

THE USE OF FACEBOOK GROUP DISCUSSION TO IMPROVE READING STRATEGIES: An Action Research

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Abstract

The rapid development of technology influence people's life in many aspects including the process of teaching and learning in university, school etc. Some social medias are popular in society, one of them is Facebook. This social networking can be used for any purposes Such as interacting, marketing, publishing, learning etc. The study aims to prove whether Facebook's group discussion can be effectively used to improve reading strategies which are normally developed through classroom interaction. It is an action research design involving one group consisting of 37 students randomly sampled out from a population of 198 students. A plan-act-observe-reflect design of the study will be carried out in two cycles. Each cycle involves pretest, treatment and post test. Cycle 1 is undertaken to see if there is a significant difference between the pretest and post test upon treatment. The indicator of success of the treatment is that the post test outscores the pretest. If it does, then Cycle 2 will be conducted to convince the results. If the two cycles show an increase in the mean scores, it can be claimed that the method is effective. In other words, Facebook's group discussion can be effectively used to improve reading strategies.

Key words: *Facebook group discussion, reading skill*

A. Introduction

New types of gadget are widely innovated and used in society. More people always update both their gadget and IT literacy to support their study, job, activity, business, hobby, need etc. The rapid development in information technology leads people to make more interaction intensively and easily.

Formerly internet was used by a limited number of people, it was only used in US defend department. Nowadays, however, people at various ages use internet also for various purposes such as connecting relatives, friends, collecting data, doing business etc.

As more social medias are found recently, it is really difficult to separate people from using internet in their life. More communication styles are made, more pulse used in society. Everything is easily found in internet. Publishing everything in internet is really effective. Government, politician-president candidates also use internet to support their campaign and this is really 'colourful' and interesting

1. English as a Global Language

It has been years that English is more widely used in society as the rapid development of information technology. In every day conversation between friends, siblings, colleagues, employee-employer the use of some English words are really common such as broadcast, updates, copy, send, invite, accept etc. are really more popular today among society. English may therefore be learned as a first, second or foreign language depending on how it is functionally used in communication (Harmer, 1991). In Indonesian context, furthermore, English is learned in response to the launching of Asian Economic community (AEC) in which borders of employment, education and trade in Asian countries will be eliminated

The rapid development of technology influence people's life in many aspects. There are more people complete themselves with some gadgets to support their life and activity. Moreover they often easily bored with their gadget for then buying another more sophisticated and new one. The experts develop their research that can make more innovations in technology.

2. Facebook and Teaching Reading

This rapid development of technology changes people life such as in interacting each other, earning money, running business, learning, etc. Only few people do not want to follow this development.

Facebook is one of social media that can be used widely by people in the world. We can find so many things and information from our Facebook account. There are more students or teenagers even children are wrap up in their Facebook account in their free time. They interact, state and declare their current situation which called as updating status, this will be read widely by their friends. On the other hand, this person always waits for other people comment as they made new status. Every day, more people use Facebook for many purposes maintaining social relationship, publishing certain programs, offering products. Very recently, Facebook (Blattner, G and Fiori M, 2009) has also been used in language classroom. It is further to make use of computer-assisted language learning as predicted in Beaty (2003).

This research is to investigate it is effective to use of Facebook in the learning and teaching processes; of which reading is the main focus herein. It is the fact that reading is one of language skills that must be achieved by the English learners. They can also learn and practice more out side the class. The limited time in learning reading must be continued in another time. This can be done through Facebook. The students may continue their practice mainly in Facebook using group discussion. This group is important to establish to make the learning process achieves its goal

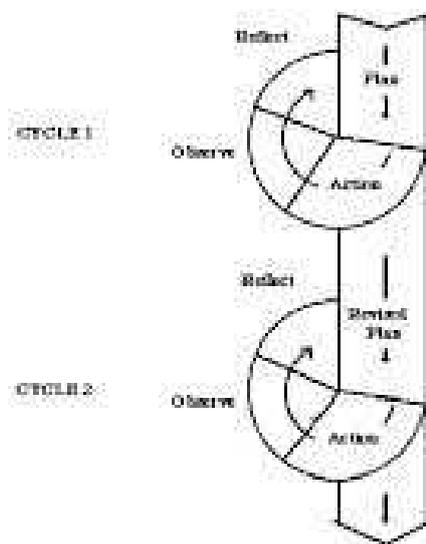
Learning and developing reading skills using Facebook group discussion is a good method since it can reduce the students' boredom. They can learn and develop their reading strategy more since they can do while they can also use their Facebook account. Furthermore, people in the world have now been very much dependent on mobile phones. For them, it is even more difficult to stop using mobile phones in daily activities. It is stated Worldwide already the majority of new mobile phone

sales are Smartphones (Gartner, 2013). Among the student population in developed countries Smartphone ownership is even higher. Thus, by Facebook in the current study may also be accessed through mobile phones.

B. Research Methods

It is an action research involving subjects of 37 students randomly sampled out of the population (198 students) of English Department of FBIB Stikubank University Semarang. The subjects were told that they were going to participate in an action research employing the use of Facebook group discussion. Therefore each of them was supposed to join the group created by the researcher. The group is called the Reading Maniacs, the group was named as such in order to promote reading interests among the subjects (students).

The action research was performed in two cycles with Plan-Act-Observe-Reflect cycle (Burns, 2007) as shown in the following figure:



Cycle 1 started with 'PLAN' in which the researcher designed the lesson plan in the use of Facebook discussion in teaching reading skills. The PLAN was executed into ACTION in real Facebook discussion with the subjects. First of all, the subjects were pre-tested off-line using teacher-made reading comprehension test. The scores were recorded as data.

The ACTION stage included (1) making sure that all subjects had joined the group called 'the Reading Maniacs'. (2) The researcher posted a link on which each member of the group had to click and read the text. (3) The researcher posted a question and asked the group to discuss the answer in the form of 'comments' which could be 'a direct response to the question', a request for clarification. In short, there were ways to finally get the correct answer. There were several questions for one text The researcher functioned as a judge for any comments posted by the group members. At random, the researcher pointed out any student to post an article (link), and the discussion went on.

Anyone posting an article should also initiate the discussion. However, the researcher maintained her function as the final judge. During the on-going cycle, the researcher kept notes on how the group members actively participated (OBSERVE). This was done by the calculating the number of comments a particular subject had made.

Cycle 1 lasted for 7 weeks (a half term), and it ended with a post test conducted off-line. The scores were recorded as data. The mean of the scores of Pretest is then compared with that of the post test to see whether there is a significant increase or decrease of the score mean. If there is a significant increase, it can be said that the method is effective, otherwise it is not. When it is clear that there is an increase, the researcher is ready to conduct Cycle 2 of the action research to further convince the results.

Cycle 2 was performed similarly to Cycle 1 with no or little modification. In this study, modification was made since the researcher dominated in posting texts in Cycle 1 (REFLECT). In Cycle 2, the plan was to give more opportunities to the research subjects to post text in the group discussion. Basically the procedures of discussion were the same as Cycle 1. More group members posted links containing texts to initiate the discussion. Cycle 2 ended with another off-line post test of which the scores were recorded. The success (effectiveness) of the teaching method is indicated by another increase of the score mean of the post test in Cycle 2.

To further convince the positive effect of the use of group discussion for the improvement of reading skills, a number of subjects (10 students) were randomly selected for personal interviews with respect to the use of Facebook group discussion.

C. Findings and Discussion

It has somehow been mentioned that the study lasted for one semester consisting of 14 meetings. However, since the use of Facebook is online in nature, it should be noted that one meeting equals to one text for Facebook group discussion. Thus there were 14 texts contributed by the researcher and group members. The researcher maintained herself as the judge of the discussion in case agreements among the group remained unsettled.

There were two cycles in the current study, Cycle 1 lasted for 7 meetings; and Cycle 2 lasted for another 7 meetings. Each cycle had a pre-test and a post test. The effectiveness of the teaching method is indicated by the increase of the score mean within the group.

Presented below is a table representing pre-test and post test scores in Cycle 1 of the current study:

Table 1 Pre Test and Post Test Scores in Cycle 1

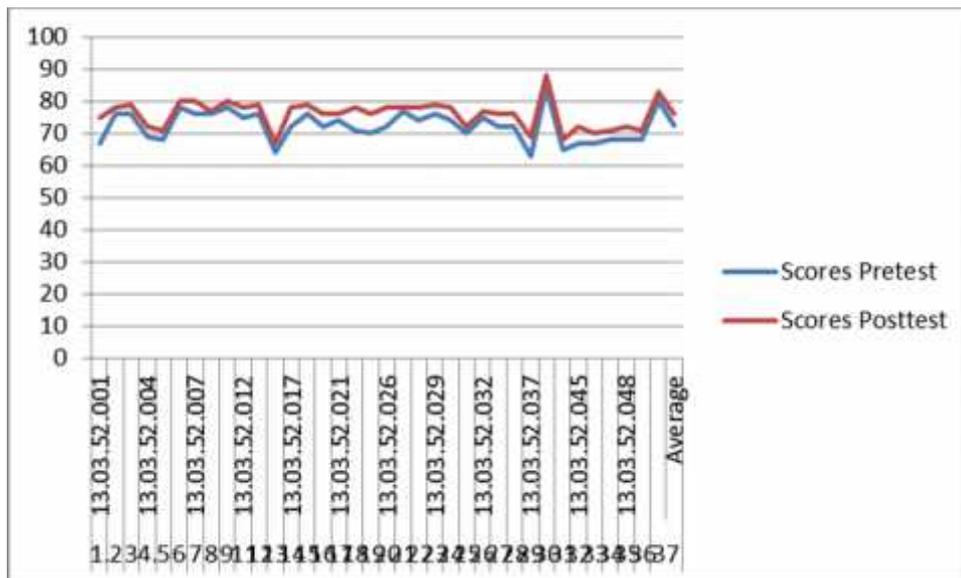
No	NIM	Scores	
		Pretest	Posttest
1.	13.03.52.001	67	75
2	13.03.52.002	76	78
3	13.03.52.003	76	79
4.	13.03.52.004	69	72

5	13.03.52.005	68	71
6	13.03.52.006	78	80
7	13.03.52.007	76	80
8	13.03.52.009	76	77
9	13.03.52.010	78	80
11	13.03.52.012	75	78
12	13.03.52.013	76	79
13	13.03.52.016	64	67
14	13.03.52.017	72	78
15	13.03.52.019	76	79
16	13.03.52.020	72	76
17	13.03.52.021	74	76
18	13.03.52.024	71	78
19	13.03.52.025	70	76
20	13.03.52.026	72	78
21	13.03.52.027	77	78
22	13.03.52.028	74	78
23	13.03.52.029	76	79
24	13.03.52.030	74	78
25	13.03.52.031	70	72
26	13.03.52.032	75	77
27	13.03.52.035	72	76
28	13.03.52.036	72	76
29	13.03.52.037	63	69
30	13.03.52.038	84	88
31	13.03.52.039	65	68
32	13.03.52.045	67	72
33	13.03.52.046	67	70
34	13.03.52.047	68	71
35	13.03.52.048	68	72
36	13.03.52.050	68	71
37	13.03.52.051	80	83
	Average	72,3888889	75,9722222

From Table 1, it is clear that the subjects performed better in the post test than in the pretest administered off-line. By average, there is an increase by 3,59% in a comparative score means between the pretest and post-test.

Visual differences of scores in each subject can be seen in the diagram below.

Diagram 1 Visual Differences of Scores in Cycle 1



As seen in Diagram 1, each member indicates an increase of score from Pretest to Post Test. By average, therefore, it can be said that Facebook group discussion is a good teaching method to be used in support of the development of the reading skills.

To further convince the results of the study, Cycle 2 was undertaken with little modification—that is anyone in the group may post a text. This was meant primarily to make the subjects (students) more actively engaged. Still, however, the researcher acted as the judge among them in case of discrepancies that might happen during the process of text comprehension. At times, the researcher corrected some wrongly constructed questions.

At the end of the semester (the 7th text discussion), another post test was administered. Surprisingly, the students got higher scores as shown in the following table (10,14 % increase by average).

Table 2 Post Test Scores in Cycle 1 and 2

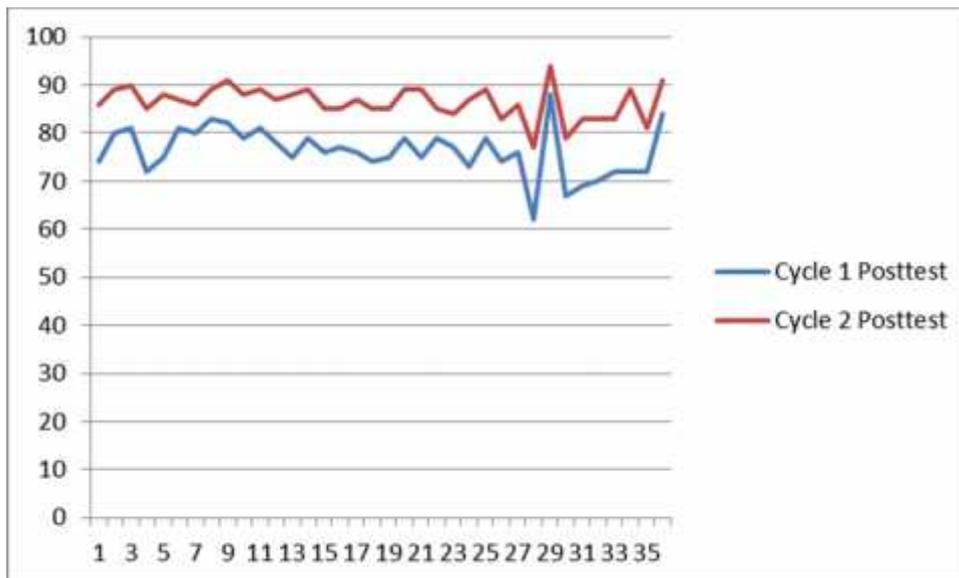
No	NIM	Scores	
		Cycle 1 Posttest	Cycle 2 Posttest
1.	13.03.52.001	74	86
2	13.03.52.002	80	89
3	13.03.52.003	81	90
4.	13.03.52.004	72	85
5	13.03.52.005	75	88
6	13.03.52.006	81	87

7	13.03.52.007	80	86
8	13.03.52.009	83	89
9	13.03.52.010	82	91
11	13.03.52.012	79	88
12	13.03.52.013	81	89
13	13.03.52.016	78	87
14	13.03.52.017	75	88
15	13.03.52.019	79	89
16	13.03.52.020	76	85
17	13.03.52.021	77	85
18	13.03.52.024	76	87
19	13.03.52.025	74	85
20	13.03.52.026	75	85
21	13.03.52.027	79	89
22	13.03.52.028	75	89
23	13.03.52.029	79	85
24	13.03.52.030	77	84
25	13.03.52.031	73	87
26	13.03.52.032	79	89
27	13.03.52.035	74	83
28	13.03.52.036	76	86
29	13.03.52.037	62	77
30	13.03.52.038	88	94
31	13.03.52.039	67	79
32	13.03.52.045	69	83
33	13.03.52.046	70	83
34	13.03.52.047	72	83
35	13.03.52.048	72	89
36	13.03.52.050	72	81
37	13.03.52.051	84	91
	Average	76,2777	86,4167

The higher scores in Cycle 2 can be the direct impact of the use of Facebook group discussion. The students (subjects) have been familiar with dealing with texts of various kinds, responding to questions, expressing both agreements and disagreements upon particular issues or even initiating issues for other to solve.

Below is a diagram showing the development of scores from Cycle 1 (pretest and posttest) to Cycle 2 (posttest).

Diagram 2 :



From the diagram above, it is clear that the students' scores tend to increase by time. It can therefore be concluded that Facebook group discussion can be an alternative technique to develop the reading skills.

The interviews with selected students (subjects) revealed that they mostly had used Facebook for friend-finding, distant communication with other friends. Their friends may not be known personally. They were also aware that such activities might be a waste of time without significant gains. Therefore, when asked on the possibility of Facebook to be used for learning, they positively responded. Their rationales were mostly based on the following grounds:

- (1) They were aware of the fact that they could be addicted to Facebook, but only limited to friendship which sometimes resulted in negative impacts;
- (2) They finally realized that time should not have been wasted on Facebook activities without any positive aims.
- (3) They finally accepted the fact that learning could be performed anywhere and anytime by means of Facebook and any other social media.
- (4) With the presence of Facebook in Mobile phone, it was even easier to get access to learning resources.

It should be noted, however, as also expressed in the background of the study, that the use of Facebook is simply to anticipate the negative use of Facebook. It does not necessarily take the place of a teacher (formal classroom interaction). In other words, the use of Facebook in the teaching of English (on teaching reading), can be thought of as being supplementary in nature. It may be also made as additional assignments for the students for the e-learning activities.

The last but of no least importance is that this kind of learning activity has at least three disadvantages, such as:

- (1) Lazy students may not post any texts or comment; in other words, they are not completely active.
- (2) Such a lazy student may seem to post a comment, but actually it is someone else who did for him or her. This is actually a weak point of e-learning. Someone can do the tasks of others
- (3) Times of discussion may not be carried out simultaneously. But, this is OK., somehow because Facebook account can be accessed at different occasions and by different people.

Finally, it is important to know that Facebook has quite a lot of features that can be used in support of language learning. Below are features that can be explored.

- (1) Free and unlimited access of an account by the account owner
- (2) Privacy can be set according to the need
- (3) Group can be easily created. More interestingly, it can be set with respect to whom the group can be joined.
- (4) For secret issues, Facebook users can make use of the chat room (inbox). In this Facebook group discussion dealing with reading strategy improvement, inbox facility can be very advantageous since a shy student may text the teacher for consultation about any issue of interest.
- (5) Files of any type can be both uploaded to or downloaded from Facebook account.

D. Conclusion and Recommendation

The findings and discussion presented above have indicated that Facebook group discussion is proven to be effectively used in improve reading strategies. The students may post comments, unlimited and without personal constraints, to the reading texts for full comprehension of the texts. The availability of on-line magazines or newspapers also contributes to the facility of text searching by means of which the texts used in the Facebook group discussion may be of various kinds and from various disciplines. Most significantly with respect to the use of Facebook is that the privacy nature can be set, whether the discussion would be made public or private (inbox). Other features of Facebook still need exploring.

It is therefore suggested that EFL teachers use Facebook in their teaching. However, it would be much better if Facebook is used as a supplementary means of teaching--such as in one of the e-learning activities in support of the classroom interaction. Thus, it is wrong to say that Facebook can take over the teacher's place. Further studies in the use of Facebook dealing with other language skills (writing) may be conducted.

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