

OPEN ACCESS

Volume: 12

Special Issue: 1

Month: June

Year: 2024

E-ISSN: 2582-1334

Received: 19.05.2023

Accepted: 20.01.2024

Published: 29.06.2024

Citation:

Chalermphong, W. N.,
Raksasri, T., Sornkeaw,
J., & Chantha, P.

(2024). Facebook
in ESL Classroom:
Class Engagement via
Community Building and
Development of Socio-
Pragmatic Competences.
*Shanlax International
Journal of Education*,
12(S1), 90–95.

DOI:

[https://doi.org/10.34293/
education.v12iS1-
June.6874](https://doi.org/10.34293/education.v12iS1-June.6874)




This work is licensed
under a Creative Commons
Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0
International License

Facebook in ESL Classroom: Class Engagement via Community Building and Development of Socio-Pragmatic Competences

Wararee Ninkoson Chalermphong

Nakhon Sawan Rajabhat University, Thailand

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-2387-6298>


Thitirat Raksasri

Nakhon Sawan Rajabhat University, Thailand

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-5978-6493>


Jittraphorn Sornkeaw

Nakhon Sawan Rajabhat University, Thailand

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-5609-990X>

Pichakorn Chantha

Nakhon Sawan Rajabhat University, Thailand

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-0728-9874>

Abstract

This article explores the multifaceted role of Facebook in second language (L2) classrooms, with an emphasis on English language teaching and learning. Through Facebook's widespread popularity and its integration into educational settings since its launch in 2004, this article aims to address the gap by examining the benefits and teaching approaches associated with Facebook in L2 classrooms. The first section focuses on the improvement of L2 learning engagement through community building on Facebook. Utilizing ideas from social and collaborative learning, such as building learner communities that foster trust, connectedness, and engagement. The second section discusses on the development of socio-pragmatic competence through Facebook. The article argues that the development of socio-pragmatic competence via Facebook's distinctive features, such as the ability to link people worldwide based on shared interest, allow learners to engage in authentic cross-cultural interactions. This engagement is seen as essential for raising awareness of socio-pragmatic norms and practicing language use in authentic contexts. The article concludes that regardless of place and time, Facebook's task-based approach to language learning greatly enhances learners' socio-pragmatic skills.

Keywords: Facebook, Second Language (L2) Learning, Language Teaching, Classroom Engagement, Community Building, Socio-Pragmatic Competence

Introduction

Facebook was invented and launched by Mr. Zuckerberg in February 2004. It was originally created as the sheets paper system for Harvard University students, it allowed them to sign up, create profiles, and share personal information to stay connected with their friends and families as well as make new connections. After being launched, Facebook started gaining more signed-up users from other universities in America (Junco, 2012). In 2005, access to Facebook had expanded to upper-secondary school students in the country and then further expanded its popularity worldwide. In present days, Facebook is recognized as one of the most popular social communities, boasting the highest

number of active members among all existing online networking platforms. In the same way, Facebook also plays various important roles in the academic world, with educators and learners actively participating in this virtual community (Tufekci, 2008). Nadkarni and Hofmann (2012) suggests that the platform's high accessibility is attributed to the well-designed features, including messenger chatting, Groups, personal feeds, links, posts, tagging, and mutual friends. These features not only support daily interactions but are also broadly employed as tools for educational purposes, including second language learning (Kabilan et al., 2010). However, compared to other technology programs such as Microsoft Office, the popularity of Facebook use in the L2 classroom still remains low and is not recognized as a mainstream platform for language teaching and learning (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004). Consequently, this article aims to discuss benefits and teaching approaches in the L2 classroom, specifically English in this case, based on two main pedagogical aspects: Classroom engagement of L2 learning via community building and Socio-pragmatic competence development.

Class Engagement of L2 Learning via Community Building

According to Lantolf (2006), a community of learners is one of the important factors that support language learning. McMillan and Chavis (1986) provided a definition of community in educational aspects, emphasizing trust, connectedness, engagement, and mutual interests and expectations among members. Mazer et al. (2007) have mentioned that Facebook functions support these aspects of creating communities in both student-to-teacher and student-to-student relationships. This is to say, their previous research indicated that by accessing Facebook, students likely observe the mutual lifestyles and interests of their classmates or even their teachers. This aspect helps them feel more comfortable in communicating which leads to better outcomes for language learning.

This idea is supported by O'Sullivan et al. (2004) who mentioned in their previous study that a Social Network Community is helpful in creating language learning communities. To elaborate, according to

their experiment, learners who were allowed to access teachers' personal social media, such as Facebook, tended to gain higher motivation and reported greater effectiveness in language learning. Furthermore, their findings from the mentioned study significantly claimed that attitudes toward their instructors and language classes were also positively developed. Similarly, Kok (2008) has mentioned that the Facebook environment provides a sense of belonging to the same community for both learners and instructors, which can build trust among them, thereby increasing the willingness to express ideas and share their points of view.

Wellman et al. (2001) have noted that Facebook functions, such as Group, are designed to connect people who share similar interests limitlessly. Therefore, it allows educators to contribute to either public or private groups specific to a language course. As a result, the instructors can provide instructions, and simultaneously, students can collaboratively share their understandings, issues, or discussions related to language through this function. In other words, educators are facilitated to connect in both academic and social ways through Group posting functions and personal feeds, respectively. Consequently, this platform could potentially lead to a student-centered approach, incorporating social and collaborative learning processes (Althaus, 1997).

According to Weisskirch and Milburn (2003), the Group platform on Facebook supports learning a second language through an online discussion platform, providing learning activities outside the classroom with natural communicative language practice between teachers and students (Supyan & Azhar, 2008). A previous study by Hamzah (2006) revealed evidence of the benefits of teaching and learning L2 via online discussion on Facebook. Using this platform could lead to increased engagement among students and teachers due to less pressure in the environment. Consequently, it is also effective in assisting introverted learners to be more collaborative in the discussion, as an online platform allows more privacy and personal space in interaction compared to face-to-face platforms (Ismail et al., 2012).

Not only is online discussion beneficial for shy students, but it also helps instructors reach learners with lower language proficiency. This is to say, limited L2 ability and limited time in face-

to-face discussion are always obstacles for learners to express their ideas or opinions. In contrast, the online platform provides more time for students to revise their posts before publishing. The evidence suggests that online discussion via the Group feature on Facebook could encourage students' engagement even outside the language classroom.

Development of Socio-Pragmatic Competence via Facebook

According to [Eslami-Rasekh \(2005\)](#), pragmatic competence, concerning language, refers to the use of language in a specific sociocultural context including both pieces of knowledge of speech functions and the appropriateness of language use in particular contexts. Besides, it is further explained by [Rose \(2005\)](#) that the definition of pragmatics also covers the way that communicators employ language to accomplish their goals based on social values and norms to maintain relationships with receivers. From the perspective of language learning, socio-pragmatics should be considered a crucial aspect of language acquisition in order to avoid misunderstandings or impoliteness in the communication of the target language ([Eslami-Rasekh, 2005](#)). This aligns with previous findings from [Kramersch \(1985\)](#), which highlighted issues with typical classroom-based language learning. Such approaches often overlook pragmatic components, leading to unsatisfactory language progress among learners. In other words, even advanced learners may struggle to communicate in L2 without socio-pragmatics skills. To delve into this issue, [Bardovi-Harlig \(2001\)](#) conducted an observation and identified one of the factors contributing to unsuccessful language learning in typical classroom-based language learning – the use of unauthentic samples from textbooks and limited access to pragmatic resources, including conversational rules and norms in L2. Similarly, [Vellenga \(2004\)](#) reported the result of ESL textbooks' investigation that even though there are some discussions about socio-pragmatic contexts found in L2 textbooks, there are only a few examples of real situations for using appropriate speech, and unfortunately, most of them are not up-to-date. To address this specific issue, [Belz and Kinginger \(2003\)](#) have emphasized the benefits of technology integration in language classrooms

for overcoming certain dilemmas of classroom authentic interaction. This, in turn, contributes to the development of pragmatic skills through personal relationships. To elaborate, learners' understanding in socio-pragmatic areas is provoked when they have merged themselves in real situations or abroad context of relationships, including those in internet-mediated communications. In other words, these technological functions can provide L2 learners with opportunities to virtually interact with native speakers or even speakers of other languages in an authentic environment. This interaction allows them to improve their cross-cultural understanding, which is one of the key goals in language teaching and learning ([Dornyei & Csizer, 2005](#)).

According to its function of linking people, Facebook is different from other electronic tools as it facilitates users to broaden their connections with people who share mutual interests from every corner of the world. In other words, it can possibly be assumed that Facebook users engaged in academic purposes are linked by their mutualities such as age, hobbies, activities, mutual friends, etc., regardless of their L1 ([Belz, 2007](#)). For this reason, they are motivated to use English as a medium of communication to discuss topics they share a mutual interest in. According to [Kasper \(1997\)](#), there are two main approaches to learning pragmatics in a second language: raising awareness in socio-pragmatics and practicing that awareness in real communication. Based on Kasper's suggestion, it is further explained by [DeKeyser, \(2007\)](#) that both approaches can be achieved through the Facebook application, as detailed below.

Socio-Pragmatics Awareness Raising

The pragmatic awareness of L2 learners can be heightened by observing naturally written exchanges among group members who share a common interest in specific topics. This observational approach is recognized as one of the effective ways to learn and notice language use in specific communities. Learners are able to observe actions and reactions within conversations, enabling them to notice the appropriateness of that specific language use ([Lave & Wenger, 1991](#)). According to previous studies by [Lantolf \(2006\)](#), Facebook functions enable language

learners to gain pragmatics awareness inductively which literally means that learners acquire data from their observations and then categorize them into language rules. Furthermore, [Lantolf \(2006\)](#) have also presented in their findings that the speech acts generally found on Facebook discussion walls include greeting, negotiating meaning, apologizing, questioning, and negation. By noticing the specific threats of language in different speech acts on Facebook, learners will be able to comprehend and understand the relationship between culture and language.

Socio-Pragmatics Awareness Practicing

Not only is awareness-raising, but in order to become a successful language learner, it is also important to practice using speech acts in real contexts. As mentioned by [Eslami-Rasekh \(2005\)](#), practicing L2 pragmatic competence is a more advanced step for language learners after gaining awareness. The Facebook Group platform, by providing opportunities for learners to immerse themselves in real cultural context through peer group interaction, allows learners to make choices in their L2 use in their collaboration. They can evaluate corrections of language use based on the responses from other users ([Prensky, 2006](#)). To elaborate, L2 learning through interaction on the Facebook application is grounded in the theory of task-based learning ([Ellis, 2003](#)). That is, Facebook users are allowed to practice and learn the language through real-virtual world tasks, where L2 acquisition occurs when learners focus not only on forms but also on discourse meanings to accomplish the communicative tasks. Regardless of place and time, learning L2 via Facebook supports a task-based approach in L2 teaching. This approach is similar to placing learners in English-speaking countries, where learners are indirectly forced to play the roles of language users, adjusting and employing the same social rules of communicative processes as they participate in real-world activities. Besides, according to Ellis's previous research, it has been found that by practicing and interacting via Facebook in L2, learners' socio-pragmatics skills are significantly improved, especially when they can recognize gaps in their linguistic repertoire.

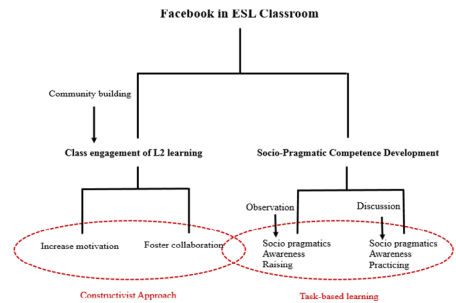


Figure 1 Diagram Presenting Key Research Questions

Discussion

The use of Facebook, in ESL classrooms has both positive aspects and challenges that need to be considered for effective implementation. It is commendable how Facebook can create a sense of community among learners, fostering trust, connections, and shared interests. However, the informal nature of the platform can make it challenging to maintain a boundary between teachers and students, potentially blurring academic interactions. To address this challenge, it is important to establish guidelines for interactions, emphasizing professionalism and encouraging active participation in group discussions related to the course content. Facebook's global reach offers learners opportunities for real-world language use and cross-cultural interactions, enhancing their social competence. However, there are also challenges such as the spread of misinformation and the need for monitoring to ensure respectful communication. To tackle these challenges effectively, structured activities within Facebook groups can be designed with a focus on social aspects. Incorporating peer review mechanisms can provide feedback that fosters a positive environment while minimizing issues related to misinformation.

Privacy concerns and ethical considerations pose obstacles associated with the nature of Facebook. There is a risk of sharing information, and ethical dilemmas arise regarding the collection and use of student data. These concerns require attention throughout the implementation process. To ensure privacy and compliance with guidelines, it is important to implement privacy settings within educational groups. Educators must also prioritize

considerations, and transparently communicate data usage policies to maintain trust. One challenge that may arise is the exclusion of students who choose not to use or do not have access to Facebook. This can be influenced by socio factors, digital literacy levels, or cultural preferences. To address this issue and promote inclusivity, it is essential to provide alternative platforms or modes of communication. Educators should consider the diverse needs of students, being ready to accommodate various preferences and accessibility requirements.

While Facebook aligns with language learning theories, its effectiveness may vary based on individual learning styles. Some students may find discussions less effective compared to face-to-face interactions. To strike a balance and cater to diverse learning preferences, adopting a blended learning approach that combines interactions on Facebook with traditional classroom activities can provide a more comprehensive language learning experience. This integration allows students to benefit from the advantages of both online and in-person interactions, fostering a dynamic and adaptable language learning environment.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Facebook serves as a powerful tool for fostering relationships within and beyond the classroom. It not only facilitates connections between teachers and students but also fosters interactions among students themselves and with real-world communities. Consequently, it enhances collaboration among students in language classrooms, promoting a dynamic and inclusive learning environment. Moreover, the 'Groups' feature on Facebook provides students with the unique opportunity to observe and practice their pragmatic skills within a community that shares common interests. It is worth noting that this feature supports the application of second language learning theories, such as constructivist approaches, task-based learning, and student-centered approaches, fostering engagement in second language acquisition. While Facebook presents possibilities for ESL education, it is crucial to carefully examine potential challenges in order to navigate them effectively. It is crucial to establish guidelines that address privacy concerns, promote inclusivity, and align strategies in order to

fully leverage the advantages of integrating Facebook into ESL classrooms. As technology continues to progress, ongoing reflection and adaptation are vital to making the most of media platforms for language education. Educators should stay attuned to emerging trends and innovative practices to ensure effective and meaningful language learning experiences in the digital age.

References

- Althaus, S. L. (1997). Computer-mediated communication in the University classroom: An experiment with online discussions. *Communication Education, 46*(3), 158-174.
- Bardovi-Harlig, K., & Griffin, R. (2005). L2 pragmatic awareness: Evidence from the ESL classroom. *System, 33*(3), 401-415.
- Belz, J. A. (2007). The role of computer mediation in the instruction and development of L2 pragmatic competence. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, 27*, 45-75.
- Belz, J. A., & Kinginger, C. (2003). Discourse options and the development of pragmatic competence by classroom learners of German: The case of address forms. *Language Learning, 53*(4), 591-647.
- DeKeyser, R. (2007). Study abroad as foreign language practice. *Practice in a Second Language: Perspectives from Applied Linguistics and Cognitive Psychology* (pp. 208-226), Cambridge University Press.
- Ellis, R. (2003). *Task-Based Language Learning and Teaching*. Oxford University Press.
- Eslami-Rasekh, Z. (2005). Raising the pragmatic awareness of language learners. *ELT Journal, 59*(3), 199-208.
- Garrison, D. R., & Kanuka, H. (2004). Blended learning: Uncovering its transformative potential in higher education. *The Internet and Higher Education, 7*(2), 95-105.
- Hamzah, M. (2006). Use of computer-mediated communication to facilitate second language acquisition. *Online Teaching and Learning in ELT*. University Sains Malaysia.
- Ismail, N., Hussin, S., & Darus, S. (2012). ESL students' attitude, learning problems, & needs for online writing. *GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies, 12*(4), pp. 1089-1107.

- Junco, R. (2012). The relationship between frequency of facebook use, participation in facebook activities, and student engagement. *Computers & Education, 58*(1), 162-171.
- Kabilan, M. K., Ahmad, N., & Abidin, M. J. Z. (2010). Facebook: An online environment for learning of English in institutions of higher education?. *The Internet and Higher Education, 13*(4), 179-187.
- Kasper, G. (1997). The role of pragmatics in language teacher education. In K. Bardovi-Harlig & B. Hartford (Eds.), *Beyond Methods: Components of Language Teacher Education*, McGraw-Hill Education.
- Kok, A. (2008). An online social constructivist tool: A secondary school experience in the developing world. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education, 9*(3).
- Kramsch, C. J. (1985). Classroom interaction and discourse options. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 7*(2), 169-183.
- Lantolf, J. P. (2006). Sociocultural theory and L2: State of the art. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 28*(1), 67-109.
- Lantolf, J. P., Poehner, M. E., & Thorne, S. L. (2015). Sociocultural theory and L2 development. In B. VanPatten, S. Wulff & G. D. Keating (Eds.), *Theories in Second Language Acquisition* (pp. 223-247), Taylor and Francis.
- Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge University Press.
- Mazer, J. P., Murphy, R. E., & Simonds, C. J. (2007). I'll see you on 'Facebook': The effects of computer-mediated teacher self-disclosure on student motivation, affective learning, and classroom climate. *Communication Education, 56*(1), 1-17.
- McMillan, D. W., & Chavis, D. M. (1986). Sense of community: A definition and theory. *Journal of Community Psychology, 14*(1), 6-23.
- Nadkarni, A., & Hofmann, S. G. (2012). Why do people use Facebook?. *Personality and Individual Differences, 52*(3), 243-249.
- O'Sullivan, P. B., Hunt, S. K., & Lippert, L. R. (2004). Mediated immediacy: A language of affiliation in a technological age. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 23*(4), 464-490.
- Prensky, M. (2006). *Don't Bother Me, Mom, I'm learning!*. Paragon house.
- Rose, K. R. (2005). On the effects of instruction in second language pragmatics. *System, 33*(3), 385-399.
- Supyan, H., & Azhar, J. (2008). The prospects of online forum at tertiary level. In A. R. Norizan & A. Ghafur (Eds.), *Policy and Implementation of E-learning at Institutions of Higher Learning* (pp. 108-122). Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.
- Tufekci, Z. (2008). Can you see me now? Audience and disclosure regulation in online social network sites. *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society, 28*(1), 20-36.
- Vellenga, H. (2004). Learning pragmatics from ESL & EFL Textbooks: How likely?. *Electronic Journal for English as a Second Language*.
- Weisskirch, R. S., & Milburn, S. S. (2003). Virtual discussion: Understanding college students' electronic bulletin board use. *The Internet and Higher Education, 6*(3), 215-225.
- Wellman, B., Haase, A. Q., Witte, J., & Hampton, K. (2001). Does the internet increase, decrease, or supplement social capital? Social networks, participation, and community commitment. *American Behavioural Scientist, 45*, 436-455.

Author Details

Wararee Ninkoson Chalermphong, Nakhon Sawan Rajabhat University, Thailand,

Email ID: wararee.n@nsru.ac.th

Thitirat Raksasri, Nakhon Sawan Rajabhat University, Thailand, **Email ID:** thitirat.r@nsru.ac.th

Jittraphorn Sornkeaw, Nakhon Sawan Rajabhat University, Thailand, **Email ID:** jittraphorn.s@nsru.ac.th

Pichakorn Chantha, Nakhon Sawan Rajabhat University, Thailand, **Email ID:** pichakorn.c@nsru.ac.th