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(MP092021)

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL)

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OCTOBER 2013
I declare that this thesis entitled “Utilizing A Social Network Site in English Literature Learning” is the result of my own research except as cited in the references. The thesis has not been accepted for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in candidature of any other degree.

Signature : Azrina

Name : Azrina Abdul Rahman

Date : 30th December 2013
To Abah, who taught me boundless amount of patience, Mak, my true pillar of strength, Aji, the anchor to my rocky boat, Imran, the better half of me and my greatest gift, Isabelle, who made it all worthwhile.

This is made with love.
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine how a Social Network Site, Facebook could promote English literature learning. The study also aims to identify stances and levels of understanding that students adopt in their literary responses via Facebook as well as to examine how Facebook promotes English literature learning among students. Currently, there is still a need for researches on the utilization of Social Network Sites in a school setting as most literature focuses on the tertiary institution. Ten students from an urban secondary school in Johor Bahru, Malaysia were involved in this study across 10 weeks. A total of 43 literary responses via Facebook were analyzed and categorized based on An Instrument for Measuring Reader Stance on an Efferent or Aesthetic Continuum and An Instrument for Rating a Reader’s Level of Understanding. Emerging themes that surfaced suggested that Facebook is a potentially useful tool in promoting English language literature learning. In addition, this study found a unique occurrence termed as Multiple Levels of Understanding that exist within a literary response. Ten interviews were analyzed and interesting perceptions in relation to students’ experiences in utilizing Facebook for English literature learning were identified. This study highlights that Social Network Sites could potentially be useful and effective in English literature learning in a school setting.
ABSTRAK

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Social network sites are becoming a popular medium of communication among students nowadays. Due to the rapid development of Web 2.0, numerous Social Networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Ning and Myspace are becoming an integral part of life of the Generation Y. In this light, it is apparent that the way students in schools communicate has significantly changed. Thus, it is only natural for English language teachers to expect that the learning styles of these students will inevitably evolve and possibly include the social network sites that these students are hooked on. These circumstances also apply to the teaching and learning of English literature in Malaysian schools. Teaching and learning of English literature in schools should also evolve to suit the current needs and interest of the present internet-obsessed generation.

Although there are numerous studies about the integration of social network sites (SNSs) in English language learning both in Malaysia and internationally (Saunders, 2008; Clark & Gruba, 2010; McCarthy, 2010; Shih, 2011; Grant, 2008; Stevenson & Liu, 2010, Arnold & Paulus, 2010, Kabilan, Norlida & Mohamad Jafre 2010), most studies focused on tertiary or higher education students and educators.
Evidently, there are still ample room on the research of the utilization of social network sites in school setting, particularly in Malaysia. This chapter will include the background of the study, statement of problem, research objectives and questions, scope, theoretical framework, significance of study and definition of terms.

1.1 Background of the Study

Internet World Stats (2012) reported that there were 17,723,00 internet users in Malaysia, which is the 60.7% of the population in the middle of 2012. It is reported that more than 11 million of these users are 15 years old and older (ComScore, 2011). Furthermore, ComScore (2011) listed that social network sites accounted for one third of all time spent online in Malaysia in August 2011, ranking as the top online activity for the market. Possibly, younger users of the Internet and Facebook might be found in urban areas in Malaysia, where facilities for them to do so are more accessible.

Clearly, social network sites (SNSs) such as Facebook is a platform of communication that teachers should not ignore. It might just be the needed bridge to engage students in English Literature learning in schools. It is time for Facebook to be seen as leverage instead of a nuisance. Thus, it would be interesting to examine how Facebook could facilitate the conventional learning process in school in hope that more students would be ‘logged in’ rather than ‘logged out’ in class.

Several scholars have discussed related ideas. McCarthy (2010) highlighted that the communication and relationships originally generated in the virtual environment can be welcomed into the classroom. Lomicka & Lord (2009) similarly acknowledged the ability of the individual users to pool resources, produce, and share content with other users in social network sites that could be beneficial in learning languages.
Most recent research on the utilization of social network sites in English language learning concentrate on finding out the possibility of Facebook being used for general English language learning (Harrison & Thomas, 2009; Roblyer et al. 2010; Kabilan, Norlida & Mohamad Jafre 2010; Arnold & Paulus 2010; Shih, 2011, Imran Ho-Abdullah et al. 2011). One research by Colwell, Hutchison & Reinking (2012) focussed on the utilization of Ning (a social network site) among literature teachers. However, research on utilization of Social Network sites in schools are still scarce, especially in terms of literature teaching and learning.

The teaching and learning of English language literature is a must in every Malaysian Government Secondary schools. In 2010, the literary texts in these schools have been changed in light of feedback and suggestions of the stakeholders. However, it is reported that most teachers are still stuck with the teacher centred approaches in teaching literature in schools (Suriya Kumar, 2004; Siti Norliana, 2003; Hwang & Embi, 2007; Radzuan, Vethamani & Shireena, 2010). Therefore it will be fascinating to examine how Facebook could be utilized in the learning of the English literature component as it defies the norms of teaching and learning of literature in Malaysian Secondary Schools.

1.2 Statement of Problem

According to a research by Hwang & Embi (2007), the approaches that teachers employ to teach literature in class are largely attributed to six factors namely the exam oriented culture in the Malaysian school setting, students' language proficiency, selection of literary texts, large group classes, attitudes of students and the training received by teachers. Given this challenging array of circumstances, it is no wonder that teachers are often face with a dilemma on how to engage students in learning the English language, let alone attempt to comprehend and enjoy the compulsory literature component that comes along with it. Students on the other hand, have varying levels of proficiency, making it even harder to experience a
conducive learning environment that enables them to comprehend and enjoy the English literature being taught in class. Radzuan, Vethamani and Shireena (2010) confirms this by concluding that teaching literature to less proficient students requires a different favourable approach, an idea which Hwang & Embi (2007) also found in their study.

Furthermore, literature teaching and learning seems to be approached quite the same way for the past 10 years since English literature was introduced in Malaysian schools. Mostly, literature lessons are found to be teacher centred, where the teacher is always in control, focusing on students' comprehension and explanation of the literary text (Suriya Kumar, 2004; Siti Norliana, 2003) as well as teachers utilizing teacher-centred teaching approaches such as the paraphrastic approach, information-based approach and moral philosophical approach (Hwang & Embi, 2007; Radzuan, Vethamani & Shireena, 2010).

Perhaps, if the teaching of literature could be integrated with students’ obsession on social network sites, the notion of mundane teaching and learning of literature could be revolutionized. Goodwin-Jones (2008) similarly proposed that teachers and educators should take advantage of students’ fixation with social networking sites and explore how it could benefit the learning of English Language.

Therefore, Facebook could be a free and readily available avenue that appeals to the students in terms of learning English literature. The missing part of this equation is an external form of guidance to show these students how Facebook could be a beneficial learning tool rather than a mere avenue for interacting with friends and playing games. This is aligned with the ideas expressed by Prensky (2005) and Jenkins (2006) where they feel that many teachers overlook, ignore, or fail to wholeheartedly embrace the tech literacy that the students are familiar with. In this case, the tech literacy platform that the students are familiar with is Facebook. Facebook could possibly be a solution of students who could not engage in the conventional setting of classroom learning as it offers them opportunity to review materials at their own pace and exchange opinions and information with other friends. Furthermore, Facebook’s numerous interfaces that enable the students to
share all sorts of media, graphics and sounds could help spark the long awaited interest in learning literature and foster creative methods of comprehending and responding to the literature texts.

1.3 Research Objectives:

1. To identify the stances and level of understanding that students adopt in their literary responses via Facebook for English literature learning.
2. To examine how Facebook promotes English literature learning among students.
3. To investigate students’ perceptions of English literature learning via Facebook.

1.4 Research Questions

The research questions for this study are:

1. What are the stances and level of understanding students adopt when discussing literature in Facebook?
2. How does Facebook promotes English literature learning among students?
3. What are students’ perceptions of English literature learning via Facebook?
1.5 Scope

This research aims to examine how Facebook promotes English literature learning among students. It also aspires to identify the stances and level of understanding that students adopt when discussing English literature in Facebook. In addition, this research intends to investigate the challenges of English literature learning via Facebook. Thus, this research did not focus on the utilization of Facebook in learning the English language although it might be an indirect consequence of the study. For the purpose of this research, literature refers to one short story entitled ‘QWERTYUIOP’ and one poem entitled ‘He had Such Quiet Eyes’ from the selected literary texts in Form Four English language syllabus. The short story focused on the aspect of characters and characteristics while the poem focused on themes. In addition, Facebook served as a platform and medium of learning these two literary texts. One particular feature in Facebook that made this happened is ‘Group’. Therefore, all features of Facebook in ‘Group’ were allowed to be utilized by the participants in this study. Findings should not be generalized to those outside this sample. The figure below will help to illustrate the scope explained earlier:

![Diagram](image-url)

**Figure 1.1** Scope of research
1.6 Significance of the Study

This research will be beneficial to teachers in schools who are struggling to grasp their students’ attention and engage them in English language literature classes. As it is, learning a second language is challenging enough for these students and trying to grasp the literature component might be a bigger challenge for them. This research could help teachers identify aspects of Facebook that could contribute positively to the literature learning process and also understand the limitations that come along with it. By recognizing the features in Facebook that appeal to students, better teaching approach utilizing Facebook could be executed. Identifying specific activities that motivate students to learn literature will enable teachers to be better facilitators of knowledge as future utilization of Facebook in literature learning will be far more effective for students. Perhaps this research could also shed some light on the varying needs that students with different proficiency levels have in learning literature. Consecutively, this will enable teachers to reach out and engage every student in the classroom, a mission that is rarely accomplished in the conventional classroom setting.

Furthermore, students will be able to experience using social network sites (SNSs) for educational purposes that will help them to widen their perspective about the usage of such sites. Parents and other stakeholders will also benefit as students will be able to make better decisions about how to utilize their time on the Internet and channel their fixation on Facebook for a wiser cause.
1.7 Theoretical Framework

This research upholds the Social Constructivist Worldview that stems from the social constructivist, where individuals seek to comprehend the world that they live and work in (Creswell, 2009). Learning is deemed as a social process, where meaningful learning only happens when people work together collaboratively (McMahon 1997; Ernest 1998). Furthermore, Harrison & Thomas (2009) pointed out how social constructivism is able to provide a theoretical framework and the key concepts to comprehend the complex layers of interaction that occur when language learners use social network sites (SNSs) (Harrison and Thomas 2009).

Since this research hopes to identify the features in Facebook for learning English literature that appeal to students and activities that motivate them to learn literature, therefore, it takes into account what the students perceive and feel. Thus, adopting the Social Constructivist Worldview theory is appropriate. The goal of a research that upholds Social Constructivist Worldview is to depend mostly on the participants’ perception of the situation being studied, emphasizing on open ended questions based on specific context (Lantolf, 2000). This is aligned with the methodology adopted for this research which is Phenomenology. Distinctively, the Hermeneutic Phenomenology by Van Manen (1990, 1984, and 1991) guided this research, where it aims to produce insights into human experience and focus on the phenomenon (Van Manen, 1990).

Furthermore, hermeneutic phenomenology, according to Hein & Austin (2001) highlights that researchers construe human experiences as if it were a text and the outcomes of these studies are viewed as texts that offer valuable and profound accounts of the phenomena. Phenomenological approaches also are good at surfacing deep issues and making voices heard (Lester, 1999). Through the usage of Phenomenology in this research, the real perceptions, attitudes and reactions of the participants could be documented in order to generate a pattern of meaning that could be derived from their experiences. Therefore, the research would be able to discover and explore the actual thoughts and accounts that the participants experienced during the utilization of Facebook in their English language literature lessons. This study
was also closely guided by Kolb’s (1984) Experiential Learning Model, which defines learning as a process where knowledge is created through the transformation of experience (Kolb, 1984). In addition, the Reader Response Theory, initiated by Rossenblatt (1983), specifically the concept of reader’s stance, guided the analysis of the data in this research.

Figure 1.1 is an illustration of how all these theories fit together in moulding this research:

**Figure 1.2**  Theoretical Framework of This Study
1.8 Operational Definition of Terms

The following are several terms that will be referred to throughout this research:

Social Network Sites: Boyd and Ellison (2007) define them as “web-based services” that permit individuals to:

a) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system,

b) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and

c) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.

Boyd (2008) further adds that “social network sites” is a combination of a variety of social media genres (blogs, instant messaging, email, bulletin boards, chat and media sharing) and it is not a mere tool to meet new people online. Instead it emphasizes how individuals could “articulate relations”. Thus, in this research, the term social network sites will be used and it specifically refers to Facebook.

Facebook: A social network site that is utilized as a platform to learn literature component in this research. It is a free platform, needs registration from users and comes with a variety of features that allows sharing of various form information and media among members.

Literature: This refers to the English language literature component that is taught in Malaysian Government schools, which is a part of the English language subject. The texts selection and syllabus are done by the Malaysian Ministry of Education it is taught to both primary and secondary schools. For the purpose of this research, the literature component referred to is the Form Four English language literature component only, which is one short story (QWERTYUIOP) and one poem (He Had Such Quiet Eyes). This research does not extend to another subject called English literature that is available as a subject on its own in Malaysian Government Schools.
**Participant-experiencer:** Coined by Wolstrom (2004), it is a term to define the role of a researcher who is involved in the online setting being studied. This includes the role of an active contributor to the group, where the researcher could be posting messages and participating in discussions online in the group being studied. In this research, this term is utilized as it accurately defines the role of the researcher in this study, which involves a mixture of virtual observation and participation.

**Multiple levels of understanding:** Literary responses that contain two or more Understanding Level based on the *Instrument for Rating a Reader's Understanding* (Appendix B). This term materialized in this study as different Understanding Levels were found in one literary response. Thus, this term is utilized in this research to describe such responses.