“CHECK YOUR FACE(BOOK) ON PAGE…”: UNPACKING THE PEDAGOGICAL POTENTIALITIES OF ENGLISH TEACHERS’ WALL POSTS

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ABSTRACT

In an increasingly digitized world where technology continued to revolutionize how human interactions were enacted, the teachers must transcend educational boundaries to provide quality education that was responsive to the needs of the 21st-century society. This research examined the Facebook wall postings of selected English senior high school teachers in Metro Manila, Philippines. Using thematic analysis, the research investigated and analyzes these Facebook posts (wall posts) to identify whether teachers; (1) could potentially initiate communication (student-teacher interaction, in particular online/via Facebook) and (2) used such social network site for academic/instructional purposes. Main themes identify in the student-teacher interaction are gratitude and appreciation, longing, interest, and status, while those that are recorded in the teachers’ wall posts are announcements, student activity documentation, and extra-curricular activities. The findings of this research help establish the importance of technology integration in the field of teaching and learning English as a second language. Moreover, the research is pivotal in the resurfacing of constructivism in education and the emergence of new communication norms brought about by technological innovations.

Keywords: facebook, interactions, English teachers, pedagogy, constructivism

INTRODUCTION

It is undeniably true that the youngsters of today consider technological innovations as a means to satisfy various needs, wants, and expectations in every aspect of their lives. One may not necessarily need a mobile phone to talk with a friend; or a Game Box to play a favorite adventure game; or a book (a printed one in particular) to research on a certain topic; or a magazine (print) to know the latest fashion trend, and for all of these are present in a single gadget, in the computer via one instrument of medium, that is the Internet. It is worthy to note that communication technology has the potentials to be a transformative agent in the society in a sense that it alters the very nature of social interaction from time to time (Blattner & Fiori, 2009).

Fascinatingly, the role of communication technology promotes an effervescent research trend on how it cultivates productive and successful pedagogical practices and experiences (Blattner & Fiori, 2009; Tyler, Smith, & Benscote, 1999). Chawinga (2017) has pointed out that if Twitter and Blogs – which are apparently examples of the social networking sites and are like Facebook – are appropriately deployed could be catalysts for the much-hyped learner-centered approach to teaching. Using the technologies, the students can now share, discuss course materials, post their course reflections, and interact among themselves and with their lecturer 24 hours. In his research, it unveils that students are ready and enthusiastic in using social media in the accomplishments of their educational activities. Greenhow and Gleason (2012) have also suggested that the use of Twitter (social media) as a new literacy practice may lead to increase engagement and better interaction between students and teachers.

Although specific technological tools are becoming more and more popular in the field of education and research, technological applications are still regarded as either ‘high tech’ or ‘low tech’ with the latter being utilized in the classrooms most of the time (Blattner & Fiori, 2009). To differentiate the two, low-level technology comprises old-time applications such as Word, Excel, and PowerPoint while synchronous chats, social network sites, and the like are classified as high-level technological applications. High
tech tools, specifically social network sites, have caught the attention of education experts as they advance constructivist practices and promote cooperation and discourse among students.

Communication, as pointed out by Thurlow, Lengel, and Tomic (2004), is transactional, dynamic, multimodal, and multifunctional. All have three similarities – they are essential “to understanding how communication works and how it is used to express our identities, to establish and maintain relationships, and eventually to build communities” all of which are central to the study of computer-mediated communication (CMC).

Social Network Sites (SNS) have affected various aspects of human lives. As one of the many facets of computer-mediated communication, SNS has been acknowledged as potential tools in every classroom. Social network site can be defined as a web-based service that allows individuals to; construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.

Facebook has revolutionized the world ever since it was introduced to the public in 2004. It started as a Harvard-only SNS which could only be accessed by those people with harvard.edu email address. After one year, a high school version of Facebook was launched. As it gains prominence among ‘netizens’, this SNS takes pride in its more than 300 million active users just after four years of its first launched (McCorkindale, 2010). It can be assumed that the majority of its users are young learners. Hence, socializing on Facebook becomes part of their daily activity.

Many pieces of research have investigated the benefits that this SNS brings to people. Blattner and Fiori (2009) have noted that Facebook can improve the physical prominence among ‘netizens’, this SNS takes pride in its more than 300 million active users just after four years of its first launched (McCorkindale, 2010). It can be assumed that the majority of its users are young learners. Hence, socializing on Facebook becomes part of their daily activity.

Although the aforementioned researches confirm Facebook as a tool that strengthens the feeling of belongingness and improves the attitude towards the teachers and the pedagogical practices, there is nevertheless cynicism as to the incorporation of high tech tools to instruction. As an example, the US Congress prohibits youngsters from using SNSs in schools (Blattner & Fiori, 2009). In the Philippines, some teachers, administrators, and parents do not want their students and children to open their Facebook most of the time because they believe that it takes away their time and devotion in studying. Greenhow and Gleason (2012) have said that most adults are panicking. They do not understand the shifts that are taking place and, regardless, they do not like what they are seeing. In its truest sense, the positive potentials of SNSs in improving the student-teacher relationship and teacher-student relationship, and the pedagogical practices of the teachers cannot be ignored. These research findings present positive student perceptions of teachers on Facebook and self-disclosure (Grosseck, Bran, & Tiru, 2011).

Another important debate to consider is despite its pedagogical potentialities, the use of Facebook in elementary and secondary educations remains vague since much work in this area has been conducted in college or university context (Wan, Wang, & Haggerty, 2008; Oldmeadow, Quinn, & Kowert, 2012; Alagoz, 2013). There is clearly a need to look at this technological innovation in the context of teaching and learning English in secondary education particularly senior high school in order to concretize how this applies to various educational settings.

It is through this contention that this research has been conceptualized and is pursued to understand how Facebook can aid in extending teaching and learning beyond the conventional English language classrooms. This research examines and analyzes English teachers’ Facebook posts (wall posts). Specifically, the objectives of this research are; (1) to determine whether teachers initiate communication (student-teacher discourse in particular) online/via Facebook, and (2) ascertain if they utilize SNS for academic or instructional purposes. Studying student samples have been the research trend because students are said to be pioneers of the internet (Jones, 2017). Thus it is more fitting and captivating to underscore on the teachers themselves since they are the ones who facilitate the learning of the students and guide the youths to use high tech tools for academic reasons and extended classroom discussion.

METHODS

Even though there are numerous qualitative analytic methods (discourse analysis, interpretative phenomenological analysis, discourse analysis, narrative analysis, content analysis), the researchers has utilized thematic analysis disclosure (Owen, 1984, as cited in, Zorn, 2001) due to its flexibility in providing a considerable account of data (Chawinga, 2017). The data corpus of this research comprises all the teachers’ wall posts from June 26 – July 20, 2017. There are 5 English senior high school teachers from different schools of Metro Manila, whose wall posts are examined.

The process of selecting the subjects is based on criterion sampling where cases which meet the criteria of importance are chosen (Patton, 2002). As such, two criteria are set; one is the teacher should be teaching any English-related subjects in senior high school during the conduct of the research, and the other is, he or she should have been using Facebook as an online platform for teaching and learning for at least three years to capture the multifaceted interactions with students. These criteria are set forth by the researchers to understand how using Facebook can potentially aid in the teaching and learning of the English language. Two sets of data are analyzed in this research: (1) wall posts that have paved the way for student-teacher interaction, and (2) wall posts that have relevance to either academic or extra-curricular activities.

According to the Facebook website, the visibility of posts you make on your wall depends on the audience you choose for each post using the audience selector. For example, a friend will see posts you have set to friends and public, while a non-friend will only see posts you have set to public. If you do not have any public posts, then a non-friend will see a blank wall tab. Even if a Facebook user will not access the profile page of a person, a post may be available in the news feed or the center column of one’s own page because it continuously updates posts or statuses from
friends or those he/she follows.

As applied in this research, the profile pages of the teachers are visited to check their wall posts for almost a month. The profile pages are saved as complete web pages to preserve its authenticity. The data corpus is of substantial amount since not all the wall posts have to be analyzed and chosen for the two data sets. The gathered wall posts are read and analyzed as to whether they belong to data set 1 (student-teacher interaction-initiating posts) or data set 2 (academic and extra-curricular-related posts). Then, the wall posts are subjected to qualitative inspection through thematic analysis. This analysis unveils the themes that are fleshed out from the data. Owen (1984, as cited in, Zorn, 2001) has claimed that a theme came about if the three criteria are present; recurrence, repetition, and forcefulness.

Recurrence as the first criterion entails that there should be at least two parts of the discourse or text that share the same thread of meaning without essentially reiterating certain words, phrases, and sentences. A theme is also considered one through repetition of key terms/textual units. This criterion is more explicit which makes the theme more observable, recognizable, and distinguished. Lastly, forcefulness refers to emphasis attached to the message or text. It comprises not only the physical feature of the text but also the way it has been presented (i.e., with the picture; text is italicized, etc.).

A theme captures something essential about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2016). Equally, the being of a theme does not necessarily rest on its countable frequency. Tantamount to this, the prevalence of a theme, though it is investigated, was not quantified unlike content analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2016). Certain descriptors are utilized instead because they already suggest the existence of a theme in data (Braun & Clarke, 2016). Lastly, every theme that has been identified and described is analyzed as to how it fits into the overall essence of the data set in relation to each research question.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1 presents the themes and examples (extracts) that are evident in data set 1. Data set 1 satisfies the first research concern, that is, to identify whether teachers can initiate student-teacher interaction via their Facebook wall posts and if they do what they talk. The main themes identified are gratitude and appreciation, longing, interest, and status. Interest has a subtheme such as poetry, whereas status yields to a subtheme of experience. Mazer, Murphy, and Simonds (2007) have shown that when students access SNS, they may discover common attributes they share with their peers or teachers and this then can lead to comfortable communication and opportunities for learning. The interaction between students and the teacher through SNS such as Facebook increases students’ motivation and affective learning which are central to building a community of learners (O’Sullivan, Hunt, & Lippert, 2004).

| Themes                     | Sample Wall Posts                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Gratitude and Appreciation | T: “ang pag-ibig ay salitang kilos, hindi lang ito basta salita na hinahabi ng iyong dila at lumalabas sa bibig ng sinoman. May kasama itong gawa.”
|                            | (Love equates action, not only words crafted by your tongue and uttered by someone’s mouth, it is accompanied by action)                                                                                           |
|                            | S: “happy Sunday hinbibibibibibibibi <3 aahahaha mahal ka namin <3.”
|                            | (happy Sunday miss <3 aahahaha we love you <3)                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Longing                    | T: “happy Sunday… happy everyday! Mahal ko rin kayo (I love you too) <3 God bless! ☺
|                            | (1)S: Sir, pwede ikaw na lang teacher naming sa 21st century literature?
|                            | (Sir, will you be our teacher in 21st century literature)                                                                                                                                                        |
|                            | T: Hehe kung pang morning lang ang grade 12 pwedeng pwede sana renz hehe
|                            | (Hehe it will be fine if only grade 12’s schedule is in the morning renz hehe)                                                                                                                                   |
|                            | S: Cge na po sir, wala pa kaming teacher dun since first day.
|                            | (Please sir, we don’t have a teacher there since first day.)                                                                                                                                                     |
|                            | (2)T: salamat, yugs! Miss ko na kayo! Kelan mo ibubulong ang bulong? Hahahahaha
|                            | (Thanks yugs! I miss you! When will you whisper what you supposed to whisper? Hahahahaha)                                                                                                                         |
|                            | S: bisitaanin nyo naman kami sa room (5501) building 5, 5th floor… woooohhh!!… wag na po pala baka mapagod po kayo sa pag panik... ibubulong ko po ang bulong kapag nakita ko po kayo na hindi humahanggos... parang lagi po kasi kayong nagmamadali pag nakikita ko kayo
|                            | (Visit us at room (5501) building 5, 5th floor… woooohhh!!... no need because you might feel tired of climbing… I’ll whisper what I am supposed to whisper when you are not in a hurry… you’re always in a hurry whenever I see you.) |
|                            | T: hahahahaha kaya nga e. feeling ko hinahabol ako ng oras ngayon. Wala kasi akong break tas mula sa baba papuntang 5th floor. Lipat-lipat hahaha.
|                            | (hahahahaha that’s right. I feel that time is always chasing me. I don’t have any break then my classes are from the ground floor to the 5th floor. I move into rooms hahaha)                                                     |
Thankfulness or acknowledgment of someone’s deed or behavior is manifested in a number of student-teacher interaction based on the student’s comments and teachers’ responses. The recurrence of meaning and the repetition of key expressions such as “thanks - ur wc,” and “I love you-I love you too” have amalgamated the theme. It can be noted here that, the interaction has been limited to these exchanges – a “thank you” and “I love you” from a student a “welcome” and “I love you too” from the teacher (see Figure 1).

Interestingly, a case of the teacher appreciating her student is recorded (see Figure 2). Although the student does not respond to the gratitude of the teacher via comments, it can be noted that based on the post of the teacher, they surely have an exchange of gratitude and appreciation with one another.

These simple exchanges may not entirely be underestimated considering their authenticity that expressing gratitude along with acknowledging or accepting that does not require a verbal or an elaborate conversation. This finding may be relevant to that of Blattner and Fiori (2009) that tackles the student-teacher relationship that is further strengthened via SNS and is fostered even outside the classroom setting considering motivation towards learning as the effective factor that is heightened even online. This is also consistent with what Mahadi and Ubaidullah (2010) that have claimed SNS enables language teachers to foster English language learning (ELL), while simultaneously promoting positive relationships with students outside the classrooms.

Table 1 Themes of Student-Teacher Interaction via Teacher’s Wall Postings (Continued)

| Themes  | Sample Wall Posts |
|---------|-------------------|
| Interest | T: “tonight I can write the saddest lines.. Write for example “the night is shattered and the blue stars shiver in the distance..” “I no longer love her, that’s certain, but maybe I love her.. love is so short, forgetting is so long..” --Pablo Neruda  
- tonight I can write the saddest lines … © © ©  
S: “I no longer love her, true, but perhaps I love her. Love is so short and oblivion so long.” Grabeeee yan sirrrr! (That’s too much sir!) |
| Status   | (1)T: Wala akong maipagmalaki kundi yung faith ko kay Lord! ©  
(2007) in which student-teacher relationship is maintained online. |

Figure 1 Theme of Appreciation and Gratitude in a Teacher’s Post
Recurring and repetitive implicit expressions such as ‘miss you’ and ‘miss you too’ have been apparent in plenty of wall posts or comments. The way of expressing appreciation and gratitude by students to their teacher as revealed in this research may have an advantage of showing how informal conversation can serve as a podium for students to establish a positive relationship with their teacher which later may translate into opportunities for learning. Greenhow, Robelia, and Hughes (2009) have affirmed this finding that student learning can happen either in a formal or informal setting.

The nature of ‘casual’ longing for each other needs no further elaboration or justification from the speakers especially since the relationship involved (teacher-student) may be between professional and personal. However, there are some instances where the relationship of the teacher and student can be regarded as intimate because there are exchanges that are presented with a very ‘casual’ tone between the teacher and the students. Nonetheless, there are positive student perceptions that are directed towards teachers on Facebook (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). Moreover, Facebook helps users maintain relationships (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; McCorkindale, 2010), appears to be significant in realizing the essence of the current research findings.

Literature particularly poetry has been talked about by a teacher and his students on a particular post-comments in a single thread. Although the interest shared by the teacher and students may be regarded as non-academic in nature, the conversation seems to be promising and remarkable since Blattner and Fiori (2009) have mentioned that interests shared by the students and teachers may create a more comfortable interactive atmosphere.

Of all the teachers who have utilized Facebook to generate a student-teacher interaction, there is only one teacher who makes a status about him feeling broken. He does this by sharing a few lines from a poem that he finds reflective of his feeling the moment he makes the status. That student-teacher interaction began when the teacher posts extracted lines from Pablo Neruda’s *Tonight I Can Write the Saddest Lines* (Figure 4) is equally significant. Though this account may not be a surprise anymore since SNSs are peppered with shared quotes and literary pieces from various people which frequently initiate conversations and gain attention, comments, and recognition, language can, therefore, be presumed as just a part of the semiotic process along with photos/pictures, videos, gestures, etc. Instead of the caption which contains words and therefore ‘language’ thus being the text, the extracted lines from a poem appears to be one as it has attracted comments thereby having student-teacher communication.

One status of a teacher pertaining to her strong relationship with God and her work schedule generates an immense deal of comments emphasizing on either the subject of the post or the experience rendered by it (Figure 5 and 6).

The meaning as created by those who commented refers to their affirmation to what the teacher has stated by saying ‘amen’ and words of encouragement for her tiring workload. This experience, direct participation (of the teacher) or observation (of students), still has facilitated interaction which may help strengthen the student-teacher rapport. Owing to the observation that the students are the ones ‘consoling’ the teacher, then high motivation and low affective filter may be upheld (Blattner & Fiori, 2009).
The second research objective is to ascertain whether teachers can initiate academic/instructional purposes through the use of Facebook. To provide clarity on this, the researchers summarize recurring themes and patterns in Table 2. Themes that are recorded are announcements, student activity documentation, and extra-curricular activities.

Table 2 Themes of Teachers’ School-related Wall Postings

| Themes            | Sample Wall Postings                                                                 |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| **Announcements** | (1) 1st PTA Meeting: Grade 7 – Mahinahon<br>June 24, 2017/Saturday/8:00-9:30am/Rm.305<br>MHS Annex 1 – Poblacion<br>Agenda: Election of Homeroom PTA Officers and other important matters.<br>Attendees: 33 parents out of 48<br>(2) TIP-Manila SHS Recognition Day<br>Congratulations to our worthy honor students Ipagpatuloy ang nasimulan.<br>Pagyamanin ang sintang paaralan (Continue what you had started.<br>Contribute to the enrichment of your beloved school)<br>**Student Activity Documentation**<br>(1) Activity Intercultural Communication<br>(2) If Oscars were given for a job well done, I’d nominate you all!<br>Congratulations for the fantastic performances STEM in today’s activity!<br>(3) July 07, 2017<br>Basics of Career Guidance HUMSS B and ARTS & DESIGN<br>(4) Reading Comprehension Exam:<br>McCall – Crabb’s Standard Test Lessons.<br>Grade 7 – Maaasahan, Magalang, Mahinahon and Maagap.<br>Venue: MHS Annex.<br>6:40 AM – 12:00 noon. 06.15.2017 #ForDocumentation #SchoolYear20172018<br>**Extra-curricular Activities**<br>(1) We’ve been through difficult times…<br>We’ve overcome every challenge..<br>We’ve shared laughters and tears..<br>And we will transcend diversities..<br>Because we are a family<br>#TIPManilaSHS #StudentCouncilDuties #ExecutiveBoard #ProudAdviser<br>(2) proud adviser

Announcements on the PTA meeting, departmental activities, and moments are captured during the awarding ceremony. Also, congratulations to students who receive awards (Figures 7 and 8) have met all the three criteria of a theme such as recurrent, repetitive, and forceful.
Facebook is utilized as a tool for extending not only the boundaries of traditional journalism but also of traditional communication avenue between students and teachers. Facebook has served the purpose of a bulletin board that can be accessed or viewed at a distance without thinking about geography and time as barriers.

Photos of students-in-action (doing classroom or school activities) are posted by a certain teacher (Figure 9). The availability of a camera in the classroom/school set up for the documentation is good to note. So far, this theme reveals the most relevant academic-related wall post of a teacher. Remarkably, the album has generated ‘likes’ from students involved and some comments from them as well. The interest and motivation of the students toward their tasks may not be underestimated because of the ‘likes’ and ‘comments’ that have been noted which could mean that they really like not just the photos but their project itself.

This activity documentation has been more promising in terms of its pedagogical implication because the teachers put captions that have elaborated the project being undertaken by the students in the photos. The captions that are actually put justified since the motives appear to be more of maintaining or strengthening student-teacher rapport by use of humor and not of stressing the academic value of the task.

There is a teacher who posts pictures of extra-curricular activities to show that he is a proud adviser of two school organizations, the student council and the art club. It can be seen in Figure 10.

The post suggests that the teacher is very supportive of the extra-curricular activities of his students and that he utilized Facebook as a tool to voice what he feels. This is similar to what Blattner and Fiori (2009) and Tyler, Smith, and Benscote (1999) have pointed out that teachers need to adapt to the emerging communication norms online and that they should be the ones guiding their students in using certain e-tools for academic purposes, or any school-related activities, for that matter.

The student-teacher interaction inside and outside the English language classrooms as an apparent phenomenon...
in Facebook may be viewed as an initial step if teachers are to embrace the unavoidable communication norms put forward by technological innovations. The presence of teachers on Facebook complements the dominance of students in this online community. This is of remarkable importance in order to, if not avoid, lessen the skepticism and criticism that youth as ‘netizens’ receive. If teachers become resident ‘netizens’ too, then they could guide these young learners instead of just being reactive to this exponential technological change.

Similarly, the teachers’ presence on SNSs may help create and maintain a space not only conducive to comfortable learning but also authentic for socio-pragmatic realizations. The latter, as what Bardovi-Harlig and Mahan-Taylor (2003) have claimed that cannot be attained via the use of traditional reference materials, for example, textbooks, as they provide only linguistic input not pragmatic input. How important pragmatic is resides on the notion that a “pragmatic error may hinder good communication between speakers, may make the speaker appear abrupt or brusque in social interactions, or may make the speaker appear rude or uncaring” (Bardovi-Harlig and Mahan-Taylor, 2003). Likewise, since constructivism has reemerged in the field of education (Matulac, 2012), Facebook and even other SNSs can facilitate the process of social interaction, a key concept in constructivism as it is important for internalizing higher mental functions such as reasoning, comprehension, and critical thinking.

This research reveals that the teachers’ use of Facebook for academe/school-related purposes still appears to be limited. This may imply that these teachers on Facebook still suffer from narcissistic mentality and personality, thus focusing on themselves alone because the results yield to only a small number of themes related to second research concern. For students to be involved in meaningful educational experiences online, teachers themselves should not be self-promoting but education-driven when online. This further suggests that the teachers may experiment on and try innovative ways to maximize the students’ learning even when they are online. As what Matulac (2012) has stressed, “A teacher must look beyond the walls of the school. There are many classrooms we can connect with. There are many teachers who face the same situation. However, most of all there is an available technology to bring them together, working hand-in-hand, striving and succeeding.”

CONCLUSIONS

This research concludes that SNSs such as Facebook open up several opportunities for teaching and learning in the realm of the English language. Its pedagogical use is paramount that both teacher and students can benefit in constructing 21st education. The various activities teachers and students are engaged in using Facebook foster positive interactions that may be useful in increasing student motivation and affective learning for acquiring the target language. The findings of this research help establish the importance of technology integration in the field of teaching and learning English as a second language. Moreover, this research is pivotal in the resurfacing of constructivism in education and the emergence of new communication norms brought about by technological innovations.

In light of the findings and conclusions of this research, the following are highly recommended. The use of SNS in the context of English language teaching and learning should be explored and monitored for various reasons, more significantly for school-related purposes. The constant availability of the gadgets and data or internet connection should also be present to determine that all students have a dependable open-access for interaction or exchange of ideas. Through this, an evaluation of real-time use of SNS of both teachers and students should also be performed if the goal is to support its practical, efficient, and effective use. The assessment familiarity of the teachers to the respondents and the reliability of no face-to-face communication in the thematic analysis is also suggested for a more encompassing result. Also, similar research that incorporates the number of participants from diverse contexts using different means of investigation will be beneficial in advancing the current findings.

Nonetheless, the research is limited to the discussion of the practical use of technological innovations (SNSs) as well as the promotion of positive interaction and good rapport between teacher and students in the senior high school setting. This means that research has excluded consideration on the possible effect of familiarity between the teacher-student before the period of investigation and also the interaction between teacher and students of different grade levels. A teacher who has become a teacher in the past or an acquaintance is more likely to become active and participative in the exchange of messages and information, compared with those unfamiliar and less-active and not so sociable ones. The time frame is considered short and partially reliable due to the unexpected situations or events happening at the time, which could give an impact to the themes being observed.

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