

ACTIVITIES AND SUGGESTIONS FOR USING SOCIAL NETWORKING IN TEACHING ESL WRITING

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ABSTRACT

With the technology boosting in the new era in this globalized world, it is essential for people to be equipped with technical skills to be competent for life-long learning and working. And English, as the globalized language, is used widely between nations and has promoted the integration of economy. It is critical for youths to master English to compete for further study, the future jobs, and so on. The role of the teacher is to make students learn English with tech skills. Therefore, this research is focused on teaching English through modern tech tools. This research is mainly about exploring activities through social networking sites to teach ESL writing and looking for suggestion to enhance the effectiveness of activities. Data was collected through mono-method approach, which is a qualitative research. According to the research, it was found that there are many various writing activities taking place among teachers and students on the social networking sites; the teaching and learning is in the non-linear way. The teaching pedagogy can be the teacher-centered or student-centered when utilizing social networking tools. Besides, the appropriate suggestion can make the activities better. Hence, educators and teachers should be aware of the social networking tools on ESL teaching.

Keywords: *Social Networking, ESL Writing, Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), Facebook, Wiki, Blog*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the times of the 21st century and in this internationalized world, the modern technology with the utilization of social networking is becoming more and more prevalent and important in our daily life. With the globalization of information rapidly boosting, people, especially youths, are expected to apply their knowledge with technique skills adequately. In fact, most of the students are living in the digital world where they spend a considerable amount of time scanning information, socializing, and learning knowledge, and entertaining. It is no longer by us to underestimate the roles of the high technology; it is becoming more and more serious that how educators incorporate the social networking tools into the English language writing.

It is very meaningful for teachers to dig social networking sites to teach ESL writing. Because the social networking can bring together people who have different perspectives and cultural backgrounds to a common community where they can share the same document, exchange opinions, and expand their capacities, all of which will

contribute to the project of writing. Moreover, with flexible online teaching strategies as well as the diverse online resources, online education can be well explored to make students learn cognitively- especially the learner who has the low capability and weak knowledge, so that they will better catch up with competent students.

In the 21st century, the teachers are expected to take the pedagogical responsibilities for utilizing not only the social networking but also state-of-the-art tools to create suitable teaching activities, to construct the authentic environment, for helping students to get the input of English knowledge and produce the output of L2 writing effectively. Teachers need to understand where the difficulty of students' using social networking is; then they can help them reduce the fear and dig the potential of internet tools to diversify learning activities, which should suit different levels of peers.

Besides, because writing is an important surviving skill, the online writing is becoming more popular in the workplace currently. Youths are expected to be exposed to the practice of ESL writing. In today's globalized working

environment, the employees must be equipped with writing and technological skills to be competent for challenges of careers. Therefore, it is essential for instructors to take advantage of the techniques to prepare young people effectively in using social networking to acquire the target language. ESL writing will benefit learners in the studying and other career in the whole life.

English writing is an important living skill. "Writing is an integral part of students' lives today due to their use of texting and social networking sites, but most students do not recognize this type of communication as writing" (Sweeny 2010: 124). Therefore, teachers should be aware of this issue to make students pay attention to English writing on social networking sites. Writing instructors are supposed to provide models through social networking, therefore preparing students to write. Also, as teachers, we should know that writing cannot be separated from reading; the two skills complement each other. Teachers must shoulder heavy responsibilities to enhance students' English writing skills by social networking tools.

It is critical that teachers and educators should develop activities that are applicable to the students to teach English writing successfully. Nevertheless, how to plan activities is another dilemma waiting for us to resolve, and what advice should be given when using social networking in teaching ESL writing is also needed to be considered.

In order to investigate how to use social networking in teaching ESL writing successfully, the researchers conduct this study (i) to find out the activities for using the social networking tools in teaching ESL writing and (ii) to look for suggestions for using the social networking tools in teaching ESL writing. To achieve the aims of the study, the following research questions were formulated:

- 1) How do you plan activities to make the best use of the social networking tools in teaching ESL writing?
- 2) What advice could you give about using the social networking tools in teaching ESL writing?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Definition of Social Networking Services

Before we talk about how to employ the social networking service in the teaching, we should first learn about what actually the social networking service is. In accordance with Wikipedia (2011), "a

social networking service is an online service, platform, or site that focuses on building and reflecting of social networks or social relations among people. Most social network services are web-based and provide means such as e-mail and instant messaging for users to interact over the Internet".

2.2 Social Networking Activities

The tech teaching measures compared to the traditional ways have many advantages; it can provide more opportunities for learners to communicate and to carry out activities (Shih-Hsien Yang 2009). And because the process of conducting the ESL writing activities by any social networking tools is non-linear, dynamic, reiterative, the learning power is easily to be amplified. The use of social networking to teach is based on the social –cultural theory brought forward by Vygotsky- learners can learn better with techniques. Hence, it is necessary and meaningful to explore the function of social networking sites to develop activities of ESL writing (Abdulaziz, 2011; Yunus & Salehi, 2012; Yunus et al, 2013; Yunus, Kiing & Salehi, 2013).

Nowadays, using second-language teaching method Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) is more and more prevalent (Yunus et al, 2013; Yunus, Salehi & Amini, 2016).

Aykut ARSLAN (2008:17) said "Traditional CALL activities can also be developed in Network Based Language Teaching (NBLT) and are actually found in most language teaching sites. The Web is full of authentic reference and didactic materials useful for language learning." Here, the list of some activities is directly or indirectly related to enhancing ESL writing through social networking sites, "Lexical quizzes, games and other vocabulary learning specific activities (e.g. lexical maps, class dictionary building ...); Grammar tutorials, exercises, simulations and games; Computer Mediated Communication activities (email exchange, collaboration projects, CoP, ...); Use of blogs and wikis for individual or group language learning e-portfolios." The most important of them is the social networking sites that help an individual student go through learning at his own pace and space. CALL, which is bounded up with social networking sites, can do more on learning activities; this will improve the students' second language writing.

2.2.1 Activities of blogs

Blogs, as one of the social networking tools, can independently exist and also can be attached to

other social networking sites such as Facebook, Wiki, and so on. Here, we take the blog as the major social networking tool to develop some ESL writing activities. Below you will find the literature review of the ESL writing activities of blogs.

Godwin-Jones (2003) indicated the function of Blog is "Writers typically make rich use of hypertext to connect to what others have written on a topic or to resources on the Web. Blog entries are normally followed by a comment button, allowing readers to write a reaction, which is then logged and linked, along with all other comments, into the original text. While most blogs are created and managed by individuals, group blogs are also possible" (p.13). So, teachers can, based on these characteristics of blog, create an online community for students to give articles and comments. Each type of blog can serve different purposes. What is more, Nadzrah and Kemboja (2009, p.47) had similar opinions about the way the blogs are used to create activities. They said a blog as a writing tool can impel students to write creatively. Blogs can be used in different ways for different activities.

2.2.2 Activities of wiki

According to Yang and Lin's (2011) findings, we can see students and teachers together carry out a series of simple activities regularly to promote learners' English writing performances. Take the wiki system. We can carry out the activity between teachers and students. That is to say teachers give the online tutoring any time when students throw the inquiries on the web as they want to. And, the activity among students is that English learners take advantage of the priorities of social networking which the traditional vehicles do not possess to comment on others' works to correct and modify the mistakes of ESL writing such as lexicon, syntax, diction, which not only help them see their own errors they always made but also make them learn easily from peers. Therefore, giving a comment and reading from their peers' works can become their daily activities, too. One study proved that youths learn fast and well from their peers. And peer feedback is supported by Vygotsky's concept to the Zone of Proximal Development, Yang and Lin (2011) said it on the basis of the previous study of Hansen & Liu. Further, according to Brianna (2011), using wikis can have activities like file sharing and content editing, which can add and edit images, text, animations, links, and files to serve English writing. Teachers can also create a shared writing for students, and students in turn can explain the materials in their own words. Due to the similarities of the function of wikis and blogs, the

activities of wikis could be transferred to the blogs, and vice versa.

2.2.3 Activities of email

Shang (2007) on the basis of the previous studies said students can have written conversation with native speakers of target language to discuss their cultures. Because if students really want to master the second language well, they have to know the cultural foundation which is tied to knowledge of target language and language skills. Shang (2007) also introduced the positive effect of email exchange by explaining Sotillo's writing activity that is "Sotillo used email for native speakers to provide corrective feedback to ESL students on their writing..." (p.81). The results of this activity revealed "ESL students benefited from different types of corrective feedback offered by native speakers, and some proficient ESL learners even incorporated more than 70% of the native speakers' corrective feedback into their revised written work" (p.81). Thereby, teachers can be a learning agent to connect ESL students with people who are proficient in English to interact by email.

2.2 Suggestions for Using Social Networking Sites

2.3.1 Suggestions for using blogs

There are some suggestions to make activities more efficiently. The study of Lina (2011) indicated that some students, when blogging, do not know how to organize the ideas and what should be focused on. A few students suggested that "the instructor should have discussed strategies for online posting along with writing samples with the students prior to the project" (p.96). Students enjoy commenting on each other's postings, from which they could develop their critical thinking skills. They can share knowledge, gain different cultural perspectives and further reflect on their own writing. While it was also found that "... the comments did not show in-depth discussions of the content but rather surface level issues" (p.98), and students had the abilities to socialize with each other on talking about cross-cultural topics, they were not good at engaging in high-order thinking. Therefore, she gave the corresponding response: that the teacher plays a facilitative role in giving students guidance and subject matter expertise in the social interaction. According to this view, the teacher can cultivate students' reflective thinking by using guided questions to foster further discussions. Teachers should be trained to design

their online learning activities and to show how to participate in the online collaborative activities rationally (Estoque, 2009).

2.3.2 Suggestions for using wiki

Lee and Bonk (2009) presented the detail recommendation for the writing activities embedded in the using of Wiki. Firstly, “content feedback”: the teacher should provide the feedback about the content and the expressive ways that students can write through Wikis. It is necessary to investigate the content and online collaboration, especially since students are not good at writing in English. Secondly, “idea creation”: “students should be encouraged to post their opinions and ideas without hesitation and fear of negative feedback.” Next, “monitoring”: teachers, as assistants, should encourage and monitor students’ own activities when they write on the Wiki. “Moreover, information related to the students’ activities can be efficiently checked through the ‘History’ function of wikis that preserves the changes of the Wiki content” (p.22). Lastly, “training”: teachers need to get students to know the wiki tool, teaching them how to use the Wiki. Students can get acquainted with technology which can start from participating in an icebreaker activity such as introducing themselves to their classmates, etc. So activities combined with each corresponding instructor’s proper guidelines make the writing performance go along smoothly and effectively.

Brianna’s (2011) suggestions: first, teachers need to tell students the proper posting etiquette. They are responsible for what they post and should respect each other. Second, educators need to develop the evaluating measures of students’ activities on Wiki. Educators also need to know whether the Wiki activities are proper for learning aims. Lee and Bonk (2009) also stated that when teachers show students the link of posting and commenting on the internet, in the meantime, they should give the instruction to prevent students’ improper words hurting others in order to maintain the friendly and harmonious atmosphere.

2.3.3 Suggestions for using email

Nesamalar, Saratha and Teh (2005) stated some suggestions for using social networking when teaching ESL writing. When using Email to teach writing, teachers need to make sure students have mastered necessary technical skills such as how to get an email account, how to operate functions of email e.g., composing, attaching, creating mail lists, saving an address, etc. Besides, they said when students are familiar with Email, teachers can get

students to practice writing with students from other schools regularly; meanwhile, teachers, as the facilitators, should create a real audience, purpose, and create information and opinion gap which make their writing authentic. For example, when teachers get students to write for foreign students on their common topics, teachers still need to get peers’ feedback to monitor their process of writing.

3. METHODOLOGY

This part introduces the methodology used in this study. The researchers explained the rationale of choosing the research design, procedure of sampling and data collection, and the data analysis procedure. In order to ensure this study is valid and reliable, the pilot study was carried out.

3.1 Research Design

This study employed the qualitative approach to collect in-depth and various perspectives of samples. To this end, an online-discussion board containing two open-ended questions was used. This study consists of two open-ended questions only; the vital wordings of questions are “how” and “what” respectively. Hence, the respondents are expected to provide information as much as possible without the clue given by the researcher.

The questions were carefully worded and arranged in the logical order. The first question was “How do you plan activities to make the best use of the Social Networking tools in teaching ESL writing?” The second one was “What advice could you give about using Social Networking tools in teaching ESL writing?” And all the respondents were requested to answer both questions provided in the same sequence.

Then the researcher utilized the online-discussion platform of UKM spin e-learning system to let respondents type out their opinions. The approach of online-discussion has many advantages: the researcher can easily get the transcript of all data; the respondents have enough time to think over and organize their words; the respondents can scan other respondents’ answers and have a discussion online to give more information; and the researcher encouraged each respondent to view others’ writing to state what she/he agrees or disagrees, which means they can debate with each other online.

3.2 Research Population and Sample

The UKM third-year TESL students were chosen as the research population because they were professional in English and they all had done the teaching practicum in different kinds of secondary

schools such as Malay, Chinese, Indian or the mixed schools. It is very likely that they learn about social networking and use it in the teaching and in their own learning experience, so they know social networking tools much better than others who are not majoring in TESL. Thus, the data collected from them would be more diverse and reliable with minimum bias. The respondents were aged from 21-23 and they were young adults who had mutual and critical thinking to consider issues. Besides, they studied in the same department, being cooperative and enthusiastic to contribute to the research. All of these advantages enhance the validity of the data.

In the research, one class of UKM TESL 3rd year students was chosen as the research sample. There were three classes of students. In order to ensure the validity of the study, the approach of drawing lots was used to decide which class would be the sample. Finally, the researcher took one class which consisted of 25 people, including 12 male and 13 female, as the research sample.

3.3 Research Instrument

Two open-ended questions were uploaded on the website of UKM spin e-learning system and the respondents were requested to respond to the questions. One of the functions of Spin can be treated as the Bulletin Board, on which students can post their words and give comments. Since every UKM student has the account of Spin, it would be the easiest way for the samples to log on to answer the questions.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

The researcher logged on the spin e-learning system on Monday, 19th September 2011, then posted the two questions in the column of spin. The instruction of the questions was to answer both of the questions in English and visit others' posting to give the comment about what you agree or disagree as well as to state the reasons. The participating time lasted five days and the column was closed at 12:00 am on 23rd September.

Then, the researcher e-mailed the leader of that class who would direct all his classmates to pay attention to the spin. He gave them five days, which was long enough to make sure that getting all the answers from the total 25 persons would be applicable. On Friday, 23rd September 2011, the researcher got on the spin system to check how the process was going. It was assured that the last person had already submitted answers on Thursday night. Therefore, the researcher downloaded the

attachment of all the data, saving it in the document of his computer. On Saturday, the researcher printed it out so that it is easier to analyze the data, to take a note on the papers.

3.5 Data Analysis Procedure

The finding of this study was the qualitative data which were analyzed qualitatively. Since the data was printed out, it was read many times. Because each respondent had mixed two questions to answer in one short essay, the researcher had to segment data with the reference to each research question. The raw data was read again and again to make sure the relevant data can be collected without losing valuable information and maintain the data as authentic and original as possible rather than change the meaning of respondents' wording. The information of qualitative data was abundant and diverse, which not only contained respondents' opinions but also included personal feelings and experiences, so the process of analyzing was complicated and time-consuming. The researcher analyzed each sentence, selected and synthesized information step by step.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Twenty five TESL students including 13 male and 12 female participated in the study. In the findings and discussion part, the researcher used F to stand for female respondent and M to mean male respondent. The findings consisted of two parts which were activities held on the social networking, and suggestions for using social networking to teach ESL writing. All respondents, male and female, provided interesting and useful writing activities and suggestions which could make the activities go smoothly and successfully.

From the findings we could see, for the first research question "how do you plan activities to make the best use of the social networking?", the answers were abundant and various. Most respondents said that they can share an amount of resources, ideas, which can be used as the writing materials to facilitate students' writing; they can establish an online group discussion for personal using or the entire class, debate to lighten the spark of thinking to write. Besides, students can type directly and publish on the websites to the people from all over the world so that students can receive the comment or feedback, so they can enjoy which benefitting from their later writing. Teens can get a chance to learn target language from a large number of audiences all over the world. They are also able to read others' works, which can be in the form of any genre to absorb the essence and to accumulate

writing experiences and skills. The social networking sites are good platforms for students to learn from others and present themselves. The social networking is a bridge which connects people from the entire world around. English language learner can find a pen pal from English speaking countries, so students can acquire authentic language which almost seems like he or she stays in the English speaking countries. What is more, the hyperlink of video, sound, or pictures can be utilized to establish the interesting writing activities as the respondents indicated. And several respondents said the proper use of games can make writing easy, as well as providing them with a lot of fun. The learning and teaching becomes more flexible in the non-linear way. Through the social networking tools, the teacher-centered and students-centered activities both can be exploited.

About suggestion part, the respondents gave the applied ideas, for example, helping students improve ICT skills by the teacher, setting the time line and etiquette when operating online, monitoring students' process of activities to ensure they follow the teacher, and so on. Besides, the ICT equipment with good internet should be set well in school, then teachers and students can have the chance to create activities.

4.1 Data Analysis

There are many activities which can be held on the social networking sites. For example, respondent F1 said,

"For a group discussion or other assignments can be done through the social networking tools at home as their homework. For instance, students are given homework as to write an essay about their favourite festivities, and they are required to brainstorm and discuss the topic with fellow classmates."

Another two respondents F8 and M3 respectively said:

"...in Facebook, teacher can create a group specially for the class' writing lesson or have the students to create a "NOTES" section in their own Facebook to upload their assignment and writings. Besides that, they will get feedback instantly from their friends and teachers."

"Wikis also provide a platform for the students to do an open discussion on certain topics or even have an online debate."

The similar activity was also supported by M7:

"... they might even receive feedbacks from the

instructor or their peers to improve their writings. These experiences are extremely valuable and it can be transformed into knowledge so that students will not repeat the same mistake again."

So, from the above parts, it can be understood that the social networking tools like Facebook and Wikis can motivate students to write easily. Students can brainstorm and have a discussion online together for their writing then get feedback from teachers or peers which enlighten them to produce more works. And students can avoid making the same mistakes in the next writing with others' instruction. Besides, some other respondents pointed that group discussion can be processed in the different ways on the social networking sites between students and the teacher or among students only.

"A teacher plays an important role in providing writing materials or organizing discussions to encourage active students' participation in learning writing through social networking sites." – M5

"the teacher can create a discussion group or a special group for each class he or she teaches, ...in this case the Facebook discussion group is very helpful. Through this page, the teacher can make sure that all the student's needs are being catered to. Besides, the students can also have their discussion online anytime they want as long as they are online," said by F3.

The activities of discussion or other assignments can be carried out anytime at school or outside school, and these activities can be organized by both the teacher and students. When it is the teacher-centred discussion on social networking sites, the teacher as the leader should provide writing materials for students. He is also required to monitor, direct, and correct students during the whole process of activities. When it is student-centred, students are supposed to gather learning resources by themselves to share, to discuss, and to encourage each other to write, while the teacher just gives some advice to direct, correct, and help students when it is necessary. Both types of discussion can be established through social networking tools. Besides, students do not have to take a pen and paper to start writing; they just type words on the websites directly and can publish it if they like. For example, F9 said that: *"asking students to publish their works via Social Networking allows students to achieve authentic goal,"* and *"Social networking helps students to publish their writing and thoughts to the world,"* acknowledged by F8.

From reading others' writings and communicating with others, students can learn vocabulary and grammar. Moreover, they can acquire fresh ideas. This sort of activity can be used to consolidate their basic knowledge of writing on which respondents agreed by giving opinions such as:

"... they have the privilege to learn more about vocabulary, grammar, organization of ideas and other useful information just by reading their friends' works or other people that are better than them." -- M2

"New ideas, suggestions, grammar check, constructive criticism and motivation from their readers are very important and helpful in writing stages towards a good piece of work, ... communicating with friends, teachers, and other people in Facebook also help them to enrich their vocabulary and grammar usage."-- F8

Therefore, the activities can focus on teaching and learning morphological and syntactic parts of target language so that students can enrich their knowledge of language. The answers from the above respondents can stimulate teachers to consider designing activities which is used to strengthen the knowledge of second language.

Some respondents demonstrated that through social networking tools, it is much easier for students to share and get ideas or information on the Internet. All of these activities will enhance the quality and quantity of writing.

As the respondent F11 said,

They sift through an over-abundant wealth of information online. All in all, social networking tools encourage students to conduct peer tutoring, where they produce and critique each other's work for a more constructivist approach to learning in a wired world."

F12 also said that,

"We can exchange opinions freely and expect to get response and feedback from our teachers. At the same time, we can spread our thoughts and opinions on the topic discussed in the classroom to the wider scope."

"In addition, these social networking also make it easier for us to get hold of information on any subjects from anywhere in this world because of its accessibility."

Hence, through the platform of social networking, youths can hold activities like

exchange and expand ideas more easily and, at the same time, produce new thinking on the discussion and writing.

Respondents F9 and F10 proved that the online activities are various and colourful for improving ESL writing, for instance, sharing with others online,

"Social Networking, for instance like Facebook, has a feature in which the users can leave comments. Teacher can make use of this feature in order to create a corresponding virtual classroom discussion. This will contribute to greater idea sharing and exchange since all students have access to express their opinion."

"Facebook allows the users to publish notes. Notes are like blogs whereby the users can share anecdotes about good things that happen in class or anything."

When M6 debated with M10, he high lightened *"The social networking tools provide a platform for the students to share their opinions,"* which means students can hold an amount of great ideas to exchange with others.

"Teens write for a variety of reasons: to stay in touch with friends, to share their artistic creations with others, or simply to record their thoughts. Teens are more motivated to write when they can select topics that are relevant to their lives and interests to write about, and would enjoy writing in English lessons when they have the chance to write creatively." M12 further explained this activity.

From above, it is known that the social networking tools can be as a vehicle for students to exchange opinions such as giving ideas to improve student's writing skills by the teacher or other students, exchanging ideas on the same issue, leaving comments on the postings, and so on. The teacher can guide students to share their knowledge and experiences in online classes, which will provide the students with recourse and materials to write on. It is also easy to establish a virtual classroom for students to process a collaborative learning which seems like what we actually do in the real classrooms. And the learning and teaching activities on the social networking can happen in the synchronous or asynchronous way, beyond geographic circumscription.

In the words of respondent M6, we found many activities used to improve English writing,

"Since most of the students have access to Facebook or Friendster every day, teachers can

post a topic on Facebook and encourage the students to share their ideas on the topic. All their ideas will be accepted and recognised by their teachers. Group discussions enable the students to become active learners. They can contribute their own ideas in their writing task and come out with their own product independently as the teachers are only playing role as facilitators by their sides."

"They can make use of the materials and resources from various fields in the social networking websites to come out with new ideas for their writing. Besides, social networking tools can provide an opportunity for the students to look into their peers' writings. They will have the opportunity to evaluate and comment on their peers' work."

Therefore, besides the activities of holding a group discussion and sharing ideas as well as giving feedback on writing performance, teachers can post a topic to interest students in speaking out their minds. Students can have much more chances to visit other people's writings than before, and they can appreciate and evaluate many writings in different genres, backgrounds, and cultures, so that they can enhance their own writing in the faster and better way.

Respondent F5 gave a supplement, she said,

"Using Facebook, Wikis and instant messenger for instance, students can respond to the teacher's instruction immediately. They can ask questions easily and get replies instantly in the chat space within the social networks. Meanwhile, among peers, students can discuss topics posted by the teacher. Students can contribute ideas to the task; commenting on their peers' ideas."

So, it is suggested that teacher give the instruction in the virtual classroom and students ask questions as long as they are willing to. The teacher then can give response instantly, which really breaks the physical restriction and time limitation.

Meanwhile, it is convenient for teachers to check students' homework as well as monitor and check students' process of writing. This point was indicated by several respondents, such as,

"Teacher can monitor students' progress as well giving guidance from time to time." – M2

"Wikis for example enables the teacher to check who did a certain part and when it was done." And "The teacher could easily monitor the students' progress and participation from his laptop as well as providing some feedback whenever necessary. This student-centred approach could also be used

to view the work level of students who are either weak or highly proficient."—M3

"Twitter, for instance, its management tools such as Hootsuite, Tweetdeck and CoTweet help to monitor conversations on any given topic by simply setting up links using particular keywords."—M10

Also when respondent M7 replied to F12's posting, he wrote *"When students post their work on the site, teachers can check their work instantly...."*

Thereby, it is the advantage of the social networking tools for teachers to observe students' writing activities. Monitoring such as checking whether students finish the project, observing each step what and how they should do in the activities can make sure students learn in the right path and follow the teacher. And teachers are able to learn about students' current conditions of learning instantly, and to adjust the teaching strategies to satisfy different levels of students.

Among those many activities, one of them was suggested by many respondents that is leaving comments and giving feedback. I think it is the critical and common approach adopted by a majority of students and teachers to make writing better. For example,

"As the student posted their writing online, his or her friends can give comment or give suggestion on how to improve his or her writing."

"Their writings are open to discussion and feedbacks from their friends, which can help them to produce better works."

"...cooperative learning and peer tutoring where the students can give feedback on each other's work." The above quotation is cited from M2's words, he strongly proposed the activities of leaving comment and giving reflection among students.

This point was further strengthened by respondents both M10 and M7, saying *"teachers can easily comment or give faster constructive feedbacks on their students' work "* and *"...students can receive instant feedbacks regarding their work or essays.*

When M2 replied to M5's posting, he also emphasized that, *"they just need to surf the Internet and type whatever they want to discuss in the social networking sites. Then the teacher can also give his students some feedback and guidance."*

As well as F11 with M11 highlighted that,

“especially in giving feedbacks, comments or suggestions in improving one’s writing,” and “ what really increases students’ motivation is the instant feedback that they would get from their friends through SNS. The eagerness to see comments posted on their post prompts them to further involve themselves in the discussion.”

The advice, the correction of writing, and the writing resources all can be given by teachers and students through comment, which enables students to learn a lot. The interaction between teachers and students will be increased in this way. It helps students produce better works as the above respondents mentioned.

Another respondent wrote this,

“Firstly, it can present a medium of virtual interaction between the teacher and the students. To illustrate, they could update each other on the current lesson of writing. The teacher could provide tips on writing a good essay while the students could upload and respond to the tips.”

It can be concluded that it is better for peers to develop interactive learning activities. By providing tips and writing strategies, teachers can make it easier for students to update their writing. Moreover, teachers can create a group to make students learn easily as F10 said, *“teacher can create a group for her students to join. The idea of having this group is to allow teacher to make announcement, assign work, assist and give instant feedbacks to students and students, on the other hand, will actively participate in discussions.”*

Besides, the visual and audio recourses such as pictures, sound, video, and so forth, through social networking sties can also facilitate writing, make writing more interesting and more simple, for example,

“These social networks enable students to upload and download pictures and listen to sounds where in paper and pen writing lesson, it is impossible to do so. Therefore, by looking at pictures and listening to sounds, students are more motivated to write.”—F5

“Every time a group member shares a link or uploads his or her work, others would be able to provide comments based on the member’s performance.”— F7

“Fully-furnished with all kind of application such as video and picture posting and learning community, it provides variety in learning. For example, in teaching comparative essay, instead of

ready wordy articles why not replace them with two interesting videos.”—M11

“Thus, not only does it bring fun to learning, but it also makes it easier for teachers too in finding materials for their teaching. Videos, for instance, are linked automatically to SNS by just a single click at the link button on the webpage and can be viewed by every student in the class.”—M11

Hence, social networking tools make the writing class more vivid and interesting. Teachers can use pictures or video even music instead of characters to set introduction to start teaching creative writing, which is difficult to be achieved in the physical classroom. Through social networking sites, it is much possible to stimulate students’ motivation to write more and better. The games of social networking are treated as the best catalyser to arouse students to participate in the writing activities. As they said one by one,

“...participate in such online writing lessons or games.” -- F6

“They can even apply jigsaw grouping into online system,”—F7

“... teachers may use the interactive games in the social networking tools as their teaching aids them in setting induction or to introduce a title of a writing task to their students.”—M6

“There are also a lot of Facebook games such as Spelling Game and Vocabulary Game that can improve students’ writing in ESL context.”—M7 replied to F10

From what they said, a teacher can start with games to help students improve vocabulary, spellings and so on. It is summed up that appropriate games can be used to promote their knowledge of writing.

Besides, through social networking, teens can talk with people globally, share common interests in online communities and exchange views wildly. Teens can make friends who are thousands of miles away to exchange ideas on the common interests in different religions, politics, cultures, etc. Students are able to sift information to accumulate writing resources.

“Through social networking, students can find pen pals who are far from them to communicate in topics in which they have a common interest so that writing can be gradually improved.”

“Social networking websites function like an online community of internet users. Depending on

the website in question, many of these online community members share common interests in hobbies, religion, or politics. This socialization may include reading the profile pages of other members and possibly even contacting them.”—F8

“... not merely to browse or retrieve information, but as a tool to communicate with other people around the world... They have the opportunity to share their ideas and opinions globally with their friends and gather new information freely... SNS let the students to make new friends where they can discover cultural, political, and educational differences of one another.”-- F2

“...it can be a great opportunity for them to meet native English speakers.”—F4

“You can make friends and can communicate with each other although you live across thousands of miles away.”—M2

“We can exchange views with people all over the world.”—F12

“With Facebook, you can connect with these people wherever they might be. Emails, instant messaging such as Yahoo Messenger and MSN Messenger serve the same function too.”—F10

And using social networking tools can acquire immediate information and update themselves, for example, as F10 listed that *“But if it is put into a proper use, Facebook is a great tool to use to update the user on news, current events, and interesting happenings in the world.”* All that you acquire from the internet will expand your knowledge to benefit writing.

Especially one respondent put forward that reading activity can prompt writing, the reading activity can be the foundation for writing better.

“English teachers can integrate social networking sites into a reading strategy lesson. One important reading strategy is inference. Inference means interpreting beyond what is actually written and making bigger conclusions. Getting information online train students to infer graphic representation of an idea in English, thus practicing their language.”

So writing cannot be separated from reading. If you are not a good reader, it is hard for you to be a good writer to produce good writing, to create new things. I believe that input (reading) is the foundation for producing output (writing). Reading and writing are quite interdependent, learners read a lot in different genres which help them to learn language structure and enrich their knowledge.

What teens acquire from the reading can be transferred into their writing; they are able to produce creative works based on the prior knowledge. Hence, teachers should make full use of social networking tools to organize more reading activities to indirectly develop students' literacy abilities.

Also there was only one respondent who indicated that ICT combined with social networking service can create wonderful activities.

“the ICT also as an agent for the teacher to create interesting activities in the writing lesson . For example, after students have read a number of article son pollution, the teacher could simply create an activity such as asking them to come out with a mind map to be displayed in the class bulletin board.”—M1

The power of ICT with social networking is potential so that this method can be used in virtual space and also in the physical classroom.

On the whole, there were many activities relevant to writing enhancement, which were fully demonstrated above; the sorts of activities were exhibited step by step. These activities are very creative to help the teacher and learners in ESL real and virtual classroom.

4.2 Suggestions for Using Social Networking Properly

When students are doing activities online, the proper advice can promote the effectiveness of activities. From the data, we can analyse the results. The original words of the respondents are cited, for example,

“...by integrating the SNS into teaching ESL writing, the teacher is indirectly helping both the students and him or herself to improve their ICT skills. Since the workforce of this country is required to have ICT knowledge, it is important for the students to be equipped with ICT skills from the schooling days.”—F3

On the basis of above mentioned part, it is suggested that teachers update themselves in order to operate technical devices to teach, and at the same time, teachers also take the responsibility to assist their students to use modern technological tools to learn. As we know, in this 21st century, students are expected to face the challenges of current studying and the future career.

Respondent M3 added that,

“...so teachers should be more adventurous in

experimenting in integrating ICT with their teaching and learning.”

Since teachers could use ICT combined with social networking tools to teach freely inside classroom and outside school, teachers are expected to try to exploit more activities creatively.

“Such tools too can cause negative effects with the lack of supervision and monitoring. ... if they do apply, steps need to be taken in order to ensure students participation and following through the activity.”—F7

“...teacher acts as a facilitator; giving the students necessary guidance and monitoring their progress to ensure that students are on the right track.”—F8

“Teacher must frequently give exercises to do. By doing so, students will spend most of their time doing the exercise rather than doing something else. Thus, helping students to use their time properly.”—F9

In accordance with the above, it is said that teachers, as facilitators, should manage and monitor students' learning processes to make sure they use the Internet for studying instead of playing. Also they should give more exercises to enable students to concentrate on studying.

Besides, *“Notes are just like any other word processor. However, it does not correct grammatical errors. Now this is the job of the teacher as the founder of the group and those who are tagged to the notes- correct the grammatical errors, sentence structure etc. by posting it on comment box.”—F10*

Therefore, as the respondent F10 said, it is the teacher's job to help the students correct their vocabularies, grammar, sentence structures. So once the teacher finds the mistakes from his or her students' postings, he should give a comment on that immediately to correct the mistakes. With teacher's helping, students will learn better from activities.

When writing on the social networking, the rules should also be set down like a physical room, F1 said: *“Timeline and rules should be set by the teacher on what type of discussion and when the students should participate in the discussion.”* It is necessary to tell students that they show respect to each other and watch language when communicating on websites.

Finally, one respondent demonstrated that ICT equipment and the access to the Internet is the

premise for developing any activity. He also said that with the restriction and rules, the social networking can function positively so as to make students study in the warm atmosphere.

In conclusion, it is meaningful for educators to first think over those issues and then carry out advice to make activities effectively.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, to answer the first research question, abundant activities can be carried out on the social networking sites. The teacher, as the assistant, can upload writings to ask students to read and evaluate, and then asks them to give a reflection. It is easier for the teacher to establish a discussion group for some students or the entire class, so that students can interact with the teacher after school time. Students can ask questions anytime, and the teacher can reply instantly. Students can brainstorm and debate with each other in this cyber community to share knowledge and experiences, which come out with new ideas for creating writing. Teachers or students, however, can share the resources such as video, pictures, sound, articles, hyperlinks etc, which can be utilized as the writing aids. Besides, students can make friends abroad to enjoy the different cultures, hobbies, and so forth in English writing. They can also get up-to-date information to help them complete their writings. Moreover, games used in the right way can make writing simple with fun.

Briefly, to answer the second research question, the suggestion was given from several different angles such as setting timeline by the teacher, respecting the rules of language, monitoring students' online learning, ensuring the ICT equipment with good Internet access, and so on.

Majority of respondents provide useful activities on the social networking; they gave specific examples to explain. It is obvious that social networking makes students write better than the conventional way. As they stated, social networking service creates an environment to integrate students into collaborative learning. Social networking, as the platform, lets students experiment with language in an authentic way. There is also the advice for using this modern technology in order to carry out activities effectively. Both activities given and suggestions provided are critical in this research.

At the end of carrying out this research, some recommendations will be given to the teachers and other educators. Even though integrating social

networking tools into ESL writing has already come true, it is still essential for both teachers and students to exploit more and more creative ESL writing activities; teachers are especially needed to be adventurous. I believe that social networking possesses the huge power to function very successfully in both teaching and learning. Teachers should learn from other teachers' teaching activities, and even together design activities.

Not only should teachers know how to operate the techniques, but they are also supposed to give a hand to solve the issue which students are not familiar with. Students' critical and creative thinking skills can also lead to organizing learning activity well. Besides, students should also use the social networking tools to develop communicative skills with people of different backgrounds.

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