

# The Perception of UTAR Ed & El Undergraduates on the Impacts of Facebook in Enhancing their ESL Writing Skills

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## ABSTRAK

Kemajuan informasi, komunikasi, dan teknologi (TIK) menjadikan media sosial sebagai alat yang sangat diperlukan dalam pembelajaran bahasa, khususnya pembelajaran bahasa kedua. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis persepsi mahasiswa S1 terhadap dampak positif media sosial khususnya Facebook dengan memanfaatkan Facebook dalam meningkatkan keterampilan menulis ESL. Menggunakan TAM sebagai lensa teoritis, penelitian metode kuantitatif ini melibatkan survei kuesioner. Sampel terdiri dari 50 mahasiswa S1. Kuesioner didistribusikan dalam bentuk Google form kepada 30 mahasiswa S1 Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris. Dengan melakukan ini, peneliti dapat mengumpulkan dan menganalisis persepsi mereka mengenai dampak Facebook dalam meningkatkan keterampilan menulis ESL. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa persepsi peserta terhadap penggunaan Facebook berpengaruh signifikan terhadap keterampilan menulis ESL mereka. Dampak positif Facebook terhadap keterampilan menulis ESL juga digambarkan melalui analisis statistik. Temuan ini memberikan wawasan kepada para pemangku kepentingan dalam menyarankan cara untuk mendorong penggunaan Facebook dalam pembelajaran bahasa khususnya keterampilan menulis. Penelitian serupa dapat dilakukan di masa depan dengan melibatkan lebih banyak partisipan dari perguruan tinggi swasta yang berbeda.

## ABSTRACT

The advancement of information, communications, and technology (ICT) has made social media an indispensable tool for language learning, especially second language learning. This study aims to analyze the perception of undergraduates on the positive impacts of social media particularly Facebook by utilizing Facebook in improving ESL writing skills. Using TAM as the theoretical lens, this quantitative-method research involved questionnaire survey. The sample consisted of 50 undergraduates. The questionnaires were distributed in a Google form to the 30 English Education undergraduates. By doing this, the researcher was able to gather and analyse their perception on the impacts of Facebook in enhancing ESL writing skills. Results of the analysis showed that the perception of participants towards the usage of Facebook that significantly influenced their ESL writing skills. The positive impacts of Facebook concerning ESL writing skills were also depicted via the statistical analysis. The findings provide an insight to stakeholders in suggesting ways to encourage the use of Facebook in language learning specifically writing skills. Similar research can be done in the future by involving a larger number of participants from different private higher education institutions.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

It was a quantitative study which explored the perception of UTAR ED & EL undergraduates on the positive impacts of Facebook in enhancing ESL writing skills. It was a well-known fact that if a student starts exploring their passion, source of inspiration, delight for writing through the growth of technology, and the advancement of information, communications, and technology (ICT) in teaching and learning, their writing skills will increase (Al-Ansi et al., 2021; Radovanović et al., 2015). Social media platforms like Facebook were typically utilised as a tool to facilitate communication and link individuals from various cultures, languages, and worldviews. Facebook was launched by Mark Zuckerberg, along with fellow Harvard University students Eduardo Saverin, Andrew McCollum, Dustin Moskovitz, and Chris Hughes in the year 2004 (Martín-Gutiérrez et al., 2017; Messner et al., 2016).

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Learning a second language, whether in or out of the classroom, is learning a language other than one's native tongue. English is a widely used language in Malaysia that is just as significant as Malay (official language of the country). English language is also a requirement in Malaysia's education system. Malaysian students are taught it as a second language in classrooms (Sandra & Kurniawati, 2020; Santiago Schwarz & Hamman-Ortiz, 2020). The four main linguistic skills were speaking, reading, listening, and writing (Knauer et al., 2020; Wahyuni & Umam, 2017). However, writing is claimed to be the most challenging ability to acquire, particularly for someone learning a second language.

Additionally, social media platforms like Facebook also assist learners to acquire and glean necessary writing skills and resources, writing inspirations, and enable learners to interact in virtual and real-life situation effectively (Ramadani & Xhaferi, 2020; Yaacob & Lubis, 2022). One type of writing exercise was publishing comments and opinions on social media sites like Facebook. Facebook users can express their ideas, opinions, and thoughts, and doing so helped them improve their writing abilities (Chang et al., 2017; Susilo, 2014). Additionally, it allowed users to express their ideas, opinions, and thoughts in writing, which was regarded to be just as helpful for improving their writing abilities. When students find themselves in situations where they were unable to use particular terms, they have the option of consulting online dictionaries or using the internet, which allows them to maintain the grammar in their work (Akgül & Uymaz, 2022; Federkeil et al., 2020). By doing this, it established a setting for students to engage in active learning, which has a variety of advantageous effects like improving their academic writing style and register, sentence and paragraph structure, choice of words (vocabulary), spelling, grammar, descriptions in essay writing gradually. Thus, it created an environment for an active learning when it involved social networking sites such as Facebook (Hossain et al., 2019; Yeo, 2021).

Although it was once thought that writing was one of the most difficult language abilities to learn, it is still possible to master. This was caused by the fact that social media sites like Facebook provided excellent opportunities for the students to expand his or her writing abilities. For instance, a study was carried out in Malaysia to find out how social media platforms like Facebook may enhance students' writing skills (Ibrahim et al., 2018). The study's objective was to demonstrate how easily and effectively second language learners might practise their writing skills in a virtual community. Thirty students from SMK Bakar Arang in Sungai Petani, Kedah, participated in the study. The study demonstrated that Facebook gave users the option to post lengthy statuses (Smith et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2020). Additionally, it provided opportunity for the highflyers (passionate writers) to practise writing while encouraging their peers to read and comment on each piece they had posted to their Facebook accounts. Facebook has grown to be an essential part of their daily life. The daily hours (5–6 hours) spent on Facebook has had a good impact on their writing abilities. Undoubtedly, the ability to write functioned as a measure to assess a learner's competency in acquiring, processing, and conveying the information (Abdul Malik & Megat Abdul Rahim, 2019; Derakhshan & Hasanabbasi, 2015; Martín-Gutiérrez et al., 2017).

In addition, students' writing abilities, such as planning, revising, drafting, and editing, have considerably increased as a result of their propensity for posting written status updates, quotes, and narratives about their lives on Facebook. It was clear that Facebook had a significant impact on their academic writing style and register, sentence and paragraph structure, word choice (vocabulary), spelling, punctuation, and essay descriptions over time. Thus, when social networking sites like Facebook were used, it provided an environment for active learning. Therefore this study aims to analyze the perception of undergraduates on the positive impacts of social media particularly Facebook by utilizing Facebook in improving ESL writing skills.

## 2. METHOD

This quantitative-method research involved questionnaire survey (Firat & Laramée, 2018; Sobri et al., 2019). The target population for this study was the total number of undergraduates who enrolled in Bachelor of Arts (Honours) English Education and English Language at Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR), Malaysia. However, only 50 undergraduates from English Education (ED) and English Language (EL) were selected to be the samples of this study. The samples were selected based on their English related courses as all the participants in this study were pursuing Bachelor of Arts (Honours) English Education and English Language course which has a direct correlation and relevance with ESL writing skills.

Sampling procedure which was adapted in this study was the non-probability sampling (convenience sampling). The convenience sampling was a sort of sampling in which the research relied solely on the first primary data source that was made available (Schlegel et al., 2021; Weninger et al., 2020). To put it another way, this sampling technique entailed gathering people anywhere they can be found and usually wherever it was convenient. Prior to choosing the participants for convenience sampling, no inclusion criteria were established.

Everyone was encouraged to take part. Apparently, convenience sampling was ideal, fast, and the subjects were readily available when conducting research. Apart from that, the questionnaires were distributed in a Google form to the 30 English Education undergraduates. By doing this, the researcher was able to gather and analyse their perception on the impacts of Facebook in enhancing ESL writing skills.

### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### Result

The first part of the findings presented the participants' demographic information and Facebook usage. The second section reported the undergraduates' perception towards the usage of Facebook for writing skills and finally the last section highlighted the positive impacts of Facebook in refining their ESL writing skills. The demographic information of participants and Facebook usage is show in [Table 1](#).

**Table 1. Demographic Information and Facebook Usage**

<b>Background Characteristics &amp; Facebook Usage</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	18	36.0
Female	32	64.0
<b>Age group</b>		
20-25 years old	42	84.0
26-31 years old	8	16.0
<b>Race</b>		
Malay	3	6.0
Chinese	28	56.0
Indian	19	38.0
<b>Program of study</b>		
English Education (ED)	27	54.0
English Language (EL)	23	46.0
<b>Using of a Facebook account?</b>		
<b>Institution</b>		
Yes	42	84.0
No	8	16.0
<b>Sharing of activities, thoughts, and experience via Facebook ac Facebook</b>		
Yes	34	68.0
No	16	32.0
<b>Monthly frequency of writing posts using a Facebook account</b>		
1-4 post(s)	32	64.0
5-8 posts	5	10.0
9-12 posts	7	14.0
More than 12 posts	6	12.0
<b>Number of words for each written post</b>		
Less than 100 words	20	40.0
100-200 words	10	20.0
300-400 words	15	30.0
More than 400 words	5	10.0
<b>Number of hours spent on writing posts on Facebook per day</b>		
<b>Institution</b>		
Less than 1 hour	25	50.0

1-2 hours	8	16.0
3-4 hours	7	14.0
More than 4 hours	10	20.0
<b>Other social media platforms usage</b>		
Instagram	23	46.0
Twitter	7	14.0
WhatsApp	12	24.0
YouTube	8	16.0

Based on Table 1, gender is 36% male respondents and 64% female respondents. The majority of respondents were women with the majority of respondents aged 20-25 years (84%), while only 16% were aged 26-31 years. Most of the respondents were students from the English Language Education Program (54%), while the remainder was from the English Language Program (46%). As many, as 50% of respondents spend less than 1 hour per day writing posts on Facebook. However, 20% of them spend more than 4 hours per day. Use of Social Media Platforms Instagram was the other most popular social media platform among respondents (46%), followed by WhatsApp (24%), YouTube (16%), and Twitter (14%).

**Table 2. The Participants’ Perception on the Usage of Facebook in Improving their ESL Writing Skills**

No.	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	You would enjoy writing posts on a Facebook wall for improving your writing skills.	44%	26%	10%	16%	4%
2	You think that writing for argumentation and descriptive essays can be improved by writing a post or comment via Facebook.	46%	28%	12%	4%	10%
3	Writing on social media like Facebook is an effective way of expanding writing skills in English language.	56%	20%	2%	14%	8%
4	Writing posts on Facebook improves the quality of academic writing.	38%	36%	4%	14%	8%
5	Writing posts on Facebook motivates you to participate in a more active and interactive learning environment.	34%	24%	20%	4%	18%

Based on Table 2, it was quite evident that majority of the participants have a positive perception towards the application of Facebook in enhancing their ESL writing skills. The positive impacts of facebook in refining the participants’ esl writing skills is show in Table 3.

**Table 3. The Positive Impacts of Facebook in Refining the Participants’ ESL Writing Skills**

No.	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Writing posts on Facebook assists you in refining your writing style and register.	38%	36%	4%	10%	12%
2.	Writing posts on Facebook makes you conscious of using correct sentences and paragraph structures.	48%	24%	4%	6%	18%
3	Writing posts helps you in learning new vocabularies.	32%	46%	2%	8%	12%
4	Writing posts makes you aware of double checking your spelling and grammar.	38%	24%	20%	4%	14%

No.	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5	Frequent posting and commenting on Facebook by users might become habitual for them when practicing their writing.	40%	24%	12%	14%	10%

Based on Table 3, it was also quite apparent that there were numerous positive impacts of Facebook in enhancing their ESL writing skills.

### Discussion

One of the most popular international websites on the internet is Facebook. Through the internet, people from different countries, languages, and cultures could converse and exchange ideas. Due to the poor disclosure of the target language in the typical classroom context, ESL students frequently had difficulties performing well in it (Hashim & Yunus, 2018; Kayi-Aydar, 2014). Large class sizes also made it difficult for teachers to focus on each student's requirements, especially in writing classrooms. Due to their limited exposure to the target language, ESL learners were accustomed to relying entirely on their teachers to teach them everything (Pratiwi, 2016; Rao, 2019). For instance, according to a Saudi Arabian survey, 62% of students claimed they could comprehend the lesson much better online than they could through the traditional method of instruction, 63% of them had improved their writing skills, and 88% of students said their technological skills had increased through the use of social media in education, along with their confidence in speaking (Ibrahim et al., 2018). As Facebook gains popularity as a social networking site, more and more educational applications are emerging, including those aimed at enhancing users' writing abilities, particularly in terms of sentence construction (basic, compound, and complex) (Derakhshan & Hasanabbasi, 2015; Nusantara, 2017).

Ultimately, the result and analysis from the questionnaire illustrated that most of the participants enjoyed themselves when writing posts on a Facebook wall as it helped in refining their ESL writing skills. They also believed that refinement of argumentation and descriptive essays can be achieved by posting or commenting through Facebook (Meiriza, 2015; Sperling, 2021). Majority of the respondent also pointed out that the expansion of ESL writing skills via Facebook has improved the quality of academic writing significantly. Most of the participants also stated that there was a boost in their motivation level as Facebook encouraged active participation when writing posts in an interactive environment (Johan et al., 2022; Yilmaz, 2017).

The result and analysis from the questionnaire exemplified that most of the participants stated that Facebook helped them in improving their writing style and register. They also pointed out that using Facebook for writing made them conscious about the correct sentences and paragraph structures usage (Akinosho et al., 2020; Susilo, 2014). Majority of the participants stated that writing posts on Facebook assisted them in learning of new vocabularies in percentages. Most of the participants encountered a spike in awareness of checking spelling and grammar when writing post on Facebook (Jha et al., 2016; Sánchez et al., 2014). They also believed that regular posting and commenting via Facebook becomes customary as it helped them refining their ESL writing skills slowly but steadily.

The findings mentioned above are critical as they provide clear understanding to the stakeholders who intend to inculcate technology-based learning and teaching in their higher education institutions. With the confirmation of the importance of adequate knowledge towards technology-based learning, higher education institutions should provide the necessary support in encouraging students with the use of social media platforms like Facebook. As the present findings cannot be generalised to all ESL undergraduates from private higher education institutions in the country, thus future research is suggested to repeat the study with a greater number of participants from various private higher education institutions and faculties. A comparative study is also recommended, with the purpose of investigating the perception of non-English major undergraduates on Facebook and its positive impacts in improving their English writing skills.

### 4. CONCLUSION

This research predominantly aimed to study the perception of UTAR ED & EL undergraduates on the impacts of Facebook in enhancing their ESL writing skills. Moreover, it sought to discover the perception of undergraduates of using Facebook and the positive impacts it has when it comes to expanding ESL writing skills. 50 ED & EL undergraduates from a higher education institution were involved in the research. In fact, a questionnaire survey was conducted to gather the data. Statistical analysis conducted has identified



majority of the participants have a positive perception towards the application of Facebook in enhancing their ESL writing skills and Facebook impacted their ESL writing skills significantly.

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