

**Students' Perception of Using Facebook
as a tool for Practicing Report Writing
Skills and Feedback**

By:

Dr. Abdelrahman E. AlAdl

Assistant Professor of TEFL-Delta University
for Science and Technology- Egypt- Gamasa,
International Road

Students' Perception of Using Facebook as a tool for Practicing Report Writing Skills and Feedback

Students' Perception of Using Facebook as a tool for Practicing Report Writing Skills and Feedback

***Dr. Abdelrahman E. AlAdl**

Introduction:

Writing is the way of reflecting students' recognition of English (Kitchakarn, 2012). Technical report is a kind of writing assignments that is based on putting scientific skills in a written form. Writing technical reports requires a sufficient base in general writing, including acquaintance of common grammar and punctuation (Michigan State University, 2007). It also requires extra skills such as interpreting, analyzing, and applying different aspects of report items. Many students face these skills for the first time. They always claim that report writing is so complex task and always in need for help and guidance. Report writing is both a requirement for completing four credit hours courses at university and a central part of succeeding in future employment. Written communication is a crucial component of all academic activities. The skill of writing technical report in a concise and clear manner is the feature of an expert (Aweda, 2008). The expert academic person should explain the principle, figures, and other notions in a comprehensible piece of writing. All medical academics must report their work, usually in writing. The main aim of writing reports report is to communicate information to an academic receiver. So, reports should be established to concentrate on the requirements of this type of readers.

However, writing reports skill is essential for academic students, many of them find it so complicated to submit their drafts of technical reports. There are many factors,

*Dr. Abdelrahman E. AlAdl: Assistant Professor of TEFL-Delta University for Science and Technology- Egypt- Gamasa, International Road

which cause this weakness, such as the lack of sufficient motivation and training for different reasons, including teaching practices, lack of interest in writing English texts, and the negative perception of what technical reports are used for.

Due to the weakness in the technical writing skills among medical students, they are always in need for continuous feedback. Social media platforms have been considered as crucial for the enhancement of English language overall skills, for its prospective for activating language learning process. Many instructors believe that they have to provide significant remarks on written sheets to present a reader response to students' activities, to guide them advance as writers and to rationalize the level they have been given (Hyland 2003).

Facebook is a greatly interactive practical social communication tool, and it has become gradually more fashionable on educational campuses. Research outcomes have pointed out that Facebook could be a valuable platform for informal learning. Facebook contact can take place among students in a specific group created by their teacher (Al-Hammody, 2014). Teachers can create private groups for their students to share knowledge within the group, give comments on posts and ask and answer questions (Richardson, 2010).

Literature Review:

Fathman & Whalley (1990) explored the affirmative roles of revising process due to the given feedback on both content and structure. In addition, Ferris (2006) revealed that about 80% of L2 students were able to effectively correct faults that assigned by instructors in drafts, with only 10% giving wrong changes. Many researchers stated that there is a crucial relationship between teacher's feedback and development of students' ability. Kroll (2001)

suggested that error correction might play an essential role if the teacher understands when and how they correct errors and what kind of errors they should correct.

Although giving feedback on students' writing is a complicated task, it is essential process to respond to mistakes. There have been several studies that were focusing on the deep impact of varied feedback methods on students' writing enhancement (Ferris & Helt, 2000). Certain elements have always been analyzed in such studies as (a) the principle of giving feedback or not, (b) the idea of providing direct or indirect feedback, and (c) the notion of providing feedback to all or to particular types of mistakes. According to Ferris & Roberts (2001), direct feedback is provided when the teacher gives the right form for the students. While, indirect feedback occurs when the teacher assigned in specific manner (giving codes or underlying) that an error committed but does not provide any corrections.

In the contrary, some researchers claimed that written feedback for students' mistakes in writing is hopeless and totally prevented any enhancement in their writing process (Kepner 1991& Fazio 2001). Moreover, Truscott (1996) didn't believe that there is advantage in this type of feedback. Consequently, several types of feedback have been argued recently to avoid the negative effects of traditional methods.

For example, online peer review and teacher feedback on students' writing are recent techniques of several instructors, as social media process of giving feedback becomes easy-to-use interface, always update, and interactive comment environment (Wu, 2005).

Various modifications have been achieved in terms of the approaches in the teaching and assessment process regarding the speedy improvement in information and

Students' Perception of Using Facebook as a tool for Practicing Report Writing Skills and Feedback

communication technologies. Facebook is one of the most common social networking sites that let users to write down information, communicate with others, and work together within the system (Stelter, 2008). Apart from this, students are able to keep away from face-to-face contact thus decreasing the level of anxiety (Murphy, 2009). So this learning environment may increase inspiration and risk taking in language learning.

Facebook may also offer numerous academic merits to teachers, that it helps them connecting with students regarding coursework, activities, useful links, and models of work that are created from both within and outside the traditional classrooms (Thanawan S. & Punchalee, 2012).

Regarding online peer feedback, contrasting with face-to-face written or verbal remarks, it has the following benefits: (1) place autonomous; (2) time independent; (3) no pressure for fast reply; (4) the capability to examine dialogues (Tuzi, 2004).

Promnitz- Hayash (2011) claimed that a social networking, such as Facebook, can be an effective tool and encouraged autonomous learning within a social environment for students. It created motivating, fun and helps to strengthen social relationships among students compared with email practical instrument to assist reliable types of communication through contacting appropriate topic with real persons (Kroonenberg, 1995). Besides, Facebook seemed to be quite available for students, as they might not have a computer at home, or over an internet connection but most of them count with a mobile which allows them to access from almost any point around the world. Another advantage is that Facebook enables learning to become student-centered rather than teacher-centered.

Additionally, Manan, Alias and Pandian (2012) reported that Facebook practices enhance the stage of

communication among students through supporting a secure learning atmosphere. Students at a low proficiency level feel more comfortable and less confused when they contribute in online activities than face-to-face in-class arguments, which are mainly dominated by the high proficiency students. Further, Facebook allows students to work together and connect in vigorous competition with each other, which, as a result, enhances their learning (Harris & Rea, 2009). For example, through contributing in debate, asking questions, and requesting for feedback or ideas, students can become aware of the advancement their peers are making and feel motivated to do better.

Wu & Hsu, (2011) considered Facebook as learning and teaching tool as well by arguing that students commonly react to communications rapidly and feel sufficient comfortable in their opportunity to exchange their ideas and information. They also mentioned that the part of the students can also change from only getting information to both exchanging and searching their acquaintance. In addition, teachers have more interactions with students through Facebook by providing suitable feedback.

Linh & Suppaset (2015) conducted a study to develop an instructional design model for assisting students in learning collaboratively using Facebook groups to improve their English writing skills at the beginning stage of their university education. The findings revealed that the elements of this model was satisfied and appropriate for giving EFL writing instruction in Facebook groups. The FBCL Model may also be beneficial in providing an instructional framework to EFL writing instructors and instructional designers.

Statement of the problem:

The aim of this study is to use facebook as a platform for assisting students in enhancing their writing skills

collaboratively using Facebook groups. In addition to, making use of given feedback from the teacher and the peer. At last to investigate how students behave in their writing correction and their attitude towards using facebook group in writing performance and feedback.

Research Questions:

1. What are the advantages of using Facebook as a tool of practicing writing skills among medical students of Delta University?
2. What is the students' attitude towards Facebook as a tool for getting feedback on their writing?

Methodology:

A. Participants:

The current study was conducted in Delta University in November 2016 for exploring the students' attitude towards the effectiveness of using facebook for improving technical report and getting peer and teacher feedback. 30 students from the Faculties of Pharmacy and Dentistry, who are completing their course of technical report writing skills, were involved in a Facebook group that formed for this study named 'Technical Report Writing1'. They were asked to involve in the prepared activities, including writing their first drafts of technical reports and providing feedback comments for each other. They were also encouraged to involve in generating thoughts and providing opinions dynamically. All These activities were done to produce beneficial learning atmosphere, moreover, let students utilizing Facebook group to improve their writing skills. At last, they replied to a 12-item questionnaire that was administered after one month of involvement in the Facebook group.

B. Instrument and Data Analysis

The 12 items in the questionnaire aim to explore students' attitude towards using Facebook group for

improving their technical writing skills in terms of the overall performance and make use of peer corrective feedback. It was consisted of three sections, the first one is based on students' personal information related to their, gender, language proficiency, their background with facebook, and whether they are familiar with facebook groups or not.

The next section was composed of ten open-ended questions with the common type 4-level Likert Scale of 'Strongly Agree', 'Agree', 'Disagree' and 'Strongly Disagree'. The last section is composed of two open-ended questions to give the opportunity for students to express their point of views on how Facebook helps them in writing first draft of technical report, whether or not it enhances their trust or motivation to write, and how they respond to and make use of peer feedback.

Findings and Discussion

The findings are presented according to the 12 questionnaire items (Appendix A), the writing improvement, peer feedback and students' attitude. The scores of every open-ended item in the questionnaire are incorporated in the area each is grouped under.

The first part of the questionnaire confirmed that each respondent has a Facebook account. 80% respondents log in very habitually with the choice of options '2-3 hours per day' and 'more than 3 hours a day', while six students from the total 30 (20%) chose the element of 'once or twice per a week' and 'less than an hour daily' which revealed that they access Facebook occasionally. All of them have the sufficient experience of Facebook groups and were participated in more than one group other than 'Technical Report Writing1'. This data was valuable to provide the researcher a clear image about students' acquaintance about Facebook groups. This implies that the data were collected

**Students' Perception of Using Facebook as a tool
for Practicing Report Writing Skills and Feedback**

according to their perceptions can be valid because they were reacting based on the prior experience of accessing Facebook groups.

The next basic part of the questionnaire is posed to find out the students' attitude towards the effectiveness of Facebook group in improving technical writing skills and peer feedback. The findings are grouped into two categories: overall Disagree (students' selection of 'Disagree' and 'Strongly Disagree') and the other overall Agreement (students' selection of 'Strongly Agree' and 'Agree' as shown in the following Table:

Table 1. Students' attitude towards Facebook groups in improving writing and getting peer feedback

No.	Items	Overall Disagree (%)	Overall Agree (%)
1	Introducing my process of writing on the group guides to arrange my ideas before the writing process.	13	87
2	I gain vocabulary terms while reading the remarks of my classmates and teacher on the group.	6	94
3	The spell-check technique assists me to decrease spelling and structure mistakes.	4	96
4	The thought and ideas that are posted by my classmates on the group assist me to provide better opinions before writing.	14	86
5	I get it simple to achieve my technical report after contributing in the group communications.	3	97
6	I read the structure of technical reports before I share them on the group.	9	91
7	By browsing the posts, I have the ability to provide feedback for the other.	10	90
8	I feel free of any anxiety to post my thoughts on the group.	12	88

9	I was encouraged by my classmates “liking” my remarks or comments.	8	92
10	I was interested in conveying topics or thoughts on the group rather than sharing them in the classroom sessions.	9	91

Table 1 showed that large numbers of students totally response positively to the statements which support the element that Facebook group is an assistance for technical writing enhancement. The collected data provide answers to the first question of the study that “how Facebook group guides students in their writing enhancement. It was evident that the group guided in arranging their ideas before the writing process, acquiring new vocabulary from reading remarks of others in the group, decreasing spelling mistakes through the spell-check technique, assisting in getting better thoughts before writing from the given points or issues that were posted by classmates, and students getting it simple to finish their reports after contributing in the group communications. The top overall percentage is 97% who expressed their agreement to the item ‘The thought and ideas that are posted by my classmates on the group assist me to provide better opinions before writing’. This indicates the significance of flowing opinions by all persons in the group conversations, and the efficiency of online peer feedback at all.

The next high percentage of 96% was to the element of decreasing spelling and structure mistakes. When students were uncertain of the spelling of a word, they wrote it in the comment box, red lines would appear if the spelling was wrong. Through this technique, they could simply ‘right-click’ on the word to notice the recommended spelling of words by the spell-check order. This is option is not available to ‘paper and pen’ writing and if students were to meet troubles with the correct spelling, it would be tiresome

for them to search for them in the dictionaries (Yunus & Salehi, 2012).

Based on the qualitative data collected from the initial open ended question in what way does Facebook group guide you to improve your writing skills? How?' it is indicated that the high repeated comments given include that the group helps in the technical report progression to arrange ideas and increase vocabulary amounts.

A student reacted "Facebook group helps me in the planning stage before the actual writing, in the pre-writing stage and also to generate ideas for my writing" different other remarks given include:

- 1) 'Assists in receiving tips on the framework of technical report'
- 2) 'Stimulates prior knowledge before the writing process'
- 3) 'Assists regarding grammar and spelling, classmates would present adjustment if there are any errors.'

Items (6, 7, 8, 9, and 10) of the questionnaire are posed to show how students get their peer feedback, in addition to the second open ended question. In item 8, 88% of them expressed their agreement that they were free to post their opinions on the group and 92% were encouraged when their classmates 'like' their comments. The students' positive tendencies regarding Facebook groups influencing the students' thoughts, can be indicated by the fact that students have enough time to think about what they want to comment on the given issue, do it in the ease of their own freedom, and the special 'like' aspect which could promote students to mention more and feel esteemed by the group through their comments. 91% of students show their preference to discuss the topics with peer online rather than in the classroom. They have confidence and autonomy; moreover they acquire the skill of criticizing. The helpful feedbacks from classmates were precious to remain them

motivated to write even more. When their comments are 'liked' by classmates, this will enhance their trust and encourage them to contribute dynamically in the group because their comments and attendance are being valued. Their respond to the open ended question (What is your attitude towards using Facebook as a tool of getting peer feedback and how do you respond to it) showed that the most of them get their peer feedback positively, and they are encouraged to write more to get more feedback presented in "like" and "comments". Here are samples of responses;

- 1) 'I am provoked to write more by acquainting that others will read my comments'.
- 2) 'Yes, particularly after receiving valuable feedback from friends'.
- 3) 'Yes, when my friends' 'like' my comments'.

Conclusions:

Based on the attitude of 30 students in this study, Facebook group does guide in their technical writing skills. Their reactions have revealed that large number of them accept that they acquire new vocabulary through reading the remarks of classmates in the group, and the spell-check element helped in decreasing their spelling mistakes. In addition, feedback by peers guides them to construct better arrangement for writing and they also find it simple to achieve their reports after contributing in the group conversations. Moreover, the results also suggest that students feel very confident when they use Facebook with friends by leaving messages to them and to post, tag, or share files within community groups. In addition, receiving peer feedback on Facebook to guide students in their writing process can be an effective way to improve sentence structure as well as enhancing their learning motivation of such a difficult technical course. The limitations of the

study are the small size of sampling and a qualitative study should be conducted to further investigate more in-depth information on students' learning.

It is suggested that additional studies could pay attention to the challenges of employing Facebook groups in teaching and enhancing writing skills. Facebook is available for education and can be an empowering tool if properly used. Therefore, rules or guidelines for the use of Facebook have to be set. It can be beneficial if used in the right way since most students are already engaged in using it. Further research ought to be conducted class projects, writing book reviews, and making presentations. In addition, students can practice other skills, such as reading, speaking and listening with other students on Facebook.

References

- Al-Hammody, A. (2014). When a Facebook Group Makes a Difference: Facebook for Language Learning, *ELTWorldOnline.com*, Vol. 6, <http://blog.nus.edu.sg/eltwo/?p=4224>
- Aweda, J.O & Lasode O.A (2008). *A Guide to Report Writing in Engineering*, University of Ilorin, Mechanical Engineering Department, Technical report 2008-06.
- Fathman, A. & E. Whalley (1990). Teacher response to student writing: focus on form versus content. In Kroll (ed.), 178–190.
- Fazio, L. (2001). The effect of corrections and commentaries on the journal writing accuracy of minority- and majority language students. *Journal of Second Language Writing* 10.4, 235–249.
- Ferris, D.R., & Helt, M. (2000). *Was Truscott Right? New Evidence on the Effects of Error Correction in L2 Writing Classes*. Paper presented at the American Association of Applied Linguistics Conference, March 11-14, 2000, Vancouver, BC.
- Ferris, D.R., & Roberts, B. (2001). Error Feedback in L2 Writing Classes: How Explicit does it Need to Be? *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 10, 161-184.
- Ferris, D. (2006). Does error feedback help student writers? New evidence on the short- and long-term effects of written error correction. In K. Hyland & F. Hyland (eds.), 81–104.
- Harris, A. L., & Rea, A. (2009). Web 2.0 and virtual world technologies: A growing impact on IS education. *Journal of Information Systems Education*, 20(2), 137–144.
- Hyland, K. (2003). *Second language writing*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

- Kepner, C. (1991). An experiment in the relationship of types of written feedback to the development of writing skills. *Modern Language Journal* 75.3, 305–313.
- Kitchakarn, O. (2012). Incorporating Peer Response to Writing Process. *Executive Journal, Bangkok University* 32 (3): 70-76. Retrieved from http://www.bu.ac.th/knowledgecenter/executive_journal/july_sep_12/pdf/aw09.pdf
- Kost, C. R. (1999). Enhancing communicative language skills through effective use of the World Wide Web in the foreign language classroom. *Foreign Language Annals*, 32, 309-320.
- Kroll (2001). Consideration for teaching an ESL\EFL writing course. In M. Celce-Murcia. (Ed.), *Teaching English as a second or foreign language* (219-232).
- Kroonenberg, N. (1995). Developing communicative and thinking skills via electronic mail. *TESOL Journal*, 4(2), 24-27.
- Linh& Suppasetseree (2015). The Development of an Instructional Design Model on Facebook Based Collaborative Learning to Enhance EFL Students' Writing Skills, *The IAFOR-Journal-of-Language-Learning*, Vol.6
- Manan, N. A., Alias, A. A., & Pandian, A. (2012). Utilizing a social networking website as an ESL pedagogical tool in a blended learning environment: An exploratory study. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Education*. 2(1), 1–9.
- Michigan State University, (2007) *Technical Writing Guide*, Michigan State University Department of Biosystems and Agricultural Engineering Farrall Hall, East Lansing, Michigan www.egr.msu.edu/age
- Murphy, E. (2009). Online synchronous communication in the second-language classroom. *Canadian Journal of*

- Learning and Technology*, 35(3). Retrieved from <http://www.cjlt.ca/index.php/cjlt/article/view/539/262>.
- Promnitz-Hayashi, L. (2011). *A learning success story using Facebook*. *Studies in Self- Access Learning Journal*, 2(4), 309-316.
- Richardson, W. (2010). *Blogs, wikis, podcasts, and other powerful web tools for classrooms*. California, CA: Crowin.
- Stelter, B. (2008). MySpace might have friends, but it wants ad money. (Business/Financial Desk). *The New York Times*, 157(54343), C4(L).
- Thanawan S. & Punchalee (2012). Effects of Using Facebook as a Medium for Discussions of English Grammar and Writing of Low-Intermediate EFL Students. *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, Vol. 9, No. 2, pp. 194–214.
- Tuzi, F. (2004). The impact of e-feedback on the revisions of L2 writers in an academic writing course. *Computers and Composition*, 21, 217-235.
- Wu, W. S. (2005). Using blogs in an EFL writing class. *Proceedings of 2005 International Conference and Workshop on TEFL & Applied Linguistics*, Taiwan, 426-432.
- Wu, P.& Hsu, L. H. (2011). EFL learning on social networking site?: An action research on Facebook. Presented at Teaching & Learning with Vision Conference. Queensland, Australia, November 2011. Retrieved February 3, 2012, from <http://tlvconf.files.wordpress.com/2011/04/tlv-paper-wu.pdf>
- Yunus Md. & Hadi Salehi (2012), The Effectiveness of Facebook Groups on Teaching and Improving Writing: Students' Perceptions, *International Journal of Education and Information Technologies* (1), V 6, pp. (87-96), 2012.