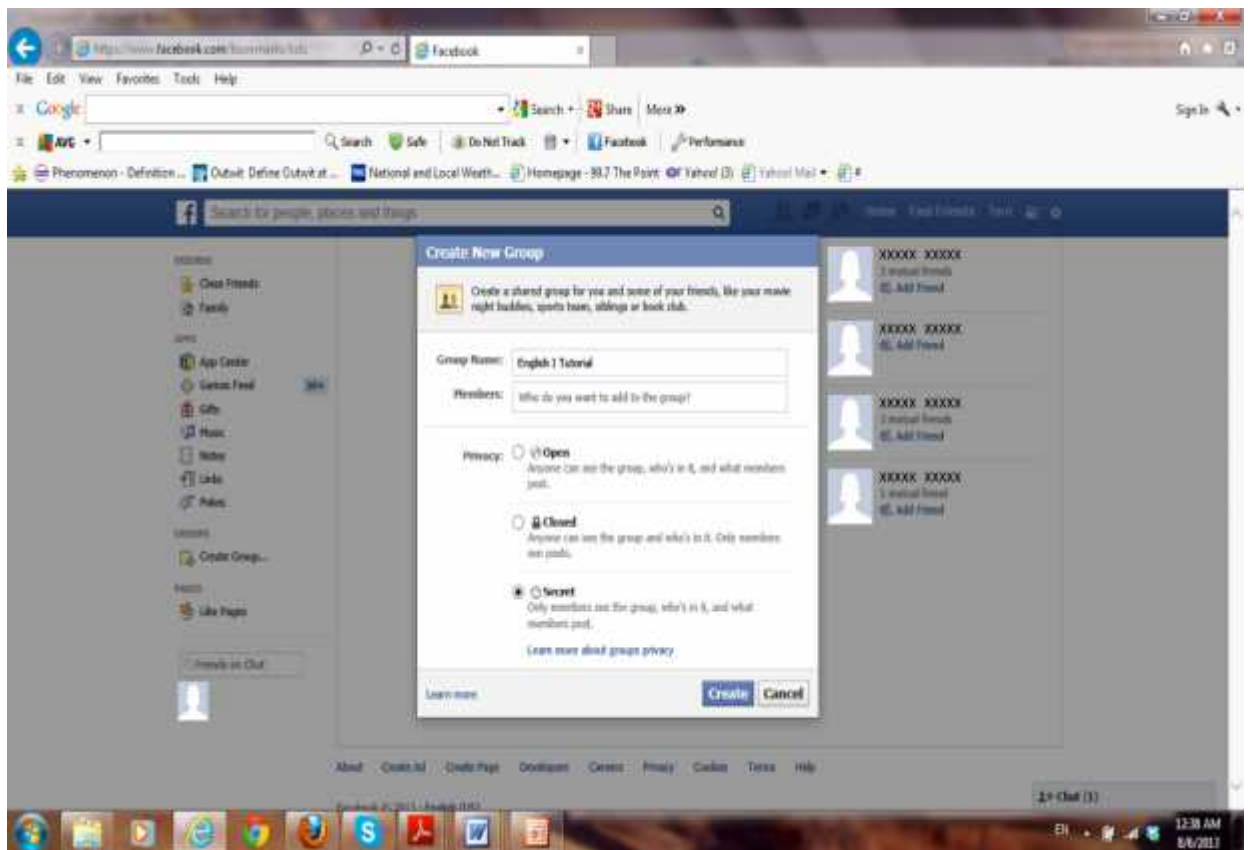
## Appendix D

### Facebook Tutorial Page



## Appendix E

### The English I Tutorial Group is Set Privacy as a Secret Group



In a secret group, people who can join are **the ones who are added to the group**, people who can see the group name and group members are **the only members of the group**, people who can see posts in the group are **only members**, people who can find the group in search are **only members**, and people who can see stories about the group on Facebook are **only members** (Facebook Help Center, n.d.).

<https://www.facebook.com/help/220336891328465/#What-are-the-privacy-options-for-groups>

## Appendix F

### Greeting Messages for the Five Week

#### **Week 1 Nov 6**

Welcome everybody to English I tutorial lab. I hope you will enjoy these activities. Lots more to learn and lots more to share.

#### **Week 1 Nov 11**

Let's count this as a first week. Let's do posting and commenting in the "English I Tutorial group" (not on the timeline).

I hope you guys will start posting something in the group. I hope you both, Whites and Browns will tell more friends come and join. Looking forward to see your posts and comments.

By the way, I really like you guys' pictures. They are so cool. Some are very funny pics. Nice job picking the pics!

#### **Week 2 Nov 17**

Welcome to English Tutorial Lab week two. Thank you for all your effort. Thank you for not giving up. I know it has been hard on you guys (Whites and Browns) last week. I believe where there is a will there is a way. We will get through this together.

Don't forget to do the activities this week! See you in the lab.

Enjoy the week!

Terri G. (the tutor)

#### **Week 3 (Nov 24)**

Howdy for week 3. Hope you all are enjoying asking questions and getting the feedback. The third week activity starts today, make sure you do at least 3 activities (post or comment) this week.

It was fun reading your posts and comments last weeks. Keep doing it. Post, repost and write comments. Remember, you learn well by doing it. Practice makes perfect.

By the way, I would like to hear from you guys about what is the difference between "just" and "only." This question was posted by Whitney Brown

Enjoy the week! Carpe Diem (Seize the day) Nov 24<sup>th</sup>

#### **Week 4 (Dec 1)**

Hola! Time flies. It is week 4. We are almost finished, one more week to go. I hope last week went well for you. I saw you guys posts last week. Enjoy reading them.

Don't forget that the 4th week starts now. As a reminder, we are more than half way through this tutorial class. If you have any questions, fire it off to me or your friends. Do your post and do comments on other posts.

For the ones who only do posts, please make sure you also comments on friends' posts.

A question from me this week....

Do you guys like what's going on our Facebook community so far? What do you like the most or what do you like the least?

Have a fantastic week!

**Week 5 (Dec 8)**

Welcome everybody to the last week of the project!!!

Finally, the journey has come to an end. I will miss reading your stuff. I hope you have some fun from doing this task and have learned something from this tutorial site.

I will leave it with the last question. Tell me one thing that you've learned in this 5-week period.

Don't forget to do last post and last comments this week. This week will be short. The last day to finish the activity is Tuesday night.

Thank you all, Mr. & Ms. Whites, and Mr. & Ms. Browns.

Please know that your participation is appreciated. Good luck with the semester.

Best wishes to all of you!!!

Have a great semester and great coming holidays.

Terri Green.

## Appendix G

### Criteria for Coding

Category	Definition	Criteria or coding rule	Interview excerpt examples
Breaking space-time constraints	To be freed from space or time limitation (non-restrictive space or time limits)	When the message is involved/ represented/referred to these words, it is coded.  convenient, anytime, anywhere, easy, not difficult, user friendly, at home, up to date, keeping in touch, unlimited time	“I think it is convenient and useful.” “I can use it anytime, any time” “I like it because it is easy to study English and easy to share some tips to another friends...”
Providing pleasant experience	To have an enjoyable experience	When the message is involved/ represented/referred to these words, it is coded.  fun, amusement; enjoy; pleasure, relax, entertain, feel good, no pressure, helpful, interesting, freedom	“That makes me feel enjoy because I can share knowledge in English with my friends” “I think the tutorial session is interesting, I like writing. I think writing allows me freely to express ideas”
Negative impacts	Lacking positive qualities Not wanted, non-productive or no significant or desired effect	When the message is involved/ represented/referred to these words, it is coded.  distract, interrupt, no face to face, not useful, not suitable, inconvenient, difficult use, no privacy, not learning	“No, I don't think so (that we use apply social media like Facebook into English classroom) because other things will interrupt me from studying”

### **Author's Biography**

Tharinee Kamnoetsin is a lecturer at Assumption University, Bangkok, Thailand. She has been interested in teaching and in education. She received a Graduate Assistantship (GA) from ELMP (Higher Education, Leadership, Management and Policy) at Seton Hall University. So she was on leave to pursue her doctoral degree at Seton Hall University. After finishing her degree she returned to Assumption University and recently is using her degree and knowledge working there.