



Identity Construction of Filipino BA English Language Students in Facebook Groups as Virtual Communities of Practice (VCoP)

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Received: 13 March 2023

Accepted: 16 September 2023

Published: 20 November 2023

CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Altejar, L. A., Sintos, R. L., Agao, J., Bacus, D., Isaias, E., & Nacionales, J. P. (2023). Identity construction of Filipino BA English language students in Facebook groups as virtual communities of practice (VCoP). *Journal of Creative Practices in Language Learning and Teaching*, 11(2), 106-120. <https://doi.org/10.24191/cplt.v11i2.21797>



ABSTRACT

Identity is not an invariable attribute of an individual, but it is a partially versatile, adaptable, and multi-aspect construction representative of oneself. Learning is successful when students can construct an identity that allows them to assert their right to be heard and become the subject of the discourse (Castaneda, 2011). With the shift from face-to-face conduct of classes to flexible learning modality during the pandemic, Facebook has been commonly used as an alternative platform in conducting virtual classes that becomes the digital habitat of both teachers and students. The researchers argue that Facebook's closed group creates virtual communities of practice (VCoP), which served as an efficient tool in the teaching and learning process during the time of pandemic. To date, very few studies exist that investigate the same or related focus of the present study in the Philippines. Thus, through qualitative method using hermeneutic phenomenology by conducting semi-structured interviews with 15 freshmen BA English language students. This study explores the roles established by students in their Facebook closed groups and the ways they employ in the groups to connect academically with their teachers and classmates. Findings revealed that the identities employed by students are learner-teacher interaction, sense of belongingness, and active commenter in learning tasks. The findings also revealed that the respondents used Facebook as an extension of the teaching and learning process, as compliance with academic objectives, and as an integrated online learning platform. Future studies may include other platforms such as Google classroom and Moodle for a wider scope of investigation.

Keywords: Identity Construction; BA English Language Students; Facebook Group; Virtual Communities of Practice; Filipino

INTRODUCTION

Identity is not an invariable attribute of an individual, but it is a partially versatile, adaptable, and multi-aspected construction representative of oneself (Deckert & Vickers, 2011). The term identity refers to either self-identity or social identity. Membership in a particular social group has an impact on one's identity. Identity necessitates that a person fulfils the role and expectations of that identity (Thoits & Virshup, 1997). As self-categorization and social comparison influence social identity formation, members of a community share similar values, characteristics, and everyday social identification (2010 & Abram, 1988). Negotiations can result in proper role performance (Ismail, 2010). Another essential aspect of identity formation on social networking sites is the establishment of social connectedness.

Self-identity is an individual's perspective, while the latter positions the discernment of society towards one's self (Domingo, 2017). Social identity refers to a sense of a person who belongs to a social category or group. A social group is a group of people who have a shared social identity or see themselves as belonging to the same social class (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The social classes where people place themselves are part of a structured society and exist solely to other contrasting types, such as a teacher vs. a student; each has different authority, prestige, and status. Furthermore, social types come before individuals; born into an already constituted society. People grow as a result of their experiences in the community. Community identification suits the aim of this study, where it states the representation of a social



identity which requires the members to develop a social presence in the online community through the ability to portray oneself as a natural person and to perceive the same in the other members of the group (Palloff & Pratt, 2007).

Language learners have complicated social identities that can only be understood in power relations that define social structures. As a result, a learner's social identity is diverse and contradictory (Peirce, 1995). Learning is successful when students can construct an identity that allows them to assert their right to be heard and become the subject of the discourse (Hall, 2011). In addition, gender, socioeconomic status, and social background are all critical social identity categories in our academic and social environments because they allow people to express who they are and how they interact with others (Barrera, 2011). These categories are social constructs that each person creates uniquely and are present in all of our living spaces, including schools, residences, and other locations.

As a means of online learning and communication, Facebook contains features that enable its users to inaugurate interactions by sharing content and interest with public and private users (Gündüz, 2017). It involves Facebook profiles that other users can view except if it has strict privacy settings. According to Ranzini and Hoek (2017), Facebook profiles are associated with real names and appearances. The relation between offline and online identities with constant posting and sharing of content increases. It leads to the feeling of being present in an observation affecting how they present themselves on the social media platform. The quick response of students to the discussions, which are comfortable enough to share knowledge and experiences inside the safe space, makes Facebook one of the most effective learning tools. The roles of students can transition from only acquiring new knowledge to searching for and sharing learning and experiences with other users by using Facebook. Furthermore, teachers and students can respond immediately through Facebook, and interactions with teachers can become more instant (Hassan, 2014).

Using social network analysis, we aimed to convey how Facebook users establish their identities and appearances in a virtual community of practice. In many studies on the advancement of a virtual community of practice (VCoP), it is recognized that members should be participative in interacting as a process of learning and institute mutual understanding and similitude domain of interest (Reinhardt, 2019). The community of practice is a construct where individuals establish a sense of personal and professional identity and a unity of purpose and collective commitment (Kenney et al., 2013). There is a paucity of published research, particularly in the Philippines, that investigates English major students' identity construction on Facebook as a community of practice in the virtual platform. Thus, this paper will further provide knowledge to understand the identity established by these students on Facebook as used for academic purposes. Further, this study examines the configuration of the English major students' identity construction on Facebook as an online learning community. This study is significant to the broad description of the relationship of language to the society providing awareness to Facebook users with their perception of how other users utilize multiple identities in virtual academic platforms. Hence, this paper aims to answer the following questions:



1. What roles do Filipino BA English language students establish in their Facebook closed group as virtual communities of practice (VCoP)?
2. How do Filipino BA English language students use Facebook closed groups to connect academically with their teachers and classmates?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Emergence of Virtual Communities of Practice (VCoP)

Communities of Practice (CoP) can form naturally due to the member's common interest in a specific domain, or it can be intentionally formed by gaining knowledge in a specific field. As a result of sharing information and experiences with the group, members learn from one another and have the opportunity to grow personally and professionally (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Members share repertoires of various means, experiences, practices, and words developed or established by the community (Wenger, 1998). These repertoires become a part of the proceedings of the community. As a result, CoP differs from groups or assemblies in that it seeks to develop members' abilities and knowledge to sustain the community (Jung & Thomas, 2009).

The communities of practice characterize member interaction but do not specify how each community can have more interaction or engagement so that each member can reap the greatest benefits from joining the CoP. When technology and community come together to form an online community, it is referred to as a digital habitat. In other words, internet access has transformed brick-and-mortar CoPs by removing geographical and chronological barriers and allowing learning partners to interact meaningfully with one another. The multifaceted benefits of membership in an online CoP - where problem-solving, knowledge building and social and emotional sharing can occur - have been agreed. Participants can, for example, seek support from them for problematic teaching practices, look for suitable solutions, and provide emotional support (Duncan-Howell, 2010; Kelly & Antonio, 2016). The community is formed through influential sharing of information and successive relationship development, which can be seen in increased connections and purposeful investigation of problems, which takes place inside the Facebook closed groups. Learners interact with other learners allowing them to develop a sense of belongingness and comfort to share and discuss information with them, making the Facebook closed groups one community with one objective—effective and productive learning and social interaction (Kenney et al., 2013).

Facebook as VCoP

Facebook contains features that allow users to create and generate profiles conforming to their personal preferences. Some studies showed that some online identities appear to strongly connect with people's real identities (Ranzini & Hoek, 2017). As an online communication medium, Facebook has virtual groups where users can engage themselves and interact with other people with the same domain of interests as theirs. This study mainly examines how Facebook become a stimulant with its unique and accessible features and function that predominantly caters to social, pedagogical, and technological necessities through VCoPs. Learners that share the same domain of interests can create and build new interactions and engage in online learning resulting in the development of a community of practice. Building a construct or a virtual community of practice



is crucial. It points out that the establishment of people's sense of belongingness to the community urges them to express themselves freely following their preferred identity and character (Kenney et al., 2013).

It is shown that it is possible to utilize Facebook to build a community of practice online consisting of students that engage in online discussions, knowledge sharing, problem-solving, and collaborations. A study conducted by Santoso et al. (2021) shows that some teachers consider Facebook as an essential messaging tool between them and their students. Facebook allows students to connect with their teachers online; hence, teachers must keep their professional identities to maintain professionalism. These teachers are accommodating and interactive with their students. Either in their group chat or their Facebook closed groups, which serve as an extension of their classroom for further announcements and other personal matters.

Moreover, advances in information communication Technologies (ICTs) have resulted in specific pedagogical domain applications, uses, and processes (Abdallah, 2013). For example, Facebook and other forms of social media are gradually and steadily transforming education and how most subjects are taught due to their interactive nature, as participants can create, update, or share information (Casimir & Doris, 2013). As commonly defined by scholars, a Facebook group is a social network service and website where groups of users create a personal profile and then build their network of contacts by adding other users as friends (Miniaoui & Halaweh, 2011). They can send and receive messages privately or publicly using synchronous or asynchronous communication and receive and send automatic notifications when they update their profile or post a link, photo, or video. Furthermore, the user may participate in common-interest user groups, a school, a company, or any religious, political, or cultural community.

The spread of COVID-19 has influenced classroom instruction in all universities across the country. As a result, face-to-face classroom instruction had to be rescinded, while other institutions were forced to convert to digital and virtual instruction. The Facebook platform is one of the most popular social media sites integrated into an academic setting during this crisis. Many educators in the country shifted to using Facebook as part of the teaching and learning process. According to Rambe (2011), having taken the opposite point of view into account, Facebook's educational environment had also induced barriers to participants' capacity to achieve one's identity. As an educational environment, this platform has provided an opportunity for multimedia materials of educators' viewpoints and has generated an "instructional and stylistic space." It supervises educators' learning progress, acts as a conduit for learners and instructors, and serves as a basis for assessment, evaluation, and appraisal (Vicheanpanya, 2014). Social media sites, such as Facebook, provide an alternative option for classroom-based instruction because they promote interaction between teachers and students.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative method using hermeneutic phenomenological approach (Mallahi, 2022) to explore the lived experience of BA English language students in Facebook. This type of phenomenology is a qualitative research method that aims to characterize and comprehend a certain phenomenon encountered by participants (Perselli & Moehrke-Rasul,



2015; Groenewald, 2004). It also used a researcher-created self-report survey questionnaire to supplement the results collected from the semi-structured interview method. The research aimed to obtain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of the participants in their VCoPs. Thus, the fundamental goal of this study was to determine how English major students construct their identities on Facebook groups as VCoPs.

Participants

The participants of this study were freshmen BA English language students in a state university in the Philippines which consists of three sections. Using purposive sampling technique, this study was carried out with only 30 students from the first section. There were five (5) male students and twenty-five (25) female students in the class, and twenty-five (25) agreed to participate as participants of the project. However, only fifteen (15) students fit the inclusion and exclusion criteria such as an active commenter in their class Facebook groups and should not have made numerous absences during the conduct of classes during the pandemic. Also, these 15 students were designated participants in this study because they all have access to the internet, allowing them to administer their identities and characters on Facebook as virtual CoP. For ethical considerations, code names were used to anonymize the real identity of the participants such as S1, S2, S3 and so on.

Data Source and Collection Tools

The data gathering for this study used semi-structured interviews, which allowed the researchers to explore more about the focus of the study. This type of data collection allows the participants to elicit extensive information when the participants respond to the interview questions. The instrument used was interviews, which the researchers conducted virtually through online communication platforms such as Messenger and Google Meet. The interviews consisted of questions that focused on the roles the students use in Facebook groups as a virtual community of practice and their ways of using it for academic purposes. The researchers communicated with the participants beforehand to secure their consent to conduct the said interviews. Each participant was provided a consent form to ask for their voluntary participation.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was applied to data gathered from the open-ended questions. It is a qualitative data analysis technique that entails reading through a data set and identifying interpretations to obtain themes and subthemes. Braun and Clarke (2006) defined the phases of thematic analysis, which allow for a systematic manner of perceiving as well as processing qualitative data through "coding." The following are the phases of the thematic analysis that were used in the present study (Braun & Clarke, 2006): data familiarization, generating initial code, searching for themes across the data, reviewing themes, and producing the report. This approach involves the process of reflexivity, which enables researchers to comprehend and attain knowledge about the topic through factual data gathering. Moreover, it also provides credible and rational sources for data findings. The determined themes and subthemes were sent back to the participants for validation purposes.



FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section explores how English major students establish roles and identities in an online community of practice in Facebook closed groups for pedagogical and other purposes. It discusses the data gathered from the study presenting the roles and identities established by the students and how Facebook closed groups are used to connect with their teachers and classmates.

Roles Established in Facebook Closed Groups (RQ1)

The study generated matrices that provide an analysis of the roles established by the participants in the Facebook closed groups. The matrix shows that most participants interact with other Facebook users through commenting and reacting, are active users and are expressive of their thoughts and stance with freedom, either by giving a rebuttal or response statement. The study identified three roles established in Facebook closed groups: learner-teacher interaction, sense of belongingness, and active commenter on learning tasks.

Learner-Teacher Interaction

The majority of the English major students create connections with their classmates and teachers inside the Facebook closed groups to make the learning process easier and more understandable. They are often seen in the comment section arguing and stating their thoughts and ideas about specific topics provided by the teacher. This allows students to be creative in interacting with other users, either by commenting on their classmates' posts or reacting to their teachers' posts. Contrastingly, some of them are agreeable to individual posts. They tend to disregard posts that they think are irrelevant and do not necessarily need attention, such as posts that are not academically related. The relevance of the content posted by their teacher on their Facebook groups affects the students' collectiveness because they are more into academic-related posts; otherwise, they tend to disregard them. It influences the student-teacher interaction because they must build a connection to make a coherent learning process. Some perceive themselves to be disinterested; they ignore posts that they think are unnecessary during the learning process.

For instance, S5 perceived themselves as not active since they are handling multiple accounts, which means that their time is divided and they must manage their time correctly; thus, it makes them inactive participants in Facebook closed groups since they only recognize relevant posts and disregard irrelevant contents which can be reflected in the following responses:

"Since I am using two accounts, the account that I use for my academic purposes is I only use if necessary. If our teacher reminds us in our G.C. that he posted an announcement, an activity, or others. So, I can say that my role is that I am an active commenter or an active respondent, I am not active in my academic account, and since I do not respond to my teacher's posts or react to them..." (S5).

These results are similar to the findings of teachers' professional identity construction of Santoso et al. (2021) that carried out the teacher-student interaction on Facebook to create a safe environment for an effective learning and teaching process. The study above examined the professional identities of teachers on Facebook like the present study, which explored the roles established by students inside Facebook as a virtual community of practice (Santoso et al., 2021).



The study showed two discrete practices which involve the incorporation of Facebook in the construction of their professional identity. Some teachers offer home visits to their students as appreciation; thus, photos are taken and posted, and students in the photos are tagged with them. This content can be seen in the student's Facebook newsfeeds that the students may or may disregard as they browse the internet. It is related to the learner-teacher interaction in the sense that the students are audiences and that they have the option to react or comment on the teacher's posts.

On the contrary, S4 perceived themselves as inactive users since their activeness varies depending on the benefits the student will get in doing such activity. They only participate in online discussions if they receive benefits such as plus points and grades. Otherwise, they only see the posts and continue scrolling through their page. They stated from their responses:

"This is made to evaluate the students' learning since not all can actively participate during the discussion. If it is mandatory and I can gain points, I think my role is a commenter. I respond to the post by also sharing my ideas about it." (S4)

Sense of Belongingness

The Facebook closed groups enable students to express their thoughts and ideas effectively through constant commenting. It can help them understand how they communicate their emotions to every post through the reaction buttons. They are provided a safe space on the virtual community of practice where they can freely express themselves (Barrera, 2011), either through their attitudes during discourses and discussions or their emotions during arguments. Most students consider engaging in these Facebook closed groups because they can feel a sense of belongingness in the group. Thus, they present their true selves without worrying about what people might say about their beliefs and viewpoints.

The connection and interaction they have developed with other Facebook users make it easier to connect and associate with them as they consider the closed group a safe space. The diversity of insights and ideas the students have does not massively impact their sense of expression since they see the same domain of interest and goal, to acquire new learning and new friends through expressing. They stated:

"I have a Facebook group with my professor and classmates. This Facebook group is used to communicate and share some ideas and insights for the lesson we've discussed. One of the activities that we have is the online discussion, where we share our idea about the given quote from the lesson that we have. This Facebook group aims to maintain the interaction even on the online platform, where the students can still reflect and learn." (S6).

This result draws similarities with the previous study conducted by Domingo (2017), which states that users of Facebook also demonstrate expressiveness by expressing their feelings on the platform. The respondents showed their feeling of expression on Facebook towards other users and students, which entails presenting their true selves and feelings with them through post interactions in the Facebook closed groups.



Furthermore, other students are forthright with their purpose of expressing their ideas and stance since they have the freedom to their preferred identities (Kenney et al., 2013). They are given a chance to present their minds and their beliefs, regardless of the different views of their other classmates. It justifies that the virtual community of practice creates an open space for distinctiveness and variability, ensuring the safety of the members of the community or closed groups. S1 usually discusses controversial topics such as politics, language, and stereotypical discourses. Like S6, they also foresee the enhancement of their abilities in speaking the English language through expressing their thoughts and ideas while interacting with their other classmates.

"It is about language, politics, and stereotype discourses. To enhance my English-speaking ability and for compliance as we belong to one class. We feel comfortable with each other in the [Facebook] platform" (S2).

Active Commenter on Learning Tasks

Some content posted by the teacher in and out of the Facebook closed groups are relevant to its audience, such as various tasks and activities which could be done asynchronously. It is relevant since the content posted will reach their audience, the students and other Facebook users, and they will see it as much as they do not want to unless they opt to mute the user's profile. Some of the participants are selective when interacting with Facebook posts at varying levels. Some of them chose to disregard the irrelevant posts and will continue scrolling. Conversely, some of them leave a reaction to the post to let the user know that they are interacting and that they consider the content relevant. For example, S4 deduced that it is necessary to interact with posts in the Facebook closed group if they can gain benefits such as points and grades. They are selective of posts they pay attention to. For example, the teacher posted an online forum/discussion, which has benefits, and students who participate will gain points, vs. the teacher posted an announcement, which is some random tasks to do and things to get done.

Moreover, students pay more attention to details that they think they can benefit from, which arrives at S4's statement:

"Well, naka depende la liwat talaga. Like what I have said, kanina if mandatory man hiya, then I am an active commenter. For example, nakaka-gain ako hin points or grade in that activity, I consider myself an active commenter. [Well, it depends. As I have said earlier, if it is mandatory, I am an active commenter. For example, if I gained points or grades in that activity, I consider myself an active commenter.] (S4).

Similarly, S5 stated that they do not usually pay attention to Facebook posts since they are handling two accounts at the same time. This makes their attention selective to significant posts, especially the content posted inside the Facebook groups by the teacher. However, they argued that it is necessary for them to get engaged in what their teacher is posting in their Facebook groups, as expressed by S5:

"Since I am using two accounts, the account that I use for my academic purposes is only used if necessary. If our teacher reminds us in our GC [Group Chat] that he posted an announcement, oran activity, or others which I need also to get engage with." (S5)



Using Facebook Closed Groups for Academic Connections (RQ2)

The paper has come up with matrices that analyze how Facebook closed groups use in an academic connection by the participants. The matrix shows that all participants are active participants and enabled to develop an intellectual relationship. Moreover, Facebook close groups also serve as a beneficial learning tool or primary setting for academic-related purposes. Hence, the researchers were able to determine three significant use of Facebook closed groups for academic connections; these are the Facebook as an extension of the learning and teaching process, compliance for academic objectives; and Facebook as an integrated online learning platform.

Extension of Learning and Teaching Process

The Facebook closed groups are a beneficial learning tool, especially for academic-related purposes, allowing students to create their profiles and character preferences (Miniaoui & Halaweh, 2011). It enables students to develop their learning progress easier, especially during these times. Students benefit from it because it allows them to engage with each other in a safe environment and build an academic connection with others. Students utilize Facebook groups as a learning tool because they can actively participate in discussions and discourses that help them analyze their learning and understand and improve their communication with student-teachers.

S6 deduced that students and teachers could connect and effectively develop engagement using Facebook groups, where they can share their opinions or thoughts on a given issue. This type of learning and teaching environment requires students to participate actively.

"This Facebook group/s serves as an extension of the discussion and learning process. Even after the online discussion, we can still catch up and learn because our professors used these groups to stock our previous lessons, and sometimes, they add more information regarding the lesson that we have. In our Facebook group, I always show respect in every interaction, whether with a professor or a student." (S6)

Moreover, S2 perceived that learners build an academic connection through interacting and giving reflection statements with other users, like commenting and reacting to posts. Hence, Facebook close groups serve as a significant setting for academic-related purposes.

"The use of facebook groups in our classes were helpful in accessing the content of our lesson, and we find it a more comfortable platform for learning." (S2)

Some students believe that Facebook can be a good learning tool for active students in social media. It helps them acquire more information and knowledge to contribute to their studies and English classes. Students articulated that other learners cannot attend online courses and discussions due to poor internet connectivity; thus, online forums and conferences in Facebook closed groups allow them to catch up with the topics discussed during the virtual meeting.

"This Facebook group/s serves as an extension of the discussion and learning process. Even after the online discussion, we can still catch up and learn because our professors



used these groups to stock our previous lessons, and sometimes, they add more information regarding the lesson that we have." (S6)

However, in a study by Lee (2018), it was argued that the disadvantage is for those who rarely use social media and for those who do not have a Facebook account. This helps the students to get them informed or updated in all class announcements. Notwithstanding, respondents consider that Facebook is convenient to use; get a quick response from our lecturers; collaboration among students made more accessible through the Facebook group; share information; the convenience of using Facebook; features of Facebook such as name tagging, sharing folders/pictures/links; staying online 24/7 on Facebook; does not require us to log out from our account; get first-hand notifications on any updates of the subject; reach our lecturers faster than emails by tag their names.

In addition, Facebook has often been used as a platform for academic purposes due to its accessibility and ease of use; efficiency in sharing of files; quickness and straightforward; it facilitates the learning process as information posted online can be easily obtained at any time and anywhere; function on the Facebook post (comment) allows for interaction with the lecturers and other classmates; helpful to those who are less spoken; give all an opportunity to express their thoughts as the demand for an immediate response is lower online; typing the answers encourage discipline for students to think through and organize their thoughts and ideas before posting them; and equipped with a high auto-refresh rate, a reply to comment function would document and structure the discussions.

Compliance with Academic Objectives

English major students utilized Facebook closed groups to create a safe environment for students to learn, engage effectively, and form connections with other personalities. S7 explained that they use the Facebook groups they have created for academic objectives (e.g., activities, announcements, group projects, and others). Students are still guided and have interactions in this virtual setting, even if their teachers are unavailable due to a critical situation. This was expressed by the following response:

"The Facebook groups that we have were used when there are activities to be posted if there are announcements for our group projects, especially if our teachers are not available. We're still guided, and still, we have interactions. I interact with them through commenting sometimes or reacting to their posts, while in the group chats, through properly chitchatting with them. We need to comment or react properly; that's important." (S7).

Facebook is one of the many platforms used by the modern learning system and communication (Domingo, 2017) to disseminate information and announcements, give activities and homework, and assess the students' learning. It is where students submit their works, if not in virtual classrooms application, and where they interact and participate in some virtual activities. Amidst the pandemic, not all students acquired as much as other students' knowledge and learning. Thus, Facebook closed groups serve as a means for academic objectives where teachers can evaluate and observe their students' participation skills as reflected in one of the participants' responses;



"This Facebook group in our English classes is used as a setting where everyone can actively participate and further assess if the students have learned something from the discussion. It is also used to evaluate and observe the participation skills of the students since we are not in a face-to-face class"(S4).

S4 added that teachers could evaluate and assess each student's learning during online discussions. So, the Facebook closed groups provide a space for other students to participate either through submission of tasks and projects or through comments and reactions to academic posts. Knowledge sharing, sharing ideas and knowledge through discussion, enables the students to learn from one another, and this is used as a good platform for brainstorming better and faster than emails. As expressed by one of the participants, "Facebook allows us to share information & ideas easily; pictures/videos/documents can be conveniently uploaded; very easy for lecturers to monitor and mentor online; enable lecturers to keep track and monitor the progress of students' discussion; enable lecturers to mentor their students by commenting and even supporting them by giving them a 'like' on their answers" (S13). Thus, it can be noted that Facebook groups are very engaging and easy to interact with and communicate with online as most of us visit Facebook more than emails. Facebook serves as the primary setting in academic learning and even teaching.

Facebook as an Integrated Online Learning Platform

Inside a community of practice—the Facebook closed groups, the learners can share their experiences, feelings, and attitudes established together with the other learners (Wenger, 1998). Students have been dealing with countless academic problems, from having strict teachers to being unmotivated and to having no time for themselves. Learning during the pandemic has not been accessible to all students. Everyone is fighting their fights and secret battles to prosper and obtain their life goals. Thus, Facebook closed groups are considered a safe space for students to feel like having someone—a companion, to feel a sense of belongingness. Some students feel left out due to internet connection problems or other external problems aside from academic issues that hinder them from acquiring new and fresh knowledge. Facebook closed groups provide a safe environment for eager students to learn and interact with other students without being left out.

In agreement with S3's statement, "This Facebook group is used to communicate and to share some ideas and insight for the lesson that we've discussed," it is essential to interact with other students and feel comfortable at the same time. It justifies that they recognize and acknowledge their right to speech, making learning effective since they can handle other students' pleasant company (S3). This is the same finding expressed in the study of Lee (2018), where students received instant feedback from teachers and mentors, and students could review the answers of all participants which would help them better remember the content of their lessons. As expressed by one of the participants:

"Face-to-face learning was more efficient because of immediate feedback; face-to-face instructions helped me understand the course concepts better; face-to-face instruction was a better way for me to learn the content material; the face-to-face course was a good method for us to ask the details about the topic that we did not understand." (S4)



Facebook facilitates valuable social interactions for students; social integration enhances the likelihood that students engaged in their study programs; it increases student engagement; students permanently sign in and can more easily keep up to date with our academic information; students are more likely to be aware of what is going on in their course; offer rich opportunities for students to collaborate on creative projects. Hence, Facebook is very convenient to use; students get a quick response from the teacher, and collaboration among students is made easier through Facebook group. Thus, making the teaching and learning process more meaningful and engaging despite the disruption of face-to-face classes due to the pandemic. Teachers and students could definitely use Facebook groups to establish such quality of learning while students could freely express their identity in the virtual platforms.

CONCLUSION

The present study found significant roles and identities established by English major students inside the Facebook closed groups during the pandemic. These identities are identified as learner-teacher interaction, including commenting and reacting to academic content posted as online learning participation. A sense of belongingness and being an active commenter on their teacher's learning tasks, revealed the students' identities through sharing their thoughts, feelings, insights, and knowledge towards other learners. The respondents used Facebook as an extension of the learning and teaching process, as compliance with academic objectives, and as integrated online learning. This study can contribute new ideas and insights into the influence of the virtual community of practice on learners' identity construction. Facebook groups could be used more meaningfully if teachers could strategize the activities they will employ which results the students to get more engaged. The results would guide future researchers in the arguments of online and offline identities made by students on Facebook closed groups. This study can be considered as an indication that there are multiple identities constructed and that teachers should consider them to make the learning process easier and more understandable. It is suggested, for future researchers, to consider conducting the research with more participants to gather more coherent results and to consider other variables such as external academic student-teacher interaction. Lastly, to the students who have constructed multiple identities, this study will prompt them to be aware of their established roles towards their teachers and classmates as they participate and engage themselves in online discourses and activities. They must maintain professional roles and identities as students using Facebook as a tool for their learning and teaching process. Future studies may include other platforms, such as Google classroom and Moodle for a wider scope of investigation.



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