RESEARCH ARTICLE

INVESTIGATING EFL COLLEGE STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD USING FACEBOOK AND ITS IMPACT ON WRITING SKILL

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT

This study aims at investigating EFL College Students' Attitudes Toward Using Facebook and its Impact on Writing Skill. The population of this research comprises the number of the students attending the third stage at English Departments in College of Basic Education and College of Education, Misan University. A random sample of fifty EFL students has been chosen to be the study sample. It includes 12 males (24%) and 38 females (76%). The participants range in age from 21 to 22 years. In order to fulfill the aim of the present study, a checklist is constructed by the researcher herself. The results of the checklist show that students have positive attitude towards Using Facebook and its Impact on Writing Skill.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Problem and Its Significance

There are many ways of presenting written language, using such technologies as the printing press, the typewriter, the computer and the mobile phone." So, writing is a basic communication skill and a unique asset in the process of learning a foreign language. To help the students write in a good way, the teachers should follow various techniques and methods to support their students to grow their abilities in writing since writing is important in studying all subjects and all professions. Only by writing well the student can give a good account of his/herself as a student (Barrass, 1995:2). Wenden (1991:15) states that learning the process of writing is a difficult skill for students to develop and learn, especially in EFL context, where exposure to English is limited to a few hours per week. Students, learning English composition, struggle with many structural issues including selecting proper words, using correct grammar, generating, and developing ideas about specific topics. These factors tend to hamper students from improving their classroom interaction and keep them from developing more active learning in writing. Due to this gap between student's needs and teacher's instructional

methodology, the issue becomes how teachers can help students express themselves freely, independently and fluently to be more autonomous writers, and how teachers can help students become more successful readers and writers of academic and work place texts (Kim & Kim, 2005:2).

The traditional technique (composition and essay) is not sufficient for teaching writing skills (Ghazwan, 2006:9). So, the researcher suggests that the teacher should find new techniques like Facebook to raise the student's achievement in writing. A Facebook is a significant technique in mounting communicative competence in a foreign language and enables the students to be in touch with their teachers through writing in an effective way and reflect their capacity in learning (Gebhard, 2006:223). The significance of the present problem lies in the fact that Facebook encourages introspection and reflection because students are essentially writing to and for themselves. Writing in Facebook is left to the individual learner to decide on how, what, when and where to publish or comment on posts for interactive learning and meaningful online language exchange (Van Lier, 1996: 5).

The present study tries to investigate EFL college students' attitudes toward using Facebook and its impact on writing skill.

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1.1. Aim of the Study

This study aims at investigating EFL college students' attitudes toward using Facebook and its impact on writing skill.

1.2. The Question of the Study

What do Iraqi EFL students think of using Facebook and its impact on writing skill?

1.3. Limits of the Study

The study is limited to:

1. EFL learners' attitudes towards the use of Facebook and its impact on writing skill.
2. Third stage (college of Basic Education and College of Education) English Department, Misan University.
3. The academic year 2014-2015

1.4.The Value of the Study

1. The researcher believes that the present study may help the teachers to adopt a new technique which reflects the students` capacity and their competency in writing.
2. The students may get benefits if they use this technique in expressing themselves by using computer or mobile phone

1.5. The Definition of Basic Terms

1.5.1. Attitude

The way that you think, feel, or behave (Oxford, 2009:44).

1.5.2. Facebook

It is one of the most popular social networking sites which allow users to post information, chat with others, and collaborate within the system (Stelter, 2008). It was founded in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg and is based on Web 2.0 technology and is available from any device with Internet access.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Whatis Writing?

It is both a physical and a mental act. At the most basic level, writing is the physical act of committing words or ideas to some medium, whether it is hieroglyphics inked onto parchment or an e-mail message typed into a computer. On the other hand, writing is the mental work of inventing ideas, thinking about how to express them, and organizing them into statements and paragraphs that will be clear to a reader (Nunan, 2003:50). Writing can also be identified as a method of representing language in visual or tactile form. Writing systems use sets of symbols to represent the sounds of speech, and may also have symbols for such things as punctuation and numerals (Internet). In the same way, it was defined as a set of visible or tactile signs used to represent units of language in a systematic way, with the purpose of recording messages which can be retrieved by everyone who knows the language in

question and the rules by virtue of which its units are encoded in the writing system (Florian, 1999:560).

2.2. Facebook (facebook.com)

Founded in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg, this social network site was formerly named thefacebook.com and was designed as a closed online social network, available only for Harvard University staff and students. Subsequently, network access has been extended to other universities and companies like Apple or Microsoft. Since 2006, Facebook provides free access regardless the membership in a university or company. The network is based on Web 2.0 technology and is available from any computer with Internet access, providing support for other several device types, including mobile devices, benefiting from optimized software interfaces, especially designed.

Users can look up for their friends from around the world and can build their own profile that can be public or private. The profile could be changed at user will or, public profiles could be blocked by the administrators if other users are reclaiming the content. Each user is allowed to post messages or photos which, also, could be public or could be addressed to a specific group or users. More recently, Facebook also provide different types of games for the users' entertainment (Stanciu *et al.*, 2012:60).

Facebook is also defined by Facebook is a social networking service founded in 2004, which is privately owned by Facebook, Inc. Facebook users may create a personal profile, add other users as friends, exchange messages, or join common interest user groups. Facebook currently has the dominant share of the social networking market and is not just the number one ranked social networking service but one of the most popular Websites on the internet. Facebook can provide students with the opportunity to effectively present their ideas, lead online discussions, and collaborate (Nicole A. Buzzetto-More, 2012:69).

2.3. Facebook and Writing

Yancey (2009:26−29) states that Students are engaged in a good deal of writing even in this era of ICT – in blogs, Twitter, text messages and, of course, FB. Strangely, students considered these types of informal writing as "communication" and not likened to the "writing" tasks that are given in schools. This shows that students are still unable to see the connection between the writing learned in the classroom and the meaningful communicative use outside of the classroom. Yancey then proposes the use of FB in helping students make that link in order to make them better writers.

Kabilan *et al.* (2010:179–187) states that 'FB groups' provides a space where ideas are posted in view of all, to be open to criticism as well as praise. Higher order thinking skills are put into play in organizing, synthesizing and analyzing these ideas both by oneself and peers in constructing knowledge. This makes up for meaningful learning when the members of the group are able to generate ideas that are shared by, and built upon through the response and feedback given by peers. A student may also gain confidence in writing through

the fact that his or her ideas are supported and agreed upon by peers, made known through the feedback received in the group. While sharing views, exchanging messages and comments on FB, students certainly develop a confidence in writing in English as a byproduct of their online socialization.

3. Procedures

3.1 Population and Sample

The population of the study includes 138 EFL students. They represent the number of the students attending the third stage at English Departments in College of Basic Education and College of Education, Misan University. A random sample of fifty EFL students has been chosen to be the study sample. It includes 12 males (24%) and 38 females (76%). The participants range in age from 21 to 22 years.

3.1. The Research Instrument

In an attempt to investigate Iraqi EFL students' attitudes towards using Facebook and its impact on developing writing skill, the researcher has constructed a twenty two-item questionnaire with fifty three subsidiary items (see Appendix1). Item 1 and item 2 are demographic information. The items 3-12 seek information on the acquaintance of EFL students with Facebook. The items 13-15 seek the EFL students' opinions on the introduction of Facebook into education. Item 16 is a general and introductory question about the effect of Facebook on EFL students' life.

4. Data Analysis

Below is a presentation of the questionnaire results. The collected data has been processed statistically; and conclusions have been drawn in the light of results, recommendations have been presented and finally suggestions for further studies have been proposed.

4.1.Results

1.Item 3 [What is your extent knowledge of Facebook?**]**

Table 4.1. Frequencies, Weighted Mean, Weighted Mean Percentile, Theoretical Weighted Mean and Theoretical Weighted Mean Percentile of Item 3

Very knowledgeable	knowledgeable	Somewhat knowledgeable	Not at all knowledgeable	Weighted mean	Weighted Mean Percentile	Theoretical Weighted Mean	Theoretical Weighted Mean Percentile	Attitude
17	16	12	5	3.62	90.5	2.5	62.5	Positive

Table (4.1) reveals that EFL students do know Facebook since the weighted mean (3.62) and the weighted mean percentile (90.5) are higher than the theoretical weighted mean (2.5) and the theoretical weighted mean percentile (62.5) respectively.

2.Item 4 [Do you have a Facebook account? (Circle): Yes: No:]

Table 4.2. Frequencies, Weighted Mean, Weighted Mean Percentile, Theoretical Weighted Mean and Theoretical Weighted Mean Percentile of Item 4

Yes	No	Weighted mean	Weighted Mean Percentile	Theoretical Weighted Mean	Theoretical Weighted Mean Percentile	Attitude
34	16	1.68	84	1.5	75	Positive

Table (4.2) reveals that EFL students do have and tend to have a Facebook account since the weighted mean (1.68) and the weighted mean percentile (84) are higher than the theoretical weighted Mean (1.5) and the theoretical weighted mean percentile (75) respectively.

4.2. Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. EFL students are familiar with Facebook and can use it without any difficulty. They spend a lot of time using Facebook on a daily basis. This may facilitate the use of Facebook in education.
2. Most EFL students encourage the introduction of Facebook to the education since they see it a very active tool especially in terms of providing and disseminating up-to-date reliable and authentic information liberally , providing cooperative and collaborative learning environment. All the students have the opportunity to participate especially those who are shy.

4.3. Recommendations and Suggestions

1.EFL teachers should encourage the use of Facebook in their classes. They should set up Facebook pages allocated for educational purposes. The Facebook pages should be controlled by already-agreed rules set by the teacher and his students.

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