

Facebook as a Platform to Develop Paragraph Writing Skills of Tertiary Level ESL Learners

Jayarathna, Dilini¹ (DELT)

Abstract

Facebook, being one of the most visited social media sites in the world as well as in Sri Lanka, is identified as an exceptional source of influence on language learning. Especially, Facebook groups are effective applications to incorporate into teaching writing skills which are not frequently addressed in existing Sri Lankan research. The problem of the present research is sprung from learners' low achievement in English writing tests, lack of motivation and confidence in writing and less interest in paper-based learning. Thus, this study was aimed to investigate the impact of adopting a Facebook group in developing descriptive and narrative paragraph writing skills for tertiary level ESL learners and their perceptions on the efficacy of using Facebook as a medium for learning. A mixed-method research design was implemented in the study as data was collected through a pre-test, post-test and five semi-structured interviews. A purposive sample of 30 intermediate level ESL learners of the University of Kelaniya who study in the first year English for Social Sciences course participated in the study during the academic year 2017/2018. By conducting the pre-test, participants were selected and a closed Facebook group was used for six weeks to identify its effects on students' ability to develop paragraph writing skills. Subsequently, based on the 'Paragraph Hamburger Strategy', lessons on 'descriptive' and 'narrative' paragraph writing procedure were posted on the Facebook learning group. Students were expected to practice and engage actively with lessons. Findings reveal that there were statistically significant differences between scores of the pre and post-tests in favor of the post-test. Moreover, Facebook is an innovative learning setting that is appealing, motivating and full of social interactions instead of traditional teaching practices. This study serves ESL practitioners by adopting an effectual approach such as Facebook in teaching language skills to solve existing issues in the teaching sphere.

Keywords - Facebook learning, Social media, Paragraph writing, Facebook groups, writing skills

¹ dilini.jayarathna95@gmail.com