

Technology and Foreign Language Learning and Teaching

Nurairhan Mat Daud



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CHAPTER 5

DEVELOPING ARABIC WRITING SKILLS USING FACEBOOK

WAN RUSLI WAN AHMAD
NURAIHAN MAT DAUD

Facebook is fast becoming a popular writing medium among social network users. Its interactive nature makes it a good medium for teaching writing. In this study, a Facebook group for teaching writing was established for students who were following an Arabic language proficiency course. The students were asked to write and to give feedback to each other's work in Arabic. The thread of communication posted on the wall was analysed. The posts revealed that Facebook was widely used by the students to communicate. A total of 89 comments or feedback were given by peers for every writing activity, with an average of four comments made on each student's work. Arabic was used by the students, and the feedback focussed on grammatical and spelling errors. The survey revealed that a majority of the students preferred using Facebook to develop their writing skills.

Keywords: facebook, Arabic writing skills, grammatical and spelling errors, peer feedback, peer editing

INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to investigate the possibility of using Facebook as a tool to develop foreign language learners' writing skills. Writers' proficiency in a language can affect the quality of their writing. In L2 writing, their knowledge of the target language genres serves as another challenge to the development of their writing skills (Swales, 1990). Teaching such a skill to foreign language learners is more challenging in a situation where the language is hardly used for writing. The fact is, writing in a second language is often done only in the classroom. This study thus, attempts to provide an environment for writing to take place outside the classroom.

Since two-way communication is possible on a web-based social network it can be a good tool for language teaching. Students can communicate and discuss online through this network. The technology can increase students' opportunities for collaboration and active participation. It also gives them more opportunity to participate as everybody can contribute their ideas without having to wait for their turn (Rozina & Nuraihan, 2003).

One such network is the Facebook. Facebook users can share messages, not only in one-to-one but also in one-to-many mode of communication. Such attributes may facilitate collaborative reading and writing (Warschauer and Kern, 2000 as cited by Rozina & Nuraihan 2003). Facebook is fast becoming