Using Facebook in Blended Learning in Vietnamese Undergraduate Students

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Abstract. The study investigated the use of Facebook as an educational tool as well as the influence of Facebook integration into blended learning environment on English pronunciation teaching and learning activities. The subjects for the study consisted of 30 students who were the first-year English majors at Thai Nguyen University of Education. They were divided into two groups: the experimental group and the traditional group. Besides, there was a student teacher from the same university to be the subject of the experimental group. A combination of qualitative, quantitative and experimental approaches was employed to collect data and students’ views on this model. This allowed the researcher to get hold of a transformation in students’ pronunciation competence and their attitudes towards a blended format with supporting a social networking site (Facebook). The findings of the study indicate that Facebook retains outstanding features to offer a professional online course for English pronunciation learning, such as live lectures, group discussions, schedule events and etc. Furthermore, Facebook benefits the teachers in managing students’ learning autonomy so that the teacher is likely to grasp the ability of individuals in a short time. However, the use of Facebook still remains obstacles in the path of carrying out English pronunciation activities, and when putting it into blended-learning, the model handles these obstacles and limitations in the current learning and teaching of English pronunciation as well.

1. Introduction

Teaching and learning English in Vietnam are burning questions and given much attention to by the Government and the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET). Therefore, the Ministry of Education and Training launched a project called “National Foreign Languages 2020” and set a fundamental goal that “By 2020 most Vietnamese students graduating from secondary, vocational schools, colleges and universities will be able to use a foreign language confidently in their daily communication, their study and work in an integrated, multi-cultural and multi-lingual environment, making foreign languages a competitive advantage of development for Vietnamese people in the cause of industrialization and modernization for the country”. However, this project has been considered to be on the brink of failing to reach its targets by Minister Phung Xuan Nha for several reasons. One of the reasons is that teaching and learning English in Vietnam do not seem to follow the international standards. It seems that language communication or English language speaking, in general, is a challenge to most students in Vietnam and the fact shows that most of the graduates cannot communicate fluently in English. Many employers complained that they were really disappointed...
about the low English language proficiency and poor confidence of university graduates. It has derived from the fact that students have little opportunities to speak English in class. This is demonstrated that English teachers mainly focus on reading comprehension, vocabulary and structural patterns with the aims of passing the final exams although the MOET highlights the significance of communicative competence [8]. Moreover, it is argued that English pronunciation competence of numerous English major postgraduates and even those who are currently teaching English at schools is relatively low. This leads to students’ bad English pronunciation that is taught by them while pronunciation is regarded as a crucial factor which decides the success in communication. Therefore, teaching and learning English pronunciation of English major students at Universities should be on the list of priorities when setting out the curriculum to help learners make progress in their communication as well as in their professional future. However, teaching and learning English also have some limitations. According to [7] students are not satisfied with learning English at university for several reasons: the limited time for teaching and learning in the curriculum, the unbalance in English competence of students in a class, poorly organized and qualified English classes, out-of-date textbooks and boring teaching methods. As above-mentioned problems, there is a strong need to have a solution to tackle these problems. Industry 4.0 brings both challenges and opportunities for the Vietnamese education system. Many educational institutions are applying new technologies to their system. Professor Nguyen Xuan Thu, former vice chancellor of RMIT University in Melbourne, co-founder of the RMIT International University in Vietnam and the Australia- Vietnam Education Promotion Association, pointed out that traditional universities can collaborate with online teaching establishments to meet the needs of Industry 4.0. The “e-learning” or “online learning” term has emerged as a phenomenon of the integration of new technologies in education. Beside positive consequences, e-learning, or online learning faces up to negative consequences such as lack of face-to-face communication, one of the main disadvantages of this learning model. These days, there are a lot of solutions proposed; however, blended-learning is above all others due to its striking features. Blended-learning is also in accordance with Vietnam’s context which is the combination of traditional learning (face to face) and e-learning. Therefore, it is an ideal measure to overcome obstacles and difficulties in teaching and learning English in Viet Nam. According to [5], blended-learning is a formal educational program in which a student learns at least in part through online delivery of content and instruction with some elements of student control over time, place, path, and/or pace and at least in part at a supervised brick and mortar location away from home. To carry out “blended-learning” model, there is a requirement of using a social media. In this research, the researcher chooses Facebook as an e-learning tool to implement blended-learning for several reasons as below:

In Vietnam, Facebook makes up for by far the most interests and is becoming an indispensable part of university students. They use Facebook for making friends, discussing and updating status or pictures. However, some people spend a considerable amount of time on surfing Facebook without intention. What is more, Facebook is overwhelming the other activities including study.

Second, Facebook actually is not designed for education, but it is a potential tool for teachers and learners as well to make use of it owing to useful and valuable functions. [2] argued that the use of Facebook may be helpful in improving low self-efficacy and self-regulated learning. [6] discovered that by using Facebook students have more chances to find experts or fellow students to discuss and investigate a subject. It is a golden opportunity to approach and widen knowledge from professors and qualified people. High teacher self-disclosure leads students to higher levels of motivation and effective learning and leads to a more comfortable classroom climate [3]. Therefore, it is highly recommended to use it for academic purposes instead of wasting time on Facebook.

Third, as a replacement for the traditional teaching method, a new approach of using e-learning in teaching and learning, in particular, Facebook will fascinate and motivate them to study.

Last but not least, Facebook is free for everyone, so any student can have their own Facebook account to serve their learning without worrying about the financial situations.

The study was undertaken to give out the approach and the experience in using Facebook as an educational tool in the blended-learning environment to facilitate English pronunciation teaching and
learning activities with the aims of evaluating the influences of using Facebook for English pronunciation learning (advantages and disadvantages). The other purpose was to explore the students’ attitudes/feedback/comments towards using Facebook in blended-learning for learning English pronunciation. Three questions were employed in the study:

1. What are activities on Facebook practical for English pronunciation learning?
2. What are the benefits and drawbacks when using Facebook for English pronunciation learning activities?
3. What are students’ attitudes/feedback/comments towards using Facebook in blended-learning for learning English pronunciation?

2. Methodology

The study consisted of 30 students from English 51 at Thai Nguyen University of Education chosen randomly to be the subjects. In other words, there were 15 students in the experimental group and the rest came to the traditional group. Besides, there is a volunteer who played a role as a teacher joining the experiment. An experiment was implemented in three weeks to examine the effects of Facebook in blended-learning to support English pronunciation teaching and learning activities on learners’ English pronunciation competence. The instructional context was a series of theoretic lectures and home assignments posted on Facebook. Then, the products of practicing pronunciation were uploaded for an after-class program in which teaching and learning activities via Facebook had been designed. After that, pronunciation activities were carried out in the classroom to reinforce their competence after the assignments on Facebook. Coupled with the experimental method, the qualitative method was implemented by observation during the process of the experimental method and semi-structured interview after finishing the experiment to perceive a change in learners’ pronunciation and students’ attitudes toward this model. Finally, the quantitative method was undertaken to collect data and learners’ feedback toward using Facebook integrated blended-learning course after finishing the experimental method because quantitative method contributes the overview of the research problem to data collection from a large population by using some numeric tools [1].

2.1. Data collection procedure

Some text.

- Pre-test and post-test
  The researcher used an app named “Elsa speak” to test the subjects’ English pronunciation competence before and after the experiment.
  The process of carrying pre-test and post-test:

  The researcher contacted the monitor of English K51 (the first-year students) class to make an appointment. Then, the researcher came to class and introduced the study to ask for their help. Because there were 15 students to join the experimental group, choosing the participants based on their willingness. Those selected students were informed about the test schedule from Elsa speak. Coupled with the subjects of the experimental group, the subjects from the traditional classroom group also needed to take the test in this app. To do this, the researcher launched the app and how to use the app on Facebook. After the students had completed the test, all the outcomes were collected.
After finishing the experiment, 30 students belonging to the subjects of the study were required to retake the test to gather data so that the researcher made a comparison about the differences in English pronunciation competence between two groups.

Apart from the pre-test and post-test, the questionnaires and interviews were employed with the aims at providing further feedback/attitude/comments from the students and teachers.

- **Questionnaires**
  The questionnaire was conducted after finishing the experiment. To be more specific, the participants of the experimental group did the questionnaire in the last period of the offline class in blended-learning. Besides, the researcher was available in class to explain and instructed the participants to do the questionnaire. Finally, all the questionnaires were gathered and the researcher expressed the gratitude to their excellent participation during the research experiment.

![Figure 1. An app named “Elsa speak”](image)
The semi-structured interview

The semi-structured interview was also implemented after finishing the experiment. The researcher contacted the teacher to arrange the interview. The questions were open-ended to get further information about her ideas towards the model and the given issues from the answers of the participants based on the questionnaires for students.

2.2. Data analysis

After having the answers to the three research questions of: 1) practical activities on Facebook for English pronunciation learning; 2) their benefits and drawbacks; and 3) students’ attitudes/feedback/comments of using Facebook in blended learning for English pronunciation. The authors started processing the data.

For analyzing data, the researcher calculated the results in terms of percentage as well as Mean, Mode and SD (Standard Deviation) [4].

According to BusinessDictionary, the three values can be understood as follows:

Mean: is a simple average of a range of values or quantities, computed by dividing the total of all values by the number of values.

Mode: is a type of average that refers to the most common or most-frequently occurring value in a series of data.

SD (standard deviation): a measure of the unpredictability of a random variable expressed as the average deviation of a set of data from its arithmetic mean and computed as the positive square root of the variance.

Data were presented in a pie chart, bar charts and tables to give readers the overview of each part and make them easy to observe. Then, every perception/idea was analyzed independently to explain further on the phenomenon. Based on the data analysis, conclusions were given and several possible suggestions were recommended to tackle the obstacles of the model.

3. Findings and discussion

The study consisted of 30 students from English 51 at Thai Nguyen University of Education chosen randomly to be the subjects. In other words, there were 15 students in the experimental group and the rest came to the traditional group. Besides, there is a volunteer who played a role as a teacher joining the experiment. An experiment was implemented in three weeks to examine the effects of Facebook in blended-learning to support English pronunciation teaching and learning activities on learners’ English pronunciation competence. The instructional context was a series of theoretic lectures and home assignments posted on Facebook. Then, the products of practicing pronunciation were uploaded for an after-class program in which teaching and learning activities via Facebook had been designed. After that, pronunciation activities were carried out in the classroom to reinforce their competence after the assignments on Facebook. Coupled with the experimental method, the qualitative method was implemented by observation during the process of the experimental method and semi-structured interview after finishing the experiment to perceive a change in learners’ pronunciation and students’ attitudes toward this model. Finally, the quantitative method was undertaken to collect data and learners’ feedback toward using Facebook integrated blended-learning course after finishing the experimental method because quantitative method contributes the overview of the research problem to data collection from a large population by using some numeric tools [1].

3.1. Background of the subjects

In the number of 15 students from the experimental group, 93.3 percent of them confirmed that they have not experienced “blended-learning” before while there was only one person among 15 students, who has ever experienced ahead of the experiment. He gave his situation as follows:

“I learned online through Skype with my aunt and when she came back to Vietnam, I learned face-to-face with her”
This statistic reveals that Blended-learning is not widespread in Vietnam, especially at schools. It seems that the traditional class still dominates every learning and teaching method. Besides, 100 percent of the subjects committed themselves to use Facebook; however, years of having a Facebook account fluctuated from two to six years.

![Years of using Facebook](image1)

**Figure 2.** Years of using Facebook by the subjects.

More interestingly, when being asked the time to access to Facebook in a day, 100 percent of them selected the same period of time in a day, from one to five hours a day which they often spend on Facebook.

3.2. **Research question 1:** What activities on Facebook are practical for English pronunciation learning?

After the experiment finished, the researcher wanted to investigate the roles of Facebook for English pronunciation learning in blended-learning through activities that the participants often do on Facebook.

![Activities on Facebook for English pronunciation learning](image2)

**Figure 3.** Facebook activities for English pronunciation learning.
Table 1. Facebook activities for English pronunciation learning.

| No. | Code | Meaning                                                                 | Number of participants |
|-----|------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1   | A1   | Work in groups; Receive information from group members (Teachers and classmates) | 8                      |
| 2   | A2   | Receive notifications/requirements from teachers                        | 10                     |
| 3   | A3   | Upload assignments/homework (recordings or videos..)                   | 13                     |
| 4   | A4   | Share ideas and opinions                                               | 7                      |
| 5   | A5   | Give feedback/comments to other members' assignments                   | 10                     |
| 6   | A6   | Receive feedback/comments from group members on the content which you have posted | 10                     |
| 7   | A7   | Contact teachers and group members                                      | 11                     |
| 8   | A8   | Watch lectures and interact with teachers                              | 6                      |
| 9   | A9   | Discuss group assignments                                              | 10                     |
| 10  | A10  | Share knowledge and problems in pronouncing English                    | 6                      |
| 11  | A11  | Practice pronouncing English and receive feedback/correction from teachers and others via video | 8                      |
| 12  | A12  | Call/call feature on Facebook                                          | 8                      |
| 13  | A13  | Receive reference materials relating English pronunciation from teachers | 11                     |

As can be seen from the bar chart, the top four common activities were Receiving notifications/requirements from teachers (homework, assignments, schedules...), Uploading assignments/homework (recordings or videos...), Contacting teachers and group members and Receiving reference materials relating English pronunciation from teachers respectively. By far the most common activity on Facebook for English pronunciation learning, Receiving notification/requirements from teachers (homework, assignments, schedules...) was performed at 87%. 80% of the participants reckoned that they often upload assignments/homework (recordings or videos...). On the other hand, the smallest proportion of participants’ activities came to watching lectures and interacting with teachers and sharing knowledge and problems in pronouncing English at 40%. As I observed during the experiment, there were several reasons for each activity. First, when teaching English pronunciation, the teacher would encourage student-centered learning to boost students’ cognition and competence. Therefore, lectures designed by the teacher were not conducted frequently. Moreover, some students shared that they could not watch lectures and join the lectures through live streaming sometimes because of the poor internet connection. Secondly, some students hesitated to share their thoughts/problems from the very first time of the experiment; however, they gradually changed after every lesson.

3.3. Research question 2: What are the benefits and drawbacks when using Facebook for English pronunciation learning activities?

The questionnaire is designed to measure the level of opinion to each statement. Each statement is attached to five scales (Strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, strongly disagree) in a likert-scale, and the participants are required to choose one of them. Based on the results from 15 participants’ choices, the researcher would analyze the outcomes through Mean/Mode/SD (standard deviation).

In the study, the three values can be understood as follows:

**Mean:** is simple average assessed value of 15 students to a statement in five scales (Strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, and strongly disagree)
Mode: is a value which receives the most choices from 15 students to a statement and the mode value in the study ranges from one to five.

For example: If the mode of statement B1 is two, the scale “Agree” receives the most choices from 15 students.

SD (standard deviation): is a measure which shows the amount of variation of 15 students’ choices from scale “Strongly agree” to scale “Strongly disagree” in a statement.

Table 2. The benefits of using Facebook for English pronunciation learning activities

| No | Code | Meaning                                                                 |
|----|------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | B1   | I would learn and discuss at any time and place                         |
| 2  | B2   | I would not miss any lesson if I had been absent                         |
| 3  | B3   | I would interact more with teachers and classmates                       |
| 4  | B4   | I would feel more comfortable when discussing on Facebook               |
| 5  | B5   | Typing would give me time to think of more ideas                         |
| 6  | B6   | I would feel interested in learning through live streaming               |
| 7  | B7   | I would update the schedules easily                                     |
| 8  | B8   | I would approach various learning resource                               |
| 9  | B9   | Facebook messenger group allows members to chat directly and indirectly |
| 10 | B10  | I would be corrected my pronunciation by calling directly to teachers on Facebook |

Figure 4. Benefits of using Facebook for English learning activities.

As can be seen from the chart, the mean ranged from 1.27 to 2.07. Overall, it is evident that most students showed their level of agreement with the scale “Strongly agree” and “Agree”. Of the ten statements, students agreed on these ideas I would feel interested in learning through live streaming.
and I would be corrected my pronunciation by calling directly to teachers on Facebook the most with 2.07. In comparison, the lowest mean came to the perception that I would learn and discuss at any time and place (1.27). It means that a large number of students strongly agreed with this idea which would be convenient for the whole team, just ahead of the idea I would approach various learning resources with 1.33.

In respect of Mode, the scale “strongly agree” was received many students’ choices in the six perceptions. Besides, the statement I would interact more with teachers and classmates had the same most common students “choices in the scale “strongly agree” and “agree” (Mode 1.5). The rest belonged to Mode 2. It is undeniable that Facebook has a substantial impact on students’ English pronunciation learning when almost participants agreed with given statements. It is important to analyze the SD value relating to the Mean value. The chart figures out that the SD fluctuated from 1.05 to 1.7. Generally, there was a big gap in each perception to five scales. The top two ranking were I would feel interested in learning through live streaming and I would be corrected my pronunciation by calling directly to teachers on Facebook with the similar SD score of 1.7 and 1.68 respectively. In contrast, the lowest SD value was for I would learn at any time and place (1.05).

Table 3. The drawbacks of using Facebook for English pronunciation learning activities.

| No | Code | Meaning                                                                 |
|----|------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | C1   | I would not follow teachers during live lectures because of internet connection |
| 2  | C2   | I would be easily distracted from lectures by chatting or receiving notifications on Facebook |
| 3  | C3   | I would not stay online as scheduled once                                 |
| 4  | C4   | Typing would be a waste of time                                           |
| 5  | C5   | The concentration would not be constant because we could be at any place  |
| 6  | C6   | I could not upload files with heavy properties                            |

Figure 5. Drawbacks of using Facebook for English pronunciation learning activities.

As can be seen from the chart, the mean fluctuated from 2.07 to 3. It reveals that there was the large gap among students’ opinions. The top three disadvantages that participants agreed were I would not follow teachers during live lectures because of internet connection, I cannot upload files with heavy
properties and Typing could be a waste of time respectively. On the other hand, the largest number of students showing their disagreement belonged to I would not stay online as scheduled once. The scale “undecided” receiving the largest number of participants was the concentration would not be constant because we could be at any place. In terms of mode, participants ‘choices scattered in five scales in general. However, the mode 2 was considerably chosen by students. This reveals that most of the students agreed with the given perceptions. In contrast, there was only one mode 3, which came to the concentration would not be constant because we could be at any place.

It is interesting to note that the SD value fluctuated from 1.7 to 2.42. In particular, the connection between the mean and the SD value when the higher the mean is, the higher the SD ranks. The highest SD value came to the waste of time when typing.

Table 4. Research question 3: What are students’ attitudes/feedback/comments towards using Facebook in blended-learning for learning English pronunciation?

| No | Code | Meaning                                                                 |
|----|------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | D1   | I would reinforce knowledge continually                                  |
| 2  | D2   | This model would contribute to enjoyable and stimulating learning        |
| 3  | D3   | I would practice English pronunciation regularly                           |
| 4  | D4   | The model boosted my confidence in learning English pronunciation         |
| 5  | D5   | It would save time on going to the class                                  |
| 6  | D6   | It would complement environmental communication                           |
| 7  | D7   | The model built strong relationships between a member and the others in a group |
| 8  | D8   | I would like to study English pronunciation through this model            |
| 9  | D9   | I would improve my pronunciation through blended-learning than traditional learning |

Figure 6. Students’ attitudes/feedback/comments towards using Facebook in blended-learning for learning English pronunciation.

The provided chart shows the number of students expressing their opinions on 9 perceptions in the likert-scale. It is obvious that their choices for 9 ideas mainly focused on the scale “Strongly agree”
and “Agree” and there were no choices for 9 perceptions with the scale “Strongly disagree” and “Disagree”. These figures were illustrated by the mode of 1 for 7 perceptions and the mode of 2 for 2 perceptions. Specifically, students agreed on the ideas the model boosted my confidence in learning English pronunciation and it would complement environmental communication. The rest perceptions were strongly agreed by the large number of students.

What is more, to demonstrate perception D9 (I would improve my pronunciation through blended learning than traditional learning) to be true, the researcher piloted pre-test and post-test on 2 subjects (the experimental group and the traditional group) before and after the experiment to evaluate the effectiveness of using Facebook in blended-learning based on the test on app “Elsa speak” which calculates users’ pronunciation level compared to a native speaker by percentage.

Table 5. The learning outcomes of the experimental group. (a)

| Participants | Pre-test score | Post-test score |
|--------------|---------------|-----------------|
| 1            | 66%           | 75%             |
| 2            | 70%           | 77%             |
| 3            | 46%           | 52%             |
| 4            | 70%           | 77%             |
| 5            | 79%           | 82%             |
| 6            | 74%           | 80%             |
| 7            | 57%           | 61%             |
| 8            | 18%           | 64%             |
| 9            | 78%           | 84%             |
| 10           | 79%           | 81%             |
| 11           | 70%           | 78%             |
| 12           | 60%           | 72%             |
| 13           | 64%           | 75%             |
| 14           | 75%           | 79%             |
| 15           | 61%           | 61%             |
| 16           | 74%           | 78%             |
| 17           | 69%           | 70%             |
| 18           | 78%           | 82%             |
| 19           | 62%           | 68%             |
| 20           | 73%           | 76%             |
A glance at the tables provided above, it is clear that there was a big difference between pre-test scores and post-test scores of the participants in the first table while there was an insignificant gap between pre-test scores and post-test scores of 15 students in the second table. This demonstrated that although the experiment implemented in three weeks, participants’ pronunciation competence improved when learning in blended-learning. To the traditional group, the improvement in pronunciation ability of 15 students seemed to be unremarkable. Therefore, the perception I would improve my pronunciation through blended-learning than traditional learning receiving the majority of students was completely right.

In conclusion, by analyzing the questionnaire responses gathered, the researcher realized that the new method stimulated students’ interest and desire to study English pronunciation. To put it another way, they still kept a positive attitude, so it could come to the conclusion that the model put them under no pressure at all.

4. Findings and discussion
The research presents that students’ English pronunciation competence was dramatically improved with the use of Facebook in the teaching and learning of English pronunciation through blended learning. Their pronunciation skills were proven to have bettered not only their responses to the questionnaires but also their scores in the pretest and posttest design. The results show that this new method had positive impacts on learning and teaching English pronunciation. As the research observed, students’ interest in learning was maintained during the process of the experiment. Furthermore, their confidence and the closeness in the relationship between the teacher and students were increased. More interestingly, after the treatment period both the teacher and students supposed that they preferred the new method than the traditional method. However, there are still several problems in the use of Facebook for learning English pronunciation. Therefore, the teacher suggested some effective solutions to deal with these problems. Above all, despite possible problems, the use of Facebook in blended-learning in the teaching and learning English proves to be effective and might be a recommendation for teachers and learners at universities.
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