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## Effects of Facebook usage on English learning behavior of Thai English teachers



Phiyapa Sirivedin <sup>a, \*</sup>, Weerachat Soopunyo <sup>b</sup>, Sunti Srisuantang <sup>c</sup>,  
Achana Wongsothorn <sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Doctoral Program in Human and Community Resource Development, Faculty of Education and Development, Kasetsart University, Kamphangsan Campus, Nakhon Pathom 73140, Thailand

<sup>b</sup> Department of Life Long Education, Faculty of Education, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok 10330, Thailand

<sup>c</sup> Department of Human and Community Resource Development, Faculty of Education and Development, Kasetsart University, Kamphangsan Campus, Nakhon Pathom 73140, Thailand

<sup>d</sup> Ministry of Education, Bangkok 10300, Thailand

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### ABSTRACT

This research investigated the use of Facebook to enhance the effectiveness of English writing and learning among English language teachers. English language learning through Facebook design was evaluated using the results from data collected from 403 completed copies of a questionnaire. The questionnaire sought responses on the problems, needs, readiness, and suggestions of the respondents—Thai teachers of English in 437 Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) schools. Seventeen BMA teachers who exhibited a keen interest in using Facebook over other social media were selected as test subjects. One facilitator was included. All participants used the English language to interact on Facebook every day for six weeks. A mixed method consisting of qualitative and quantitative approaches was employed to analyze the collected data. The frequency, percentage, and content analysis were used to analyze the qualitative data consisting of the survey questionnaires, observations on interaction through Facebook sites, in-depth interviews, participants' reflections, and self-notes. A t-test was used to analyze quantitative pre- and post-test data. The findings of this study indicated that Facebook could significantly help improve writing skills, namely accuracy, meaningfulness, clarity, and relevance. It also effectively enhanced teachers' English learning attributes, namely fluency, confidence, satisfaction, value, and self-efficacy belief.

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### Introduction

As one of the main contributors in the learning process, it is Thai teachers who teach English who have been given the burden to prepare Thai people to become members of the ASEAN community. However, previous studies have shown some problems regarding their skills, such as their

knowledge, ability to teach, and skills in daily English usage. These problems have been caused by a shortage in training budgets, resources in language learning, and information (Yodsinsin, 2009). They have affected the teachers' abilities to convey language content, to build a proper learners' attitude toward English, and to develop human resources to fit the context of the ASEAN community. Thus, a well-designed language learning approach to enhance their quality development must be created. Statistics show a high frequency of usage of online social networks, at 87.05 percent, in Thailand, especially in Bangkok (Bonk, 2002).

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: [s.phiyapa@hotmail.com](mailto:s.phiyapa@hotmail.com) (P. Sirivedin).

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Studies have also revealed the benefits of online social networks on learning, especially Facebook. The opportunity has been presented for a new language learning approach—the integration of the online social network with language learning (Lorsomrudee, 1999).

#### *Online Social Network and Learning*

Gagne (1971) indicated that appropriate and conducive external conditions can promote the process of learning in the brain. Online social networks can be a platform providing these appropriate and conducive external learning conditions. Previous studies showed evidence supporting this claim as follows.

Butcher and Gibson (2010) indicated that an online social network could provide a communication interface that is easy to use. The effective use of technology may assist with learners' overall satisfaction and develop intellect among learners outside classrooms. Liu, Horton, Olmanson, and Toprac (2011) reported that learners could mostly learn through online social networks. The new media technology environment can motivate better learning which in turn creates a much more effective development than traditional learning. It allows a free-learning, interactive environment regardless of time and place.

A summary of the studies also revealed that humans can achieve maximum efficiency in learning with the advantages of online technology (Butcher & Gibson, 2010; Kanthawongs, Thanapongpan, & Boripun, 2011; Wattanawong, 2004; Willis, 2008).

#### *Facebook as a Learning Platform*

Shih (2013) concluded that language learning through Facebook is also a way to effectively improve the grammar skills (tense and structure) of learners, while Kajornboon (2013) indicated that Facebook is a powerful tool to be used as a space for learning English and promoting learning attributes. It can make learning more effective especially when focused on the diversity of experience or knowledge of learners. Many studies reported the conclusion that, through Facebook, learners with different amounts of experience and knowledge could interact with each other. They exchange information, ideas and knowledge, and help assess or edit each other comments while learning together (Knowles, 1980; Troike, 2006; Yang, 2004). These assessment fulfilled learners' and teachers' demand for English excellence (Wongsothorn, 2010). Learners who received feedback while writing, achieved better results in their overall writing test scores (AbuSeileek & Abualsha'r, 2014).

Thus, the researcher believes that the integration of Facebook with English learning can be an alternative approach to improve the quality of English teachers as well as country development. Besides, there has been no study on the use of Facebook as a channel for the development of English language teachers in Thailand. Therefore, the research aimed to investigate the effect of Facebook to enhance the effectiveness of English writing and English learning attributes among English language teachers. Research questions asked whether Facebook effectively improves writing skills and enhances teachers' English learning attributes.

## **Methods**

The mixed method consisting of qualitative and quantitative approaches was used in this study. The study was performed in two steps as follows.

#### *Survey Step: the Development of a Learning Platform on Facebook*

Four hundred and three completed copies of a questionnaire were collected and used as samplers in this stage. The collected data were synthesized along with the theories and results from related studies. English language learning through Facebook design was completed prior to the experiment by the researcher. It consisted of the definition of five principles for English learning through Facebook and a plan for learning platform on Facebook. The five principles focused on: participants' needs, freedom, and willingness; a relaxing environment; technology convenience; method diversity; and motivation. The plan consisted of five steps: preparatory, conformity, operation, evaluation, and changes in attributes. They were investigated by experts in three fields: Information Communication Technology (ICT), English Language Teaching, and Teaching English through Online Social Networks.

#### *Experimental Step: the Implementation of Learning Platform on Facebook*

Seventeen BMA teachers—Teacher Da, Teacher Yok, Teacher Mut, Teacher Pe, Teacher Mote, Teacher Wit, Teacher Rat, Teacher Diew, Teacher Wee, Teacher Joy, Teacher Thip, Teacher Honey, Teacher Preecha, Teacher Nit, Teacher Su, Teacher An, and Teacher Ruchwere—were purposively selected to be involved in the implement project. The one facilitator in the project was the present researcher. The implementation project was divided into five steps: preparatory, conformity, operation, objectives resolution, and changes in attributes. The learning participants were registered and the pre-test was employed. The facilitator and learning participants learned to understand the activities, agreement, and objectives prior to the operation step. Then, they were involved in group interaction using English language to communicate (chat, share, exchange, correct, motivate, discuss, debate, play, and enjoy) with each other in a relaxing atmosphere. Self-notes, observation, and group reflection were recorded regularly. A post-test was administered after the operation step had been completed. Then, the in-depth interview was performed. The learning period continued in the last step which was a time for new learning activities in a more authentic environment such as practicing with a native speaker and network building.

#### *Participants*

##### *Participants 1*

In total, 1,170 Thai teachers who teach English in 437 schools under the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration were involved in the survey step.

## Participants 2

Seventeen BMA teachers who had indicated their keen interest in joining the English Learning through Facebook project and most frequently used Facebook were purposively selected. One facilitator was also involved in the experimental step.

## Data Collection

Survey step: Survey questionnaires were distributed to a finite population consisting of 1,170 Thai teachers who teach English in 437 schools under the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration. The questionnaire consisted of four parts: demographical information; problems; needs and readiness to participate in English learning through a Facebook project; and an open-ended question with the IOC validity at .97. In total, 403 completed copies of the questionnaire were collected.

Experimental step: Data were collected using the pre-test and post-test which were investigated by five experts. The tests contained five short paragraph writing items. The pre-test and post-test were used to evaluate the progress of English writing skills with regard to two aspects: first, English usage consisting of spelling, proper use of vocabulary, idiom, and structure (tenses, sentences arrangement); and second, English for communication consisting of meaningfulness, clarity, and relevance. The tests were administered both in class and online. The participants who did the test online had to provide their e-mails, telephone numbers and answer a secret question to identify themselves. The answers were rated from 1 to 5 by the English language expert. In-depth interview questions, observation, and recording of English learning attributes as well as self-notes and a group reflection form were used to collect qualitative data.

## Data Analysis

Survey step: The frequency, percentage, and content analysis were performed to analyze the data collected from the survey questionnaires.

Experimental step: A t-test was performed to analyze the collected data of the pre-test and post-test while the content analysis was performed to analyze the collected data from the in-depth interviews, observations and recording of English learning attributes, self-notes, and group reflection.

## Results

The findings of this study are provided below in two parts: the results of writing skill improvement and English learning attributes enhancement.

### Results of Writing Skill Improvement

Table 1 shows a significant score for the overall writing skills improvement of BMA English teachers at .000 ( $p < .05$ ). This indicated that the BMA English teachers

**Table 1**

Results of pre- and post-test of English writing

	Pre-test		Post-test		Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Q.1	2.82	.951	3.41	.870	.008*
Q.2	2.88	.928	3.35	.862	.072
Q.3	2.71	.686	3.47	.943	.001*
Q.4	3.00	1.061	3.35	.702	.111
Q.5	2.82	.883	3.41	.712	.004*
<b>Sum</b>	<b>2.85</b>	<b>.658</b>	<b>3.40</b>	<b>.671</b>	<b>.000*</b>

\* $p < .05$

made significant progress in their English writing skills through learning on Facebook. The writing improvement of most participants was evident in two parts: effectiveness of English usage and English writing for communication.

1. In terms of the effectiveness of English usage, namely accuracy, most participants had less misspelt and mis-used words, verbs, sentence structures, and idioms. They made fewer English language mistakes in a sentence after learning. They also made more complete sentences with better English grammar. The results showed that most participants (15 out of 17) performed better in their writing scores.
2. In terms of the effectiveness of English writing for communication, namely meaningfulness; clarity; and relevance, most participants showed better performance after learning. They could choose the appropriate words that conveyed the proper meaning. They could produce numbers of meaningful, clear, and relevant messages. Their answers showed the improved construction of the sentences when compared to the earlier testing. The results showed that most participants (15 out of 17) had higher scores after learning.

The overall average rating of the effectiveness of the English language writing scores before and after learning were significantly different at .000 ( $p < .05$ ) as shown in Table 1.

### Results of English Learning Attributes Enhancement

Content analysis was employed to analyze the collected data from the in-depth interviews, observations, and recording of English learning attributes, self-notes, and group reflection. The results revealed that most participants' learning attributes gradually changed and improved over time. The changes and improvements in BMA English teachers were evident in all five aspects: fluency, confidence, satisfaction, value, and self-efficacy belief. Details are as follows:

#### Fluency

In the first week of the project, learning participants hesitated to write comments in a daily conversation. Some were quiet, some tried to post short comments and then left the conversation.

## First 2 Weeks

30/9/15

Facilitator	<i>A clip to inspire you in English speaking practicing. (Video clip "English Breakfast")</i>
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1/10/15

Facilitator	<i>Keep practicing and practicing for your goal!</i>
T. Da	<i>Go go!!</i>

After the first two weeks of the operation step, it was found that most learning participants never left the conversation. They performed better in the fluency of writing with more fluent conversation, longer comments, and more accurate grammar.

## Week 3

Facilitator	<b>One of the most popular questions among single people is "to get married or not to get married?" I, myself, wonder why someone wants to get married while someone doesn't want to get married. Do you have an answer?</b>	20/10/15@10:25 pm.
T. Vee	<i>When I came to this blue planet, I came alone and whenever I leave, I will leave alone. That's the reason why I am single. (But the truth is that I am too rich and too handsome.)</i>	20/10/15@10:35 pm.
T. Mote	• <i>Good answer.</i>	20/10/15@10:44 pm.
T. Vee	• <i>The last sentence?</i>	20/10/15@10:45 pm.
T. Yok	• <i>The woman doesn't want the good man. "ชอบดีเกินไป"</i>	20/10/15@10:55 pm.
T. Vee	• <i>They love good men, but they hang around with bad one and many the rich.</i>	20/10/15@11:00 pm.
T. Mote	• <i>It takes a long time to find real love. Or it's useless to prove it. Anyway, don't stop believing.</i>	20/10/15@11:08 pm.
T. Vee	• <i>Real love is in your family, your dad and mom.</i>	20/10/15@11:10 pm.
T. Mote	• <i>That's right.</i>	20/10/15@11:15 pm.
T. Rat	• <i>So many people asked this question to me. First time I don't like them. When I answered this question many times. I was very proud of my answered. I'm happy to be a single more than to be a couples. I have a freedom life.</i>	21/10/15@10:42 am.

The interview comments are excerpted and summarized as follows:

*"I began to be more fluent. I could give comments without worrying of being wrong because others and facilitator were so kind and understanding."*

*"I gained better skills in conversation and my comments are more accurate and meaningful. At first, I have to think before giving comment but after my frequent usage I found it's getting better and better."*

From the interaction and the interview excerpts presented above, it could be concluded that learning participants' fluency had progressively developed toward the project's completion.

## Confidence

Data analysis showed that most learning participants gradually developed their confidence overtime from the first week of the project. They commented, shared, exchanged ideas and knowledge, asked and gave advice, discussed and debated, motivated, and helped correct each other through interaction on Facebook. They felt more confident to correct others. These interaction excerpts

showed that Teacher Mut had confidence to help correct Teacher Pe (excerpt 1) in the fourth week.

## Excerpt 1

T. Pe	<i>So sweet eyes. I don't scare with you.</i>	31/10/15@3:03 pm.
T. Mut	• <i>*I am not scared of you.</i>	31/10/15@3:12 pm.
T. Pe	• <i>Oh I Thank you for your kindness.</i>	31/10/15@3:13 pm.
T. Mut	• <i>You're welcome. (Emoticon)</i>	31/10/15@3:15 pm.

Note: \* means correction

And Teacher Pe had learned it and used it correctly later on (excerpt 2)

They had the confidence to open the topic for comments and discussion from other learning participants instead of waiting for the facilitator to lead first (excerpt 3).

## Excerpt 2

T. Pe	<i>Oh! I'm scared. They look like real finger.</i>	31/10/15@3:33 pm.
T. Mut	<i>I think so. (Tagging T. Pe)</i>	31/10/15@3:54 pm.

## Excerpt 3

T. Yok	<i>What is the different between different and difference? It makes me confused.</i>	8/10/15@11:19 pm.
T. Wit	<i>Different is adj. and Difference is noun.</i>	9/10/15@12:35 am.
T. Mote	<i>Explain how to use it, please.</i>	9/10/15@12:40 am.
T. Wit	<i>As I know, you have to learn from these sentences; We are different, The difference between us is our height.</i>	9/10/15@12:45 am.
Facilitator	• <i>Good example. Thanks a million.</i>	9/10/15@12:51 am.

The interview excerpt indicated their confidence as follows:

*"We get chances to exchange our knowledge in English writing and when we made mistakes, others help correct us so that we learned how to write it correctly. Now I feel much more confident in using English."*

From the interaction and the interview excerpts presented above, it could be concluded that learning participants' confidence had progressively developed toward the project's completion.

### Satisfaction

At the end of the project, it was found that most learning participants enjoyed English learning through the Facebook project. They felt more enthusiastic about English learning and wanted to learn more. Excerpt 1 showed an enthusiastic conversation between Teacher Nit, Teacher Yok, and Teacher Wit among themselves and with the facilitator.

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<b>Excerpt 1</b> 8/10/15	
T. Nit	<i>Can I post status every story?</i>
Facilitator	<i>Yes, you can post with any topics you like.</i>
T. Nit	<i>Thanks so much for your advice.</i>
Facilitator	<i>You're welcome. Keep fighting!</i>
T. Yok	<i>Yeah! Go for it!</i>
T. Wit	<i>That sounds interesting.</i>
Facilitator	<i>So come and join!</i>
T. Wit	<i>(Smiling Emoticon)</i>

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Excerpts 2 to 4 are examples from the Facebook inbox message of Teacher Rat.

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<b>Excerpt 2</b> 10/10/15	
T. Rat	<i>I've just posted my comments. I'm not so sure about it. But I will practice more and more.</i>
<b>Excerpt 3</b> 11/6/15	
T. Rat	<i>Thank you so much. I feel happy every time I come to read and comment in this group.</i>
<b>Excerpt 4</b> 12/12/15	
T. Rat	<i>This English learning through Facebook program is not so strict. No time limit. We don't need to sit in and learn with others at the same time. I can get in, read, and post comments when I am free and get out of the group when I am busy. No need for signing which makes me fun with learning. This makes it fun to learn more. Asked if I can apply it to my work? My answer is "Yes". I used to bring this technique to apply with my students and chat like this with the students as well. Students enjoy it.</i>

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Most of all, they had a positive attitude toward the convenience of learning through Facebook. For example, they approved of the way they could learn from anywhere and whenever they wished to. They could learn when they were working at school, playing with their children at home, traveling to other provinces or countries, or visiting their hometown during a vacation (excerpts 5 and 6).

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<b>Excerpt 5</b> 17/10/15@7:56 am.	
T. Thip	<i>Today my family and I are going to visit our grandma at Uthaitani. (picture)</i>
<b>Excerpt 6</b> 20/10/15@8:09 am.	
T. Pe	<i>Morning All, Did you have breakfast? This's local food at Ubon Ratchathani. (picture)</i>

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From the interaction excerpts presented above, it could be concluded that learning participants' satisfaction had progressively developed toward the project's completion.

### Value

It was found that most learning participants appreciated the value of the method of English learning and self-

studying through Facebook. They believed that they could apply the knowledge obtained from the project in practice. The interview revealed their appreciation as follows:

*"In the beginning, I appreciate its value that I could apply the knowledge and methods to use with my students. After a few weeks, I found its true practical value on myself, my colleagues, and my students."*

*"I feel happy practicing my English through this method because it made me feel more confident to use English and I will try to practice more and more."*

The following excerpt shows another example of their reaction toward the question about building the network on English learning through Facebook in the future.

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Facilitator	<i>Do you think we should expand our network?</i>
T. Da	<i>Yes.</i>
T. Mote	<i>Excuse me, do you mind if I add my friends to the group?</i>

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From the interaction excerpts and interview presented above, it could be concluded that learning participants appreciated the value of the method of Facebook learning which had progressively developed toward the project's completion.

### Self-Efficacy Belief

The collected data revealed that the learning participants had strong beliefs that they could successfully improve their English writing skills through the project. They also had a strong will to learn English through Facebook. The following excerpts show examples of their new status as they regularly took turns to post in Facebook group (excerpts 1 to 10).

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<b>Excerpt 1</b> 22/10/15	
T. Tip	<i>Good morning everyone Today I have an English training at Suan luang District.</i>
<b>Excerpt 2</b> 23/10/15	
T. Pe	<i>Angkor Wat Temple is the World Heritage. It's magnificent, amazing and attractive place. To sculpt on stones about the legend of Ramayana, living conditions in the past and religious belief. I will come back again. ^-^</i>
<b>Excerpt 3</b> 24/10/15	
T. Nit	<i>If you have a problem. Whom will you speak with?</i>
<b>Excerpt 4</b> 25/10/15	
T. Pe	<i>I miss you all my group but I'm sick and must to take a big rest, see u after get well.</i>
<b>Excerpt 5</b> 26/10/15	
T. Mut	<i>Now I'm at Phu Tub Buek. It's very cold for me. Where do you like to travel?</i>
<b>Excerpt 6</b> 27/10/15	
T. Thip	<i>Today is End of Buddhist Lent Day. What do you do on this day?</i>
<b>Excerpt 7</b> 28/10/15	
T. Diew	<i>The best place in my hometown (Maha Sarakham) .... Let's go to relax all together before come back to school.</i>
<b>Excerpt 8</b> 29/10/15	
T. Mut	<i>Let's make the story from the 4 pictures.</i>



**Excerpt** 9 30/10/15

T. Rat *Do you remember this song? For me this song is my encouragement?*

**Excerpt** 10 31/10/15

T. Rat *I do it by myself on Halloween day. It looks terrible, but it has health benefits. I think it tastes good.*

The excerpt of interview comments showed how much they believed that they had learned more through this project.

*"Before the project, I don't have much reliance that I can learn and gain more knowledge from this project. After the project begins, I feel more confident that I can learn and gain more knowledge from this project. I have much intention that I have learned more and gained more knowledge with the help and support from others."*

*"I feel that I have improved overtime. It seems that we don't stop at only this point but gradually being improved such in writing longer sentences or even in a short paragraph. I feel that I can do it!"*

From the interaction excerpts and interview presented above, it could be concluded that learning participants had strong beliefs that they could achieve their goals of learning through this method.

## Discussion

The findings of the study showed significant improvement in the English writing skills and positive changes and improvement in teachers' attributes with regard to all five aspects, which may be attributed to three main factors of the project design: interaction, diversity, and correction.

Studies that support the first factor, interaction, revealed that Facebook is a powerful tool to use as a space for interaction. Interaction between participants can foster knowledge sharing. They came to interact, exchange knowledge, discuss with each other, and help each other to fix mistakes. They exchanged their knowledge and wanted to learn more. When they had greater interaction, they had chances to practice. Repeated and frequent practice promoted the development of English learning attributes and had an effect mainly on improving their English writing skills (Kajornboon, 2013; Khan, 1998; Knowles, 1980; Shih, 2013; Troike, 2006; Yang, 2004). The findings of Bonk (2002) were also in agreement with these findings. He reported that the new trend of learning was mainly based on communication and conversation which enhance learners' learning.

Studies that supported the second factor, diversity, indicated that the variety of Facebook's features, and participants' qualification can promote adult learning. Firstly, Facebook has various features or applications that learners can use to facilitate their learning, such as multimedia, images with text, various quotation (Quotes, Ideographic, Infographic) video clips, message alerts, and a dictionary. These handy facilities affected their attitude toward learning which caused attitude changes during learning. Participants have a more positive attitude toward learning through Facebook and feel more confident in learning

through interaction. This makes their learning smooth and effective (Pornpeerachon, 2007). Secondly, many of the participants' qualifications, including age and educational and teaching experiences are beneficial regarding the opportunity to exchange knowledge and experiences on the use of language (Wattanawong, 2004). Siemens (2005 quoted in Trentin, 2010) stated that *"learning and knowledge derived from the diversity comments, that is, it relies on the comments of various people. Similar to when we wrote on our Facebook and then other users express an opinion after you. More comments posting means the more you have learned and the more knowledge you have gotten."* Diversity of experience or knowledge of learners would cause interaction, knowledge exchange, and comment editing between learners while they were learning together. This would make their learning more effective (Knowles, 1980; Troike, 2006; Yang, 2004). These actions resulted in the development of better English language skills and attributes especially for those participants who do not have an educational background in English like Teacher An and Teacher Da. They could learn and develop their better English writing through this method.

Studies that supported the third factor, correction, claimed that it promotes better writing skills and builds participants' attributes in learning. Wattanawong's concept (2004) focused on participants' opportunities to be aware of their progress and mistakes and to have the opportunity to fix and improve them. Comments from peers, peer assessment, or feedback are essential for the effective grammar skills improvement of the participants. Participants also had a positive attitude toward regular correction from peers and the facilitator (Wongsothorn, 2010). The ease and convenience of Facebook facilitated searching for more information in real time and expanding the scope of information that was used to correct each other's text. They were able to go back and forth to help edit and correct each other's messages at any time. This style of learning helped to develop their attributes and their English writing skills.

Other factors that also promote greater improvement of participants' attributes and writing skills are the characteristics of Facebook itself—cost effectiveness, convenience, ease of use and amusement, and the relaxed, authentic environment.

## Conclusion and Recommendation

The findings of the study revealed that Facebook had a positive effect on BMA English teachers' English writing skills and learning attributes. Based on these results, Facebook can be a visionary, recommended platform for English learning. Thus, three key factors for the implementation of language learning through Facebook design should be taken into account. The first is interaction due to its ease and effectiveness. The second is the diversity of Facebook's features and participants. The last is correction or editing in an atmosphere of goodwill or friendship. These factors resulted in better changes in their writing skills and learning attributes.

This handy design of language learning through Facebook and its approach will benefit agencies and educational institutions. They can use it as an alternative to

develop teachers' teaching and language skills within their organizations. This will also benefit individual learners or teachers of other fields who want to improve their English through Facebook. It can also be applied for self-learning and lifelong learning education. Moreover, this can be used to foster networking in order to strengthen the organization of various educational agencies.

Further research should try other fields of study apart from language and with students or teachers in other subjects and develop a model that is suitable in other contexts or with different groups of learners and other desirable learning attributes, such as communication skills, teamwork, problem solving, independent responsibility for learning, sharing information, and respect for others.

### Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest for this article.

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