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An informal Facebook group for English language interaction:

A study of Malaysian university students' perceptions,
experiences and behaviours

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Arts Education

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To my wonderful family

The best thing to hold onto in life is each other

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Abstract

This study looks at a group of Malaysian university students' perceptions, experiences and behaviours when presented with an informal, participatory Facebook interaction group for English language practice. Three methods of data collection, namely questionnaire, LMT100 Facebook interaction group, and semi-structured interview were employed in stages.

The findings show a discrepancy between the participants' perceptions of using Facebook for English language learning (ELL), and their experiences and behaviours when presented with the interaction group. Only a quarter of the participants used the group actively by initiating interaction threads, and communicating with each other. A huge majority acted passively by making their participation visible just once or repeatedly through the means of likes and short comments. The rest of the members were silent readers who never made their involvement visible over the period of six weeks.

The students showed higher participation rate when presented with three topics; entertainment-based, grammar quizzes, and university-related inquiries. This was discussed as students' selective interests and preferences in learning. The types of online content suitable for English language learning was also addressed. More passive interviewees reported small improvements in their communicative competence from the interaction activity. The active interviewees however only felt a boost in their confidence to use English publicly rather than experience enhanced English language ability.

The discrepancy between the students' perceptions and behaviours are discussed from three levels of sociocultural influences which are personal, institutional, and societal. The students' prior English language learning experience within an education system that privileges examinations may have influenced their (non)participation in the LMT100 group. The interviewees also indicated the existence of sentiments in racial, political, and religious issues, which may have influenced their learning experience at the university.

The findings indicate that the informal, unstructured English language interaction platform on Facebook as having great potentials, although not tremendously successful in this study. Several implications are presented as strategies that may assist the integration of Facebook for English language learning in the future.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.0 Introduction

This chapter introduces the field of interest, namely social networking sites (SNSs) and English language learning (ELL). It generally describes the ELL gap in the Malaysian context that may be filled by integrating SNSs into formal and informal academic activities. To further understand the position of English language in Malaysia, I briefly present the context and development of ELL, as well as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). In situating SNSs into English literacy practice in Malaysia, I also discuss the challenges of ELL as a result of sociocultural values and influences. This chapter ends with the aims and objectives of the research that guide the structure of my thesis.

1.1 Background of study: Social networking sites (SNSs) and English language learning (ELL)

The online application of Web 2.0 or social media has been growing rapidly over the past 15 years (Constantinides and Fountain, 2008). Social media has transformed the way people connect and communicate with one another. It provides a personal space for Internet users to display their personalities and identities, express opinions and spread ideas and ideologies.

The most popular types of social media include social networking sites (SNSs), blogs and wikis, but SNSs were by far the fastest growing type of social software (Richter and Koch, 2008). The explosive growth of SNSs is common across many countries (Kim

et al., 2011). There are a number of established SNSs being used all around the globe for various purposes such as social, professional, business, religious activity and hobby. In the meantime, new SNSs are still being developed and introduced to the Internet world. The considerable success of SNSs has resulted in the creation of new social media that incorporate elements of the SN system such as status updates, comments and feedback, photos and video uploads, microblogs and group pages.

In 2008, Richter and Koch (2008) wrote that Facebook and Twitter were the two most famous, globally-accessed SNSs. Other social media that closely resemble SNSs include Instagram (photo sharing site) and YouTube (video sharing site). The widespread success of SNSs has also been due to advances in mobile technology such as smart phones, tablets and laptops that allow users to constantly and conveniently access their profiles on the Internet (Godwin-Jones, 2008, Pimmer et al., 2012).

There are two fundamental purposes of SNSs, which may be described as *awareness* (i.e. to stay in touch with existing friends or colleagues) and *exchange* (i.e. to share information) (Boyd and Ellison, 2007, Richter and Koch, 2008). However, the global accessibility and multi-functionality of SNSs has expanded these basic functions to include other purposes, such as formal and informal education, online businesses, information dissemination, artistic creation, political activism and acts of volunteerism (O'Murchu et al., 2004, Newgarden, 2009a, Mahadi and Ubaidullah, 2010). Constantinides and Fountain (2008) argued that despite the non-existence of a generally accepted definition of the term, the commercial use of SNSs has been extensive and important. This led to a divide between supporters of the evolution of the Internet as Web 2.0 and critics of the Web 2.0 High-Tech hype (ibid.).

Despite divides and criticisms, the field of education has appeared generally positive about introducing and integrating SNSs into formal and informal learning (Bull et al., 2008, Chen and Bryer, 2012b, Veletsianos and Navarrete, 2012, Wodzicki et al., 2012). The incorporation of SNSs and other social media tools into learning has resulted in what is termed the *new paradigm of learning* or *new literacy* (Cazden et al., 1996, Sew, 2009a). Similar to its basic tenet, the integration of SNSs into the academic world is based on its ability to connect users with one another, and simultaneously improve interaction and collaboration (Resta and Laferrière, 2007, Chou and Chen, 2008, Lampe et al., 2011, Llorens Cerdà and Capdeferro Planas, 2011, Rambe, 2012b). More specifically, the basic purpose of easing interaction and communication between people on SNSs is in line with the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach, which has been widely adopted in English as a second/foreign language (ESL/EFL) classrooms since the 1970s (Borau et al., 2009, Yamada, 2009, Nowrozi, 2011, Zhang, 2012).

The growing research concerning the integration of SNSs and other social media into the field of education has examined the usages, benefits, pitfalls, ideologies and strategies. Some areas that have been covered in relation to the integration of SNSs into academic learning are as follow:

- Social interactions (Wang, 2005, Bell, 2007, Teclehaimanot and Hickman, 2011, Bahrani and Sim, 2012)
- Formal and informal learning (Downes, 2010, Bahrani and Sim, 2012, Chen and Bryer, 2012b, Cain and Policastri, 2011)
- Identity establishment (Huffaker and Calvert, 2005, Greenhow and Robelia, 2009, Harrison and Thomas, 2009, Bjerregaard, 2010, Idrus, 2012)

- Educational uses of SNSs in educational settings (Selwyn, 2007a, Grosseck and Holotescu, 2008, Madge et al., 2009b, Selwyn, 2009a, Grosseck et al., 2011, Wesseling, 2012)
- Collaborative learning (Chou and Chen, 2008, Lampe et al., 2011, Llorens Cerdà and Capdeferro Planas, 2011, Rambe, 2012b).

Despite the growing interest to introduce SNSs in academic context, a limited number of studies have examined the suitability or use of SNSs and second language learning. Some studies in this area have included; blended learning environment (Shih, 2011, Shih, 2013), benefits and weaknesses of SNSs for ELL in higher education setting (Kabilan et al., 2010, Yunus et al., 2012), the construction of knowledge on Facebook (Idris and Ghani, 2012), identity development, (Harrison and Thomas, 2009), critical literacy, (Rambe, 2012b) and writing (Reid, 2011b, Dixon, 2011, Yunus et al., 2012).

Some well-known SNSs, particularly Facebook, have come into prominence and have become a major part of students' and teachers' lives. This has been observed particularly among college and university students in countries such as United States, Nepal, United Kingdom and South Africa (Selwyn, 2009a, Cain and Policastri, 2011, Grosseck et al., 2011, Pimmer et al., 2012). In Malaysia however, Hamat *et al.* (2012) discovered that SNSs had not fully penetrated the Malaysia's university setting to the extent that might initially have been assumed. Regardless, many academics saw SNSs as an invaluable learning tool and offer opportunities and advantages for English language development, both inside and outside of the classroom (Kabilan et al., 2010; Mahadi and Ubaidullah, 2010; Melor et al., 2012). This is due to the added learning dimension and bridging of the formal-informal academic settings (Wodzicki et al., 2012). Added to this, reports on social media showed that the rate of SNSs

users, except Twitter, increased among teenagers, while the rate of blogging dropped among adolescents but grew in number among older adults, (Lenhart et al., 2010). This suggested that younger users were becoming more aware and comfortable in using the microblogging function provided by SNSs, rather than blogging on websites (ibid.).

1.2 A general gap in the literature: ELL in Malaysia

Following Che Musa *et al.* (2012), the terms *English language* and *English literacy* are used interchangeably in this study. The use of the word '*literacy*' has been expanded to conceptualise social practice, instead of being restricted to defining the teaching of reading and writing (ibid.).

Many studies conducted on SNSs integration in academic and ELL have indicated the positive aspects of the activity, and how importantly English is regarded in Malaysia (Kabilan et al., 2010, Yunus et al., 2012, Idris and Ghani, 2012). As the nation's second language, English language mastery is emphasised and sought after. Research on English learning strategies has revealed the scarceness of authentic platforms or activities that could provide students with the opportunity to practise their English language skills. Reports discovered that Malaysian students feel awkward in using English in their daily interaction, citing an unnatural feeling and the difficulty of maintaining communication in English, as they were competent users of their native languages (Briguglio, 2000, Sawir, 2005, Abu Bakar, 2007). As Malaysia has its own national language and varieties of other native languages, the number of native speakers (NS) of English was scarce, thereby making it difficult to provide a sustainable platform for English language practice. Due to this, English language

practice and interaction has tended to be restricted to classroom contexts and these have been neglected once students step out of the school compound. This indicates an absence in the link between in-school and out-of-school literacy practices, and in some settings, total marginalisation of non-school literacy practices at both homes and schools (Azman, 2000).

Furthermore, the exam-oriented learning strategies employed by many academic institutions in Malaysia further alleviated students' needs for competence in all aspects of the English language. The focus is on the skills tested during examinations such as reading comprehension, writing and grammar, while ignoring communication and listening skills that do not directly impact their grades (Hussin et al., 2001, Pandian, 2002, Koo, 2008). Evidently, Berman and Cheng (2010) found that even though non-native speakers (NNS) graduate students in a Canadian university reported difficulties in ELL, their academic performance was not affected as compared to their NS peers. However, due to the exam-oriented learning, students often suffered in oral presentations, networking and communication that jeopardised their chances of securing good jobs (Kassim and Ali, 2010).

In enhancing the opportunities for English language interaction, I explored the suitability of Facebook as an SNS, to provide a safe and constantly accessible learning platform. The integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) offers an alternative mode for instruction delivery, to address the challenges of teaching and learning in the 21st century that requires teachers and students to work together as co-authors and co-producers in literacy building (Mukti and Hwa, 2004, Koo, 2008). The employment of SNSs in language learning was based on the argument that English language literacy is viewed as a social practice, in which

learning is based on participation and meaningful interaction (Street, 1998, Che Musa et al., 2012). In the same breath, Lee (2003) reminds teachers that the classroom should not be treated as an isolated entity, but as an integral part of the larger society and the outside world. In line with this, Hussin *et al.* (2001) urged teachers to develop a continuous program that integrates in-class and out-of-class language activities to give students life-long learning experience, instead of discontinuing it after their examinations ended. As such, the employment of SNSs into language learning was hoped to provide some continuity in terms of students' literacy practices (Azman, 2000).

As an Internet-dependent medium, Facebook may be accessed by students and teachers alike from whenever and wherever they are, making it an excellent tool to bridge formal and informal learning or in-school and out-of-school literacy practices. SNSs play a central role in the lives of university students, who come from a generation who grew up surrounded by social media technology. Facebook in particular is widely used by the demographic of college and university students of the ages 18-35 years old (Socialbakers, 2013). Unlike other SNSs, Facebook provides a range of functions that cater to various social and afforded learning needs, such as private/closed groups, notes, personal messages, event planner and multimedia uploads and sharing.

Having argued for the relationship between ELL and Facebook as an SNS, I provide a brief explanation of the English language education development in Malaysia, to emphasise its importance. The sociocultural aspects and values adhered to by Malaysian students are also presented.

1.3 A brief explanation of English language development in Malaysia

The British ruling of Malaysia before 1957 shaped its educational system, with the introduction of English language being one of the utmost importance. Prior to British set up school system, the Malays obtained their education from religious schools that taught Islam. The Chinese and Indian immigrants who were brought into Malaysia to work at mines and estates built their own vernacular schools, which used their mother tongues as medium of instructions. Following this, the British developed Malay medium schools to provide secular education to the Malays, enabling them to become better fishermen or farmers than their fathers and ancestors (Foo and Richards, 2004).

However, ethnic groups in Malaysia were still divided by their geographical locations and the schools they attended, which was part of the British divide-and-rule strategy. The Malay secular schools introduced by the British employed English as their medium of instruction. Over time, English came to be commonly used among an elite group, and became a gateway to securing white-collar jobs in commercial and administration sectors, as well as to securing opportunities to study abroad and locally (Soo, 1990, Foo and Richards, 2004). Quoting Omar (1992:121; cited in Mohd-Asraf, 2005), the use of English distinguished *“the haves and the have-nots, the urban and the rural, the modern and the traditionally educated and so on”*.

After Malaysia achieved its independence in 1957, the spirit of nationalism sparked among society resulting in the introduction of the Bahasa Malaysia or Malay language as the medium of instruction in academic institutions (Foo and Richards, 2004, Ridge, 2004). The employment of Bahasa Malaysia as the national language was also an attempt to boost the status of the Malays (ibid.). Bahasa Malaysia provided a way

of uniting the racial groups after previous segregation based on their jobs, geography and language.

Eventually, the rapid development of science, technology, commerce and international trades that are widely recorded and communicated in English raised an awareness among policymakers in Malaysia of its importance in education (Murugesan, 2003). As a result, in 2003, one of the boldest and drastic moves involving educational policy changes was made in Malaysia, as English was re-adopted to be the language of instruction in the teaching of Mathematics and Science (PPSMI), to replace Bahasa Malaysia after 30 years (Kaur Gill, 2003). PPSMI was designed to give students the opportunity to keep abreast with scientific and technological development, and to engage in an increasingly globalised world (Pandian and Ramiah, 2004, Ridge, 2004). Some measures in PPSMI such as the Buddy System and cooperative and collaborative teachers' effort were taken and recommended, to ensure PPSMI worked successfully (Pandian and Ramiah, 2004).

However, the drastic changes resulted in persistent debates among policymakers, educationalists, politicians and the publics about the new policy. Teachers and students did not have the ability or language competency to teach and learn content matters in English, even though they recognised and were positive towards the changes (Pandian and Ramiah, 2004). For example, teachers in Chinese vernacular schools experienced difficulty during the implementation of PPSMI, as they had to code-switch between Mandarin and English while delivering content, especially in low-performing classes (Lim and Presmeg, 2011). A study by Idris *et al.* (2007) also found that during the short period of PPSMI, a group of in-service teachers reported their lack of confidence in teaching Mathematics and Science in English, even after they had

undergone pre-service and in-service training. This resulted in a lot of time being wasted in content translation, and decreased the effectiveness of the learning experience (Lim and Presmeg, 2011).

Due to these differences and continuous debates, the PPSMI policy was reversed in 2012. Bahasa Malaysia again became the medium of instruction in schools. Further frustration ensued among the public who believed that English medium instruction was the way forward for the nation and students' development (Kang, 2014, *The Star*, 2014). The fluctuation of English as a medium of instruction led to confusion among students, teachers and the public alike. This might have contributed to the declining standards of English language achievement among students, which was evident at two levels of national examinations (Choy and Troudi, 2006, *Malaysia Education Blueprint*, 2013). The changes in language policy see that official government businesses and formal institution pedagogy are conducted in Bahasa Malaysia. However, there is less control of Bahasa Malaysia enforcement in the private sector such as commerce and businesses (Gill, 2005).

1.4 The advent of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in Malaysia

Before 1983, the English language syllabus for primary and lower secondary settings in Malaysia employed a structural-situational approach, which focused on explicit grammar learning, and involved teacher-centred classrooms and language drills (Pandian, 2002). At the upper secondary level, a communicative syllabus was employed (ibid.). The structural-situational syllabus produced students who passed examinations, but failed to use the language practically. It was thus concluded that

the structural-situational syllabus neglected the communicative aspects of language, and focused too broadly on content that had to be learned by students. Following this, the communicative syllabus was introduced to the primary and lower secondary to replace the structural-situational syllabus. The fundamental aim of the introduction of the communicative syllabus was to produce a workforce with versatile communicative ability. However, the communicative approach was also problematic to teachers and students in terms of the classroom activities and learning content (ibid.).

Due to this, the communicative syllabus was revamped by policymakers into two more manageable curriculums, which were known as the Integrated Primary Schools Curriculum (KBSR) and the Integrated Secondary Schools Curriculum (KBSM). These curricula were more wholesome, and took into consideration the basic skills of reading, writing, arithmetic, the development of personal, spiritual, emotional, physical and intellectual, as well as the inculcation of values such as respect, honour, and appreciation (ibid.). These curriculums, which were underlined by the communicative approach, gave students more opportunities to practise their language skills through a discussion and simulation of authentic situations. Several programmes and systems were developed alongside these curriculums to further enhance ELL experience and improve students' skills, such as the Self-Access Learning (SAL) (i.e. reading materials, audio recordings, computers) that aimed to create autonomous learners, the introduction of critical and creative thinking skills, and class readers and literature in ELT (ibid.).

However, the vision of creating a communicative, fun-filled classroom was not achieved, as teachers and students eventually reverted to the structural-based

teaching of drilling and doing exercises based on the past year's exam questions (ibid.). The unsuccessful implementation of the communicative classroom was due to the exam-oriented Malaysian educational system, which prioritised grades and scores (Pandian, 2002, Koo, 2008, Che Musa et al., 2012). Teachers and students neglected the suggested communicative activities from the textbooks provided by the ministry for KBSR and KBSM such as information gap, language games, drama, projects and simulations. Consequently, English literacy was developed as a set of skills, instead of as part of social practice that situates students in communities of the real world (Pandian, 2006). The low exposure to, and lack of familiarity with communicative activities might have caused students difficulty in learning when they enter universities. As students retained these learning strategies when they advanced to tertiary institutions, they faced difficulty in adapting to university academic culture, hence jeopardising their learning progress. For example, some of the common problems found among university students include the lack of note-taking skills, limited vocabulary, and language anxiety (Mustaffa, 2006, Muhammad, 2007, Koo, 2008). Besides this, other challenges faced by learners of English language in Malaysia are presented below.

1.5 The challenges of ELL among Malaysian students

1.5.1 Socio-economic factor

English has always been a part of the Malaysian national curriculum from primary to tertiary education. As such, one would have thought that English language was not so foreign to Malaysians at large. However, Choy and Troudi (2006) found that English language did not play a central role in students' lives out-of-school. Moreover, one of the most pressing issues in English language classrooms was that students in rural

areas did not get the same opportunities and exposure to English as their peers in urban areas, who were most likely to come from higher economic-status families (Pillay, 1998). Accordingly, students between the ages of 13-15, from four rural schools, reported that they disliked reading English books, as they could not understand them (Asraf and Ahmad, 2003). Despite receiving exposure from schools, they still could not express themselves in English (ibid.). Added to this, other studies demonstrate that secondary school students had problems in grammar mastery (e.g. morphology and syntax), writing skills (e.g. producing ideas in English) and reading skills (e.g. inability to employ analytical and critical skills) (Stapa and Abdul Majid, 2006, Maros et al., 2007, Jalaluddin et al., 2008, Darus and Subramaniam, 2009).

1.5.2 Pronunciation and language variety

Baskaran (1994) stated that the plurality of Malaysian society resulted in the wide use of English language, besides the nation's native languages such as Malay, Chinese and Tamil. However, due to the lack of communicative activities at school and at home, Pillai (2008) observed problems in pronunciation among Malaysians. Rajadurai (2001) stated that pronunciations was the most resistant skill to improvement. Studies noted that there was a standard version of English, i.e. the British English that was used and taught in formal situations and academic institutions. Then, there were the sub-standard varieties of English that are used in informal settings, or by people who have not mastered the standard forms. The sub-standard varieties of English and accent come from various ethnic groups, socioeconomic, education level, language, and geographical location (Pillai, 2008).

According to Pillai (2008), Malaysians tended to accent-switch in their speeches. Soo (1990) specifically detailed that people who spoke proper English language (or the

acrolectal form) could effortlessly switch to the substandard varieties of English when communicating with those who had not acquired the proper forms. It should be remembered that Malaysian English (Manglish) was neither a branch of the British English, nor was it inferior to other varieties of English. It has undergone systematic and consistent changes in spoken and written forms, and was used nationally rather than regionally (Parks and Floyd, 1996; cited in Soo, 1990).

The existence of the sub-standard versions of English resulted in tension over the medium of instruction that should be used in the language classroom. Some believed that the standard model accent of British English should be employed instead of the Malaysian English accent (Pillai, 2008). Based on questionnaire responses, Rajadurai (2001) affirmed that pronunciation was indeed vital to intelligibility and assisted acquisition of communicative competence. Therefore, it was suggested that the way to improve pronunciation for adult learners was through explicit teaching at both micro and macro levels, with both top-down and bottom-down approaches (ibid.).

1.5.3 The influence of previous ELL experience and sociocultural issues

Interestingly, Malaysian students in Australian universities similarly complained about not having sufficient English learning platforms (Briguglio, 2000, Sawir, 2005). They reported non-improvement in English literacy due to the following reasons; prior learning experience in schools that emphasised grammatical aspects but neglected listening and conversational skills, insufficient English cultural knowledge, limited contact with local Australian students, and difficulty to sustain English interactions with Malay friends although they made a point to try (ibid.). Substantiating these points, Abu Bakar (2007) found that ESL students from similar ethnic groups, especially Malay, felt self-conscious when using English to communicate with each other, hence

causing them to revert to their mother tongue, even in computer-based learning. As much as the students wanted to contribute to the discussions in tutorials and lectures, their limited vocabulary and inadequate knowledge on how to express themselves hindered them from articulating their ideas. Eventually, this resulted in the decline of their English language ability, and impacted their confidence during communication and presentation (Shakir, 2009). Some students finally mustered up enough courage to communicate in English, albeit for a short time, before going back to their native languages. However, instead of getting support and encouragement, they received criticisms and negative remarks from their own ethnic groups, and were regarded as arrogant and show-offs (Abu Bakar, 2007). Consequently, the students who initially wanted to try using English feared making mistakes and being laughed at by their friends (Asraf and Ahmad, 2003).

Besides facing difficulty in learning the four skills, a group of ESL students similarly reported their lack of confidence in English learning, through a dialogue journal on Facebook (Hiew, 2011). In line with this, a study by Wong (2005) showed that English language teacher trainees with higher self-efficacy employed more frequent use and a variety of ELL strategies than those with lower self-efficacy. These problems were real concerns among local employers who needed English-proficient employees to expand their businesses to international audiences (Shakir, 2009, Blueprint, 2013). To solve these issues, Abu Bakar (2007) suggested mixed ethnicities groups during projects, activities and assignments, to encourage more natural English interaction among students. It was believed that this would boost students' self-esteem to use English, although code-switching would be commonly employed during the process (ibid.).

In short, certain communities in Malaysia, especially those who lack English language exposure, might develop strong feeling against their peers who tried to practise English as a daily routine. The main concern is that if the Malaysian students in Australia complained about the difficulty of practising English language interaction despite being immersed in an English speaking culture, there is a pressing need to rethink the strategies, tools and activities for Malaysian students at local universities, since they might not get as much opportunity for English language practice as they really need.

1.5.4 The lack of ICT skills and language proficiency

Conversely, Samuel and Bakar (2006) outline the challenges in using ICT that affected ELL from the point of views of teachers' skills. It was reported from the interviews and researchers' observation that the insufficient and archaic facilities, plus teachers' indifferent attitudes and lacking ICT skills, caused non-progression in the teaching and learning of English using ICT (ibid.).

The bigger issue is that there were claims that English language teachers in Malaysia were incompetent, and possessed inadequate English proficiency to engage and improve students' learning (Choy and Troudi, 2006). Apart from linguistic disabilities, the non-encouraging social environment such as unenthusiastic attitude and lack of interest failed to motivate English literacy (Jalaluddin et al., 2008). These concerns was nationally recognised, and were communicated to the policymakers. Some measures were taken to improve the quality of Malaysian English language teachers, including the Cambridge English test that assessed competency (Bernama, 2013). There was also talk of importing English teachers from India to improve the Malaysian

English language scene, but this idea was fiercely rejected by educators and the public, citing differences in accent and language identity (Teh, 2012, Ar, 2012).

1.5.5 The need to situate ELL within specific sociocultural values

More importantly, there was growing awareness among researchers and educators that second language learning should be fitted into students' sociocultural values and worldview (Hashim and Sahil, 1994, Bonk and Cunningham, 1998, Anton, 1999, Darhower, 2002, Van Nguyen, 2010). During British colonisation of Malaysia, English was used to spread Christianity and Westernisation in schools (Mohd-Asraf, 2005). Therefore, the resistance to English learning might be partly due to the fear that English language could harm the religious practises, and destroy the Eastern values (ibid.). As such, it is very important that the teaching of English in Malaysia be grounded in the sociocultural and socio-religious values exercised by its society (Kachru, 1992, Mohd-Asraf, 2005). For example, Choy and Troudi (2006) found that a group of Malaysian students who had undergone changes in medium of instructions from Malay to English, found that the college social environment was more conducive for English learning than schools. Therefore, sociocultural values such as family encouragement and school settings might have an influence over students' attitudes in English learning (ibid.). In line with this, Muniandy *et al.* (2010) believed that English education must also emphasise sociolinguistic competence that underlines pragmatic and practical language use. Students should be given the opportunity to acquire universal intelligibility instead of native-like proficiency, in order to function more successfully in various English environment and settings (ibid.).

1.6 Research aims and research questions

In Malaysia the mastery of the complex linguistic tapestry of English denotes prestige and ability (Rajadurai, 2004). Foo and Richards (2004) believed that as English was the lingua franca of the world, Malaysians need English to progress professionally. Malaysia recognised this, and officially documented English as the nation's second language. Its mastery was highly sought after for local and foreign education, career development, political aspirations and social purposes (Murugesan, 2003, Rajadurai, 2004). English is taught at all three levels of institutions (primary, secondary and tertiary), with an abundance of English enhancement courses being offered privately to the public for general and specific purposes (Foo and Richards, 2004). Apart from the instrumental aims, as an independent and plural nation, Bahasa Malaysia and English language provided a way to unite the society, inculcate a sense of patriotism, and assist communication (Murugesan, 2003).

Therefore, the growing advancement in ICT and social media technology should be viewed as an opportunity to re-introduce English language literacy, enhance students' interest and improve ELL, as it offers ways to bridge in and out-of-school English practices (Thorne and Reinhardt, 2008). Additionally, from a case study in the ESL Malaysian classroom, Abu Bakar (2007) concluded that authentic ICT activities have a wide potential to increase students' ELL. Therefore, I seek the effect of Facebook as an SNS on English language interaction among Malaysian university students.

Based on previous studies, Facebook was reported to be widely used by college and university students, who routinely accessed Facebook on a daily basis (Kabilan et al., 2010, Yunus et al., 2012). Furthermore, Facebook has been expanded into a versatile platform that supports multiple functions, including socialisation, communication,

entertainment, self-status seeking, identity formation and information dissemination (Park et al., 2009). In this study, I attempted to present the effect of Facebook on ELL from the students' points of view. The research questions are as follow;

1. How do university students view the use of Facebook for English language learning (ELL)?
2. How do university students use a Facebook group for English language interaction?
 - a. What types of interaction threads and topics emerge from university students' interactions on Facebook for English language interactions?
3. How do university students perceive the changes in relation to their English language skills after using a Facebook group for English language interaction?

1.7 Thesis structure overview

This thesis has six chapters. Chapter 1: Introduction, introduces the areas of interest which are SNSs, Facebook and ELL. It also briefly explains the development of ELL in Malaysia, the advent of CLT and the challenges faced by teachers and students in English pedagogy in the Malaysian context. The chapter ends by emphasising the importance of English language mastery, and the reason that Facebook was chosen as the tool to improve learning experience. The research questions that guide the structure of the study are also outlined.

In Chapter 2: Literature Review, more in-depth elaboration of SNSs and their employment in tertiary institutions are provided. The pedagogical application of SNSs is discussed from various perspectives including collaborative learning, formal and informal learning, social interaction, identity formation and academic achievement. This is followed by pointing out the benefits and weaknesses of SNSs integration into

academic. The presentation narrows down to illustrate the studies that have been conducted on SNSs and second language learning. Based on the previous literature from the sub-sections, three specific research gaps are outlined and addressed. These research gaps guide the development of research questions for this study.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology explains the methodology employed to address the research questions. The theoretical framework of constructivist-interpretivist that underlines the way data were analysed and described are presented. Following this, the rationales of mixed method approach are outlined. In-depth elaboration of the three stages of data collection methods (questionnaire, Facebook interaction activity, and semi-structured interview) are presented, together with descriptions of the sampling technique, contextual settings and sample participants. Following this, the pilot study, data collection procedure and the data analysis procedure are explained. Finally, the ethical consideration taken during the data collection process and data analysis are presented to ensure that the participants were not harmed in anyway during the course of this study.

In Chapter 4: Findings, the results from the data analysis from the three stages of data collection are presented, with examples from Facebook interaction activity and extracts from interview transcripts. The coding processes are explained in detail to demonstrate how the categories of themes were derived from the Facebook interaction activity and the semi-structured interview transcripts. Grounded theory, constant comparative approach, and inductive and deductive approaches that were employed to derive categories of themes are also described. The names and identities of the participants are made anonymous in the presentation of data, to ensure their privacy and safety. Charts, graphs, tables and figures are used to illustrate data.

Chapter 5: Discussion considers the findings from all three stages of data collection presented in Chapter 4. The chapter is divided into two sections where the first explicitly addresses the research objectives, and the second discusses the sociocultural factors that might have affected students' ELL. The discussion of the findings are linked, corroborated, compared and contrasted with the previous literature. It interprets the data gathered from the field work, by connecting it to students' sociocultural values, learning experience and technological advancement. Some issues discussed in this chapter are traditional learning versus informal online learning, the absence of pre-defined learning objectives in LMT100 interaction activity, selective interests, pedagogical lurkers, and three levels of sociocultural influence.

Finally, Chapter 6: Conclusion, sums up the findings, and situates the study within the existing literature, based on the contribution it made to the field of the use of SNSs for ELL. The chapter firstly summarises the findings from each stage of data collection, and provides an overall conclusion of the results. The implications of the study for practical educational purposes in using Facebook for English language interaction are elaborated. Following this, the limitations of the study are outlined, and several recommendations for future research are detailed.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

This chapter synthesises previous studies that explored SNSs and pedagogical-related use, especially for second language learning. It briefly highlights the important features of SNSs, and their pedagogical impacts in the contexts of; formal-informal learning, students-teachers' perceptions, collaborative use, interactions, motivation, identity and community development, academic achievement, mobile learning, as well as the benefits and weaknesses of SNSs in pedagogy. It narrows down to focus on studies that have looked at SNSs and second language learning. Finally, it identifies the research gaps, and their relation to methodology and context. The research questions are then outlined.

2.1 Social Networking Sites (SNSs)

Web 1.0 provided media tools with social features to Internet users, but did not connect individuals and groups as communities on the Internet (Rishel, 2011). The emergence of Web 2.0 tools resolve this issue by allowing users to control communication, and mediating many collaborative processes based on sharing and interaction for networking and entertainment (Thackeray et al., 2008, O'Keeffe and Clarke-Pearson, 2011, Chen and Bryer, 2012a). Web 2.0 was developed with more interactive and personal features in online space. Billions of people participate in social online activities on a daily basis, by playing a range of roles such as readers of discussion forums, searchers of information, viewers of photos and videos, publishers of content, and writer of product reviews (Preece and Shneiderman, 2009). These activities are made possible as social media supports two-ways communication

(i.e. backchannel), that permits broad interactions, cooperation, self-monitoring, and multiple resources information (Sutton et al., 2008).

Web 2.0 tools are collectively termed social media and include the likes of blogs, wikis, podcasts and social networking sites (SNSs). The term social media has been used interchangeably with Web 2.0 due to its importance, popularity, and influence in today's culture (Greenhow and Gleason, 2012). More specifically, social media refers to online applications that promote informal space, create interconnection between users, facilitate social interactions, make possible collaboration, and present user-generated content, which encourages information sharing and social networking purposes (Cormode and Krishnamurthy, 2008, Panckhurst and Marsh, 2008, Asur and Huberman, 2010).

Some of the most visited social media tools are image-sharing sites (e.g. Flickr, Tumblr, Instagram and Pinterest), video-sharing sites (e.g. YouTube and Dailymotion), SNSs (e.g. Facebook, Twitter and MySpace), gaming/virtual worlds (e.g. SecondLife, World of Warcraft and Sims), as well as an abundance of weblogs and vlogs (video blogs) (O'Keeffe and Clarke-Pearson, 2011). SNSs in particular, ease networking, interaction, and keeping up-to-date with the latest news and issues. In today's world, SNSs play central roles in almost every aspect of lives, including politics, economy, religion, humanitarian, and education (O'Murchu et al., 2004). SNSs users have the ability to perform a variety of activities from a single platform. The diverse, rich information presented on SNSs includes content and non-content information (i.e. links) (Agichtein et al., 2008).

SNSs are participatory platforms or user-generated content sites, and the ongoing activities on the medium may be conceptualised as intentional social actions (Gangadharbatla, 2008, Cheung et al., 2011). Prensky (2001a) suggested that the ability to conduct many activities from a single social media platform creates a society that uses the Internet as the first port of call to get things done, from applying for jobs to organizing events. As such, our lives are “*profoundly influenced by social networks without our knowledge of the implications*” (Matsuo et al., 2007: 1).

The advancement of mobile devices such as smart phones, laptops and tablets has further assisted Internet users to stay connected on social media. Users who live in different parts of the world are able to keep in touch with each other and keep up-to-date with breaking news, using various synchronous and asynchronous tools such as Facebook, Skype, Facetime, and so forth. Information is disseminated quickly and accessible by global netizens (i.e. Internet citizens), within seconds. For example, the news of the Boston marathon bombing that happened on 15 April 2013, in the United States, reached the other parts of the world within minutes after it occurred.

In short, the convenience, simplicity and accessibility of SNSs enable users to achieve limitless possibilities in communication, dissemination of information, knowledge creation, organisation, networking, and so forth. This could all be done from one platform, available from anywhere at any time, and hence, may be highly beneficial in bridging students’ formal and informal literacy practices.

2.1.1 Definition of SNSs

Boyd and Ellison (2007: 2) defined SNSs as a web-based service that allows individuals to a) construct a public, or semi-public profile within a bounded system, b) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and c) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. SNSs are fundamentally designed for networking, communicating and sharing purposes. The Facebook founder, Marc Zuckerberg, designed Facebook with the aim to connect and facilitate interaction between families, friends and people who already have some sort of offline or existing relationships (ibid.). Studies by Peluchette and Karl (2008), Subrahmanyam *et al.* (2008) and Pempek *et al.* (2009) substantiated that Facebook was indeed used by users to keep in touch with each other. In fact, Grudz *et al.* (2011) asserted that the study of Twitter provided valuable input to understand how SNSs were employed to maintain existing relationships. As such, despite SNSs' ability to connect and mediate relationships with strangers, SNSs users may not necessarily be looking to meet new people. Instead, they wanted to be connected to people who were already in their extended social network (Lampe *et al.*, 2006, Boyd and Ellison, 2007). Ross *et al.* (2009) termed this an offline-to-online relationship, as the majority of Facebook friends first met offline before they were added to each other's networks. Ellison *et al.* (2006) and Subrahmanyam *et al.* (2008) argue that the overlap of offline-online relationships on SNSs may indicate the users' effort to strengthen human ties. Similar patterns of offline-online friendship were also found on instant messaging (IM) interaction (ibid.). Conversely, Raacke and Bonds-Raacke (2008) found that MySpace and Facebook users wanted to make new friends, as well as locating old friends on the SNSs. Thelwall (2008) identifies three levels of friending dynamics on MySpace, i.e. close friends, acquaintances and strangers.

2.1.2 Features of SNSs

Most SNSs share similar characteristics and features, such as individual space, microblogging platform and friends lists. These SNSs can however, be differentiated based on the functions they play, besides the general networking and communication purposes. For examples, YouTube and Keek were created for video-sharing, while Instagram, Tumblr, and Flickr were designed for image-sharing. Apart from this, some SNSs were developed to target specific groups of communities based on geographical regions, language, religion, interest, hobbies and careers. Some examples of these SNSs are; LinkedIn (for professional development and career networking), LiveMocha, Babel and LiveJournal (for language learning), AsianAvenue, MiGente, and BlackPlanet (ethnic community sites with limited friends' functionality), Dogster and Catster (for users who share interest in dogs and cats), MyChurch (for members of the Christian churches), and Pinterest (to share hobbies and interests) (Boyd and Ellison, 2007). This shows SNSs' ability to connect networks of people conveniently for career development, business purposes, language learning, discussions of hobbies or interests and sharing of life experiences (Panckhurst and Marsh, 2008, Wodzicki et al., 2012).

SNSs also vary in terms of profile visibility and accessibility (Boyd and Ellison, 2007). Some SNSs such as Facebook, give users the flexibility to determine the privacy settings of their profiles, posts, comments, pictures and such, while some SNSs do not support this function. For example, by using search engines to find user profiles, Friendster allowed full profile visibility of users to the public. On the other hand, the visibility of profiles on SNSs like LinkedIn and Classmates.com is dependent on paid accounts (ibid.). Usually however, once users become friends, they are able to view each other's profile pages and any multimedia elements associated with them (e.g.

pictures, documents, web links and videos), unless specified by the profile owners. Connected users are able to synchronously and asynchronously communicate with each other using tools such as walls, tweets, direct messages and chat that can also be made public or private. The synchronous chatting tool can be viewed as similar to instant messaging tools. In fact, the QQ site from China was initially developed as an instant messaging site, before being transformed into an SNS (ibid.).

In short, many SNSs were designed with almost similar fundamental features, but with very different specific purposes. Some SNSs are more popular than others, and are accessed more widely and frequently. For example, Beaver (2007) wrote that Flickr only received and generated about 5000-6000 images per minute, despite being one of the earliest photo-sharing websites. This number pales in comparison to Facebook, which (at the time) received approximately 60 million uploaded photographs weekly, and published 100 thousand images back to users per second (ibid.). The reason for the huge statistical difference could be attributed to Facebook's association with college lives and university students that attracted more adult Internet users in general (Gross and Acquisti, 2005). Apart from these, the success of an SNS is highly dependent on the default language, site accessibility, and fee requirements.

As SNSs are central to university students' lives, the following section presents the way that SNSs are used in relation to academic.

2.2 Social Networking Sites (SNSs) and pedagogy

SNSs have added a new dimension to the teaching-learning process (Wodzicki et al., 2012), where it was found that when presented with the freedom to access Internet at home and school, students chose to engage in academic activities, socialising, networking and entertainment-related activities (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011). A number of studies have shown that college and university students between the ages of 18 to 29 years old made up the highest demographic of heavy SNSs users (Peluchette and Karl, 2008, Selwyn and Grant, 2009, Madge et al., 2009b). The 2013 Pew Internet Centre report found that about 67 percent of adult on the Internet were on SNSs, and all of them were almost exclusively on Facebook (Brenner, 2013). It has been reported that Malaysia has one of the highest number of Facebook users in the Southeast region (Talip, 2013, Socialbakers, 2013).

The popularity of Facebook among university students and its ability to improve communicative experience has turned Facebook into a formal and informal platform for academic purposes that could improve students' learning (Chen and Bryer, 2012b, Cain and Policastri, 2011, Shih, 2013, Shih, 2011, Pilgrim and Bledsoe, 2011, Petrović et al., 2012, Llorens Cerdà and Capdeferro Planas, 2011, Veletsianos and Navarrete, 2012). Educators also saw the potential benefits of SNSs, such as Facebook as a tool for ELL (Kabilan et al., 2010, Yunus et al., 2012).

The following section discusses the research that has been conducted in formal and informal academic settings. The SNSs of choice for much previous researches was Facebook and Twitter. Other SNSs include MySpace, Ettl, Ning, and LiveMocha. A majority of the previous researches that focused on various academic disciplines further demonstrated and substantiated the roles of SNSs in pedagogy. This discussion

narrows down in the direction of SNSs and second language learning, which provides a basis for the development of research gaps and objectives for this study.

2.3 How have SNSs been used in academic settings

The use of SNSs in academic settings are discussed in the following sub-sections; a) social purposes and practical academic activities, b) formal, non-formal, and informal learning, c) students and teachers' perceptions of SNSs, d) collaborative learning on SNSs, e) interactions opportunities, f) identity formation and a sense of community, g) students' motivation, h) relationship between SNSs and academic achievement, i) critical literacy and language skills, and j) SNSs and second language learning.

Based on the synthesis of the previous researches, I critically present the big idea that governs my study, which is learning language in a socially-mediated environment. I discuss how SNSs influence second language learning, the possibility of integrating formal curricula in informal spaces, and the reasons that Facebook was chosen as the platform for English language interactions. Other social media that may be used for ELL is also briefly presented.

2.3.1 Social purposes and practical academic activities

It is not entirely clear how and why students adopt SNSs to fit into the academic settings, even though it appears to play a central role in their lives (Hung and Yuen, 2010, Cheung et al., 2011, Lin and Lu, 2011). Hence, the centrality and multi-functionality of SNSs, has resulted in a growing body of research that examined their integration and implications in pedagogy. This research was especially prevalent in secondary and higher learning institutions to examine students' activities on Facebook,

and to identify the ways in which SNSs were use in educational settings (Selwyn, 2007a, Selwyn, 2009a, Madge et al., 2009b, Pempek et al., 2009, Grosseck et al., 2011, Malita, 2011, Wesseling, 2012).

The collective findings from these studies reported that in academic settings, SNSs such as Facebook and Twitter were mainly used for socialisation purposes rather than for educational activities (Selwyn, 2009a, Selwyn, 2007a, Madge et al., 2009b, Pempek et al., 2009, Wodzicki et al., 2012). Substantiating this, Hew (2011) who reviewed 36 previous empirical research on students-teachers' use of Facebook, agreed that Facebook has very limited educational use, and was utilised for more social purposes. Some of the social activities include to stay in touch with near and distant friends and families, share and tag multimedia information and engage in social activism such as volunteering (Grosseck et al., 2011, Hogan and Quan-Haase, 2010). In support of this, Wesseling (2012) and Wodzicki *et al.* (2012) reported that the students in Amsterdam and Germany used Facebook and StudiUV mainly for social purposes and interaction, leisure, as well as educational and information sharing activities. Statistically, only one fifth out of 774 students in Wodzicki *et al.*'s online survey (2012) reported to using StudiUV for study-related knowledge exchange, because as freshers, their main intention in using the SNS was to get to know other students. In an earlier study, Madge *et al.* (2009b) reported similarly that students used Facebook prior to enrolment at the university to make new friends.

In terms of specific academic use, results indicated that SNSs were employed for more practical study-related purposes such as exchanging learning materials and assignments details, speculating contents for exams, organising weekly tutorials, conducting online discussions, critiquing the nature of organisation and staff members,

confirming attendance and period of assessment and sharing jokes, rather than discussing the content of academic matters comprehensively (Selwyn, 2007a, Selwyn, 2009a, Malita, 2011, Wang et al., 2012, Wodzicki et al., 2012). More particularly, the commonly observed practical academic activities from students' Facebook status were those of recounting and reflecting on university experience, exchanging of academic information (e.g. class schedules, locations, and logistics), displaying supplication or disengagement, and bantering (Selwyn, 2007a, Selwyn, 2009a). As such, it may be fair to state that SNSs were majorly used for informal activities on SNSs. This brings us to the discussion of how SNSs were used in formal, informal, and non-formal learning environment.

2.3.2 Formal, non-formal, and informal learning

Technology has always played a central role in second language learning. From the rigid and static old web of Web 1.0 to the more interactive and personalised online spaces of Web 2.0, language educators have attempted to situate these technologies within pedagogy, in order to improve students' learning experiences, and assist acquisitions. The Web 2.0 tools in the forms of social media including social networking sites (SNSs), blogs, and wikis could be transformed into Personal Learning Environments (PLEs) to support students' formal and informal learning needs, as they have the ability to connect isolated pieces of information in academic courses (Downes, 2010, Dabbagh and Kitsantas, 2012).

Formal online instruction resembles formal classroom learning that includes quizzes, tasks, presentations and deliberate learning (Pimmer et al., 2012). It is officially directed by teachers, based on a set of curriculum and objectives developed by government authorities or institutions (Greenhow and Robelia, 2009: 122). Students

receive credits or formal degrees at the end of the process. In relation to this, formal language learning is structured, purposeful and institution-based (Lightbown and Spada, 2001; cited in Bahrani, 2011). Another form of formal learning, is also carefully planned by a person or an organisation, but occurs outside of the educational institutions. Such specific, focused formal tasks with compulsory participation in online environments could benefit students' learning processes, as it has been argued that they encourage participation in scholarly discourse at a higher level, as well as promoting greater engagement and improving learning outcomes (Panckhurst and Marsh, 2008, Oradini and Saunders, 2008, Birch and Volkov, 2007).

On the other hand, informal learning is spontaneous, experiential and unplanned (Greenhow and Robelia, 2009). When it takes place in participatory media, it has the potential to increase students' engagement in formal learning settings (Bull et al., 2008, Greenhow and Robelia, 2009, Reid, 2011b, Chen and Bryer, 2012b). Informal learning may be seen in relation to incidental learning (Lankard, 1995), "*learning en passant*" (Reischmann, 1986; cited in Jahnke, 2013) and "*experiential learning*" (Kolb, 1984; cited in Jahnke, 2013). Incidental learning and experiential learning may occur in both planned and unplanned learning situations, or in other words, formal, informal, and non-formal learning (Jahnke, 2013). In Jahnke's (2013: 61) words, "*informal learning is a self-directed learning situation (or not organised at all) that is triggered by the learner instead of an external teacher. It does not culminate in the conferring of any degree.*"

Informal and unplanned learning may occur on SNSs such as Facebook. For example, Irwin *et al.* (2012) created four Facebook pages as additional course platforms to assist interactions between teachers and students, as well as to provide course-

relevant information. Although the number of students who were engaged with the Facebook pages to report its effectiveness was small, a majority of them still believed and recommended Facebook as a learning platform for future courses (ibid.). In line with this, a group of teacher trainees in Singapore reported satisfaction with the fundamental use of Facebook as the Learning Management System (LMS) in their academic setting, despite reporting several limitations such as privacy, safety and comfort (Wang et al., 2012).

Lockyer and Patterson (2008), Boostrom *et al.* (2009), and Veletsianos and Navarrete (2012) have studied the use of SNSs and segregated social networks (SSN) such as Flickr, Eggl and Blackboard in formal learning. They have reported that the activities yielded positive outcomes, and were appreciated by students. It was observed that a group of Pharmacy students responded enthusiastically to an informal learning opportunity on Facebook where external experts in the field of Business Pharmaceuticals were invited to interact, give advice and discuss contemporary topics (Cain and Policastri, 2011). However, the high student interest to participate on the informal learning platform might be partly due to the bonus questions added in their exams based in the group's discussion (ibid.). Accordingly, the students in Cain and Policastri (2011) and Grosseck *et al.*'s (2011) studies reported increased motivation and comfort in using Facebook as a tool for research discovery and creativity, discussion and completion of assignments, and communication with field experts.

Downes (2010) and Dabbagh and Kitsantas (2012) argue that social media including SNSs, blogs and wikis, could be turned into Personal Learning Environments (PLEs) to support students' formal and informal learning needs, as they have the ability to connect isolated pieces of information in academic courses.

a. Informal learning in an online environment

Informal language learning was first introduced by Knowles (1950: cited in Bahrani, 2011), and is based on inspiring environments and supporting structures (Watkins and Marsick, 1992; cited in Jahnke, 2013). Informal learning environments entail unstructured learning processes, open settings, and voluntary participation where students are given the freedom to shape and direct their learning, based on their interest (Merryfield, 2003). Meanwhile formal and non-formal learning often rely on teachers' instructions and rules (ibid.). Thus, the different technological tools used informally in language learning should be unstructured, unconscious and undirected (Rogers, 2004; cited in Bahrani, 2011). El-Bakry and Mastorakis (2009) argued that the next generation of learners expect more informality in learning as formal learning systems such as traditional Learning Management Systems (LMS) no longer meet their needs as social media users and user-generated content producers. The traditional LMS often present limited human-human interaction, and mainly require students to browse and interact with stored digital materials (Wang and Chen, 2007).

Social media is often associated with informal learning (El-Bakry and Mastorakis, 2009), and in the online environment, it emphasises social interaction between students. Although often undervalued, informal interactions play an important role in successful collaborative projects (Contreras-Castillo et al., 2004). The unstructured tasks in informal learning promote more affective interaction between students, while the more structured tasks in formal learning encourage more interactive and cohesive interactions (Arnold et al., 2013). In the online environment, learning is often associated with the social constructivism paradigm that sees knowledge construction as a socially-mediated process among a community of people, where it is an *“active process of constructing rather than acquiring knowledge”* (Duffy and Cunningham,

1996; 171; cited in Jahnke, 2013). Within this paradigm, students become active agents within the learning process, where they act as both producers and consumers, i.e. *prosumers*, of knowledge. They may thus experience a deeper learning outcome (Chapman, 2003; cited in Jahnke, 2013), as the social learning setting sees that the best way to learn something is by teaching it to others (El-Bakry and Mastorakis, 2009). As *prosumers*, students learn in a creative and open environment that intensifies the learning experience and strengthens social relationships (Jahnke, 2013).

The ubiquitousness of Internet and social media accentuates informal learning and allows the unstructured, and voluntary process to happen more conveniently in and out of formal educational institutions. The recreational literacy activities in the online environment that students undertake outside the classrooms have high values and wide potential in developing their formal skills (Thorne and Reinhardt, 2008).

b. Informal learning and social interactions in online environment: Previous studies

In the second language learning environment, interaction is an integral part of the communicative language learning process (Lantolf and Pavlenko, 1995). The communicative approach (CA) sees language as a tool for social communication and interaction where students need to learn to communicate in the target language (TL) (Nunan, 1991; cited in Wang and Chen, 2011). In a virtual learning community (VLC), social interaction enhances instruction, and in a distance education environment, interaction shows the ways students construct knowledge (Tu and Corry, 2002, cited in Wallace, 2003, Arnold et al., 2013). Adding to the values of informal learning, Liddicoat (1997; cited in Atkinson, 2002) stated that in authentic human interaction, people need to interact for the purpose of engaging in relationships, and the options

for participation are not constrained by institutional roles. This setting contradicts the contrived interactional environment often observed in formal language classrooms, where the language produced is inauthentic.

Social interaction in an ESL context contributes to informal language learning that occurs when people interact with others, and implicitly learn the language through the use of different technologies that demand interaction in English (Bahrani, 2011). In informal ESL settings, technology and social interaction enhance language learning (Pemberton et al., 2004; cited in Bahrani, 2011). The EFL students in Bahrani's (2011) study performed better in the post-test after the exposure to technology that promoted speaking fluency, as compared to the ESL students who were exposed to social interaction activity only. Therefore, it may be even more advantageous to second language students if the social interaction activity is combined with technology to ensure maximum learning opportunities.

Social interaction activity falls in line with Vygotsky's socio-constructivism social learning concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where the learner is purported to benefit from both interactions with and support from more able peers (Birch and Volkov, 2007). In an informal setting, conversations are developed according to social needs where the language to be used is unpredictable but goal-oriented and meaningful with abundant opportunities within students' ZPD (Bahrani, 2011). When students are exposed to a wider online community, they may be able to get scaffolding or the help necessary to improve insufficient language skills from ordinary people, rather than language teachers, outside of the school environment (ibid.).

Merryfield (2003), Birch and Volkov (2007), and Arnold *et al.* (2013) found that synchronous and asynchronous social interaction was the major benefit of the discussion board for foreign language teachers and ESL students. It placed students in an intellectual environment to encourage active, thoughtful and equal participation from all, allowed them to adopt a more active role in the learning experience, facilitated the acquisition of higher order thinking skills and deep learning, provided shy ESL students with more opportunities to contribute to class discussions, and overcome linguistic limitations by expressing their thoughts in their own words within a supportive community (Merryfield, 2003, Birch and Volkov, 2007, Arnold *et al.*, 2013).

Accordingly, the academic practices on SNSs improved students' critical literacy, shaped their identities, and allowed their academic voices to be heard on safe platforms (Reid, 2011c). The shy, introverted students in Reid's (2011b) study stated their preference and the feeling of security when interacting on Facebook walls, instead of engaging in face-to-face meetings with other people. Their sense of comfort and security was illustrated by the jokes they shared on the Facebook platforms (*ibid.*). Added to this point, the students in Hurt *et al.*'s (2012) study showed their preference for Facebook instead of their university-sponsored online forum, citing Facebook familiarity, ease of navigation, and aesthetically appealing interface. More specifically, the participants in Çoklar (2010) and Fewkes and McCabe's (2012) studies reported high usage of Facebook due to the convenience of interaction, rapid information dissemination, group collaboration, self-organisation and facilitation of homework completion. The asynchronous nature of online interaction is especially important for students whose first language is not English, as they may

have more opportunities to keep up with the fast-paced discussions (Hanna, 2003; cited in Merryfield, 2003).

Another central benefit of social interaction in the online environment is the reduced feelings of isolation, which has been reported by studies in higher education and at the workplace (Birch and Volkov, 2007, Gray, 2004, Contreras-Castillo et al., 2004). Besides this, Gray's (2004) informal interaction activity at the workplace also brought the opportunity to learn new skills and work practices, as a means to achieve social and professional connections with colleagues. Birch and Volkov (2007) conducted an activity with compulsory online participation to look at EFL and ESL distance students' perceptions on an assessment item. The students reported improvement in their cognitive and social learning skills as they shared views, perspectives and experiences with others, applied theory to real world examples, as well as an increase in students-students and students-instructors' interactions (ibid.). Similarly, the students in two Mexican universities used the platform CENTERS to enhance informal interactions for online collaborative projects (Contreras-Castillo et al., 2004). They reported an increase in the collaboration among course participants, and greater satisfaction with the course in general (ibid.). Added to this, Osman and Herring (2007) underlined the values of synchronous chat tools for deep learning among university students from different cultural contexts. Arguably, the quality of the interaction was limited by the nature of task, language difficulties, and differing cultural expectations (ibid.). The language and cultural barriers may thus outweigh the benefits of the synchronous chat activity (ibid.).

Jahnke (2010; cited in Jahnke, 2013) put forward a free and open online forum called InPUD to support a large group of Computer Science students' learning in a

university. Students had the opportunity to engage in discussions with other students and faculty members in topics that they wanted to discuss, anonymously. They reported a special feeling of membership and community from the experience (ibid.). Another study that was based on informal workplace-based learning presented that social media such as Facebook and World of Warcraft, are central in developing competencies for being successful at work (Jahnke, 2013). It leads to *“an all-embracing learning experience that activates learners on all levels such as the cognitive, affective, and conative levels, i.e. technology-embraced informal-in-formal learning”* (Jahnke, 2013: 64). Added to this, Gray (2004) found that adult workers gained new insights into their professional identities due to their active and peripheral participation in an online community of practice to support informal workplace learning.

c. Why unstructured forums are unlikely to generate sustained discussions: A discussion based on previous studies

Miyazoe and Anderson (2010) compared three different online activities on three online platforms; wikis, blogs, and forums. The tasks on the wikis and forums were formal, while the activity on the blogs was optional (ibid.). The students reported to have enjoyed the wikis the most, followed by blogs, and forums (ibid.). The formal task on the wikis was a collaborative translation from English to Japanese, and topical discussions on forums. The informal optional blogging activity was free writing (ibid.). The variations of the activity and blended course design were challenging and fun to the students (ibid.). However, since the blogging activity was optional, students did not leave comments on each other's blogs but they read them (ibid.). A reason cited for this was that the optionality of the blogging activity made it seem private to the

students (ibid). Furthermore, there was already too much interaction planned and expected in the forum and wikis (ibid).

A study by Armstrong (2014) presented the values of unstructured, self-initiated blogs for students of Early Childhood Education. The voluntary nature of the blogging activity followed Siemens' (2004) Connectivism theory that views online learning happening based on the connection between students, teachers, experts, communities, and content materials. In Armstrong's (2014) study, it was reported that only half the number of the students created their own blogs, and similar to the students in Miyazoe and Anderson (2010), all of the students followed other students' blogs and read the entries. The bloggers reported satisfaction from blogging as they saw the point of doing the activity, while the readers wanted to learn more about the content of the course, and extend the curriculum through multimedia formats. Ducate and Lomicka (2005) agreed that blogging in the language classrooms is beneficial as students participate as readers and writers. Similar findings were reported by the participants in Hammond's (2006) study that blogging centralised reflections on ideas, allowed communication to a wider and removed audience, and promoted feedback from other readers. The participants who did not create their own blogs reported issues such as lack of time, insufficient digital literacy skills and facilities, privacy concern, and most importantly, viewing the activity as lacking in academic value (Armstrong, 2014).

Students would have been much more interested to participate in an online activity if their products had been showcased to a group of the target audience, so as to give a sense of purpose to the learning process. This was argued by Hammond (2006) as a reason for the uneven rates of participation among seven college students in a study that looked at blogging within a collaborative project. Similarly, the participants in

Birch and Volkov's (2007) study reported that their non-participation in the online assessment activity was due to unrequited involvement, unnecessary activity, limited time, unawareness of the discussion forum that also took too long to access and download, and their non-confidence in the online environment. In relation to this, in an open and unstructured online interaction study, some secondary students were highly motivated to manage their learning in an online environment, while some needed strong additional support from the teachers (Nicholas and Ng, 2009). The students' initial interest and participation for asynchronous discussion dwindled, as they only read the posts rather than sharing opinions (ibid.). Besides facing technical difficulties, other issues reported from the open environment included the inconvenience of logging onto LMS compared to chatting on MSN, the lack of motivation to complete the online task at home, and the open and unstructured nature of learning which made it challenging for the students to target the research (ibid.). Goodband and Samuel (2010) concluded from their study of a Maths community at a university that Facebook has its limitations compared with formal education tools such as Moodle, as well as a tendency to distract students from their studies.

From the studies presented above, it is clear that there are powerful educational and social values in informal, unstructured social interaction activity in the online environment. However, the sustainability of such discussion activities is arguable due to the options that students have over their participation and involvement. The secondary school students in Nicholas and Ng's (2009) study were less motivated to undertake the discussion activity due to the non-compulsory attendance and lack of assessment. It was then argued that the enormity of the unstructured online learning was a bit much for the young students to comprehend and cope with (ibid.). If this was the case, then the informal environment had worked against the principles of putting

less burden onto the students, and allowing them to structure their learning based on their time, space and interests. Instead, it pressured students to openly discuss the suggested topics when they were uncertain of its added value to their learning.

Armstrong (2014) concluded her study by stating that there was no simple solution to creating unstructured, participatory blogging activities. If teachers were to provide students with intensive instructions or guidance in the online environment, the uptake of the activity may be increased and students might experience the maximum benefits of blogs (Ducate and Lomicka, 2005), but the low direction may lead to more autonomous learning (Armstrong, 2014). Likewise, Hammond (1998) described the discussion process in the online environment as valuable yet complex, as participation cannot be easily structured, the possible use of digital vernaculars and the non-suitability of text-based communication for certain types of discussions. This conclusion was drawn from a study involving a group of higher education students who were placed in an informal interaction platform on Lotus Notes to discuss the topics in their course (ibid.). Cavalli (2014) concluded their study by reiterating Manca and Ranieri's (2013) concern about the educational values of Facebook. On one hand, students seemed reluctant to be using Facebook for academic purposes, and the focus on Facebook had shifted from educational to socialisation (Madge et al., 2009b, Selwyn, 2007a). On the other hand, Facebook seemed to be an effective tool in mediating social relationships and building on social capital, as well as assisting collaboration, resource sharing, critical thinking, course support, communication, and active participation (Ellison et al., 2007, Cain and Policastri, 2011).

Previous studies have established that SNSs are largely used for communication, socialisation and dissemination of practical academic information (Selwyn, 2007a,

Selwyn, 2009a, Malita, 2011, Wodzicki et al., 2012, Wesseling, 2012). Accordingly, there was a growing awareness among students that SNSs such as Facebook were inexpensive tools in promoting knowledge in higher education where they were used to discuss assignments, lectures and study notes (Grosbeck et al., 2011). For example, the teacher trainees in Reid's (2011b) study used Facebook to share teaching experience, and to give and receive advice on lessons and classroom management. These activities suggested that SNSs, such as Facebook, were often used formally and informally in academic settings. As the adoption of Facebook as an SNS in an HE setting is influenced by many factors such as the institution, sociocultural, as well as internal and external factors, Cavalli (2014) articulated the need for more research to help us better understand the usage of Facebook, in order to create the best strategies in the educational context.

d. Formal and informal learning: Some issues that may arise

Three main issues arose from the formal and informal use of SNSs in pedagogy. Firstly, students were only focused on course-related and graded tasks, rather than connecting and networking with peers, and using the SNS platforms for entertainment (Boostrom et al., 2009, Veletsianos and Navarrete, 2012). Secondly the technical, social and cultural barriers on SNSs such as Facebook and Cloudworks might hinder students' participation in learning activities (Lockyer and Patterson, 2008, Conole and Culver, 2010). Thirdly, Greenhow and Robelia (2009) and Jones *et al.* (2010) argued that despite the massive educational use of technology, there was a distinct divide between students' learning space and personal space, as some students argued against the connections between their online activities and formal classroom learning. In fact, studies found that younger and older students did not expect to be using Web 2.0 in the classroom in the same manner that they did at home (Lankshear and

Knoebel, 2004; cited in Selwyn, 2007, Lohnes and Kinzer, 2007). This divide was due to the differences in students' perceptions and actual learning experiences, as well as their social lives. To this end, many researchers warned educators against randomly importing Web 2.0 tools into the classrooms, without prior and appropriate planning, assuming that these tools would automatically and miraculously motivate students and transform learning processes for the better (Lankshear and Knoebel, 2004, Selwyn, 2007b, Oradini and Saunders, 2008, Panckhurst and Marsh, 2008, Lester and Perini, 2010, Margaryan et al., 2011).

Following this, Jones *et al.* (2010) urged educators to find the most strategic ways to integrate SNSs platforms into classroom learning in order to bridge students' personal-learning spaces and in-school-out-of-school literacy practices. To achieve this, dialogue sessions between teachers and students might help inform what students want and need when SNSs are integrated into educational-related activities (Selwyn, 2007b).

2.3.3 Students and teachers' perceptions of social media and SNSs in academic settings

In Blattner and Lomicka's (2012) study, a group of French second language students in the US demonstrated positive attitudes toward the use of Facebook for educational and personal purposes. Similarly, Fewkes and McCabe (2012) found that the majority of participants in their study reported to using Facebook for academic-related matters, but rarely did so, as they believed that their teachers hated Facebook, and did not encourage its use. In support of this, 30 instructors from various levels of institutions stated that despite being active users of Facebook, they were sceptical over its potential for instructional purposes (Green and Bailey, 2010). This may be

due to the barriers or perceived barriers that could impact the effectiveness of SNSs in the classroom, such as security, access to ICT facilities, bandwidth and suchlike (Crook and Harrison, 2008).

Furthermore, many students and teachers were still very much accustomed to the traditional way of teaching-learning, which does not mix media, and require the presence of an authority to manage the process (*ibid.*). Added to this, Luckin *et al.* (2009) identified that many secondary school students in the UK were interested in using Web 2.0 for school activities, but smaller numbers were actually engaged in sophisticated, critical and analytical activities, and were sceptical about shared construction of knowledge in a public format. Similar to Selwyn (2009b), Luckin *et al.* (2009) concluded that the teenage students' activities on Web 2.0 were unspectacular and non-ground-breaking.

The in-depth content analysis of students' educational-related Facebook activity, coupled with a big number of sample participants, such as in Selwyn (2007a, 2009a) and Malita's (2011) studies, lend a certain level of credibility to the findings. The researchers observed the students' behaviours on the SNS platforms, rather than simply relying on their reports based on perceptions, hence making it possible for the findings to be generalised to their immediate contexts. Arguably however, the studies lacked triangulation of data from different methods for comparison and interpretation purposes. The missing non-verbal clues in text-based SNSs interactions, such as body languages, eye contact and intonations made it difficult for meanings to be interpreted accurately. Small and Vorgan (2008) and Hamilton (2009) agreed that the absence of non-verbal paralinguistic features on SNSs decreased students' ability to read real-life facial expressions, and understand emotional contexts of

subtle gestures. As such, the triangulation of data gathered from different methods in a study would yield more accurate data interpretation.

2.4 Defining collaborative learning (CL)

SNSs are unique tools that allowed for the simultaneous creation of a personal learning environment and CL communities (Anderson, 2005). Cross *et al.* (2002) and Liccardi (2007) added that the Internet possessed a great potential in enhancing collaboration between people, both in education and business management. Panitz (1999) argues that CL is more than just a classroom technique. It is a personal philosophy that promotes a high level of respect in a group, and embraces individual members' abilities, contributions and values (*ibid.*). In a collaborative environment, the group shares authority and accept responsibility for the group's actions (*ibid.*). CL is based upon consensus building through cooperation by group members, rather than competing to become the best (*ibid.*). In practical classroom terms, Gokhale (1995: 1) defined CL as *"an instruction method in which students at various performance levels work together in small groups toward a common goal"*. Students were usually presented with learning tasks and objectives that had to be achieved by working together.

Before the emergence of Web 2.0 tools, synchronous and asynchronous CMC tools were used to encourage students to engage in online CL tasks (Veerman and Veldhuis-Diermanse, 2001). For example, Blake (2000) looked into incidental negotiations among 50 students with intermediate L2 Spanish where the students were instructed to complete tasks in the forms of jigsaw, information-gap and decision-making, to illustrate the negotiation process. The emergence of Web 2.0 has slightly altered the

term CL, as social interaction and discussion on SNSs also falls into the categories of collaborative activities (Rambe, 2012a, Llorens Cerdà and Capdeferro Planas, 2011, Lampe et al., 2011). Online social interactions and discussions were often compared to the negotiation of meaning activities, as the TL was predominantly encouraged during interactions. Consequently, students have the freedom to shape the interaction in SNSs to suit their preferences and interests, which echoes the fundamentals of CL that emphasises the process of learning, rather than the product (Panitz, 1999).

The assessment of online CL among students and staff from two Open University courses in the UK showed that students participated more in online collaborative activities if they were being assessed (Macdonald, 2003). An assignment that focuses on course content might, indeed, positively affect the quality of the online discussion (ibid.). This indicates more instrumental learning motivation, where graded learning content motivated students' participations on online discussions. Based on this factor, I differentiate the notions of online social interaction/discussion and CL as two distinct activities. From my point of view, CL requires students' interactions/discussions to solve a problem or complete a task. On the other hand, social interactions or discussions are very loosely structured, and do not necessarily have to address a specific learning objective. Admittedly, Facebook lacks a collaborative project orientation, as it was designed for socialisation purposes, and was never intended to be used academically (Llorens Cerdà and Capdeferro Planas, 2011). Following this, I use Facebook as an informal platform to examine participants' English language interactions. The participants were asked to engage in social interaction, rather than complete tasks or projects for CL. Notably, however, I am aware that SNSs have the ability to promote CL among students.

2.4.1 Collaborative Learning (CL) and Social Learning Theories

CL falls in line with the social learning theories and new literacies that situate learning as socially constructed (Gee, 1991, Gee, 1999, Kress, 2003). Based on Vygotsky's (1978) theory of Social Constructivism, Prawat and Floden (1994) argue that knowledge is a social product, and hence, students learn more effectively by participating in collaborative problem-solving activities with close teachers' supervision. It emphasises culture and context to understand the occurrence in society, and knowledge is constructed based on this understanding (Kim, 2001). To cite Kahn (1993) and Lave and Wenger's (1998) propositions, learning is a social discourse rather than individualistic activity, and in today's culture, *"learning is viewed as fundamentally social, and derived from authentic engagement with others in a community of practice"* (Bonk and Cunningham, 1998: 45). Reed *et al.* (2010: 6) proposed that social learning is *"a change in understanding that goes beyond the individual to become situated within wider social units, or communities of practice through social interactions between actors within social networks"*.

In the Social Constructivist classroom, students are given opportunities to become more involved in the planning, implementing, and restructuring the teaching-learning process. Such a classroom focuses on the process of knowledge co-construction between individuals and their community (Palinscar, 1998). However, Mayer (2004) strongly objected to the idea that social constructivist learning should be restricted to discovery learning, as a variety of other instructional methods such as reciprocal teaching, peer collaboration, cognitive apprenticeships, problem-based instruction, web quests, anchored instruction, and other methods that involve learning with others, also lead to social constructivist learning (Kim, 2001: 5).

a) Connectivism Theory

Based on the advent of digital technology, Siemens and Downes (2008) proposed the Connectivism theory that which integrates social learning and social media. In the social media environment, every user is connected to each other, given the opportunity to share and discuss knowledge using multiple platforms such as SNSs, wikis, and blogs. Connectivist learning starts when students connect and feed information to a learning community (Kop and Hill, 2008). The learning community is viewed as group of people that share similar interests and interact, share, debate, and think together (Siemens, 2004). SNSs distributed knowledge is stored digitally, and is validated in a community based on the diversity of opinions (Siemens and Downes, 2008). Due to the nature of knowledge and information that constantly changes, truth value and accuracy also change over time, depending on new discovery related to the subject (Kop and Hill, 2008). Learning is then viewed as a cyclical process, whereby students can collaboratively learn and transfer knowledge from one platform to another as networked learning. One of the core skills of Connectivism as a network is to understand and maintain connections between fields, ideas, and concepts, that contribute to learning (Siemens, 2004). As such, although online learning has the ability to provide personalised learning environment (PLE) to students, it almost exclusively promotes socially-constructed knowledge, and emphasises sharing and participation, rather than individualistic learning (McLoughlin and Lee, 2007).

However, the implementation of these theories in the classroom is not without its challenges. Connectivism, for example, was considered as relevant to the current networked learning setting, but lacked rigour due to its reflection of the fundamentals of participatory media (Bell, 2010). Glasson and Lalik (1993) found that when teachers shifted their teaching-learning instructions to the social constructivist

approach, their students were presented with bigger opportunities to test and discuss ideas during tasks. However, they soon discovered that it was difficult to achieve a balance between giving students room to develop their own understanding, and their effort to present accurate information (ibid.). Based on this problem, the teachers voiced their dissatisfaction with the existing grading system (ibid.). In relation to this, Lipponen (2002) and Reed *et al.* (2010) wrote that there was an absence in unified, substantiated and established theoretical framework, consensus in collaborative conception, and unit of analysis, to ground computer-supported collaborative learning (CSCL). The absence of these elements positively indicated the richness and diversity of the CSCL field, but negatively demonstrated its divergent progress (Lipponen, 2002). In an attempt to illustrate communication styles and learning performance in a CSCL community, Cho *et al.* (2007) applied Social Network Analysis (SNA), and identified the individual (communication styles) and structural (pre-existing friendship network) factors that affected the development of collaborative learning social network. Cho *et al.* (2007) adopted a longitudinal survey data alongside SNA, which resonates with De Laat *et al.*'s (2007) recommendation for more multi-modal approaches of SNA to investigate the complexities of Networked Learning (NL) and CSCL, to thoroughly understand students' interaction patterns and online behaviour.

2.4.2 SNS and collaborative learning: Benefits and weaknesses

As presented in the previous section, the integration of SNSs in collaborative learning offers a great number of potential benefits to students in the academic environment. SNSs ability to support constant and instant communication has resulted in various formal and informal collaborative employment. Effective communication increases students' opportunities to connect with people from all over the world in real-time. Due to this, Web (2009c) presented Twitter's suitability as a language tool that

connected English language students with a vast number of native speakers (NS). In line with this, eight instructors in Chen and Bryer's (2012b) study agreed that Facebook and LinkedIn were major SNSs that could support formal learning, due to their capacity to enrich discussions, increase engagement, and create broad connections between adult students. Besides facilitating language learning, Harrison and Thomas (2009) found that the SNS LiveMocha initiated and maintained students' collaborative relationship, besides assisting in the development of their online identities.

SNSs facilitate collaborative learning by providing constantly accessible and safe online platforms for communication purposes, regardless of the physical distance and geographical locations of students. This is due to their ability to support both forms of synchronous and asynchronous interactions (Yamada, 2009, Wang and Chen, 2007, Perez, 2003, Sarnoff, 2005). For example, Lim (2010) found that the distance education students in her study preferred using Facebook for discussion purposes, than the university-provided learning platform. In the same vein, Lester and Perini (2010) argue that SNSs have the potential to engage distance education students, by allowing more meaningful interactions with teachers and other students, as well as providing more access to the campus services, and created a supportive culture for distance learners. Opportunities to engage in robust academic experience, no matter how far apart they are physically, grant students a sense of belonging within specific communities that encourage and respect their values. The sense of belonging not only shapes students' social identity, but also enhances their mental health, as these communities provide students with the opportunity to create a *shared experience*, rather than *experience that is shared*, with their friends, who were collaboratively and

cooperatively reaching for the same learning and social goals (Llorens Cerdà and Capdeferro Planas 2011).

From their study of 516 students' perceptions and the tendency to use Facebook for collaboration, Lampe *et al.* (2011) found that students' perceptions were measured based on two psychological well-being variables, namely self-esteem and self-efficacy. Baumeister *et al.* (2003) argued that high self-esteem was not predictive of good performance among students. Following this, students in Lampe *et al.*'s (2011) study reported that high self-esteem decreased their tendency to collaborate negatively, but it unnecessarily indicate positive collaboration. On the other hand, high self-efficacy increased the likelihood of positive collaboration, whilst decreasing the possibility of negative collaboration (*ibid.*). In line with this, Cheung (2011) found that Facebook intensity had a positive effect on social capital of students who participated in project groups on the platform.

The improved self-esteem and self-efficacy also enhanced students' perceptions, motivations, and attitudes towards learning (Cain and Policastri, 2011, Pimmer *et al.*, 2012), and improved their academic performance (Guerrero and Rod, 2013). The focus groups in Eteokleous *et al.*'s (2012) study demonstrate their confidence that Facebook interest groups benefitted learning, and also created a broad range of online learning communities. Extra-educational Facebook activities were so influential that some students who did not initially possess Facebook profiles, were pressured into creating accounts, to participate and contribute to the group interactions (*ibid.*). The findings in Eteokleous *et al.*'s (2012) study echo an earlier result presented by Madge *et al.* (2009a), whereby a group of first year undergraduate students felt inclined to create Facebook accounts to assist their informal academic and social

transitions into university lives. Therefore, it was evident that teachers and peers' influence on SNSs affected students' motivation to learn and socialise (Wentzel, 2009).

The use of SNSs might be more extensive, as they promoted seamless information transfer and encouraged lifelong learning among students (Wong et al., 2011). Malita (2011) found that the Spanish students in her study continued to use Facebook as a medium for practical course discussions, even though Facebook was not very popular in the Spanish culture at the beginning of the study. Lockyer and Patterson (2008) found that the use of Flickr as a part of a formal learning activity in the classroom, yielded positive outcomes among students. Not only were they cognitively engaged and working collaboratively, but the activity showed potential for deeper engagement on the topics (ibid.). Griffith and Liyanage (2008) generally argue that SNSs facilitated academic study groups and team-based work. In Hoffman's (2009) study of Ning, it was identified that some positive collaborative impacts on students, were the balancing of individuals' creativity, personal interactions, student engagement, and motivation. In line with this, Jones *et al.* (2010) identified that students used social technology widely for educational purposes, but differentiated learning space and personal space, due to their experiences in learning and social life.

In short, CL on SNSs offers clear benefits to the academic field in a number of ways, generally by facilitating interactions between teachers-students and students-students, disseminating and receiving latest information, as well as easing the circulation of educational pictures, videos and web links (Guerrero and Rod, 2013).

However, Kreijns *et al.* (2003), Cain and PolICASTRI (2011) and Eteokleous *et al.* (2012) express caution with regard to several potential pitfalls when SNSs are used for collaborative purposes. Firstly, the desired social and psychological effects of the interactions are frequently neglected, as the outcomes of the collaborative activity are often prioritised. Secondly, educators often feel too certain that students will interact on SNSs just because the environment permits it. As students are unique individuals with specific learning needs, a particular collaborative activity might attract some students, but not others. When this happens, the students who are not interested might feel forced to participate in the collaborative activity on the SNS environment, due to the teachers' presence (Kreijns *et al.*, 2003, Cain and PolICASTRI, 2011, Eteokleous *et al.*, 2012).

2.5 Interactions afforded by Facebook in academic settings

The most fundamental feature and influential factors of an SNS is its provision for interaction platform for social communication that connects users of the site (Ross *et al.*, 2009). Malita (2011) emphasised that one of the most important benefits of using social network in education, is in fact, interaction. Barker (2009) found that communication with peers was the main factor that motivated students' use of SNSs. Duffy and Bruns (2006) added that social media such as blogs, wikis, and RSS feeds improved interactive and intercreative engagement between students-students and students-teachers.

In academic settings, the interactive platforms grant students wider opportunities to express ideas and opinions, and engage in communication with their peers, teachers, and external experts, beyond the classroom instructions (Cain and PolICASTRI, 2011).

As Facebook was viewed as a familiar out-of-school activity, many students felt safe in engaging in the literacy practices of writing, facilitated by peer interactions (Reid, 2011a). More specifically, Malita (2011) reported that Facebook supported students' active and critical interaction with peers, where they commented, provided and received feedback on tasks given by their teachers.

Dzakiria (2012) added that while there were various types of instructions facilitated by Facebook in academic environment, the most common interactive activities were between students-students, students-teachers, and students-materials, or was better known as the interaction triads. Following this, SNSs were viewed as possessing the ability to engage students and invite their active participations in a learning process that is fully rooted in social interactions, knowledge exchanges and optimum cognitive development with their peers (Baird and Fisher, 2005: 24). Therefore, what these neomillennial students needed were interactive and engaging content materials to increase their intrinsic learning goals (ibid.).

Notably, different communicative tools and functions resulted in different interactive effects. For example, in Haythornthwaite's (2001) case study of project teams, a variety of communicative tools was employed to achieve different purposes. The project teams used email for intrateam communication, Internet Relay Chat (IRC) for general communication, and Webboard for diffusing class-wide communication (ibid.). Additionally, the short on-campus face-to-face interaction provided a catalytic effect on students' social and emotional exchanges (ibid.). The differences in effect afforded by different communicative tool might further explain the reason why students preferred conducting academic discussion on Facebook, instead of university-based forums (Hurt et al., 2012).

2.5.1 Students-students' interactions on Facebook

SNSs' abilities to promote fast and convenient communication platforms has stimulated the establishment of specific interest groups. These groups encouraged users to engage in various social and academic activities such as the sharing of information, and exchanging of ideas with one another (Wodzicki et al., 2012). Although these interactive activities might be informal, and were largely conducted out-of-school, they have wide potential in enhancing students' 21st century academic skills. The multi-functionality of an SNS that allowed students to conduct various tasks on one platform almost at the same time might be especially appealing to the Generation Y, or the *digital natives* who were constantly online and always multitasking on the Internet (Prensky, 2001b, Baron, 2008, Davis, 2009, Lee, 2010, Wesseling, 2012).

In Sarnoff's (2005) study, distance learners felt greater benefit from asynchronous interaction and websites, as they were able to access posted materials, whenever it was convenient to them, without having to synchronise their schedules with other students, faculty, and departments. The websites only needed to fit the accessible course content that was free from any forms of possible students' marginalisation (ibid.). Bearing this in mind, SNSs seem to be a perfect interaction platform for students, especially the distant learners, as SNSs such as Facebook and Twitter are widely accessible, have stable connections, provide options for both synchronous and asynchronous forms of communication, and display simple layout. The simplicity and functionality of the platforms might indeed grant students a sense of security and comfort when engaging in either academic or social interactions with each other.

2.5.2 Students-teachers' interactions on Facebook

The introduction of social software and technology in education has altered teachers' roles in the classroom. The open access to information on the internet has resulted in teachers-students-content interaction to occur in a different manner (Siemens, 2008). Students have equal, if not greater power to determine the learning directions in the classroom. However, this does not mean that teachers are playing less important roles, although not central. Teachers have to play more background roles as course planners, material designers, implementer, and facilitators, to make sure that students are utilising the social software optimally, and simultaneously ensure the success of the lessons (Lave and Wenger, 1991, Siemens, 2008, Panckhurst and Marsh, 2008). For instance, it is reported that teachers' encouragement has significantly increased students' engagement with Connect (i.e. a function of the SNS Elgg) for academic purposes among University of Westminster students (Oradini and Saunders, 2008).

Social software such as SNSs, also aids teachers-students' interactions in and out of the classroom. The students in Boostrom *et al.*'s (2009) study found that the segregated social network (SSN) or content management system (CMS), Blackboard, allowed coordination and file-sharing, with emphasis on teachers-students' communication. Unlike SNSs, however, the SSN or CMS lacked the flexibility for peer-to-peer communication (*ibid.*). Hewitt and Forte (2006) added that Facebook interactions had a positive impact on students' perceptions of their teachers, and this rating was not even influenced by the student-teacher contact on the platform. Students also showed comfort with the faculty presence on Facebook, as it increased the potential of getting to know their teachers better, by providing an alternative communication medium to reach them (Hewitt and Forte, 2006, Mazer *et al.*, 2007, Teclehaimanot and Hickman, 2011). Mazer *et al.* (2007) presented that students felt more motivated, experienced

better classroom climate and affective learning, because of teacher self-disclosure on Facebook. Arguably, the students' feelings could be attributed to the *ceiling effect*, as the teachers were highly respected authorities, and well-liked by the students (Hewitt and Forte, 2006).

On the other hand, there were mixed feelings towards the presence of faculty on Facebook, due to issues of privacy and identity management. Students had privacy concerns over personal photos and communications on Facebook, and worried over teachers' skewed perceptions of themselves (Mazer et al., 2007, Cheung and Vogel, 2011). As such, some students in Hewitt and Forte's (2006) study demanded professional, unfamiliar, and unsociable teachers-students' relationships on Facebook. In line with this, the students in Cheung and Vogel's (2011) study reported more comfortable feeling when they communicated with their teachers about project groups established on Facebook, rather than communicating as friends. Professionalism among teachers on SNSs was similarly echoed by the participants in Mazer et al.'s (2007) study. Although the students wanted to get to know the teachers better, they were cautious over the content they shared or was shared by others on their Facebook walls, such as political issues (ibid.).

These preferences over such teachers-students' relationships and degrees of interactions on Facebook were influenced by factors such as gender, age, and students' level of study. Hewitt and Forte (2006) found that male and female students held different views on faculty's presence on Facebook. More male students felt positive about having faculty members on Facebook, as compared to the female students. Similar observation was made by Teclehaimanot and Hickman (2011), where a bigger percentage of female students felt strongly against the presence of

their teachers on Facebook. In terms of level of study, teachers felt that it was more appropriate to befriend graduate students than undergraduate students on Facebook (ibid.). Alternatively, graduate and undergraduate students did not feel that the differences in age and level of studies affected teachers-students' interactions on Facebook (Young, 2009, Teclehaimanot and Hickman, 2011). Students indicated that they desired passive teachers-students' interactive behaviours on Facebook. Teclehaimanot and Hickman (2011) identified and categorised the hierarchy of acceptable teachers-students' behaviours on Facebook as shown below:

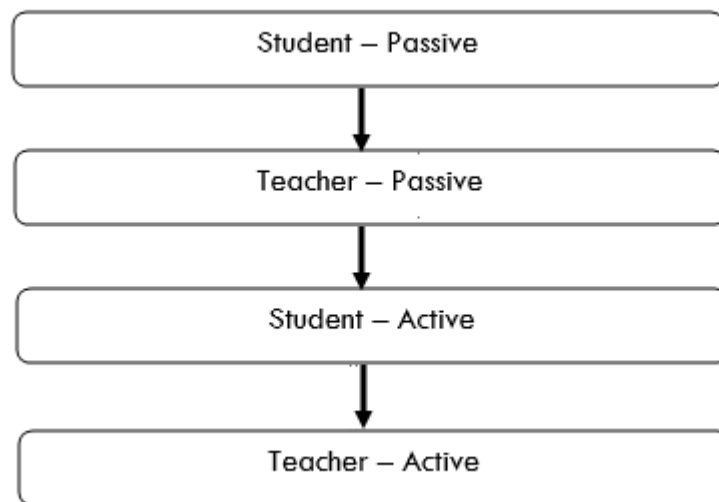


FIGURE 1: HIERARCHY OF ACCEPTABLE TEACHERS-STUDENTS' RELATIONSHIP ON FACEBOOK

From Figure 1, it is apparent that students' active behaviour was much more favourable and prioritised than teachers'. Some of the behaviours referred to in the discussion were poking, adding or inviting as friends, and commenting on posts or personal photos (Teclehaimanot and Hickman, 2011). Based on the findings, it may be seen that students felt content knowing that their teachers were reachable on Facebook, but would not prefer to socially engage with them. Instead, they viewed SNSs as a place where students created social networks, thus were more suitable for friends, than teachers (ibid.). On the other hand, Oradini and Saunders (2008) found

that the students at the University of Westminster were excited to see their teachers' active contribution on Connect, but this resulted in the lack of students' academic use of the platform.

Apart from connecting teachers and students, the interactive ability of SNSs links students with people beyond the four walls of a classroom. This provides students with wider opportunities to be connected and to network with experts, professionals, and enthusiasts in specific fields. Studies by Cain and Policastri (2011) and Guerrero and Rod (2013) invited experienced professional practitioners in the fields of Pharmacy Management and Political Science to interact, share knowledge and experience, and exchange ideas with the students. These activities added value to students' learning practice, and elevated the learning process. For instance, the Facebook learning community in the field of Management and Business, Computer Science, and Engineering, helped the students in Eteokleous *et al.*'s (2012) study to solve tasks problems in a short period of time.

2.6 Identity formation and a sense of community

Students' participation and engagement on SNSs with certain groups of users led to the development of various online communities (McLoughlin, 1999). These communities such as online fan fiction granted students a sense of connectedness and belonging with other members (Black, 2005). In Borau *et al.* (2009), Hung and Yuen (2010), and Grudz *et al.*'s (2011) studies, a majority of public universities' students agreed that SNSs such as Twitter and Facebook fostered a sense of community and strong social connectedness. This was achieved through posts and comments (tweets) that expressed variations of greetings, updates and humour (Borau *et al.*, 2009).

Similarly, based on virtual ethnography approach and interviews, Bosch (2009) identified the development of educational micro-communities on Facebook, among the University of Cape Town students, but added possible hindrances, such as the lack of digital literacy and access issues. Hung and Yuen (2010) found that students expressed favourable feelings of their learning experiences in the classes when SNSs were used as a supplementary tool. Added to this, in a study of blended learning among a group of Architecture students, McCarthy (2010) demonstrated that the transfer of online Facebook discussions into the physical classroom, improved meaningful relationships between peers. This indicates that the interactions and relationships developed on SNSs assisted community building in both online and offline environments (Boostrom et al., 2009, McCarthy, 2010).

These communities developed and practised their own sociocultural-laden interactions and relationships with each other. The sociocultural practices influenced the ways students acted and behaved on SNSs, hence shaping their social identities (Zhou, 2011). This means that the social identities of teenagers were partially defined by themselves and partially defined by others (Boyd, 2007: 137). To this effect, the relationship, experience, and association with a certain community determine and shape a student's thoughts, identities, and self-presentation on SNSs. Based on this, McLoughlin (1999) advised teachers and material designers to be culturally sensitive to students' sociocultural background, as well as learning preferences and needs, in order to create an appropriate instructional paradigm.

There are many studies that have looked into students' identity formation on social media and SNSs (Stutzman, 2006, Huffaker and Calvert, 2005, Hewitt and Forte, 2006, Harrison and Thomas, 2009, Greenhow and Robelia, 2009, Boyd, 2007,

Bjerregaard, 2010, Barker, 2009). Students' social media identity could be viewed from many different perspectives such as user profiles, interaction patterns with other people on SNSs, the topics of discussions they associated with, the games they played, and how active or passive they were on the SNSs. For instance, the students in Park *et al.*'s (2009) study used Facebook to participate more in civic and political action than action associated with recreational purposes. As such, SNSs users are able to assume multiple personalities, present themselves in any way they desire, and indeed, become who they wanted to be. This, in Slater's (2002) words was described as "you become what you type" (cited in Greenhow and Robelia, 2009:124). In line with this, Coiro *et al.* (2014: 526) showed that today's youth were experimenting with different identities, or "dynamic and shifting constructions and presentations of self". For example, the students who used LiveMocha in a study by Harrison and Thomas (2009) deliberately presented themselves with false information (e.g. names, country of origins, and native languages) to keep their anonymity, and to express their disappointment with the platform impression management features.

All in all, the use of SNSs in academic setting fits into the definition of social learning in communities, as echoed by Lave and Wenger (1998). Constant interaction, and diverse communities of people with similar interests, allow students to assume different roles and identities when associating themselves with certain groups. This provides them with opportunities to be aware of the sociocultural differences in a community, and eventually learn to adapt the values into their thoughts, beliefs, and perspectives. Based on a survey questionnaire study, Zhou (2011) concluded that both social identity and group norms contributed to users' participation on SNSs.

2.7 Students' motivation in academic learning on SNSs

The newness and popularity of SNSs among the younger generations may be seen as an opportunity for educators to increase students' learning motivation. From the CMC competence point of view, motivation to participate in SNSs was associated with the amount of time spent on Facebook, and the number of times individuals check their Facebook walls on daily basis (Ross et al., 2009). Other factors that may contribute to users' motivations were based on the SNSs abilities such as personalisation, easy access to information about friends, similar users' activities, and positive feedback (Silius et al., 2010).

The constant usage of SNSs such as Facebook and Twitter at home and learning institutions increased the possibility of students being online almost at all time, for social and academic purposes. From a survey finding, Rouis *et al.* (2011) found that the integration of Facebook into a course improved 239 undergraduate students' satisfaction with life in general. Meanwhile, 23 students in Shih's (2011) blended learning course, reported boosted motivation and interest in English writing, that was conducted through class instruction and cooperative learning. However, several studies argued that motivation for students' participation on SNSs were not well understood (Burke et al., 2009, Ho and Dempsey, 2010), as while SNSs managed to improve students' engagement to some extent, there were also cases where students lost interest in the learning process.

2.7.1 Self-esteem, the need to belong, and entertainment

Correa *et al.* (2010) found that extroversion and openness to experiences positively relate to social media use. Lin and Lu (2011) and Leng *et al.* (2011) added that several contributing factors to the continued usage of SNSs are enjoyment, number of peers and usefulness. Leng *et al.* (2011) identified that perceived enjoyment was more significantly predictive of students' attitudes towards SNSs than perceived usefulness. Other predictors of students' participation on SNSs are Internet self-efficacy, collective self-esteem, the need to belong, cognition and overall attitudes towards SNSs (Gangadharbatla, 2008).

Ardichvili *et al.* (2003) conducted a qualitative study to identify Caterpillar Inc. employees' motivations and barriers when participating in virtual knowledge-sharing communities of practice. The result showed that knowledge sharing and flow were easier when employees regarded it as belonging to the public, but there were a variety of reasons that contributed to the lack of knowledge sharing, despite their priorities to the organisations and communities (*ibid.*). Some of these reasons were fear of criticism and misleading the community (*ibid.*). Gangadharbatla (2008) presented the survey result of college students, where the need to belong, collective self-esteem, and Internet self-efficacy had a positive effects on attitudes towards SNSs. To this end, Barker (2009) found that the female participants in her study showed higher positive collective self-esteem, spent more time on SNSs, and were strongly motivated to communicate with their peers. On the other hand, males were reported to possess more negative collective self-esteem, which correlated with social compensation, and indicated that they used SNSs an alternative platform for communication (*ibid.*). Added to this, Valkenburg *et al.* (2006) and Silius *et al.* (2010) identified that positive feedback enhanced students' self-esteem, while negative

feedback decreased self-esteem. There were many ways in which self-esteem could be elevated in an organisation. From the analysis of user behaviour and interview, DiMicco *et al.* (2008) found that professionals in a large enterprise used internal social networking to strengthen bonds with distant and/or unknown employees. This activity helped to create personal relationships among employees, besides ensuring career advancement, and campaigning for projects (*ibid.*).

Burke *et al.* (2009) studied 140,000 Facebook newcomers' motivation, based on four mechanisms (i.e. social learning, feedback, singling out, and distribution), while Ho and Dempsey (2010) used a survey to study Facebook users' motivation, from viral marketing point of view, and outlined four potential motivational factors (i.e. the need to be part of a group, the need to be individualistic, the need to be altruistic, and the need for personal growth). It was identified that singling out newcomers affected those who were not inclined to share on the platform, but receiving feedback and having a wide audience encouraged those who were already interested to contribute content (Burke *et al.*, 2009). The newcomers contributed more content when they saw their friends doing the same (*ibid.*). Users who were more individualistic and altruistic shared or forward more online content than those who were not (Ho and Dempsey, 2010). On the other hand, Jung *et al.* (2007) found that users were motivated by entertainment and personal income factors in presenting and maintaining their "Cyworld" weblog homepages.

Besides self-esteem and the need to belong, entertainment was also a factor that determined cultural and gender influences in students' use of SNSs (Barker, 2009, Kim *et al.*, 2011, Lin and Lu, 2011). Culturally speaking, Kim *et al.* (2011) found that American students largely used SNSs for entertainment purposes, while the Koreans

looked for more social support from existing relationships. Despite the difference in weights of importance, college students in both cultures shared fundamentally comparable motives in using SNSs, which were to seek friends, social support, entertainment, information, and convenience (ibid.). Based on 402 online questionnaire responses, Lin and Lu (2011) applied the network externalities and motivation theory to identify the reasons for SNSs use. Enjoyment was ranked first, followed by a number of peers, and usefulness, but this differed between genders (ibid.). The number of peers determined women's continued SNSs use, but this and the number of members, had no enjoyment impact on men (ibid.).

2.7.2 Students' personalities and how they affect the use of SNSs

Ross *et al.* (2009) and Seidman (2013) argued that students with certain personalities reacted and behaved differently when participating on SNSs. For example, Extraverts were more likely to use SNSs to communicate with others and engage in social activities, while Neuroticists tended to control what information is shared on SNSs, such as on the Facebook walls (ibid.). Extraverts also actively engaged in social activities outside Facebook, and did not use Facebook as an alternative to their physical activities (Ross *et al.*, 2009). Wilson *et al.* (2010) added that the Extraverted and Unconscientious students reported higher levels of SNSs use and addictive tendencies. Essentially Rouis *et al.* (2011) reported that the extensive use of Facebook among students with Extraverted personalities decreased their academic performance. Similar finding was echoed by Pempek *et al.* (2009), Karpinski and Duberstein (2009), and Kirschner Karpinski (2010), that Facebook usage can negatively affect students' academic achievement. On the other hand, the students in Cain and Policastri (2011) demonstrated more extrinsic or instrumental motivation, where they showed interest to participate in the Pharmacy Management Facebook

group, to be able to answer extra bonus questions from the Facebook discussion in their exams. Nevertheless, a small percentage of students stated their intrinsic motivation for joining the group, which was to learn more about Pharmacy Management and Leadership from the three professional practitioners in the field (ibid.).

All of these concerns can be summed up as the students' social, psychological, and emotional characteristics on SNSs. Adolescents bring these existing human factors characteristics onto their SNSs interactions to build relationship, create network, and influence other people (Ahn, 2011). These communications might provide causal links for social outcomes of interest where supportive feedback from peers might increase higher social capital or psychological well-being (ibid.). Urdan and Schoenfelder (2006) and Mazer et al. (2007) however, were wary that if motivation was only measured in terms of individual difference, it may downgrade the importance of contextual influences, which include classroom climate, role of educators, and characteristics of school. Their research investigated the point of views of three motivational theories which were achievement goal, self-determination, and social-cognitive (Urdan and Schoenfelder, 2006)

2.8 Relationship between SNSs use and academic achievement

It is undeniable that SNSs such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, Egll, and LiveMocha have been a part of students' lives for both social and academic activities. Academically, SNSs were viewed as having the potential to informally support classroom learning, and bridge in and out-of-school literacy practices or online-offline relationships (Ellison et al., 2006, Harrison and Thomas, 2009, Reid, 2011b, Chen and

Bryer, 2012b). More specifically, Reid (2011b) emphasised that Facebook has the potential to promote critical literacy in writing, as students can be expressive and active in a safe social space.

This section discusses the relationship between SNSs usage, particularly Facebook, and its positive and negative impacts, as well as inconclusive findings relating to students' academic achievement. Following this, the connection between SNSs to critical literacy and second language skills is briefly presented.

2.8.1 SNSs and negative-positive academic achievement

Davis (2009) and Petrović *et al.* (2012) among other researchers, identified Facebook as a beneficial medium for educational-related activities. However, some studies that examined Facebook relationship to students' academic achievement, argued otherwise (Kubey *et al.*, 2006, Pempek *et al.*, 2009, Karpinski and Duberstein, 2009, Kirschner and Karpinski, 2010).

a) SNSs and impaired academic performance

In their study, Kubey *et al.* (2006) found that heavier recreational use of the Internet highly correlated to impaired academic performance. This is especially observed when students were engaged in synchronous communication, such as instant messaging, as opposed to asynchronous interaction, such as email (*ibid.*). Similarly, a majority of students in Pempek *et al.*'s (2009) study reported that Facebook brought negative impact to their learning, and only a small number agreed that Facebook enhanced learning.

More importantly, from a survey study of 219 undergraduate and graduate students, Kirschner and Karpinski (2010) found that students who were Facebook users obtained lower GPAs and spent fewer hours studying than non-users. Some of the reasons outlined for these findings were that Facebook users; spent more time on Facebook for extracurricular activities (e.g. maintain or expand social network, organise events) than on academic activities, and suffered from split-attention when engaged in both social and learning process, as compared to the Facebook non-users (ibid.). Likewise, Rouis *et al.* (2011) observed that extraverted-personality students who used Facebook extensively, showed declining academic performance. Despite the decrease in their GPAs, the Facebook users emphasised their priority for academic learning, but concurred that they suffered from procrastination, and poor time-management skills (Kirschner and Karpinski, 2010). In support of this, the students in Hamat *et al.*'s (2012) study reported that the higher usage of SNSs for social purposes, networking and informal learning did not affect their learning performance. Both Facebook users and non-users in Kirschner and Karpinski's (2010) study reported a similar duration of Facebook usage on daily basis, but the non-users spent more time doing paid work per week, while the users spent their time browsing Facebook. The amount of time students spend on academic work may have influenced their academic success (Astin, 1984, Chickering *et al.*, 1987).

b) SNSs and positive academic achievement

Although significant, the designs of Kubey *et al.* (2006), Karpinski and Duberstein (2009), and Kirschner and Karpinski's (2010) studies were criticised, due to the non-continuous measures of time spent on Facebook, small number of snowballed sample participants, self-reported GPA, correlational data from unpublished draft manuscripts, and failure to include prior academic ability as a control variable (Junco,

2011, Pasek et al., 2009). Similarly, Rouis *et al.* (2011) findings that were entirely based on self-report and perception, did not gauge students' actual behaviours of SNSs usage.

As a reaction to Kirschner and Karpisnki's (2010) finding, Junco and Cotten (2011) studied Facebook use and academic achievement with a larger sample participants of 1839. Concurring with Kirschner and Karpisnki's (2010) finding, Junco and Cotten (2011) stated that spending fewer hours on academic work, as a result of entertaining activities on Facebook, certainly impacted students' learning negatively. However, it was emphasised that students have to spend a massive amount of time on Facebook to cause substantial, real-world impact to their overall GPA. Therefore, as opposed to Kirschner and Karpisnki's (2010) finding, it was concluded that the time and frequency students spent on Facebook, negatively impacted their overall GPA (Junco, 2011). Pasek *et al.* (2009) similarly conducted a study based on larger representative of American youths and undergraduate students. There was no concrete data to suggest any relationship between Facebook uses and grades, but evidently, Facebook was used more commonly by individuals with higher grades (*ibid.*).

Added to this, a study at the University of Melbourne showed that personal Internet use at work, helped increase staff members' concentration and productivity (Hamilton, 2009). Cain and Policastri (2011) and Guerrero and Rod (2013) similarly illustrated that the students in academic-based Facebook groups demonstrated high commitment to learning, scored higher in exams, and performed significantly better than non-participants in the fields of Pharmacy Management and Political Science. Other studies showed that Facebook indirectly brought positive impacts to students by encouraging active participants in informal lessons, contributing ideas, sharing

opinions and interests, improving self-esteem, and forming social presence and identity (Ellison et al., 2007, Valenzuela et al., 2009, Pempek et al., 2009). More specifically, Valenzuela *et al.* (2009) illustrated the positive relationship between the intensity of Facebook use and satisfaction with lives, social trust, civic engagement, and political participation, among a sample of 2603 students. Despite the positive impact of SNSs like Facebook on academic learning, it should be noted that there is yet to be a study to demonstrate the positive relationship between Facebook usage and students' academic achievement.

From another perspective, Kolek and Saunders (2008) and Pasek *et al.* (2009) presented inconclusive results in the relationship between Facebook and academic achievement. There was neither correlation nor difference in the overall students' GPA to suggest positive-negative relationships to users and non-users of Facebook (*ibid.*). Discrepancies in the studies' findings, might be due to external varying variables, and sociocultural settings that influenced sample participants. It is near impossible to control all of the variables that might have influenced the findings of the studies. For example, the academic achievement of an SNSs' users, might be affected by the time they spent watching TV and playing video games, rather than solely accessing the Internet (Hamilton, 2009).

2.8.2 Using SNSs to promote critical literacy and language skills

In relation to academic achievement, SNSs such as Facebook may help improve students' critical literacy and language skills, by exposing them to a wide range of discourse functions and online writing. The models of writing might be able to enhance students' creative deployment of language play, such as using code-switching, group-based jargon, and abbreviations (Pempek et al., 2009). In line with this, the newness

of SNSs especially Facebook, encourages the teaching-learning of writing literacy on online spaces (Lee, 2010, Reid, 2011b), that could also benefitted the less active social media participants, or lurkers, by providing them with language model and input (Dennen, 2008).

Lee (2010) found that writing literacy was continuous from one online platform to another, and has the ability to promote lifelong learning. In this case, it was identified that a group of youngsters in Hong Kong applied similar text-making practices they developed in Instant Messaging to Facebook, including the use of abbreviations, code-switches, emoticons, and multimodal texts (ibid.). Therefore, writing skills may be transferred from an old online platform to a newer one, thus encouraging students to become more familiar and comfortable in practising the TL in a continuous act of online writing. On the other hand, only a small number of students in Grosseck *et al.*'s (2011) study were convinced that Facebook could break language barriers in enabling the development of TLs. In relation to this, the critical discourse analysis of teachers-students Facebook conversations in Rambe's (2012b) study illustrated students' under-developed study skills, and much less literacy skills, despite the emergence of peer-based collaboration in learning. This suggests the importance of critical literacy skills, and other language skills in the online environment to create high quality learning experience.

As such, although SNSs generally have great potential to improve teaching-learning process, some findings from the previous studies indicate that there is still a lot of effort needed to integrate SNSs into academic learning to ensure the best outcomes from these activities. To this end, Bernard *et al.* (2004) and Ahn (2011) emphasised

the importance of pedagogical design that caters to students' learning needs and interests, rather than too much dependence on the novelty of technology.

2.9 SNSs and second language learning

Research on the employment of SNSs in education were still in their early stages, but the benefits that they offer in elevating social interactions, has certainly impacted the dynamics of the second language classroom (Stevenson and Liu, 2010, Wang and Vásquez, 2012, Blattner and Lomicka, 2012). The studies that have been conducted on SNSs and second language learning focused on several areas including; using Facebook for reading, writing practices, and critical literacy (Stewart, 2009, Pascopeila and Richardson, 2009, Walker, 2010, Skerrett, 2010, Denny, 2010, Shih, 2011, Reid, 2011b, Dixon, 2011, Drouin, 2011, DePew, 2011), the opportunities and benefits of Facebook as an online platform for ELL (Mahadi and Ubaidullah, 2010, Kabilan et al., 2010, Yunus et al., 2012, Shih, 2013), the construction of knowledge on Facebook (Idris and Ghani, 2012), blended learning experience (Liang and Bonk, 2009, McCarthy, 2010, Shih, 2011), the use of microblogging for communicative and cultural competence (Borau et al., 2009), and the use of SNSs for community and identity development (Harrison and Thomas, 2009, Blattner and Fiori, 2009). Rather than centralising solely on SNSs, previous studies also looked into other social media applications such as blogs, online gaming, wikis, and podcasts, and their impact on the second language learning environment (Thorne et al., 2009, Sun, 2009, Sew, 2009b, Yang, 2009).

Despite the various areas of interests, most of these studies focused on presenting the benefits and feasibility of SNSs as an added value for second language learning. In

a blended learning environment that combined physical classroom and peer assessment on Facebook, the Taiwanese English language students in Shih's (2011) study, reported improved skills, raised interests, boosted motivation, and a preference for cooperative learning. The social impacts of the blended activity were a strengthening of friendships, improved communication, and an increased sense of interest in each other (ibid.). Added to this, Blattner and Lomicka (2012) viewed Facebook as an invaluable platform for blended learning, due to its ability to bridge the gaps of contact and communication among students that affect academic performance. Despite these positive aspects, Liang and Bonk (2009) advise that blended learning in the EFL environment required teachers' strategic planning and monitoring in order to ensure the successful implementation and evaluation of activities.

From an incidental learning point of view (Lankard, 1995), Kabilan *et al.* (2010: 185) wrote that the casual interactions on Facebook, allow students *"to learn new words, build confidence, increase their motivation and positive attitudes towards learning English"*. Yang (2009:18) similarly echoed that feedback received in blogs as discussion forums, *"reinforced students' confidence and motivation in language learning"*. It was further identified that the adaptation of blogs and forums invited EFL teacher trainees to reflect, comment, and challenge each other's viewpoints, while catching up with the content they missed out on during the classes (ibid.). These blogs allowed teacher trainees to voice their (dis)satisfactions, beliefs, struggles, and experience as a community who went through a shared teaching-learning experience (ibid.).

Meurant (2008) took one step further by integrating digital literacy into second language learning on SNSs. The Korean EFL freshmen students in the study were instructed to record campus-guide videos, email them to the instructor, and write comments or feedback in English, based on the videos published on the Cyworld platform. This activity was seen as successful, as it simultaneously developed students' digital literacy and English language skills. Furthermore, the use of multimedia satisfied students' needs for aesthetic sense and the application of computing on mobile phones, WiFi, and broadband (ibid.).

2.9.1 Evaluating ESL students' participation on SNSs

Alternatively, McBride (2009) discussed foreign language learning on SNSs from the assessment or evaluation point of view. In order to improve students' interest and participation in foreign language learning activities on SNSs, teachers need to disclose detailed rubrics of how students' participations are assessed and graded. This would grant students the feeling that they are in control of their learning environment, and encourage them to critically reflect on their contributions, raise awareness that their participations are invaluable to the learning process, and, link informal or recreational writing with formal or academic writing (Vie, 2008, Godwin-Jones, 2008, McBride, 2009).

It is necessary to raise students' awareness that their informal learning activities are also important to bridge in and out of school literary practices, as many students were unaware that recreational writing outside their formal academic learning, is also accounted as writing practices (Thorne and Reinhardt, 2008, Reinhardt and Zander, 2011). For example, the voice blog activities in Sun's (2009) study gauged students' critical skills from planning to evaluation stages, where students employed a wide

range of strategies to cope with the emerging blogging-related issues. At the end of the process, the students became aware that blogs could be used for a variation of purposes, including learning, information exchange, social networking, and self-presentation (ibid.). Notably however, the process of assessing, evaluating or grading online students' participation was not easy, due to the "*unpredictable nature of truly authentic, open-ended language and culture projects*" (McBride, 2009: 51).

2.9.2 SNSs and communicative competence

Blattner and Fiori (2009) and Borau *et al.* (2009) found that Facebook and Twitter had the ability to improve students' communicative and cultural competence, and socio-pragmatic competence (i.e. the ability to use language appropriately in specific contexts), in second language setting. Students' sociolinguistic competence was influenced by a mixture of formal and colloquial styles (e.g. using *wanna* for *want to*), which made the Twitter atmosphere much friendlier (Borau *et al.*, 2009). Also, students' cultural competence allowed them to communicate with native speakers, albeit with difficulty at times (ibid.). The interactions with other students, and possibly native speakers, could provide insights into other people's culture, thus creating an awareness of any existing differences and linguistic styles. However, many students in Borau *et al.*'s (2009) study were unable to handle communication breakdowns on Twitter, due to inefficiency in using online tools such as dictionaries. As a result, Twitter was regarded as inefficient in improving strategic competence (ibid.).

Arguably, cultural competence cannot be easily acquired by only relying on SNSs interaction; hence more trainings are needed to improve students' online cultural competence. The ability to situate oneself properly in a social space, and the awareness of a community's unique culture, resulted in increased motivation and

improved performance in language classrooms (Blattner and Fiori, 2009). This ability also fosters a sense of belonging to a particular community among individuals (ibid.). In short, the interaction in communities in which students belong to influenced the creative expressions of language use and development of their identities (Harrison and Thomas, 2009, Thorne et al., 2009).

Summary

Thus far, I have presented the many previous studies that have been conducted on social media especially SNSs, to establish the values that they have in academic settings. The discussions cover a number of themes including collaborative learning and social learning theories, motivations, academic achievements, and identity formation. Essentially, I tried to put forward the fundamental issues that form my study which are informal learning, second language learning (English), and social interactions. These issues are discussed in more detailed in the following sections where I present the big idea of the research, the research gaps, and the details of the research to derive at the research questions.

2.10 The big idea: Language learning in a socially-mediated environment

Having presented the values and weaknesses of informal online interaction, I am arguing for the implementation of unstructured learning outside of the formal context. The big idea taken seriously in this study is that language is best learned when it is socially-mediated. It follows the communicative approach to language learning that emphasises social interaction in authentic settings. This notion is much like how children

acquire their first language, that is by association and interaction with their parents, immediate surroundings, and society, which happens in an unstructured and informal environment (Krashen, 1982).

Krashen (1982: 10) made a distinction between *learning* and *acquisition*, where language acquisition is underlined as a subconscious, and implicit process, one where acquirers are not aware that they are acquiring language, but are only aware that they are using the language for communication (ibid.). Acquirers may not understand the rules of the language, but have a feel for correctness (ibid.). On the opposite, *learning* is often formal and explicit, where learners consciously learn the rules of the second language, are able to talk about them, and “*know about*” the language (ibid.). Krashen (1982: 10) argued that adults can also acquire or *pick up* a language, but they may not be able to achieve native-like competence like children could. In this sense, acquisition is seen as more powerful than learning as students would be able to *pick up* a language naturally, rather than being pressured to learn the rules. Their ability to use the language would then be complemented in formal classrooms where they would be made aware of the rules. Based on Krashen’s (1982) theory, language can thus be acquired through informal interaction, and is best learned when students see the need to communicate with other people, or having a target audience for their language production.

At the moment, the technology of social media presents a platform where students can interact with one another for a variety of purposes, including academic, social, hobby, interest, and so forth. These interactions often occur informally, without any structure, and can lead to the learning of new knowledge, establishment of identities, as well as construction of relationships, among others. The content presented on these

social media may also help students acquire new language skills unconsciously, when they engage with materials that are of interest to them. Seeing that Facebook is one of the most popular SNS for university students, it may present a context where students can acquire English language by interacting with peers, experts, and content.

I attempted to use Facebook to promote unstructured and informal social interaction activity to improve university students' English learning experience. There is a growing awareness among second language educators and researchers of the values of social interactions on informal platforms, unstructured learning environments, and participatory involvement in online activities (Jahnke, 2013, Armstrong, 2014). Such informal self-directed learning is a powerful form of learning and attractive (Siemens, 2004), as students are given the freedom and flexibility to associate or dissociate themselves with the learning activities or environment. Should they feel that the learning activities add values to their academic capabilities, they would participate as extensively as they desire, and vice versa (Armstrong, 2014). In this sense, the students are truly the managers of their own learning and are free to choose the preferred topics and contents.

2.10.1 The relationship between SNSs and second language learning: A critical evaluation of its effectiveness

The emphasis on social interactions in authentic environments follows the communicative approach that sees language learning as a socially-constructed process. This approach governs the theory of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) which is largely adopted in many language classrooms. CLT argues that students be given the opportunities to emulate the use of the target language (TL) in a real-life context. It is important that meaningful interaction in authentic or situated learning

be directly relevant to real-life language learning (Woo and Reeves, 2007). The activities that underline the CLT principles were often presented in the classrooms, but to what extent do these tasks promote authentic TL production from the students? The format of the tasks in the classrooms are often formal, which means that teachers expect students to produce certain forms of language at the end of the lessons to achieve learning objectives. Authentic CLT activities are thus very difficult to implement in classrooms as the TL produced by students may not resemble realistic usage. To this end, it may be necessary to celebrate the opportunities to constantly practice and be exposed to the TL on SNSs

Social media is valuable in assisting social interactions between students, teachers, communities, experts, and content materials on one platform. The language used in a social media environment often resembles real-life usage as people often write the way they talk. Therefore, not only do students get to practice the TL in an authentic manner, but the informality and lack of structure of the social interaction activities also entail that students get to talk about the topics that are genuinely of their interests, rather than being forced to participate in a given subject. The beauty of social media also lies in its ability to disseminate content material efficiently to a specific community or general users of the platforms, which could then be immediately discussed and presented to the target audience.

On the other hand, Meskill and Anthony (2005) argued that studies on foreign language learning with CMC were too focused on interactions and autonomy, rather than on the identification of pedagogical strategies. To address this issue, they conducted a formal activity that was deemed authentic, and promoted student-centeredness to be in line with an ideal communicative classroom, on the platform

Blackboard to a first-year Russian class. The activity was beneficial as it allowed teachers and students to examine language being used in online conversations, and identified teachable and learnable moments (*ibid.*). In order to focus students' attention on aspects of language, and create meaningful connections between what was being learned on Facebook and learning objectives, Kabilan *et al.* (2010) found that the participants in their study required some forms of structure or pre-determined learning outcomes. Due to this, the students demanded a more formal avenue of academic discourse on Facebook, where the learning process was dependent on teachers' guidance and initiatives, and the details of English language assignments or projects were fully outlined (*ibid.*).

However, when presented with formal graded tasks online, active students were usually so focused on completing the tasks that they neglected reading their peers' contributions (Dennen, 2008). As a result, silent readers who took time to consider their arguments, and read other people's writings, often gained more information and linguistics knowledge (*ibid.*). The silence period appears thus to be valuable, and much needed by the quieter or shy students to observe other students' postings for a period of time to build their confidence (Chiu, 2009).

Notably, the many studies on pedagogical lurkers have suggested that a majority of Internet users are indeed silent readers rather than content constructors, which may further result in low participation from the students in an unstructured, informal learning environment (Nonnecke *et al.*, 2004, Nonnecke and Preece, 2003). Chiu (2009) found that only a third of the members of a class of 46 participated online in any one topic, but they actively participated at some point or another, even though they did not volunteer opinions in face-to-face discussions. Arguably, the informal,

unstructured and open platform might not be sustainable or attractive enough to the students due to the lack of association that the activity has with instrumental rewards such as bonus marks in exams, such as observed by Cain and Policastri (2011) in their study.

In relation to Kabilan *et al.*'s (2010) finding, the participants in Stevenson and Liu's (2010) study demonstrated high preference and reliance on traditional Web 1.0 technology that provided content or tutorials, and promoted reading and writing skills, although they were presented with three language learning SNSs; LiveMocha, Palabea and Babbel. In support of this finding, Clark and Gruba's (2010) autoethnographic study found that LiveMocha was indeed counter-productive to language learning, due to the flaws in its design. Despite its potential to mediate language learning, Clark and Gruba (2010) suggested improvement and other means of data collection to further identify the suitable pedagogical activities that could be integrated into LiveMocha. Additionally, based on a survey and usability test, the students in Stevenson and Liu's (2010) study illustrated more positive views of SNSs that helped them achieve learning goals, rather than sites that were too cartoony or youthful.

In support of unstructured and informal online interaction activity, the integration of new technology such as SNSs in education is essentially to find new strategies for English language learning, rather than replicating traditional classroom activities in online environment. Therefore, by having social media in education, second language learning should be less about drills and exercises and rote learning, and more about the dynamic and organic social interactions, which accentuates the design of social media. Often, higher education students have already been registered with a formal

online LMS or CMS system such as e-learning on MOODLE that is associated with the institutions. On this platform, students received lecture notes, exercises, assignments, and graded tasks. The formality of the platform and its association to the learning institutions lead to a more formal usage of the TL, which might be academic in nature, but inauthentic in real-life settings. It may thus be necessary that second language students be given the opportunity to immerse themselves in a constantly accessible online environment for English language interaction practice and learning autonomy, as a strategy to enhance their linguistics repertoire that could improve their formal literacy skills (Thorne and Reinhardt, 2008). Added to this, Goodband and Samuel (2010) asserted that SNSs will continue to develop and it is in the interest of HE as an organisation to keep abreast with the new developments and be aware of the possible benefits of the latest technology. SNSs must not be ignored within the HE setting, and could be used constructively (ibid.).

Therefore, despite the limitations of Facebook as an SNS in education, previous literature has outlined its potential benefits and effectiveness in assisting students' learning especially in social interactions. The Malaysian second language setting in particular is in need of a platform for English language practice due to the emphasis it places on its mastery. Facebook is popular within the university students' demographic and is routinely accessed on daily basis (Kabilan et al., 2010, Yunus et al., 2012, Madge et al., 2009b). Crystal (2001) believed that online communication is being adopted more extensively, and resulted in the rapid development of digital vernaculars or the Internet language. Although students need to be taught the correct forms of English language, it may be necessary for institutions to embrace and address the digital vernaculars, as online communication is quickly becoming a norm (ibid.). However, there is still the lack of attention given to it in the language

classrooms (ibid.). The rapid exchanges in synchronous online interactions especially, promoted fluency rather than accuracy as students were more concerned with exchanging ideas than correcting linguistic mistakes (Lee, 2002). As such, it may be in the students' best interest to promote a balance between function, content, and accuracy in online interactions (ibid.).

Therefore, Facebook as an SNS may be necessarily seen as having a potential relationship with second language learning. Its effectiveness in mediating communication between communities of language learners has been extensively discussed at local and global contexts. To place the argument on a continuum (see Figure 2), on one side, we have the formal, traditional English language classrooms that practice structured tasks with pre-determined learning objectives, and on the other end, we have a dynamic, open, unstructured, voluntary-based social media platform for English language interactions and practice.

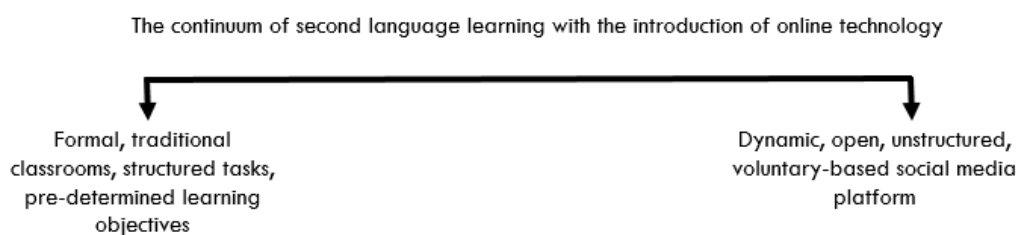


FIGURE 2: THE CONTINUUM OF SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING WITH THE INTRODUCTION OF SNSs

In my view, it is unnecessary to replicate and give students formal English language tasks on SNSs when they are already doing that in the classrooms and on e-learning platforms. What they need is a space to use the English language in an authentic setting, based on their interests and learning needs. As such, in this study, a closed Facebook group was created and promoted for social interaction and information

dissemination, to accentuate its basic functions (Hamat et al., 2012, Boyd and Ellison, 2007).

It may however be necessary to establish that I am not discrediting the merits of traditional face-to-face learning in the classrooms to improve students English language skills. Formal content and learning model are still very important in education (El-Bakry and Mastorakis, 2009). El-Bakry and Mastorakis (2009) thus called for the creation of collaborative learning spaces to promote informal learning on e-learning platforms, to ensure that the formal learning environment also accommodates informal learning facilities. Perhaps, the blended learning environment that combines both online and face-to-face activities for second language learning such as observed in Shih (2011, 2013), McCarthy (2010), and Liang and Bonk's (2009) studies may cater to the wide arrays of students' learning needs and preferences.

Seeing that the research was conducted on a short term basis, however, my focus was on the informal and unstructured social interactions for English language practice among university students, in the hope that the activity could improve language skills and boost confidence. It focused on informal social interactions, in an open and unstructured Facebook platform to engage higher education students in English language practice.

2.11 Why was Facebook chosen as the platform?

The affordances of Facebook as a Web 2.0 social software granted students with "*unprecedented learning opportunities*" (McLoughlin and Lee, 2007). Students were

given total control of the learning process, as well as participation in collaborative user-generated content and collective intelligence, to create “the wisdoms of the crowds” and community-focused inquiry (Surowiecki, 2005: 666). This, according to McLoughlin and Lee (2007), has the potential to radicalise and transform traditional teaching-learning practices into a new literacy. Although the study on educational uses of Facebook was relatively new, it has great potential in academic practices and research, especially in a higher academic setting (Aydin, 2012, Hew, 2011). In line with this, the field of second language learning and social media is still in its infancy, but worth pursuing due to the growing dependency on online communication (ibid.). Some of the social media that have been studied in their relations to second language learning are Facebook, Twitter, LiveMocha, Palabea, blogs, wikis, and video games. For example, the studies by Greenhow and Robelia (2009), and Newgarden (2009b) saw high English language learning values in the originality of Twitter to limit each tweet to 140 characters, as students have to think and structure their words concisely to get their messages across. This led to the coining of the term *Twitteracy* that illustrated the relationship between Twitter and literacy (ibid.).

In Malaysia, Hamat *et al.* (2012) found from a nationwide survey that university students spent most of their time on SNSs, then learning activity, and blogging. They mainly used SNSs for informal learning activities by interacting and communicating with peers in their social circle, and this practice was acceptable as SNSs were social in nature (ibid.). Essentially, the students did not feel that the extensive use of SNSs affected their academic performance (ibid.). However, Hamat *et al.* (2012) found that SNSs penetration among Malaysian university students were not 100 percent as initially assumed, but in Kabilan *et al.*'s (2010) earlier study, it was established that university students were comfortable in using Facebook for social and academic

purposes, and that they accessed Facebook routinely on daily basis. The familiarity and comfort with Facebook could further trigger students' eagerness to embrace it as an additional second language learning platform (Blattner and Lomicka, 2012). The findings in Madge *et al.* (2009b) and Eteokleous *et al.*'s (2012) studies, among others, demonstrated that students specifically created Facebook accounts to keep up with both academic and social life at universities. Even though they were not forced to possess Facebook accounts, the convenience of communication and information exchange, as well as connection and network, pressured them into creating at least one account, to successfully navigate their university experience (*ibid.*).

Furthermore, Nielsen (2005) pointed out that youth desire to leave their marks online, and the interactive features of SNSs such as Facebook appealed to them. Godwin-Jones (2005) stated that the Net Generations created a third space online that has significant influences on their mental and physical activities, and should be capitalised for academic purposes. Eberhardt (2007) added that since SNSs were changing the ways students interact with each other, it is about time that colleges and universities learn how to effectively deal with the impact. Therefore, as a means of bridging the gap between formal and informal learning, in-school and out-of school literacy practices and intensifying ELL experience, it was suggested that SNSs such as Facebook were used in the ESL classrooms, to capitalise on both the social and academic opportunities afforded (Blattner and Fiori, 2009).

From the review of literature presented earlier, SNSs-related educational studies largely involved Facebook, in comparison to others SNSs. It is due to the high usage of SNSs among university students that I chose Facebook to assist their English language practice. By having only one platform to login in order to socialise and

learn, students may feel less burdened by the interaction activity. In support of this, the participants in Nicholas and Ng (2009) and Lim's (2010) studies reported their preference to log on to a chatting platform instead of their university LMS. Apart from that, Facebook was chosen as the social platform to assist students' English language practice due to several reasons:

- Facebook is the most popular form of SNS among college and university students, and the high Facebook adoption rate in their studies provided opportunities for the introduction of the SNS into learning process. (Boyd and Ellison, 2007, Cavalli, 2014).
- Facebook has massive potential to promote English language interaction (Tan et al., 2009, Kabilan et al., 2010, Idris and Ghani, 2012, Muniandy and Muniandy, 2013, Socialbakers, 2013, Talip, 2013).
- Facebook is multi-functional and supported by many internal and external features (e.g. wall, message, notes, events, photos, videos, links, document, birthday calendar, games, etc.). It is also stable, ease the process of community building and able to reach a diverse range of Internet users (Ellison et al., 2007, Selwyn, 2007a, Bosch, 2009, Madge et al., 2009b, Davis, 2009, Pempek et al., 2009, Selwyn, 2009a, Grosseck et al., 2011, Llorens Cerdà and Capdeferro Planas, 2011).
- Facebook offers microblogging tools, for students who want to write extensively. The pieces of writings could then be easily circulated on the platforms to reach the target audience, and encourage feedback in the forms of comments. This is so much more convenience for students who desire to take up blogging, as compared to having to create a whole weblogs. The content on weblogs are also naturally more difficult to circulate as users have to be redirected to new tabs for access. As such, it may not gather the attention from

the target audience as widely as the content on SNSs. Students would also feel more motivated to participate in online activities if they have a target audience in mind to showcase their writing products (Hammond, 2006).

- The interactive features of SNSs such as Facebook appealed to students (Nielsen, 2005), and reduces the risk of technological frustration that undermines the success of the introduction of new technologies in learning processes (Cavalli, 2014: 63).
- Facebook gives users the freedom to determine the level of privacy they prefer for their profiles and the information they share (Gross and Acquisti, 2005), which is especially vital in an open environment, such as the online world.

2.11.1 Other social media that have been used for ELL

There are many other social media that could have been utilised as platforms for the practice of English language interactions. Several SNSs that were specifically designed for language learning included LiveMocha, Babbel and Palabea. LiveMocha has especially been studied quite extensively from multiple perspectives including language learning and identity formation (Clark and Gruba, 2010, Stevenson and Liu, 2010, Harrison and Thomas, 2009). LiveMocha was useful as it allows students to interact with the native speakers of the language they wanted to learn. However, Clark and Gruba (2010) found LiveMocha to be flawed in its design which made it counter-productive for language learning. In the same vein, the participants in Stevenson and Liu's (2010) study positively reported that SNSs helped them achieve language learning goals, but resented sites that were too cartoony and youthful. They relied more and preferred the content and tutorials presented on Web 1.0 that promoted reading and writing skills (ibid.). This may be because they were

already accustomed to the traditional form of learning that they experienced at their academic institutions. However, it may be necessary to initiate the new mode of informal learning so that the new generation of students would not be left behind in a world that increasingly relies on online communication.

Other social media such as SecondLife, Duolingo, wikis and blogs could also be used for second language learning. However, these media are not as popular as Facebook among the university students in Malaysia. To introduce its functions and usage might be time-consuming and burdening the students, as they have to learn new media that are not related to their academic work. The unfamiliarity of these tools, combined with the English language interaction activity may be too much for the students to adapt to, hence could lead to the rejection of the activity. Perhaps, these social media could be introduced in any longitudinal studies in the future.

As social media is a fairly new medium in education, it may take a while before students are prepared to embrace the changes in the learning process, as they have to take more responsibilities for managing their own learning. To learn a language is to practice it in a socially-mediated environment until learners are able to use it fluently and accurately. My study is thus the first step towards creating a generation of students who are able to facilitate their English language learning based on their interests, when provided with the platform and facilities. The sustainability of social interactions on an online platform, while it is important, should not be the determining factor for the activity. Students should be given a platform to practice their language skills regardless of their participation or non-participation. Perhaps, after a period of silence and observation, they may desire to practice their language skills to express their thoughts to a target audience, who are within their communities of peers and

learners, such as found in Dennen's (2008) study. Therefore, it is important to raise the students' awareness and confidence level by promoting such online platforms to elevate their English language learning experience. Based on the beliefs that Facebook was popular, widely used among university students, and had massive potential to promote English language interaction (Tan et al., 2009, Kabilan et al., 2010, Idris and Ghani, 2012, Muniandy and Muniandy, 2013, Socialbakers, 2013, Talip, 2013), I created a closed Facebook group consisting of a large group of English language learners who were taking a similar English proficiency course at a university in Malaysia.

2.12 Research Gaps

The following section outlines three research gaps identified from previous literature that employed Facebook in academic, which guide the development of the study. These research gaps are presented in terms of the design of pedagogical activities on Facebook for interaction activity, methods of data collection, and the lack of research on Facebook and ELL in Malaysian contexts.

2.12.1 Research gap 1: The design of pedagogical activities on Facebook for interaction activity

The first research gap stems from the differences in the design of pedagogical activities on Facebook for second language interaction. Liang and Bonk (2009), Clark and Gruba (2010), and Blattner and Lomicka (2012) emphasised that the current theory in language acquisition centres on social interaction, participation, collaborative discussion, identity and community development, and sociocultural integration, all of which could be mediated by SNSs. In this regard, I place emphasis

on the interaction activities as a literacy practice on Facebook, to improve university students' English language skills.

The previous multiple-method studies (Shih, 2011, Shih, 2013, Reinhardt and Zander, 2011), commonly employed SNSs as a part of formal lessons or tasks, where students' contributions and participations were assessed and graded. For example, the students in Shih's (2011) study were instructed to publish seven online writings, and conduct peer assessment regarding the products. The students reported an improvement in language skills, confidence and motivation to write (ibid.). However, following Beaudoin's (2002) argument, such formal activities might have forced the students' participation, contribution and interaction on the Facebook platform, in an effort to achieve learning objectives. In relation to this, many previous studies emphasised the importance of pre-set, clear learning objectives, tasks and guidelines, where SNSs are adapted for pedagogical activities, to ensure successful learning experience (Meyer, 2003, Rovai, 2007, Chen and Bryer, 2012b). Educators were also reminded to not be disillusioned by the novelty of SNSs, as a new interactive technology, and assume that it can automatically change learning process for students. These researchers believed that in reality, SNSs integration into pedagogy is not a straightforward issue, and must be critically assessed beforehand (Selwyn, 2007b, Panckhurst and Marsh, 2008, Oradini and Saunders, 2008, Hoffman, 2009, Koltay, 2010, Lester and Perini, 2010, Hourigan and Murray, 2010).

However, Bull *et al.* (2008) argued that students often lost focus and energy when they had to address specific learning objectives in a limited amount of time. Following this, it is essential for students to be provided with a safe, participatory platform for their TL practice, where they are not forced to contribute to content development or

initiate discussion under time constraint. When students are relieved of all the anxieties, learning experience might be more natural, fun and enjoyable, as they are not pressured into producing knowledge when they are unprepared. Following Krashen's (1985) affective filter hypothesis, I believed that when the negative feelings such as anxiety, boredom, and self-doubt are lowered or eliminated, students could better process the language input they received and enjoy the learning experience. Some strategies that could lower students' affective filter are creating a fun and relaxed learning environment, boosting their self-confidence, and tailoring learning topics based on their interests (ibid.). To this end, I proposed an English language interaction group on Facebook that did not specify any learning objectives, and mainly relied on students' participation, contribution, and interests to develop content and social interaction.

2.12.2 Research gap 2: Methods of data collection (and sampling technique)

The second research gap centred on the differences and deficiency in the methods of data collection. The studies that have been conducted in the area of Facebook and second language learning, were mostly theoretical (Mahadi and Ubaidullah, 2010), or applied single-method data collection, with the common methods being surveys and content analysis of Facebook interactions (Kabilan et al., 2010, Hamat et al., 2012, Idris and Ghani, 2012). In relation to this, Wang and Vasquez (2012) agree that many studies in the area of Web 2.0 and second language learning have not been grounded in theory, and suffer from a set of common methodological limitations and weaknesses. For instance, the study by Mahadi and Ubaidullah (2010) theoretically discussed the opportunities afforded by SNSs for language teachers, but presented limited implications of practical strategies that could be exploited for

ELL. Thus, more empirical studies were needed to substantiate the findings concluded in the theoretical studies.

Previous survey studies commonly investigated students' perceptions of Facebook use for English language learning (Kabilan et al., 2010, Yunus et al., 2012). Meanwhile, the findings from Facebook interaction content analysis investigated students' critical literacy, communicative and cultural competence, as well as construction of English language knowledge (Borau et al., 2009, Reid, 2011b, Yunus et al., 2012, Idris and Ghani, 2012). Alternatively, a study by Dixon (2011) applied statistical testing of correlations to look into NS and NNS students' engagement on Facebook, and its relation to writing success. To add to the discussion, the sampling method in Idris and Ghani's (2012) study, which looked into the construction of English language knowledge on Facebook, could be challenged, as the data was not directly solicited from the target group of English language students. Instead, it was gathered from the researchers' personal Facebook walls, and presumably these data included the ones written or constructed by friends and families, rather than the community of English language students. To some extent, the data addressed the research question, which was to examine how knowledge was being constructed on Facebook. However, the conclusion drawn by Idris and Ghani (2012) that Facebook was suitable for ELL was debatable, as the sample participants were not representative of English language students.

All in all, it is undeniable that theoretical and single-method studies have been an invaluable addition to the existing bodies of knowledge, in the area of Facebook in second language learning. These single-method studies are helpful in highlighting students' perceptions, activities, topics of interaction, and development of relationships

and identities when Facebook was academically employed. For example, from the analysis of teachers and students' writing on Facebook, Reid (2011b) found that Facebook provided a safe pedagogical space that bridged informal and formal critical literacy writing practices. Furthermore, the content analysis also identified relationship development, and the growth of new forms of interactions, language, and texts (ibid.).

The single-method studies thus paved the way for more in-depth research that might fully encapsulate students' behaviours, experiences and the sociocultural factors (Van Nguyen, 2010) that influence the ways they used Facebook for ELL. However, the dependency on single-method data in a study, did not allow for the findings to be triangulated and corroborated with data from other methods, which may threaten its validity. Furthermore, many of the single-method studies did not look beyond how students perceived Facebook in ELL, and hence failed to fully understand students' needs and wants when Facebook was employed to mediate ELL process. The neglect in students' needs and wants might cause frustration, retaliation and non-engagement when such activities are implemented. As such, there is a gap in the literature to identify students' feelings, behaviours and experiences when Facebook was employed for English language learning.

Nevertheless, several studies employed multiple-methods data collection that promoted data triangulation. A study by Reinhardt and Zander (2011) applied the bridging-activities model by Thorne and Reinhardt (2008) and situated-learning principles by Lave and Wenger (1991), to examine social networking from the language socialisation perspective, in an Intensive English Program (IEP). Not only was this study theoretically grounded, it employed multiple quantitative and qualitative

data collection methods, including surveys, journal entries, class discussions, analysis of activity materials, recording and observations of classroom interaction, SNS use tracking, and post-instructional interviews (Reinhardt and Zander, 2011). The methods aimed to provide students with experiential learning, and raised their critical awareness in regards to the use of SNSs for social purposes and ELL (ibid.). Apart from this, studies by Harrison and Thomas (2009) and Shih (2011, 2013) also employed multiple data collection methods to examine the implementation of SNSs in ESL setting. Harrison and Thomas (2009) used LiveMocha in an ethnographic study that combined classroom observation, in-class presentation and analysis of semester papers to examine the development of identity in online communities. Rather than centralising on ELL, the focus of Harrison and Thomas' (2009) study was on friendship management, identity development and social bonding. On the other hand, Shih (2011, 2013) examined the effect of Facebook writing in a blended learning environment among groups of ESL, and English for Business Communication students in a Taiwan institution. The methods employed were peer assessment of writing on Facebook, interview, student self-efficacy scale, self-developed satisfaction survey, and pre-test and post-test English writing skills. The result of the studies showed a positive improvement in students' English writing and a willingness to communicate ideas with friends (ibid.).

2.12.3 Research gap 3: Lack of studies on Facebook and English language learning (ELL) in Malaysian context

The third research gap is that there have been a limited number of available studies on the effect of Facebook (or other SNSs for that matter), for ELL in Malaysia. Aydin (2012) recognised this and stated that despite Facebook's popularity among students, the research on its educational use was still in its infancy. Several studies in Malaysian

context that have been conducted in this field were very informative, but employed single methods and did not explore beyond students' perceptions of the issue. I attempted to address these issues, and identify students' perceptions, experiences, and behaviours when Facebook was used to mediate English language interaction. Notably, it is not easy to integrate online pedagogical activities into language classrooms, as it requires a great deal of effort and groundwork (Hourigan and Murray, 2010). However, this area is worth looking into as the use of Facebook among Malaysian students, did not show signs of slowing down anytime soon. Furthermore, Meurant (2008: 71) argues that the second language digital literacy was able to allow both educators and students to access the variety of English resources available online, and facilitate global computer-mediated social communication using a universal language of the Internet. The field of SNSs and second language learning has slowly been garnering attention and interest from the researchers and practitioners in Malaysia. Therefore, I intended to add new findings to the body of existing knowledge in the specific area of Facebook and ELL in higher institution. It is hoped that the findings will lead to the development of models, concepts, or theoretical framework to identify the effect and relationship between SNSs and second language learning.

2.13 My research

Lam (2000), Warschauer (2000), and Herring *et al.* (2007) believe that English has become an important international language of social media, such as Facebook and LiveJournals. However, English is highly dependent on cultural expression, and values of various native and non-native speakers around the world (*ibid.*). Herring *et al.* (2007) found that blogs on LiveJournals were largely written in English, but the numbers of blogs in other languages were slowly growing. Similarly, Meurant (2008)

identified that English digital literacy was very much required for successful navigation, and retrieval of resources on the Internet.

Lam (2000: 478) emphasised the importance of literacy development in the new “*age of globalisation, transborder relations, and the popularisation of Internet-based communication*”. Thus, the way in which students use English in online environment might differ from the standard, formal English they learned in the classroom. The language styles they adopted to portray themselves on the Internet indirectly demonstrated their identity, or who they aspired to be (ibid.). For example, Lam (2000, 2004) identified mixed-code varieties in English used by two teenagers, that were developed among youth of the online communities in interactions with peers globally. This unique set of language represents the youths’ identities that fall into a different culture, rather than that of English-speaking American, or Cantonese-speaking Chinese (ibid.).

Furthermore, as presented earlier from a more practical perspective, English language mastery is highly needed among Malaysian students, to ensure great academic achievement, the security of well-paying jobs, and the confidence to present oneself to an international audience (Benesch, 2001, Malaysia Education Blueprint, 2013, The Malaysian Times, 2012). Despite the growing importance of other languages such as Mandarin, Martinez (2014) strongly believed that English will continue to be the world’s bridge language, used for communication and international commerce.

Based on the research gaps discussed in the previous section, and the universal importance of English language mastery, I examined a group of Malaysian university students' perceptions, experience, and behaviours when presented with an English interaction group on Facebook. Consequently, the study looked at the effect of Facebook interaction on students' English language skills. It employed three methods of data collection, namely questionnaire, content-thematic analysis of Facebook interaction, and semi-structured interviews, to allow for the triangulation of data. These methods closely resembled the ones adopted by Shih (2011), but rather than designing the interaction activity as part of formal learning activity, the Facebook group was used informally, as an external support platform to an English course. The participants were encouraged to practice English language interaction with peers enrolled in similar English course across the university, and contribute to English language content and knowledge on the Facebook group.

English language interaction and information exchange activity have great potential to develop a community of students who support each other's learning. I emphasised social interaction and authentic communication in developing students' English language ability, although it was highly likely that the language styles of the Internet and social media are not of the formal, grammar-ly, or Standard English language. Therefore, unlike Shih (2011, 2013), Kabilan *et al.* (2010) and Darhower (2002), who argued that students must be given instructions or projects to learn through Facebook, I did not propose any problem-based activities to be solved collaboratively. Instead, I proposed that Facebook be used as a social platform for interaction, discussion, self-expression, information and multimedia sharing, rather than for formal online learning activities. Formal instructions might defeat the purpose of Facebook as an SNS, hence, deterring students who accessed Facebook as a daily routine. Furthermore, I feel that

there is a need to differentiate Facebook as an SNS from other online instructional tools for English language learning. If similar types of formal activities were to be conducted on Facebook and other SNSs, what distinguish them from other online instructional tools such as e-learning and forums? As such, retaining Facebook as a social platform, might boost students' motivation, and cultivate positive attitudes in using English for social interaction.

Added to this, in a world where creative ability and productions are celebrated and circulated in the forms of memes, fan fictions and multimedia sharing (images, videos, songs, drawings) on SNSs, it may be necessary to investigate Malaysian students' passion and proactive-ness in improving their English language skills in a socially-mediated setting. Following this, the Facebook group interaction activity, had a general objective of promoting English language interaction practice, and did not specify any specific learning objectives and posting requirements. Students' participations were purely voluntary, and were not pressured by any external factors or instrumental rewards.

2.14 Research Questions

Unlike Kabilan *et al.* (2010) and Reinhardt and Zander's (2011) proposition that students must be made aware of the learning process, I did not differentiate learning and socialising on Facebook, as it attempted to capitalise upon students' social interactions. I aimed to make students feel comfortable to interact in English, and to develop an interest in using English naturally in daily conversations, on a social platform that was familiar, and highly accessible to them. Based on this, the students' perceptions, experience, and behaviours were examined when presented with the

opportunity to practice English language interaction on a Facebook group platform.

To this end, the research questions of this study are:

1. How do university students view the use of Facebook for English language learning (ELL)?
2. How do university students use a Facebook group for English language interaction?
 - a. What types of interaction threads and topics emerge from university students' interactions on a Facebook group for English language interactions?
3. How do university students perceive the changes in relation to their English language skills after using a Facebook for English language interaction?

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.0 Introduction to Methodology

Chapter 2 highlighted the past literature that examined SNSs and their pedagogical-related use. It narrowed down to present studies on SNSs in second language learning, their implications, and methods of data collections. These discussions led to the development of three research gaps that guide the aim of the study, namely to examine Malaysian university students' perceptions, experiences, and behaviours when presented with opportunities to practice English language interaction on a Facebook group. This is in line with the current approaches to second language learning that capitalised on social interaction, participatory learning, collaborative discussions, identity and community development, and sociocultural integration (Liang and Bonk, 2009, Clark and Gruba, 2010, Van Nguyen, 2010, Blattner and Lomicka, 2012).

To address the research questions, this chapter outlines the research strategy employed. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first section briefly discusses the epistemological and ontological frameworks that underpin the study. The second section presents the more practical aspects of the study, including, research methods, the context of study, sampling technique, participants, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

3.1 Definition of terms

I wish to examine Malaysian students' perceptions, experiences and behaviours when presented with an English interaction platform on Facebook. The terms *perceptions*, *experiences* and *behaviours*, which are also the unit of analysis are defined below to illustrate the way they are understood in the study.

The term *perception* has philosophical foundations, and has been used in a wide range of disciplines, including nursing, wild landscape conservation, education and language learning (Bunting, 1988, Marton and Booth, 1997, Mc Morran et al., 2008). Following the online Oxford Dictionaries (2014b), the term perception is defined as "*the ability to see, hear, or become aware of something through senses; and the way in which something is regarded, understood, or interpreted*". Similarly, the historical development of the term, fundamentally emphasises the notions of sense, stimuli, and intellectual activity (Bunting, 1988). The combination of these notions creates the definition of *perceptions* as a process whereby impressions recognised by the senses are translated into a coherent, unified view of the world. Although the view might be incomplete or unverified, an individual's perception guides his/her behaviour, and illustrates his/her worldly purposes (BusinessDictionary.com, 2014). The definition of *perception* from the phenomenography approach point of view is also highly relevant. The phenomenography approach uses the term *experience* interchangeably with *conceptions*, *perceptions*, and/or *understanding*, to look into the variation of human experience of a phenomenon (Marton and Booth, 1997). Following the phenomenography approach, I view the terms *perceive*, and *experience* as synonyms, and are dependent on the students' views and opinions. I solicited the students' perceptions twice, in Research Questions 1 and 3. Research Question 1 looks into students' perceptions of the effect of Facebook on ELL. Research Question 3 examines

the students' experiences, and their perceived changes in English language skills as a result of their participation in the LMT100 group.

On the other hand, in RQ2, the students' behaviours are examined based on their participation and non-participation in the LMT100 group. In this situation, the students' activity in the group, was analysed and interpreted from my point of view, as the researcher, to examine their interaction patterns and topics of discussions, on the Facebook group. Behaviour is defined as "*the way in which one acts or conducts oneself, especially towards others*" (Oxford University Press, 2014a). Following this, the patterns and topics of interaction, as well as degree of participation, were analysed, to understand the way students acted in the group. The data was interpreted by drawing inferences from the sociocultural aspects that might influence students' interaction pattern in the LMT100 group.

3.2 Ontological and epistemological assumptions: The Constructivist-Interpretivist paradigm

The study is situated within Constructivist (also known as *Interpretivist*) ontological and epistemological assumptions. It proposes that the purpose of social science research is to understand social meaning in context, as reality is socially created, in the minds of individuals, instead of being an external singular entity (Hansen, 2004, Ponterotto, 2005). Humans are interacting social beings, who jointly create and reinforce shared meanings, from interactive dialogues and interpretations (Ponterotto, 2005). These interactions and interpretations shape the way humans view and experience the world. As such, their experience and view of reality, are influenced by subjective-cultural beliefs. Different people view the construction of reality differently, i.e. "*some*

consider that reality is out there to be discovered whereas others consider that reality is socially constructed” (Allison and Pomeroy, 2000: 92). Neuman (2005) shows that in an empirical research, the interpretive stance is more concerned in achieving emphatic understanding of an issue from the participants’ point of views.

Bearing this in mind, the study is sensitive to the contextual space in which the study is carried out, and how the participants interpret the issue presented to them. The students’ perceptions, experiences and behaviours, gathered from a set of questionnaire, Facebook interaction activity, and semi-structured interviews were analysed interpretively rather than objectively. As part of a specific community that practises unique sociocultural values, students bring their ideologies and beliefs into the study, which determine their perceptions, thoughts, actions and interaction patterns. The Malaysian university students’ views on SNSs and ELL might have been influenced by many external factors such as the society that they live in, the technological exposure they received, their family socioeconomic background and so forth. As such, one student’s view might differ from that of another, or the collective views of a group of students might be unique when compared to the groups of students from different parts of the world. Following this, I attempted to make the students’ voices heard. By analysing questionnaires, Facebook interaction data and interview transcripts, I tried to make sense of the students’ thoughts and values in examining the effect of Facebook on ELL.

3.3 Mixed Method Approach

Underlined by the Constructivism-Interpretivism paradigm, I adopted a more pragmatic approach of a mixed method paradigm, using both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection (Creswell et al., 2003), to examine university students' perceptions and interaction patterns, of the effect of Facebook for ELL.

Mixed method research has a long history in research practice, as researchers often use the methods that provide assistance to them in addressing research questions (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Mixed method design has been applied in an extensive range of disciplines such as health science, education, special education, and counselling psychology (Sale et al., 2002, Creswell et al., 2003, Hanson et al., 2005, Collins et al., 2006). Mixed method is a type of research that *“combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g. use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection analysis, inference techniques) for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration”* (Johnson et al., 2007: 123). Other interchangeable terms for mixed methods approach are blended research, integrative research, and multimethod research (Brewer and Hunter, 1989, Thomas, 2003, Morse, 2003, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

The development of mixed method approaches has arisen on account of a growing awareness among researchers that all methods have limitations, and a combination of methods in a single study might neutralise or cancel the biases of other methods (Creswell et al., 2003). This resulted in the development of data triangulation, a means to seek convergence across quantitative and qualitative methods (Jick, 1979). The concept of data triangulation is soon expanded by researchers to the mixing of different types of data, where the findings from one method inform the other method,

or one method is “*nested within another method to provide insight into different levels or units of analysis*” (Greene et al., 1989, Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998).

The above definition echoes Rossman and Wilson’s (1985) three rationales for a mixed method approach, which are to; a) allow confirmation or corroboration of data through triangulation, b) enable development of analysis to provide richer data and, c) initiate new modes of thinking by attending to convergence or confirming data that emerge from the various methods. Following this, Greene *et al.* (1989) expanded the mixed method rationales by highlighting five broad purposes; a) *triangulation*: seeking convergence and corroboration of results from different methods studying the same phenomenon; b) *complementarity*: seeking elaboration, enhancement, illustration, and clarification of the results from other methods; c) *development*: using the results from one method to help inform other method; d) *initiation*: discovering paradoxes and contradictions that lead to a reframing of the research question; and e) *expansion*: seeking to expand the breadth and range of inquiry by using different methods for different inquiry components.

Added to this, Brannen (2005: 176) reminded that the data gathered from different methods, does not produce a rounded finding, as there are four possible outcomes from a mixed method design; a) *corroboration*: the same results are derived from both quantitative and qualitative methods; b) *elaboration*: the qualitative data analysis exemplifies how the quantitative findings apply in particular case; c) *complementarity*: the qualitative and quantitative results differ, but together they generate insights; and d) *contradiction*: where qualitative and quantitative findings conflict. As such, the possibilities of comparing, contrasting, and strengthening data

from a mixed method research could yield more pluralise, eclectic, and comprehensive findings for the issues being examined (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

One of the most common mixed method designs is the sequential procedure where a qualitative pilot study is followed by a quantitative method (Morgan, 1998, Creswell et al., 2003). To some quantitative advocates, this indicates the inability of qualitative research to stand on its own, and hence, that it must always be validated by scientific quantitative and true data (Collins et al., 2006). However, the qualitative advocates defended the implementation of quantitative method in their studies as a strategy to increase validity and reliability of findings (Sale et al., 2002). Gable (1994) similarly found that sequential multiple methods are often used in social science research such as business research.

Another two designs of mixed method research are concurrent procedure and transformative procedure. A concurrent procedure occurs when a research provides a comprehensive analysis of findings, by combining the quantitative and qualitative data. The data is collected, analysed and interpreted in the course of the study. A form of data can also be nested within a larger data collection procedure, to address different questions, and other levels of units, in an organisation (Creswell et al., 2003). The transformative procedure bases a research's perspectives on theoretical lens, within a method design that contains both quantitative and qualitative data. Theories govern the methodological aspects of the research, including the frameworks, methods of data collection, and anticipated outcomes of a study. Accordingly, the design of the methodology may involve sequential or concurrent procedures (ibid.).

The data gathered from mixed method design involves both numeric and textual information to represent both quantitative and qualitative findings (Creswell et al., 2003), but Brannen (2005) argued that this understanding seems overly simplistic. The common association that qualitative data focuses on meanings, while quantitative findings are concerned with behaviour, lacks conviction, as both studies might be concerned with people's views and actions (ibid.). In support of this assumption, Bryman's (2006) review of mixed method design in 232 social science articles showed that common quantitative methods employed are structured interviews and questionnaire research, while the qualitative method often involves semi-structured interview. Both quantitative and qualitative studies were conducted within a cross-sectional design (ibid.). However, a large amount of research failed to align the rationales and uses of mixed method design, did not anticipate the findings gathered from at least one of the methods, and were not prepared to conduct triangulation or corroboration of data (ibid.). As such, despite the potentials of mixed methods design to strengthen findings in single studies, researchers must be wary of its weaknesses, rather than assuming that mixed methods will produce perfect findings. The weaknesses may be due to the biases of the methods employed, or the non-representativeness of sample participants.

Blaikie (2009) stated that different methods may produce different results, which may tap different ways of knowing, and demonstrate different reality. To achieve this, it is best that researchers understand the rationale and purposes of mixed methods design (i.e. to triangulate, complement, corroborate, expand, contrast, or develop), to produce the best findings (Rossman and Wilson, 1985, Greene et al., 1989, Brannen, 2005). It should be emphasised that the qualitative and quantitative methods in single research must be viewed as alternative to one another, instead of

competing with each other (Danziger and Kraemer, 1991, Gable, 1994). In information technology studies in particular, quantitative and qualitative methods complement each other, where one finding is incomplete without the other (Attewell and Rule, 1991).

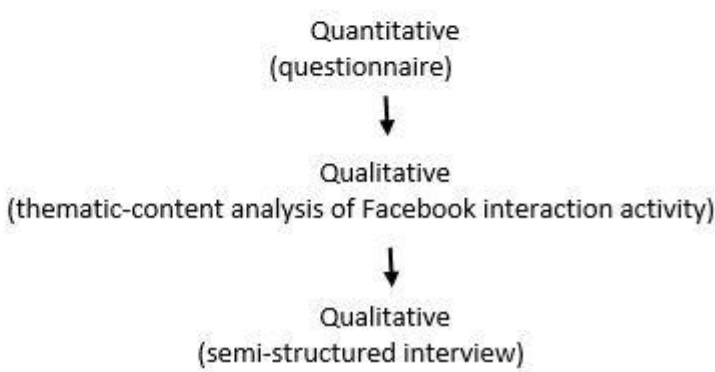
3.3.1 Mixed method approach used in the study

The study may be categorised as survey research, as it measures human's behaviours, in the past, present and the future (Hatch, 2009). Survey research is also commonly used in the fields of business, marketing, politics and economics (ibid.). I applied the sequential procedure (Creswell et al., 2003), or between-method triangulation (Denzin, 2009) that employed questionnaire, thematic-content analysis of Facebook interaction activity, and semi-structured interview in stages, as methods of data collection. The between-method triangulation that applies both quantitative and qualitative approaches could serve to reduce bias among researchers, data sources and methods. According to Hammond and Wiriyapinit (2005: 283), this allowed for a triangulation of methods that granted "*the researcher with a greater degree of confidence in reporting findings*" while still prioritising the subjective interpretation of data.

Table 1 illustrates the mixed research steps proposed by Johnson and Christensen (2007) that I adopted.

TABLE 1: MIXED RESEARCH STEPS (JOHNSON AND CHRISTENSEN, 2007)

Table 1: Johnson and Christensen's mixed research steps adopted in the current study	
Mixed research steps	Details
<p>Step 1 Determine whether a mixed methods design is appropriate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The current study's decision to apply the mixed method design, is based on two reasons: Firstly, the literature review of previous studies in similar fields; i.e. Hammond and Wiriyapinit (2005), Harrison and Thomas (2009a), Cain and Policastri (2011b), Reinhardt and Zander (2011), and Shih (2011), employed multiple methods in their studies such as questionnaire, interview, focus groups, pre and post-tests, observation of in-class presentation, content analysis, recordings, journals, and class discussions, for triangulation of data in single studies. Multiple methods have the potential to provide more intensive answers to the same point, as well as strengthening elaboration, enriching and complimenting findings (Hammond and Wiriyapinit 2005). As a result, the researcher is granted with a higher confidence level to present the findings of the study. Secondly, the nature of the current study called for the combination of numeric and text data, to assist the examination of students' perceptions, experiences, and behaviours, in answering the research inquiries.
<p>Step 2 Determine the rationale for using a mixed methods research design.</p> <p>Answering the questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What do I want to achieve by mixing quantitative and qualitative approaches 2. How will mixing approaches help me to answer my research questions? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Based on the research questions, the current study aspired to triangulate, corroborate, compare, and contrast the findings from one stage with another, to clearly understand the effect of Facebook on English language learning, from the students' points of views. <p>Many previous studies that have been conducted in the local context, only took into consideration the students' perceptions of the use of Facebook for English language learning. To expand the literature, the current study also looked into students' experiences and behaviours, when presented with the opportunity to practise English language interaction, on an informal Facebook group.</p> <p>By employing multiple methods to derive at a conclusion, the current study managed to gather the students' points of views from three angles, namely questionnaire, Facebook group interaction, and interviews.</p>

<p>Step 3 Select a mixed methods research design and mixed sampling design.</p> <p>Answering the questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is the quantitative and qualitative paradigm going to be given priority, or will both be given equal status in my study? 2. Should the qualitative and quantitative components be carried concurrently or sequentially? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed in this study, but it is fair to state that the qualitative methods played more dominant roles. There were two qualitative methods used, i.e. thematic-content analysis of Facebook group interaction, and semi-structured interview; and only one quantitative method employed, i.e. questionnaire. <p>The methods of data collection in this study were conducted in sequence, where the data from one method, informed and corroborated the data from subsequent methods. This strategy is termed as sequence procedure by Creswell (2003), and sequential triangulation by Morse (2003). The sequence of the methods were:</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  <pre> graph TD A[Quantitative (questionnaire)] --> B[Qualitative (thematic-content analysis of Facebook interaction activity)] B --> C[Qualitative (semi-structured interview)] </pre> </div>
<p>Step 4 Collect the data</p>	<p>The questionnaire was implemented at the first stage of the data collection procedure to provide the numeric data, as well as to raise the students' awareness of the research. This was followed by the Facebook group interaction data, and finally, the semi-structured interviews.</p>
<p>Step 5 Analyse the data</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The quantitative data from the questionnaire was analysed using SPSS 21 software, and presented using statistical descriptions in the forms of tables, graphs, and charts. <p>The qualitative data from the Facebook interaction activity and semi-structured interview, were analysed using NVivo 10 software. The Facebook interaction data was presented based on recurring themes, while the interview findings were illustrated from the questions asked. The unique cases were also highlighted and were further discussed in the following section.</p>
<p>Step 6 Continually validate the data</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An external rater was invited to conduct the analysis. The codes that emerged from the external rater's analysis were compared and contrasted with the codes that derived from my analysis. Any inconsistencies in the codes were discussed and re-analysed to be agreed upon. <p>The qualitative data were repeatedly and constantly reviewed during the writing process, to ensure reliability and validity.</p>

<p>Step 7 Continually interpret the data and findings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The data from different methods were triangulated, compared and contrasted against three sources, which were findings from different methods, results from previous literature, and the sociocultural aspects that might have (in)directly influenced the students' opinions.
<p>Step 8 Writing the research report</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The numeric and text data were presented using tables, figures, and charts. The findings were then interpreted and discussed in two sections to address the research questions and discuss new findings. Notably, there were several problems that commonly occur when writing a mixed method research (Johnson & Christensen, 2008): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. <i>The style of writing:</i> There are different styles of writing and data presentation, for quantitative and qualitative researches. As such, it is important to achieve balance between the two in a mixed method study, and ensure that results from both types of findings, contribute to the conclusion. b. <i>Audience:</i> Some readers might be familiar with one type of research approach (either qualitative or quantitative) in educational research. Therefore, any scientific or specialised terms used, must be clarified or avoided, and are only used with reference and extensive samples. c. <i>Length of the report:</i> A mixed method study has to present, describe, and discuss the methods and findings for both quantitative and qualitative approaches. As such, longer research reports are anticipated in multiple method research, than in single method studies.

3.4 Methods of data collection

I employed three multiple methods of data collection, namely questionnaire, Facebook interaction activity and semi-structured interview. These methods were conducted in stages (i.e. sequence procedure or sequential triangulation), as the data from one stage informed the procedure for the following stages. The stages and methods of data collection process are shown below:

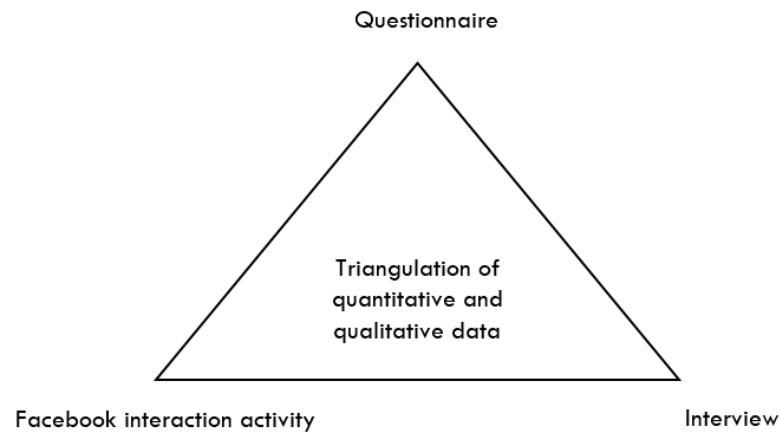


FIGURE 3: DATA TRIANGULATION USING THREE METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

3.4.1 Questionnaire: Quantitative or Qualitative

Questionnaires are commonly associated with the positivist epistemological stance (Bryman, 2006). However, the employment of questionnaire in the study intended to examine the university students' perceptions, of the effect of Facebook for ELL. Since the research inquiry was focused on *perceptions*, it entailed that the students' views were highly dependent on their life experiences, thoughts and values, which were influenced by their environment. As such, the questionnaire data was more inclined towards an interpretive stance that views reality as *"not 'out there' but in the minds of people; reality is internally experienced, is socially constructed through interaction and interpreted through the actors, and is based on the definition people attach to it"* (Sarantakos, 1997: 36). Therefore, the questionnaire data was not objective and value-free. Instead it was subjective to the students' interpretations, based on their interactions with reality, and was thus treated qualitatively. However, the questionnaire data was analysed and presented quantitatively using statistical descriptions in the forms of graphs, charts and tables, to construct the numeric findings. The descriptive statistic data formed the quantitative part of the multiple methods approach, and corroborated and triangulated the qualitative data in the following stages of the data collection procedure.

3.5 First stage: Questionnaire

Questionnaires are the most convenient method of gathering a large sample size in a short period of time (Zikmund et al., 2012). Besides this, there were three other purposes of the implementation of the questionnaire in my study. Firstly, the data from the questionnaire addressed Research Question 1, which was to examine the university students' views of the effect of Facebook on ELL. Secondly, it gathered the students' Facebook usernames and emails, to inform the Facebook interaction activity at the second stage of data collection procedure. Thirdly, it raised the students' awareness of the issues related to the study. Fundamentally, the purpose of the questionnaire was to gauge the students' responses of the way they might have used Facebook for explicit or inexplicit ELL. In line with this, Reinhardt and Zander (2011) believe that students must be made aware of the formal or informal literacy practices they participated in to ensure learning. The students' awareness of the study's purposes assisted data collection procedure at the second and third stages.

The questionnaire was adapted from Kabilan *et al.*'s (2010) study, which was conducted at the same university as my study. Based on Kabilan *et al.* (2010), the questionnaire consisted of five sections, as follows:

Section A: Facebook usage

Section D: English language learning on Facebook

Section B: Facebook practice

Section E: Demography

Section C: Facebook experience

Several changes were made to the questionnaire, to ensure its relevance to the current Facebook setting, as well as to make the answering process easier. The changes included; using the term Facebook instead of FaceBook, adding more questions to

address the research questions, modifying the open-ended questions into multiple choice items, altering the 5-points Likert scale to a 6-points Likert scale, and changing the numbering of questions.

3.6 Second stage: Facebook group interaction activity

For the second stage of the data collection procedure, I collected interaction texts on a Facebook group for English language interaction practice. The main purpose of this group, which was called the *LMT100 USM 2013* (or *LMT100*), was to provide the university students with a platform for English language interaction. The *LMT100* group was specifically created, and only involved a group of students who were enrolled in the *LMT100* English proficiency course at the university for the semester. Selwyn (2007a) and Cain and Policastri (2011) described Facebook as an effective platform for informal learning and communication purposes.

Besides promoting interaction, other reasons for the creation of the Facebook group were to;

- Give students the opportunity to get to know each other, since a majority of them were in their first years. This argument follows Hammond and Wiriyapinit (2005) and Shih (2011) findings that students who were engaged in online or Facebook interaction, shared polite updates and posted non-controversial comments to maintain friendship with their peers.
- Provide students with a safe and secure platform for the practice of English language interactions, without the fear of being judged, criticised, or laughed at by non-students.

- Examine popular or preferred topics of interactions among students in a university setting, and their interests in English language interaction.
- Identify students' strengths and weaknesses in English language interaction.
- Determine students' level of self-confidence, motivation and types of behaviours in English language practice.
- Examine the ways students used the platform to share knowledge and information with the community.

Participants were invited to join the group using their Facebook usernames and email addresses, written in the previously administered questionnaire. They were encouraged to use the Facebook group platform for English language interaction, to share English language information, discuss the LMT100 module, and communicate with each other. Further details of the group's structure and activities are presented below.

3.6.1 How was the thread structured?

In order to maintain the Facebook function as an SNS, and simultaneously, to encourage authentic English language interaction among students, the LMT100 group had an open and voluntary structure of participation. The students were neither assigned nor instructed to complete any tasks, projects, or assignments in the group. Instead, they were briefed that the group should be used the way they usually used their personal Facebook platform (as a social site instead of a formal academic platform), but for English language interaction and general learning. Following this, the students were given the freedom to share and post English language information, initiate interaction on any topics, share multimedia of English language interest, and post updates on issues that matters to them.

Arnold and Paulus (2010) suggested that less structured tasks could encourage more conversation, community building and collaborative reflection. This was to avoid forced interaction among students that require a minimum number of postings during certain period (Beaudoin, 2002). To this end, the students' participation and contribution in the LMT100 platform was voluntary, and they were neither pressured into posting updates nor commenting to other members' posts.

In line with the function of Facebook as an SNS, the content of the LMT100 group was user-generated. The students were expected to practise their English language skills through interaction, and learn new English information through shared content. In ensuring the comprehensibility of the LMT100 group's purpose, providing examples of posts that could be shared on the platform, and encouraging interaction among students, I shared several updates in the forms of news and web links, as communication prompts. The topics of the prompts that I shared included news links, motivational pictures, grammatical quizzes, English reading articles, university-related inquiries, as well as songs and movies, in the forms of texts and multimedia elements.

In summary, there was no structure of interaction for the LMT100 group, as the content was dependent on students' contributions, posts and comments. As such, the group was best described as promoting informal and unstructured interactions of authentic English language information, based on the university students' needs, interests and preferences. It should be noted however, that the task-less, voluntary-based interaction activity promoted, contradicted many previous studies that argued the necessity of tasks, pre-determined objectives and projects on online environment, to ensure the effectiveness of the learning process (Bull et al., 2008, Oradini and Saunders, 2008, Koltay, 2010, Kabilan et al., 2010). However, having pre-

determined objectives could backfire, as they hampered students' energy in learning (Bull et al., 2008), burdened them with extra informal tasks, and made them lose interest in the literacy process altogether.

3.7 Interview

Interviews are interactional relationships, where both interviewers and interviewees engage in an ongoing process of meaning making (Kvale, 1996). The interactional process provides some guidance to elevate understanding of other people's minds and thoughts about certain matters. Most of the time, people articulate matters that are totally different from what they are thinking. This may be particularly seen in a text-based interactional medium, such as online communication, and a short messaging system (Hammond and Wiriyapinit, 2005, Shih, 2011). In previous studies, it was shown that participants were polite in commenting on their peers' works, and avoided controversial or sensitive topics. However, during the interview process, the participants admitted to consciously being polite in online writing, which demonstrated dissimilar thought processes and writing behaviours (ibid.). The contradiction shows the effectiveness of the interview methods in comparing and corroborating findings from one method with another.

To this end, the semi-structured interview disclosed the participants' points of views that were unknown from the analysis of their LMT100 group interaction. The interview investigated the participants' wants and needs in ELL on SNSs. However, Britten (1995) stated that the aim of the qualitative research interview is to discover the participants' framework of meaning. As such, interviewers must refrain from imposing their structures and assumptions on the participants' responses (Britten, 1995: 251).

To achieve this, interviewers must be opened to the new concepts and variables presented by the participants, which might be different from what was initially predicted or expected (ibid.). By freeing the minds from fitting the data into certain frameworks that govern the participants' responses, there are possibilities of the emergence of new information, which might add to existing theories, or assist in developing new theories. In order to encourage the participants to be more opened in their responses while still adhering to the pre-determined issues, the semi-structured interview method fits the purpose.

3.7.1 Semi-structured interview

Semi-structured interview has some pre-set questions, but allows for greater scope of open-ended answers (Hannan, 2007). It is also agreed that interview questions seek to elicit information about attitudes and opinions, as well as perspectives and meanings of the transcripts (ibid.). As such, the semi-structured interview was highly applicable to address the third research inquiry; i.e. to identify the university students' experiences of the effect of the LMT100 group for English language interaction.

I aspired to address the research inquiry, but wanted the students to elaborate and diverge in their responses, in order to discover new perspectives and explore in-depth ideas. The loose structure of open-ended questions in semi-structured interview encouraged the participants to elaborate more on their opinions and feelings, as well as explain their experiences in the LMT100 group. The interview data sequentially triangulated the findings from the Facebook interaction activity. The selection of interview participants was dependent on the Facebook interaction activity, where active, average, passive and very passive participants were conveniently invited to be interviewed. The sampling process is further detailed in the following section. Each

interview session was recorded using a voice recorder on a mobile phone, after permission was solicited from the interviewees.

3.7.2 The interview guide for the semi-structured protocol

Following Brenner's (2006) semi-structured interview protocol, I divided the interview into topics to be addressed, with some initial wordings of questions, and a list of areas to be explored with each interviewee. This means that the prepared topics in semi-structured interview only served as a guide during the sessions, but the direction of the interview is determined by the interviewers and interviewees' interactions. The semi-structured interview thus contradicted the structured interview that follows a rigid protocol, with pre-determined questions. The semi-structured interview fitted the requirement of my study, which selected interviewees based on their degrees of participations, on the Facebook interaction activity; i.e. *active, average, passive and very passive*. The semi-structured interviews allowed for similar inquiries from the interview guide to be asked to each interviewee, but in ways that suit their participation status.

In relation to Brenner's (2006) guide, Spradley (1979) recommended that interviewees' cultural and personal vocabulary, and framework, be incorporated into the interview questions. Based on the Matrix of Questions Options, Patton (1990) and Britten (1995) suggested that the types of questions relevant for qualitative interviews are behaviour or experience, opinion or belief, feeling, knowledge, sensory, background and demographic. These types of questions were suitable in investigating students' perceptions, experiences and behaviours, when the Facebook group was promoted as an English interaction platform. The interview guide employed in the study is shown in Table 2 below.

TABLE 2: THE INTERVIEW GUIDE USED IN THE SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

Table 2: The interview guide used in the semi-structured protocol in the current study (based on Brenner, 2006)	
Topics	Keywords
1. Reason for Participation / Non-participation	<i>social, academic-related, English language related, peer pressure, encouragement from teachers, reward, token for participation</i>
2. Types of role played during interaction	<i>active, passive, lurkers, contributors</i>
3. Feeling while interacting on Facebook	<i>happy, glad, sad, frustrated, inspired, bored</i>
4. View on Facebook's suitability as an English learning tool	<i>suitable, not suitable, the activity is (un)helpful,</i>
5. Peer-teacher support	<i>(dis)like support, in(sufficient) support, wish for more support from teacher or peer</i>
6. Feelings over teachers present in Facebook group	<i>(un)comfortable, (dis)like</i>
7. View over the lack of task or prompt during the activity	<i>(un)purposeful, direction for learning activity</i>
8. View over the voluntary nature of the activity	<i>(dis)like, encouraging-discouraging, un(interested)</i>
9. Recommendation on how the activity could be made better	<i>learning tasks, in(voluntary) participation, teacher-peer roles and support</i>
10. Activity's effect on students' own English language level	<i>(un)helpful, improve, decline, no effect</i>
11. Students' view on Facebook as an academic tool	<i>subjects, suitability to be used, (un)attractive to students, access issue</i>
12. Students' view on Facebook as a social tool	<i>subjects, suitability to be used, (un)attractive to students, access issue</i>
13. How to use social media in English language learning	<i>interaction, roles of teacher-peer, materials to be used, types of activities, implementation of activities, content</i>
14. Expectations for future Facebook-related academic activities	<i>types of activities, implementation of activities, materials, content</i>

3.8 Contextual setting

A case study emphasises the importance of contextual setting of a phenomenon (Yin, 2003). Although my study is more of a survey instead of a case study, the findings that largely emerged from the students' points of views are still dependent on the contextual setting and the sociocultural influences of the environment. This section discusses the contextual setting in terms of the university, the physical environment, and the background of the participants involved.

3.8.1 The university

I carried out the study at a university situated in the Northern part of Malaysia, which was one of the five leading public research universities. It was awarded the APEX (Accelerated Programme for Excellence) title in 2008, by the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education. The university offers a wide range of Science and Arts courses including Medicine, Pharmacy, Computer Science, Biology, Chemistry, Industrial Technology, Music, Education, Architecture and Communication.

As a public university, it accepts students based on meritocracy, which means that students are offered places for degree courses based on their A-level educational merit. As such, the students at the university come from various backgrounds in terms of ethnicity, family, socioeconomic and education, but are fundamentally exposed to the sociocultural influence of Malaysia. Although it opens its doors to international students for degree courses, the percentage is still limited. The variety of ethnicity among the university students include a majority of Malay, Chinese, and Indian, and minorities of Kadazan, Iban, Bajau, etc., who come from many different parts of Malaysia, in Peninsular and Borneo. The students may learn and receive similar formal

English language syllabus or training in schools, but differ in the level of exposure to the language. For example, some students might have the opportunity to use English frequently in their daily conversation, while some might find English interaction a foreign concept.

3.8.2 Participants of the study

The participants were enrolled in one of the university's English courses, called the LMT100. The students who took this course were those who obtained Band 1, 2 or 3, in the Malaysian University English Test (MUET). There are six bands or levels to MUET with the descriptions shown in Table 3 below. If the students obtain Band 4, 5 or 6, they can directly enrol into more advanced English courses, such as the LSP300, LSP401, LSP402 and LSP403. The participants in my study were thus very limited users, limited users and modest users of the English language. Despite varying degrees of English language ability, and disciplines or departments at the university, the students were grouped together into similar English classes. The class teachers had to find ways to engage the better students with the weaker ones in classroom activities. Abu Bakar (2007) found that interactions and discussions between average students and weaker students could improve the weaker students' language ability. This lent support to the design of the LMT100 Facebook group, which invited participation from all students, regardless of their English language abilities and course disciplines. However, a few teachers reported problems in managing both types of students in the classroom, due to limited contact hours.

From the teachers' reports and my observation during class visits, some students, especially the ones from Borneo, had difficulty in understanding English language instructions, which caused them to lose interest in the learning process. This could be a

unique case because from the data analysis, the majority of participants obtained Band 3 in their MUET, which made them modest users of the English language. Most participants from various disciplines were in their first year of university, but a small percentage of mainly the Pharmacy students were in their second year.

TABLE 3: MUET BAND DESCRIPTION

Table 3: MUET Band Description					
Aggregated Score	Band	User	Communicative Ability	Comprehension	Task Performance
260-300	6	Highly proficient user	Very fluent, highly appropriate use of language, hardly any grammatical error	Very good understanding of language and context	Very high ability to function in the language
220-259	5	Proficient user	Fluent, appropriate use of language, few grammatical error	Good understanding of language and context	High ability to function in the language
180-219	4	Satisfactory user	Generally fluent, generally appropriate use of language, some grammatical errors	Satisfactory understanding of language and context	Satisfactory ability to function in the language
140-179	3	Modest user	Fairly fluent, fairly appropriate use of language, many grammatical errors	Fair understanding of language and context	Fair ability to function in the language
100-139	2	Limited user	Not fluent, inappropriate use of language, very frequent grammatical errors	Limited understanding of language and context	Limited ability to function in the language
Below 100	1	Very limited user	Hardly able to use the language	Very limited understanding of language and context	Very limited ability to function in the language

3.9 The researcher's roles

a) The issue of positionality

The issue of positionality is essential to be defined, as my role as the researcher, participant observer, and interviewer may have had an influence over the students' behaviours during the course of the study. Like the participants, researchers are also parts of a bigger society, which means that their experiences are similarly framed in sociocultural contexts (Bourke, 2014). In analysing and interpreting qualitative data, *"it is reasonable to expect that the researchers' beliefs, political stance, cultural background (gender, race, class, socioeconomic status, educational background) are important variables that may affect the research process"* (Bourke, 2014: 2, Hammond and Wellington, 2013). By reconstructing the insider/outsider status against all the variables, researchers may be able to better understand the dynamics of researching cross cultural issues (Throne, 2014). Quoting McDowell (1992), Throne (2014) stated that researchers must take into account their own position in relation to research participants and research settings. *"We have to acknowledge who we are as individuals, and as members of groups, and as resting in and moving within social positions"* (Bourke, 2014: 3). As an instance, Hammond and Wellington (2013) cited the dilemma faced by Huisman (2008: 372) to find the balance between the *"sometimes contradictory positionalities as a woman, a researcher, a friend, a graduate student, and as person who was straddled between two classes"* in her study of refugees in the UK.

Although often times researchers try to appear objective in their interpretation of data, Bourke (2014) insisted that *"pure objectivism is a naïve quest, and we can never truly divorce ourselves from subjectivities"*. Researchers could however, be mindful of our subjectivities, in our struggles to remain objective, as positionality represents a

space where objectivism and subjectivism meet (ibid.). Furthermore, Hammond and Wellington (2013) emphasised the importance of explaining one's positionality in a study as researchers may face problems of subjective interpretations as well as gaps in background knowledge, which may affect the outcomes of a project.

b) My role in the study

My position as a researcher in this study is unique as I played multi-faceted roles during the process. As I have had history and previous experience teaching at the institution, I was undertaking an insider position. In this sense, I understood the system and process of the English proficiency classes, as well as had ways of getting access to the department, colleagues, and students. Furthermore, I had the advantage of discussing with the teachers who were my ex-colleagues, about the students who participated in the study, to better understand their English language ability, and behaviours in the classrooms. My status as an ex-language teacher at the department indicated authority, which may have made the students felt obliged to participate in the research, thus increasing the rate of participation. However, the students may have felt pressured to participate in the study due to my position and authoritativeness, especially at the questionnaire stage, when I visited their classrooms. Secondly, their behaviours in the LMT100 group may have been altered due to my presence as a participant observer, who not only administered it, but also monitored their conversations, and interacted with them. As a result, the participants may have not exhibited their actual behaviours on Facebook in the group, and my presence may have hindered their participation. This argument was similarly observed by Armstrong (2014) in her study of blogs among Early Childhood students in a UK university. She stated that her participation in the study was expected to alter the students' behaviours, as she was promoting the use of blogs, where blogs have been promoted

(ibidi). In my case, I was encouraging the participants to use a Facebook group for English language interaction, which may have had an influence over the way they presented or excused themselves in the group. Following Armstrong (2014), another disadvantage to having an insider's knowledge to the organisation is that I may miss the things that someone looking from the outside would see, due to the close personal connection I had with the research participants.

At the interview stage, my presence as an authority figure who wanted to promote English language interaction through Facebook, may have made the participants' reluctant to reveal their actual thoughts on the matter, out of respect to me. The research participants may have displayed behaviours that they felt was required (Armstrong, 2014), which may have affected the findings of my study. In both the LMT100 group and interview sessions, I tried to create rapport with the students in order to make them more familiar and comfortable to talk to me. This was also to ensure that the participants were reassured that their expressions of thoughts would not harm them in any way. This may have worked to some extent as there were certain degrees of activities from the members, but I cannot completely guarantee that they had in fact exhibited their true self in the LMT100 group and expressed their actual thoughts during the interview sessions. Although it seemed as if the research participants had open up to me in expressing their thoughts, they may have concealed some facts in order to show their respect.

As humans, the students behaved in ways that were defined by their sociocultural values. As such, it is neutral and not wrong to make observation and interpretation that is theory-laden (Hammond and Wellington, 2013). Sometimes, taking the stand of positionality as a researcher may be more advantageous to inform a research, as

we are capable of understanding the experience of others, as well as help us see the barriers and limits on understanding (ibid.). In this case, the setting of the study worked to my advantage as a researcher who come from similar sociocultural background, and received similar educational opportunities as the participants. Nevertheless, the possible barriers may have been in understanding the participants' engagement with Facebook as an emerging media for both academic and social purposes.

c) What else could I have done or would like to do in the future in respect to
guiding or triggering participation

During the course of this study, I may have been influenced by the belief that the activity would work and that I wanted it to work despite previous researches that established the need for structures and assessments in online activity. However, there were also studies that suggested informal, unstructured forums could generate (Cain and Policastri, 2011, Wesseling, 2012) high students' involvement and interests in learning. As the rate of members' participation in the LMT100 group was not as high as I had hoped for, there were perhaps a number of strategies that I could have implemented to elevate involvement and the effectiveness of the interaction activity. The strategies presented are gathered from the interviewees' recommendations.

Firstly, I could have presented more grammar quizzes as students responded warmly to the activity. This may be because by learning grammar, they felt as if they had learned something tangible from their involvement with the group. Accordingly, more language games such as riddles and crossword puzzles could also be shared so that students could learn vocabulary in a fun and enjoyable way. As a response to Kabilan *et al.*'s (2010) call for more structure on Facebook for English language learning, I believe that structure can be provided by paced grammar quizzes and language

games, with students free to engage or not with them. This is very much in line with the idea of self-directed learning as students are given the freedom and flexibility to manage their learning and decide on what to do based on their interests. Although unstructured, I would try to post the content in a timely manner to help students organise their interaction activity. For example, I might have posted grammar quizzes every three days so that students had something to look forward to when they accessed the groups. This might also have helped the students if other language materials followed a similar pattern.

Secondly, more entertainment-based content relating to music and movies could have been shared in the group as it attracted the students' attention and interest. Besides improving interactions on the topics, the content such as lyrics and subtitles might also have added to the students' linguistics repertoire. In line with this, I could have attempted to ask more opinion-based questions to solicit the students' self-expressions and viewpoints as they tended to respond highly on topics that directly related to them.

Thirdly, I could have shared more English language materials in a variety of forms such as articles, videos and audios, to expose students to authentic content regardless of whether they commented on the items or not. This is because a majority of online users are silent readers (Farzan et al., 2010), and while the content may be of interest, they may not make their involvement visible. Silent readers need time to familiarise themselves with the new environment and members, and will only participate over time (Dennen, 2008). As such, the content shared on the platform may have benefitted members in ways I was not aware of.

Fourthly, I could have introduced rewards in the forms of tangible things such as vouchers for food outlets, a sum of money, gadgets (i.e. an MP3 player, a mobile phone), or negotiated bonus marks with the English language teachers, and university merit points with the specialised departments. This would indicate that informal interaction activity within a socially-mediated platform was indeed seen by others as beneficial in supporting students' English language learning. By raising the students' awareness of the importance and potential of informal learning, they may have become more interested and involved in the Facebook supported activity.

Fifth I could have provided clearer guidelines on expectations and etiquette and topics which were off limits in order to promote more interactions, avoid students second-guessing appropriate content, and create good rapport. Perhaps, more specific instructions of the types of suitable materials may have heightened the students' engagement with the group. For example, as the students were more inclined to engage with grammar quizzes, more content of the sort could have been presented at the initial stages, to get their attention. When they have become more comfortable among other members, more interaction activity may be introduced.

Of course to varying degrees I carried out the set out suggestions, for example I shared a variety of relevant multimedia materials in the forms of articles, audios and videos. It was only after the innovation and I had the interview that I realise I could have done it better. In future I am resolved to: provide more grammar activity at the initial stages; offer more specific guidelines or instructions; introduce tangible rewards that may interest the students; present content that are in line with the students' preferences such as entertainment. Essentially, I would also as below consider the role of the moderator in more depth.

d) Future design: Considering the voice of a moderator

As the group administrator, I automatically assumed the role of moderator, where I created the platform, initiated interaction threads, commented on other members' posts, and encouraged more participations from others. This was not an easy task as the group members expected so much more from me in terms of providing them with English language materials and content. My roles in the group may be viewed in relation to the six themes identified by Moses *et al.* (2014), as presented below:

Themes	Categories
<i>Encouragement and involvement</i>	Encouragement of the moderator Involvement of the moderator
<i>Rewards</i>	Giving marks for online participation Giving feedback for good performance
<i>Providing specifications and reinforcement</i>	Elucidating performance specifications Reinforcement through monitoring
<i>Skills and knowledge</i>	Being technologically competent Providing short introduction to the students
<i>Prepare the environment</i>	Prepare the learning environment Provide easy access and user-friendly system
<i>Publicise the usefulness</i>	Manage a large number of students In-hand learning materials User-flexibility New medium of teaching and learning

Notably, the moderator's roles outlined in Moses *et al.* (2014) followed the formality of the learning management system (LMS) used at the university, hence the emphasis on marks, learning environment and feedback. This is not to say that these elements are not important in an informal environment, but they may be a little bit more flexible and less rigid compared to such as found in a formal environment. For instance, as an unstructured platform, the students' participation or responses to a particular

interaction thread will not be graded or formally assessed. In fact, it will be treated as a contribution to develop interaction, rather than scrutinise for language productions. However, it is important to approach the issues of language usage such as grammar, sentence structures, vocabulary or spelling at a different time to educate the members of the correct ways to write. Perhaps however, the teaching of grammar could be approached in a fun way such as in the forms of quizzes or language games to create a fun rather than rigid informal environment. The grammar quizzes were tested in the LMT100 group and proved to be popular among the group members. In fact, the interviewees requested for an authoritative figure such as myself as the group moderator, a teacher, or other students with good English skills to correct the mistakes committed in the group so that all members could be benefitted from the knowledge. This shows that even in an informal platform, the students desired to be able to learn something substantial from their involvement in the activity to indicate improvement in their English language skills. An interviewee however, believed that grammar mistakes from the group need to be addressed in the formal classroom instead, as the platform was more suitable for opinion-based discussions and interactions. This is a matter that needs to be negotiated by the moderator and the group members. Besides providing feedback on students' language production, a moderator in the LMT100 group may guide the students' interactions by initiating threads to solicit students' voices. This may be through opinion-based inquiries or thought-provoking discussions. As suggested by an interviewee, a moderator could then transform these non-academic discussions to become more academic and relate it to their formal learnings.

Based on the discussions, the role that I have played in the LMT100 group resembled a moderator of an informal and unstructured interaction platform. However, to make the activity more effective in the future, I propose several suggestions pertinent to the role of moderators in the group as follow;

- The LMT100 group was unique as it was informal and unstructured interaction platform. However, the group members were largely unaware of its function and purposes, and viewed it as a platform that presented English language content. They felt disappointed when their expectation is not met. As such, the moderator may need to raise the members' awareness that the group was designed for interaction and content engagement. It follows the theory that language learning is best learned in socially-mediated settings. In this study, the group members shared similarities in the sense that they were students at the university taking the same English language proficiency course. It was thus hoped that they would have pooled their resources together and shared knowledge through interactions. Therefore, at the initial stages, it may be necessary that the moderator play more active roles initiating interactions, presenting content and fundamentally raising the members' awareness of the functions they need to play in the group.
- As an unstructured and informal platform, there were no specific rules or guidelines imposed on the members when accessing the group. As such, the moderator and students have the flexibility to negotiate terms and directions of the activity based on their interests, preferences and needs. For example, the moderator and group members may negotiate the frequency of grammar quizzes to be presented in the group each week, or the rewards that will be awarded to the most active participants in the group.

- An online medium is open, dynamic and laden with digital vernaculars. As an English language interaction platform, the moderator and students need to come to a consensus of the type of language acceptable in the group. As it is unstructured and informal, the question of whether internet language should be allowed to be used needs to be negotiated and discussed. Taking my study as an instance, the group members were largely students with limited to moderate abilities; hence, there was bound to be English language mistakes in their writings. As such, it is necessary that moderators provide feedbacks and correct the mistakes in order to avoid students fossilising the errors. However, the amount of work to correct language mistakes in online environment is tremendous. Perhaps, a few moderators could join the group and take turns in giving feedbacks to the students.

Based on the points presented above, there are a few moderator roles that may improve the effectiveness of the LMT100 group. Perhaps, future designs of informal and unstructured online interaction platforms for ELL take these strategies into consideration to intensify the benefits, and minimise the disadvantages of such medium. Also, a longer period of study may produce more desirable outcomes as members will be given the opportunities to familiarise themselves with the structure of the group and its members.

3.10 Sampling

This section discusses the issues of sampling in my study from the questionnaire stage, LMT100 interaction activity, and interviews.

3.10.1 Sampling: The selection of the LMT100 students as participants

There were several reasons for the selection of LMT100 students as the sample participants. Firstly, the students with low to average English language ability (based on their MUET scores), should be provided with more opportunities to practice their skills on a safe, engaging and constantly accessible platform. From the LMT100 teachers' reports and my observation during visits to the classes, the differences in the students' English language abilities were varied. Most students comprehended the basic briefing and instructions given by the teachers and I, but there were a number of students who failed to understand the instructions. As a result, they had to ask their friends during the briefing, which not only interrupted the process, but also their confidence level. When asked if they needed help, they smiled but continued to ask their friends to translate what the teachers and I were saying. Added to this, some students were more outspoken than others, while some even feared asking questions, because it meant that they had to use English. During formal lessons, the teachers were required to adhere to syllabuses, assignments and writings tasks. Due to this, the weaker students were presented with even more limited frames of opportunities to practice their English language interaction skills in the classroom. Therefore, the informal English language interaction on Facebook might increase the students' interest and confidence to communicate, as they were provided with more spaces and time to articulate their thoughts.

Secondly, the first year students were adapting to a new university environment. Not only did they have to adapt physically, but they also needed to adjust their style of academic learning, into a more independent, fast-paced setting. Many classroom instructions were conducted in English and many books, references, and lecture notes, were also produced in English. For weaker students, a setting where English was

celebrated might be foreign to them, thus hindering their full participation from classroom discussions. In line with this, Sawir (2005) found that while students might possess adequate grammatical knowledge for decent, basic sentence constructions, they might lack excellent listening, communication and presentation skills. This hampered their self-esteem, and led to their limited contribution to the classroom discussions (ibid.).

Therefore, the LMT100 students could benefit from having an informal, voluntary platform where they were able to practise their English interaction skills, while simultaneously making new friends and adapting into the university lifestyle, to become a fully functioning member of the community. To view this in a positive light, the online interaction and relationship developed an online environment, have the potential to resemble real-life intimacy, when given time to develop (Cerulo, 1997).

3.10.2 Sampling technique: How were the participants recruited?

The main sampling technique used in all three stages of data collection can be described as convenience sampling, as the samples were selected based on ease of access, physical proximity, accessibility and their willingness to participate in the study (Teddlie and Yu, 2007, Ritchie et al., 2013). Convenience sampling lacks a clear strategy, instead gathering data from people who are most conveniently available (Zikmund et al., 2012, Ritchie et al., 2013).

At the questionnaire stage, the convenience sampling was used to gather 622 responses. This number doubled Kabilan *et al.*'s (2010) participants of 300 students. The questionnaire participants may be described as captive population as they were

approached collectively in the classroom during formal learning hours. Vandebosch (2008) stated that one of the best-known examples of captive population was that of university students, as they are situated in a context (i.e. institution/classroom) that are dependent on their class teachers for learning process. The process of questionnaire distribution and collection is further elaborated in the *Data Collection Procedure* section below.

Besides soliciting the participants' perceptions of the effect of Facebook on ELL, the questionnaire also asked for their Facebook emails and usernames. These details were used to invite the participants to join the LMT100 Facebook group, which was created to examine the participants' English language interaction on an SNS platform. However, not all of the questionnaire participants provided these details. As such, Facebook invitations to join the LMT100 group were only extended to those who gave out their details. Although invited, the students were not pressured into joining the LMT100 group, as participation was voluntary, rather than compulsory. The invitation process took about a week, and the interaction activity took place for approximately six weeks. By the end of the sixth week, the group had approximately 360 members. Data in the form of interaction threads was gathered from the LMT100 platform. The coding process and the analysis of the qualitative interaction data are presented in Chapter 4.

The pre-analysis of the LMT100 interaction activity informed the selection of the interview participants at the third stage of the data collection procedure. Based on the analysis of the LMT100 data, the group members' varying degrees of participation on the platform, were divided into three categories of *active*, *average* and *passive*. However, after much deliberation, another category of *very passive* was

added to represent a larger number of the LMT100 group members who had joined the group but never participated in any interaction activities on the platform. The group members' names were categorised accordingly on separate lists (*Active, Average, Passive, Very Passive*), and potential interviewees were randomly selected from each list. The selected names were approached through Facebook Message, and were invited to join the interview sessions. Most of the approached participants agreed to be interviewed, but two participants declined the invitations. When this happened, the participation lists were consulted once more, and new names were randomly selected, approached and invited to be interviewed. To be fair to the other LMT100 group members who wanted to share their views, an open invitation to participate in the interview sessions was published in the group platform. However, only one student agreed to participate based on this open invitation strategy. Further details on the selection of interviewees, the interview process and the total numbers of the interviewees are presented in the *Data Collection Procedure* section.

To reiterate, the main sampling technique used at all three stages of data collection process was the convenience sampling technique. Additionally, at the interview stage, a small scale of purposive random sampling technique was employed to select the interviewees, based on their participation in the LMT100 interaction activity.

3.11 Pilot study

Prior to the actual data collection procedure, the methods described above were piloted to several groups of students and general Facebook users. The pilot study was divided into three stages, to reflect the actual methods of data collection procedure. The questionnaire pilot session went smoothly due to accessibility to participants.

However, the Facebook interaction activity and semi-structured interviews were conducted more briefly, due to several technical issues, language barriers and non-participation from the students.

3.11.1 Pilot study: Questionnaire

At the first stage, the questionnaire was piloted to 47 Intensive English Programme (IEP) students at the university. The IEP students consisted of international students who wished to further their studies into undergraduate and postgraduate courses at the university. During my visit to the classrooms for the pilot sessions, I was often accompanied by the class teachers for two reasons. The first reason was to ensure that the international students were not harmed in anyway, to explain the purpose of the research, and to help clarify the questionnaire to those who faced problems understanding the items. At the end of every session, the students were asked to give feedback about the questionnaire. From this feedback and the analysis of the items, several changes were made to improve the questionnaire, as follows:

- Questions: Deleting questions that did not answer the research questions.
- Numbering: Correcting an error in questions numbering.
- Cover page: The previous cover page simply explained the purpose of the questionnaire in a paragraph. However, after briefing the pilot students of the whole process of data collection, I became aware of the interrelation between different methods, which needed to be illustrated to the students. As such, the cover page was redesigned to include a flow chart that explained the process of the data collection procedure, while also giving out the important details such as the Facebook group's name, and my contact details as the researcher.

- Email: The term *email* was changed to *Facebook email* to make it clearer that I specifically required the latter, rather than the former type of email.
- Clarity of instructions: After briefing the pilot participants, I became aware of the need to ensure total clarity of instructions, the purpose and direction of the study, and most importantly, the efforts required from the students to ensure the success of the data collection process. This is because, the data from one method informed or relied on the method following or prior to it. Therefore, instructions must be clearly understood by the students. Furthermore, some students' inability to understand English language was taken into consideration, to ensure their participation and contribution.

3.11.2 Pilot study: Facebook interaction activity

The questionnaire participants were invited to join the LMT100 Facebook interaction group. The pilot participants (who were international students), however, reported several issues that made them unable to participate in the study beyond the questionnaire stage including; having no Facebook accounts, inability to understand English instructions, and time constraints due to intensive class schedules. As such, other participants or testers for the LMT100 group were selected.

Several friends from my personal Facebook friends' lists were invited to join the LMT100 Closed Facebook group using their Facebook usernames, to test the group's accessibility and privacy. Only two friends joined the group. One participant was teaching the LMT100 module, while the other participant worked with a private company. Several posts were shared between myself and the two participants, to ensure that the group was functioning as required. This process took five days, and

after feeling satisfied with the setting, the two participants and the shared posts were removed from the LMT100 group.

3.11.3 Pilot study: Semi-structured interview

The two pilot participants from the LMT100 interaction activity participated in the interview sessions to discuss their experience of the group. The brief period of the procedure, and the lack of participants and interactive activity, turned the interview sessions into discussions where the pilot participants gave several recommendations to help with the data collection.

Although brief, the pilot study provided insights, and initiated improvements to the methods of data collection.

3.12 Data collection procedure

This section presents the chronology of the data collection procedure, and explains the methods more explicitly.

After amending the methods based on the feedback from the pilot data, I conducted the actual data collection procedure. Figure 3 illustrates the three stages of methods that were conducted sequentially, as the data from one method informed another.



FIGURE 4: THE THREE STAGES OF DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

3.12.1 First Stage: Questionnaire

The data collection procedure was initiated through the distribution of questionnaires, based on convenient sampling, to the LMT100 students. To get access into the university, I solicited permissions from the Dean of the school, the head of the English Language Department, and the individual teachers, teaching the LMT100 course, through emails and face-to-face meetings. Upon receiving approval and consent, appointments were made for me to visit the classes for questionnaire distribution.

During these visit, I briefed the students about the study's purposes and procedures. The students were informed of what was required of them, and the opportunities of their involvement in the study. They were also told that there was a non-compulsory section of the questionnaire that solicited their Facebook usernames and emails for the LMT100 interaction group. In total, there were 20 classes visited in two weeks' time, where 622 returned questionnaire were collected.

Most of the time, both the class teachers and I were present during the briefing and questionnaire distribution process. In one occurrence, the class teacher was absent at the start of the session. On another occasion, I was unable to attend a class due to the clashing of timetables, and relied on the class teacher to distribute the questionnaire and brief the students about the LMT100 Facebook group. Each session took approximately 15 to 30 minutes, with approximately 20-30 students in each class. There were a few times that the participants sought to clarify the meanings of words and how to answer the questionnaire items. The questionnaire was collected immediately after each session ended.

3.12.2 Second Stage: Facebook Interaction Activity

I used the Facebook emails and usernames provided in the questionnaire to extend Facebook invitations to the participants to join the LMT100 group. At first, the privacy setting of the group was set as *Open*. After all the Facebook usernames and emails were invited to join the LMT100 group; the group setting was changed to *Closed*, in ensuring the group's privacy and security. This means that the interactions were only accessible by the group members who were students of the LMT100 course. As the group's administrator, I also approved the requests to join the group by new members. These requests gave an indication that an English language interaction platform was appealing to the university students. The setting was set as *Closed* to ensure

As the moderator of the informal platform, I constantly posted updates to initiate interaction, encourage participation, promote ELL, and show examples of suitable topics in the group. A range of topics and media were shared, including news links, English language articles, grammar exercises, songs, movies, discussion topics, and reading comprehension activities. The members were generally instructed to use the platform to practise English language skills by interacting with each other, sharing thoughts and ideas, disseminating language learning materials, and so forth. There were no tasks, assignments, or formal learning activity given or conducted. The group members' contribution was voluntary, and they were neither pressured nor penalised for the lack of participation. I often commented on other members' posts to promote English language practise and encourage more participation from others. The interaction data was gathered for six weeks, with approximately 360 members in the LMT100 group. The group was not terminated after the data collection process. In May 2014, there were approximately 660 members of the group, but it was no longer active.

A preliminary analysis of the LMT100 data was conducted to look at the frequency of group members' participation. It was identified that the group consisted of *active*, *average*, *passive* and *very passive* members. To determine the degrees of members' participation, each activity in the LMT100 group was given points (see Table 4):

TABLE 4: THE SCORE ASSIGNED FOR THE LMT100 INTERACTION ACTIVITY

Table 4: The score assigned for LMT100 interaction activity	
Activity	Points
a. Posts with multimedia elements (pictures, videos, web links, etc.)	5
a. Posts (text-based)	4
a. Comments with multimedia elements (pictures, videos, web links, etc.)	3
a. Comments (text-based)	2
a. Like	1

The scoring scheme in Table 4 was applied for each interaction thread in the group. Out of 360 members, there were about 170 members who took part in the interaction activity once, or repeatedly. The activity includes to *like* a post, initiate interaction thread, and comment on other people's post. At the end of the process, the mean score for *active*, *average*, *passive* and *very passive* participants were identified. Higher scoring participants were categorised as *active*, while lower scoring members were considered to be *passive*. The participants who scored between the active and passive members were categorised as *average*. Another category of *very passive* was created to cater for the students who joined the group, but did not make their participation visible. The analysis showed that most active members scored 37 points, while the very passive members did not contribute to the interactions at all.

3.1.2.3 Third Stage: Semi-structured Interview

The participants were categorised accordingly based on their participation rate. For each category, four to nine members were randomly selected to participate in the interview sessions. The members were contacted using Facebook Message, and

briefed of the purpose and process of the interview. Those who agreed to be interviewed were given the freedom to set the date, time and location of the sessions, based on their preferences and convenience. Two participants declined the invitation, citing unpreparedness and having prior engagement. The category were then re-consulted, and new members were approached. I also openly invited the group members who wished to participate in the interview sessions. Only one participant responded to this invitation. The distribution of interviewees is shown in Figure 5 below:

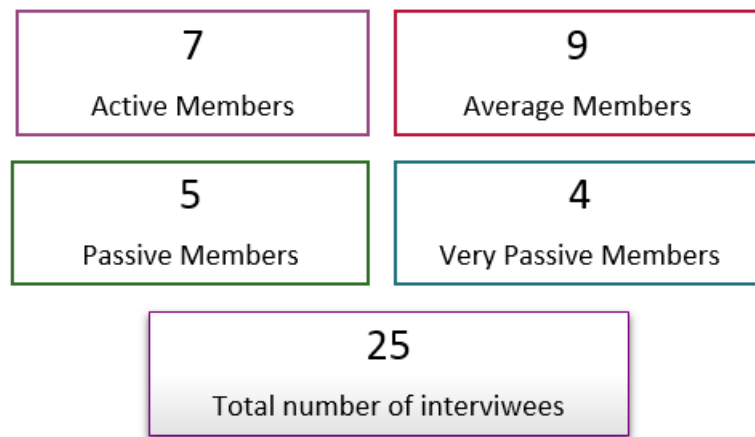


FIGURE 5: THE CATEGORIES AND TOTAL NUMBER OF INTERVIEWEES

Individual face-to-face interview sessions, were conducted at various dates, times and locations (e.g. library, café, etc.). Notes and a voice recorder were used to record each interview with consent. The interviewees were given plenty of rooms to express their opinions and thoughts on the matters discussed. The process was completed in two months, with 25 interviewees from the four categories.

3.13 Data analysis

This section presents the way that the data was analysed from the three methods of data collection procedure. It is divided into two main topics which are quantitative analysis of the questionnaire, and the qualitative analysis of the Facebook interaction

data and the interview transcripts. The coding processes to derive categories of themes from the qualitative methods are presented more rigorously in Chapter 4.

3.13.1 Quantitative analysis: Questionnaire

The questionnaire was analysed using SPSS 21 software. The values were coded into the system and the items from the questionnaire were manually copied onto the program. The improvement made to the software has allowed for missing values to be computed, hence producing a more comprehensive and accurate result.

In total, there were 622 coded questionnaires. While the majority of participants gave out personal details, such as names, Facebook usernames and emails, and phone number, there was a small number who refrained from doing this. These personal details are not revealed for safety purposes, and were only used to inform the second stage of the data collection method. The questionnaire results are presented quantitatively using descriptive statistics, with charts, tables, and figures in Chapter 4.

3.13.2 Qualitative analysis: LMT100 group interaction and interview transcripts

The Facebook interaction activity and interview transcripts were analysed using a combination of content analysis (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992) and thematic analysis methods (Braun and Clarke, 2006), i.e. thematic-content analysis. Content analysis is a systematic and objective way to describe and quantify phenomena, and can be used with both qualitative and quantitative data, depending on the research questions (Elo and Kyngäs, 2008). Thematic-content analysis is commonly applied to analyse written, verbal or visual communication messages, and to describe the phenomena of

interest to achieve specific purposes, rather than documenting shared meaning between researchers and participants (Cole, 1988, Downe-Wamboldt, 1992). I used the thematic-content analysis to code data and establish meaningful patterns of the phenomena, in the forms of categories of themes. This is however, highly dependent on the information that the participants are willing to share, and the extent of data sources, available to a researcher's knowledge (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992). As such, when content analysis is used, the interpretation of data was greatly influenced by the researcher's level of knowledge, experiences, biases and perspectives of the issue (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992: 351). It is not wrong however, to present the data as such.

My interpretation of the qualitative data, although may have been influenced by my knowledge of the university students' lives and Malaysian sociocultural context, was triangulated and corroborated from two other perspectives; i.e. the results from the three methods of data collection, and the findings from past literature at local and global scale. The participants were treated as a community of learners, and the data was presented as such, to reflect the systems of meanings, and the sociocultural values that influenced their interaction patterns. Appendix B (page 490) illustrates the steps of thematic-content analysis that guide the analysis of qualitative data. NVivo 10 was used to create, organise and link themes from the transcripts.

There were two different ways that the categories of themes were derived from the qualitative data. The LMT100 interaction data was analysed based on constant comparative approach (Strauss and Corbin, 1994) and grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006) that analyse data inductively (Figure 6). Open coding process was conducted to derive open codes from the raw LMT100 interaction threads. Using axial coding

process, these open codes were reduced into bigger categories of themes from the data. In the NVivo software, these open codes are called free nodes. Further details of the coding process, and the categories of themes developed from the LMT100 interaction data, are presented with examples in Chapter 4.

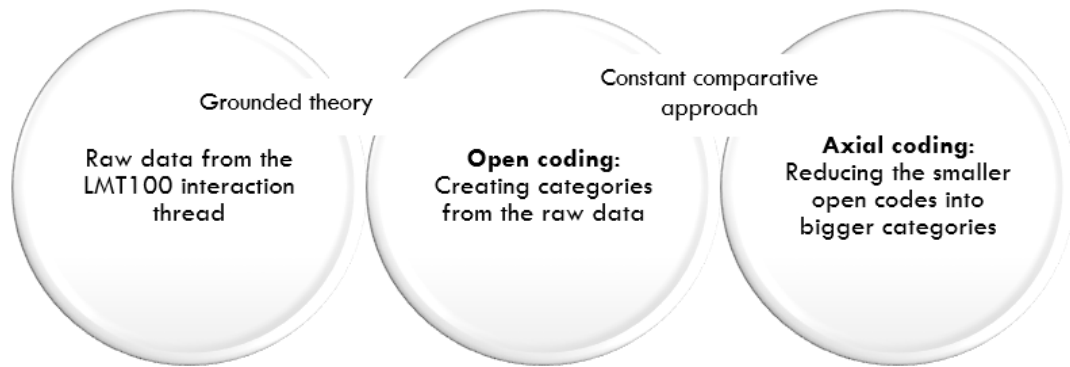


FIGURE 6: THE PROCESS OF CREATING THEMES FROM THE LMT100 INTERACTION DATA

On the other hand, the interview data was treated differently, as the sessions were conducted with the help of an interview guide (see Table 2: 123). Although the guide did not necessarily dictate the structure of the interview, the interviewees' responses, no matter how elaborated, fundamentally stemmed from the topics in the interview guide. Therefore, the data from the interview transcripts was analysed deductively. The transcripts were uploaded to NVivo, and the initial codes or nodes were created based on the topics in the interview guide. The data from the transcripts that fall within a topic was assigned to the specific codes or nodes. When responses to a topic were too elaborated and led to other issues, new nodes were developed under the main nodes or topics. However, not all of the interview data could be assigned to the established nodes or topics. When this happened, open codes were developed and reduced into free nodes, using axial coding. Therefore, in the analysis of interview data, a deductive approach was firstly used to develop topical categories, while the inductive approach supported the development of new topics from the interview

transcripts. This process was repeatedly conducted until all of the data in the interview transcripts were exhausted. Following this, grounded theory and constant comparative approach (Charmaz, 2006) were also employed in analysing the interview transcripts. Figure 7 shows the analysis process. Further details and examples of the coding and categories development are presented in Chapter 4.

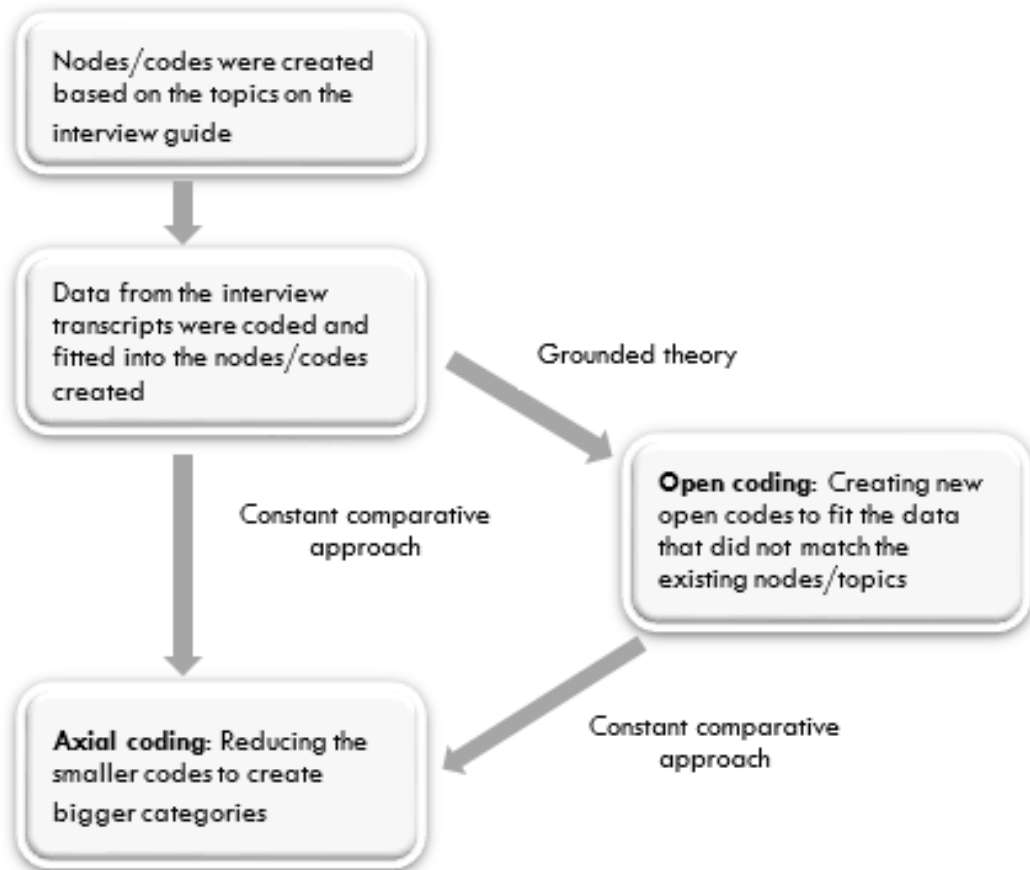


FIGURE 7: THE PROCESS TO DERIVE CATEGORIES OF THEMES FROM THE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

3.14 Ethical Considerations

Ethics are a moral code of conduct to protect human participants in empirical research (Biggam, 2011). Ethical considerations are important in ensuring that researchers follow an appropriate practice when engaging with participants to ensure safety. I adhered to a strict ethical conduct throughout the whole research, from the planning

of data collection, to the presentation of findings, in protecting the participants' fundamental rights, dignity, confidentiality, as well as cultural and religious values.

The questionnaire used was taken and adapted from Kabilan *et al.* (2010). I solicited permission from the main author of the study through email prior to adapting and using the questionnaire. Written consent was given by Professor Kabilan, a few days after the request was made. At the planning stage of the data collection procedure, I contacted the Dean, the Head of the English Language Department, and the teachers teaching the LMT100 course, to solicit their permissions for the study to be conducted. Upon approval, I requested that the teachers to provide slots during their class time for the briefing and questionnaire answering session. The teachers were almost always present during the sessions to introduce me as the researcher, and to ensure that no harm was inflicted on the students. During the visits to these classes, the students were given the option to opt out from answering the questionnaires and from participating in the study altogether.

In line with the tenet of SNSs, the LMT100 group employed voluntary-based participation and user-generated content. The participants were invited to join the group, but should they declined the invitation, they were neither pressured nor forced to participate. The group was open for any discussions, but controversial topics such as races and religions were avoided. The features of Facebook also allow participants to edit or delete potentially offensive updates or comments. As such, the participants had total control over the interaction activity that may have reflected their identities. The participants were still treated as a member of the LMT100 community even if they chose not to make their involvement visible. Their names and identities were kept anonymous in data presentation to protect their privacy. The

interviewees were selected based on their participation rate. They were approached using Facebook message and invited to be interviewed. New potential interviewees with similar criteria were selected when the ones approached, declined the invitations. They were not pressured to participate unwillingly. I also openly invited interested members of the LMT100 group to take part in the interview, to practise fairness in selection. When the interviewees agreed to participate, they were given the freedom to determine the date, time and location of the sessions, to ensure their safety and comfort. The interviewees were advised to use English or Malay in expressing themselves and reduce anxiety. Voice recorder was used after permissions were solicited from each interviewee. Their identities were kept anonymous and are presented using pseudonyms. Two interviewees requested to be interviewed together, while three interviewees brought friends to accompany them during the sessions. These requests were accommodated to avoid any potential conflict and ensure comfort among the interviewees.

Chapter 4: Findings

4.0 Introduction to findings

This chapter presents the findings from all three methods of data collection; questionnaire, LMT100 group interaction activity, and semi-structured interview. The findings are illustrated in stages of the data collection procedure, starting with the questionnaire results.

4.1 Stage One: Questionnaire

The 622 questionnaires solicited the university students' perceptions of the effect of Facebook on ELL. The results are divided into sections on demographic, English language competency, English language use on Facebook environment, activities on Facebook, and perceptions of ELL on Facebook. The cross-tabulation of genders and ethnicities are presented against the effects of Facebook on students' ELL. Descriptive statistics in the forms of tables, charts, and graphs were used to illustrate the data. The participants are collectively described in percentages.

4.2 Demographic information

Demographic information discloses the participants' gender, age distribution, race, department and year of study. Of the 622 questionnaire participants, there were 26 percent male students and 74 percent female students, which echoes the dominance of the females in Malaysian tertiary education setting (Ng, 2011, Online Desk, 2013).

The age distribution of the participants was quite diverse, between the ranges of 18 to 40 years old. In majority, 98 percent of the participants were between the ages of 18 to 24. Only two percent were between the ages of 25 to 40. It is common that students who have completed their A levels, to enter universities between the ages of 18 to 24 years old, which explains the majority of participants between these age ranges. The small percentage of students between 25 and 40 years old might be the ones who pursued their degrees after completing their diplomas, or after working full-time for several years.

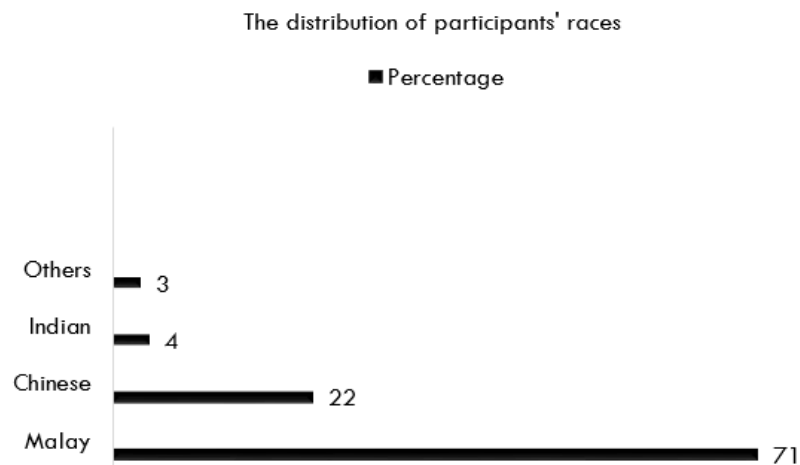


FIGURE 8: THE DISTRIBUTION OF PARTICIPANTS' RACES

The 622 questionnaire participants came from various races and ethnicities (Figure 8). The majority of participants were of Malay descent, followed by the Chinese, and Indian. Three percent of the participants consisted of the more minority ethnics including Ibanese, Kadazan, Dusun, Melanau, and Iranum, who mainly resided in the West Coast (Borneo) of Malaysia. Due to the differences in races, ethnicities and areas of residence, it would be fair to assume that the students mostly used Bahasa Malaysia and English in their communications at the university, as both languages were generally common to Malaysians. Both languages were formally taught in schools,

hence were not foreign to the students, and may have been used together with their native languages in daily communication.

It must be noted that on Facebook, there were high possibilities that the students have encountered a lot of English language content in various formats including multimedia, article, news like, generic quizzes, and web interfaces as these materials are often circulated rapidly. This may have exposed them to wider contexts of English language usage instead of purely academic content. As such, although they may have not explicitly written posts and comments in English on Facebook, it may be the case that the variety of content they come across informally could have influenced their language acquisition and add to their knowledge.

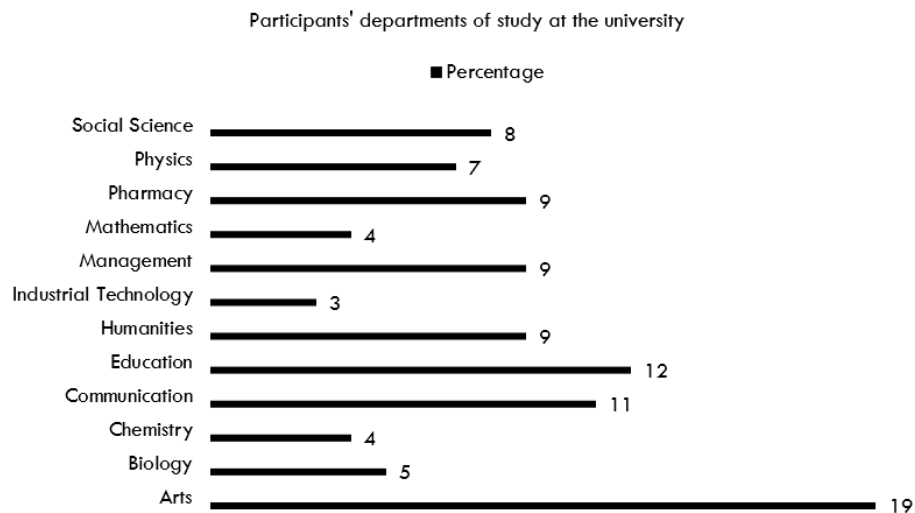


FIGURE 9: THE DISTRIBUTION OF PARTICIPANTS' DEPARTMENT OF STUDY

The participants came from various departments and courses, ranging from Science to Arts (Figure 9). To round up, there were 68 percent Arts students and 32 percent Science students who answered the questionnaire. Arts students made up the highest percentage of participants, followed by the Education students, Communication students, Management students, and Pharmacy students. The other participants are

from Humanities, Social Sciences, Physics, Biology, Mathematics, Chemical Science, and Industrial Technology.

Eighty-eight percent of the participants reported that they were in their first year of university, while 11 percent stated that they were in their second year. One percent of the students reported that they were in their fourth year.

4.3 The statistics of participants' Facebook account

This section describes the findings that relate to participants' Facebook account, which include their Facebook membership, and frequency of log in. A hundred percent (100 percent) of the participants reported having at least one Facebook account, which suggested that Facebook was indeed highly subscribed by university students. The finding thus contradicts Hamat *et al.*'s (2012) conclusion that SNSs had not penetrated the Malaysian university setting in total. It thus backs previous studies that saw Facebook as being used extensively in institutional setting as it eased interactions between teacher-students, and has the ability to improve critical literacy (Cain and Policastri, 2011, Cheung and Vogel, 2011, Cheung *et al.*, 2011). However, Hamat *et al.*'s (2012) study was conducted nationwide, and included a larger sample participants from various universities in Malaysia, while my study was small-scale and only conducted at one university. Further research may need to be conducted to determine the penetration of Facebook and other social media among university students.

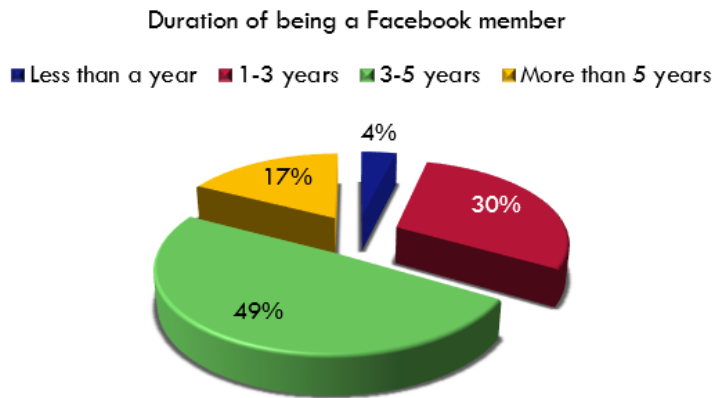


FIGURE 10: THE PARTICIPANTS' DURATION OF BEING A FACEBOOK MEMBER

Approximately 80 percent of the participants had been members of the Facebook community for 1 to 5 years, which indicated a certain extent of familiarity with the platform (Figure 10).

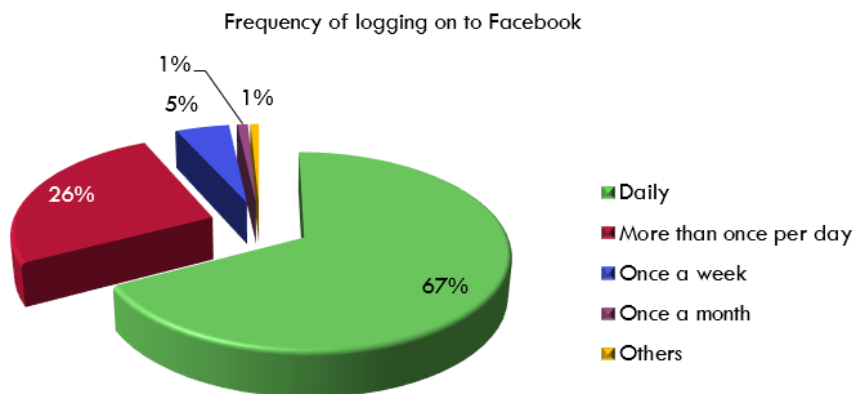


FIGURE 11: THE FREQUENCY OF PARTICIPANTS' LOGIN INTO FACEBOOK

Ninety-three percent participant reported that they logged on to Facebook on a daily basis, and more than once per day (Figure 11). Others logged on once a week and once a month. As such, it is fair to assume that most participants were familiar with the Facebook format and functions. Presumably, they did not face many problems on Facebook due to their fluency in using Facebook.

4.4 English language competency

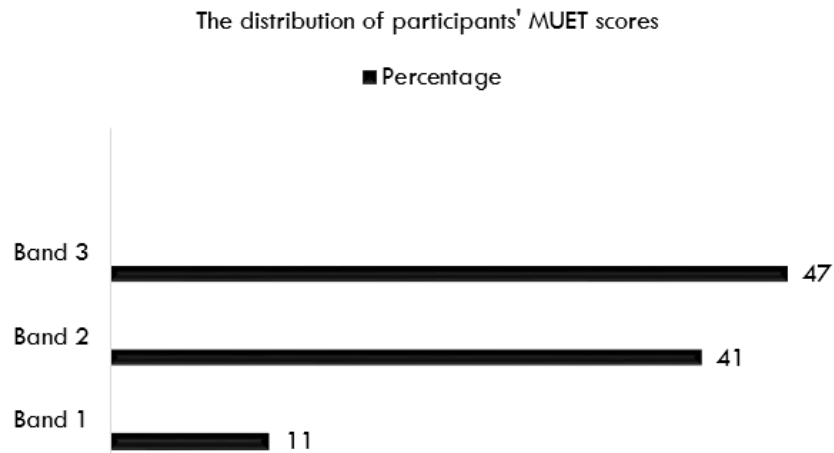


FIGURE 12: THE DISTRIBUTION OF PARTICIPANTS' MUET SCORES

The participants were enrolled in the LMT100 English Proficiency course, as they scored Band 1 (very limited users), Band 2 (limited users), and Band 3 (modest users), in the Malaysian University English Test (MUET). A majority of participants obtained Band 3, then Band 2 and Band 1 (Figure 12). This indicates that they possessed limited to modest English language skills based on the Malaysian education standard.

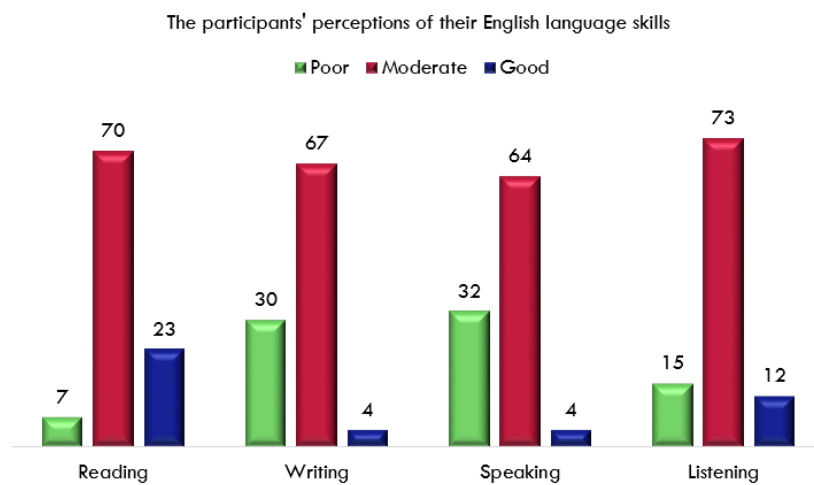


FIGURE 13: THE PARTICIPANTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS

Figure 13 demonstrates the participants' perceptions of their English language skills. The participants were asked to rate their English language skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening, into three options: poor, moderate or good. Most participants rated all four skills firstly as moderate, then poor, rather than good. Therefore, the participants' perceptions of their English language skills were in line with their MUET scores that were of modest and limited users, than that of proficient users.

4.5 Activities on Facebook

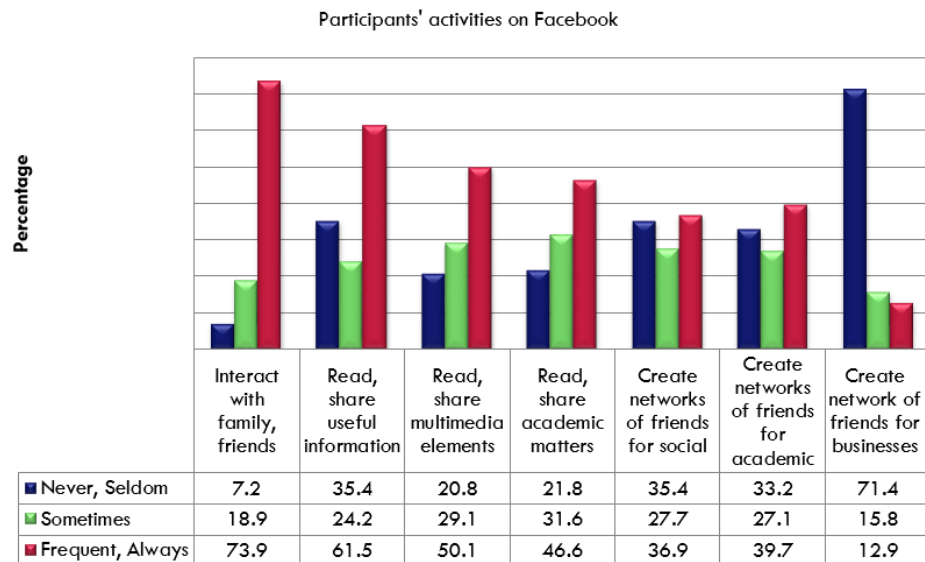


FIGURE 14: PARTICIPANTS' ACTIVITIES ON FACEBOOK

Figure 14 shows the participants' perceptions of their activities on Facebook. The participants were asked to rate the frequency of their Facebook activities, based on the following options; *never, seldom, sometimes, frequent, and always*. For illustration purpose, the options were grouped into three categories of *never and seldom, sometimes, and frequent and always*.

Calculating the responses for *frequent and always*, it may be seen that the participants used Facebook mainly to interact with their friends and families (74 percent), rather than to create network of friends for social purposes (37 percent). This finding is in line with the aim of Facebook, which was to maintain existing relationship and ease communication, rather than meeting new people (Boyd and Ellison, 2007). The finding also echoes the results of other studies by Selwyn (2009a), Madge *et al.* (2009b), Pempek *et al.* (2009), Grossek *et al.* (2011), and Wesseling (2012) who found that students mainly used Facebook to interact with families and friends. Following this, 19 percent of participants reported that they sometimes used Facebook to interact with family and friends, while only 7 percent reported that they never and seldom did so. These findings could be attributed to West *et al.*'s (2009) assertion and news reports (Van Grove, 2013, Beck, 2014), that not many students would want to befriend their parents, especially mothers, and interact with them on Facebook, due to embarrassment and social norms.

Apart from this, the multi-functionality of Facebook had given the participants wider opportunities to receive and share useful information (62 percent), and spread multimedia elements (50 percent). Substantiating this, Saikaew *et al.* (2011) observed that graduate and undergraduate students in Thailand used Facebook informally for discussions, as well as sharing of videos and document links. Essentially, the students were still active in sharing new knowledge even after the class ended (*ibid.*).

The statistics in Figure 14 positively indicate that the Facebook function at the university was slowly changing from purely socialising to become more academic. It is thus highly relevant that Facebook is formally and informally adapted into the academic settings to garner students' interests, and fill in the gap for seamless,

continuous learning (Wong et al., 2011, Cain and Policastri, 2011, Chen and Bryer, 2012b, Veletsianos and Navarrete, 2012).

A majority of the participants reported that they seldom and never used Facebook to create networks of friends for business purposes. However, there were 29 percent of the participants whom reported that they frequent and always, and sometimes used Facebook for this reason. These students may be the ones taking the Entrepreneurship course for the semester, or they were businesspeople who used Facebook to promote their goods and services.

All in all, the findings affirm the results from previous studies, that Facebook was mainly used for interaction purposes. However, the function of Facebook is gradually changing from purely socialising to becoming more academic, and even business-oriented. In terms of education, it has great potentials in easing discussion, and circulating knowledge and information among university students.

4.5.1 Languages used on Facebook

This section presents the languages which the participants claimed to use on Facebook. The items *sometimes*, *frequent*, and *always* are presented as Yes responses from the participants.

The languages that the participants claimed to use on Facebook					
English and its combination					
	%		Yes %		
	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequent	Always
1. English only	3.2	14.8	42.1	20.1	19.8
Total	18		82		
2. English and Malay	5.2	11.1	28.9	26.7	28.2
Total	16.3		83.8		
3. English and Mother tongue	11.8	14.5	28.4	23.5	21.8
Total	26.3		73.7		
4. English, Malay and Mother tongue	15.3	17.9	25.6	20.6	20.6
Total	33.2		66.8		

The Table above shows the English language and its combination that the participants claimed to use on Facebook. English only, and the combination of English and Malay were highly used with more than 80 percent participants' agreement. The high percentages substantiate the importance and familiarity of Malay and English as the nation's first and second languages. When used in a public space, these languages may be accessible to more Internet users in Malaysia. Slightly lower percentages of students claimed to use the combinations English and Mother tongue, and English, Malay, and Mother tongue on Facebook, which similarly indicate the regularity of English language practice among them.

On the other hand, approximately 16 to 33 percent participants claimed to very rarely and never use English and its combination on Facebook. Although they have never explicitly used English in their productions, it is highly unlikely that they never encounter English on their Facebook pages due to its prevalence in news, multimedia,

articles, web interfaces, and information circulated. Therefore, they would have been exposed to the language, even though they may never produce it.

4.6 Students' perceptions of English skills after using Facebook

This section presents the students' perceptions of their English language skills after using Facebook. It is further divided into four sub-divisions, which are; English language skills, self-confidence, attitudes, and motivations. The participants were asked to rate their perceptions according to the five options of; *no unsure, yes a little, yes moderately, and yes a lot*. For the purpose of presentations, the options are grouped into four categories, of; **No and Unsure, A Little, and Moderately and A Lot**.

4.6.1 English language skills

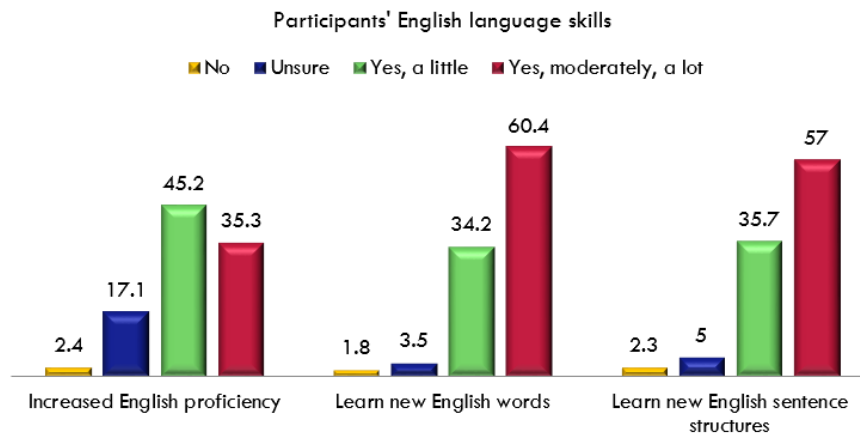


FIGURE 15: PARTICIPANTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS

Figure 15 shows the participants' perceptions of their English language skills after using Facebook. Huge percentages of about 95 percent and 93 percent participants perceived that they have learned new English words and sentences by a little, and moderately and a lot after using Facebook. Approximately 81 percent saw that their English language proficiency had improved a little, moderately and a lot after using Facebook.

The percentages for these items clearly indicated that Facebook benefited and granted students with the opportunity to learn English language. Even though the participants used Facebook for more social purposes rather than for academic matters (refer to Figure 14), they reported development in their English language skills, especially in the attainment of new vocabulary and sentence structures. This may suggest that their social or recreational activities on Facebook may be beneficial in second language acquisition.

Notably, only about 5 to 20 percent participants reported the lack of improvement to their English language skills after using Facebook. The percentages of uncertain participants were higher than the percentages of the participants who reported no improvement at all. This may suggest the participants' unawareness of the learning process that may have occur during their engagement with Facebook.

In short, the participants reported English language improvement for all items in Figure 15. It is apparent that students perceived Facebook as highly beneficial in developing English vocabulary, sentence structures and reading confidence, among others.

4.6.2 Self-confidence

This section describes the participants' perceptions of their self-confidence to use English in daily lives after using Facebook (Figure 16).

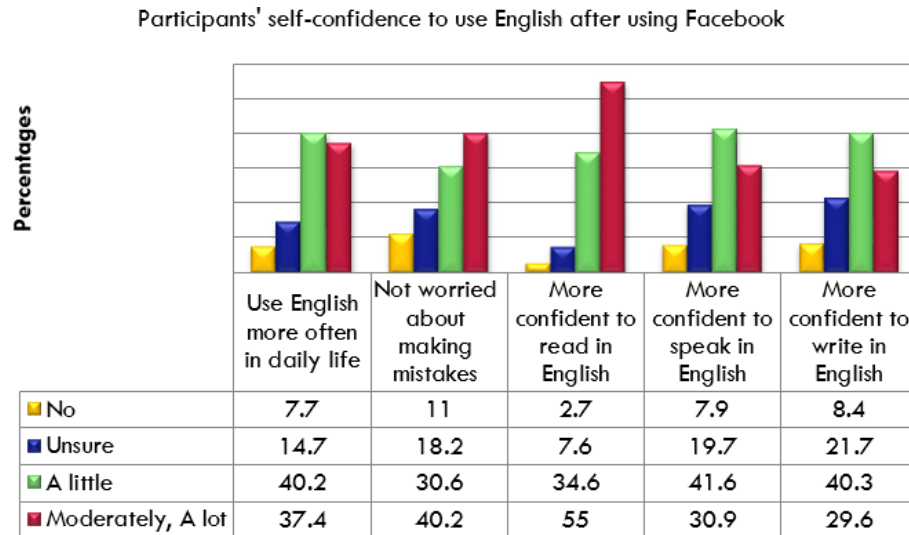


FIGURE 16: PARTICIPANTS' PERCEPTIONS OF SELF-CONFIDENCE TO USE ENGLISH AFTER USING FACEBOOK

A huge percentage of approximately 90 percent participants believed that their confidence to read English language materials had improved a little, moderately and a lot after engaging with Facebook. In comparison, only about 70 percent and 73 percent students believed similarly for their writing and speaking skills. The participants were probably more comfortable to read English language materials in their own time, rather than to produce language by writing or speaking. Writing and speaking skills commonly cause anxiety among students. In line with this, 71 percent reported that they were not worried of making English language mistakes, and about 78 percent believed that they used English more in daily life as a result of using Facebook. These percentages show improvement in the students' confidence in using English. Although the numbers were not as high as their perceived development of English language skills, it shows that Facebook has tremendous potentials in gradually boosting students' confidence to practise the language.

4.6.3 Attitudes

Self-confidence could also be a sign of participants' attitudes. The three items in the questionnaire which were indicatives of the participants' perceptions of their attitudes towards English after using Facebook are shown in Figure 17.

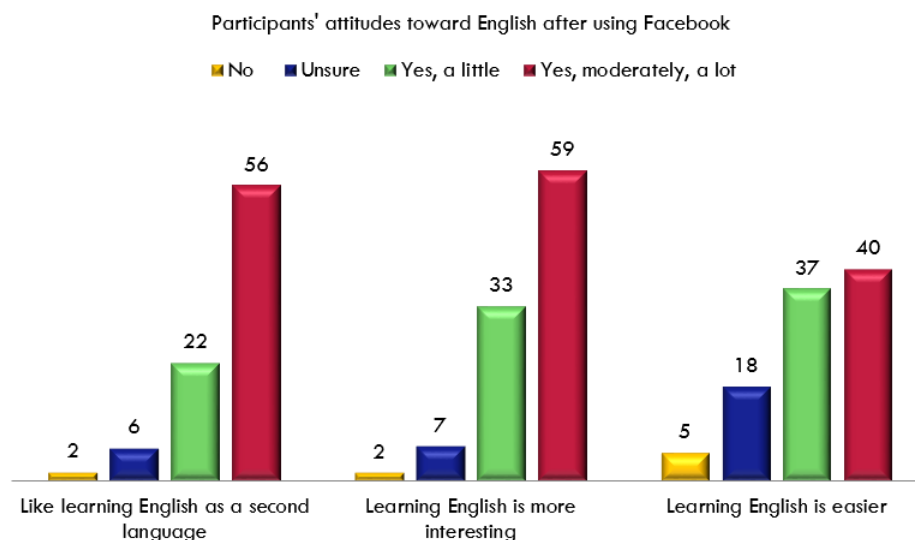


FIGURE 17: PARTICIPANTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD ELL AFTER USING FACEBOOK

The participants indicated positive attitudes toward ELL after using Facebook. In Figure 16, a huge percentage of 92 percent students perceived that learning English is more interesting on Facebook, but it was neither any easier (77 percent), nor they liked learning English as a second language (78 percent). These percentages however, are only low in comparison to the 92 percent. It is interesting to see that more than three quarter of the participants had positive attitudes toward using Facebook for English learning. The percentages thus indicate that Facebook could be suitably integrated as an English language platform, as it promoted positive attitudes among students and make learning more interesting. Similar results were concluded by Dennen (2008) and Pempek *et al.* (2009) where students used Facebook for online discussion and content reading.

Only 8 to 23 percent of the participants reported uncertainty and negative attitudes towards the items. These responses may be due to the lack of a proper platform for ELL, or the view that Facebook was only suitable for social and networking purposes, instead of being linked to academic matters, as discussed in previous studies (Selwyn, 2007a, Madge et al., 2009b, Grosseck et al., 2011).

4.6.4 Motivation

Three items in the questionnaire illustrated the participants' perceptions of motivation in ELL after using Facebook (Figure 18).

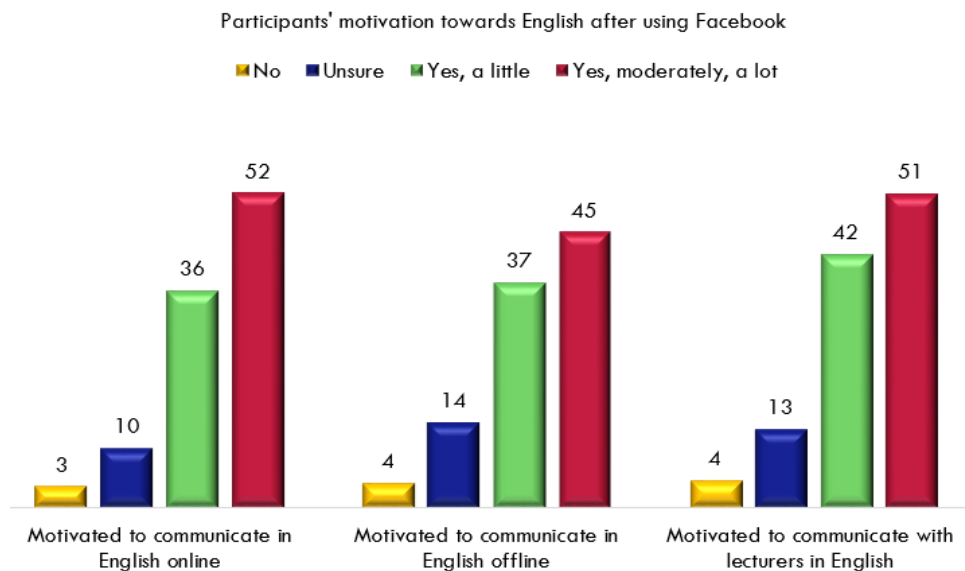


FIGURE 18: PARTICIPANTS' MOTIVATION TOWARDS ENGLISH AFTER USING FACEBOOK

A huge percentage of 93 participants reported their improved motivation to communicate with their lecturers in English after using Facebook, by a little, moderately and a lot. Perhaps this is due to the ease of access reachability whenever they need to interact with their lecturers for academic purposes as observed in previous studies (Teclehaimanot and Hickman, 2011). Cain and PolICASTRI (2011) similarly identified that the Facebook group in their study eased communication between students-students and students-teachers, and boosted learning motivation. Following this, 88 percent

and 82 percent of students perceived improved motivation to use English in online and offline environment after their engagement with Facebook. Similar to the perceptions of their attitude, the participants' improved motivation in ELL after using Facebook, could be attributed to the exposure of the language they received on the platform. The content circulated may have been tailored to their interests, which in return, increased their access to Facebook.

The percentage of participants who reported uncertainty and non-improvement in their English learning motivations was low (between 13 to 18 percent), which implied that Facebook motivated ELL among the university students.

4.7 Other SNSs that the participants used besides Facebook

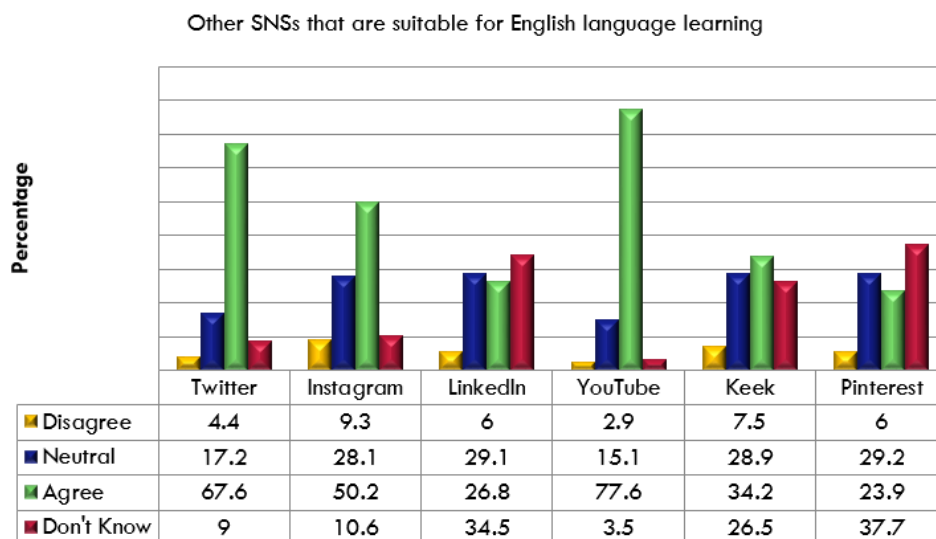


FIGURE 19: OTHER SNSs THAT ARE SUITABLE FOR ELL

The participants were asked to rate six SNSs besides Facebook that could be suitable for ELL. A 6-point Likert scale was used; *Strongly Disagree*, *Disagree*, *Neutral*, *Agree*, *Strongly Agree*, and *Don't Know*. For the purpose of presentation of findings, the Likert

scale was combined to form four categories of *Disagree*, *Neutral*, *Agree*, and *Don't Know* (Figure 19).

The majority of participants saw that Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube as suitable for ELL. This shows that social media platforms for different purposes including the ones to spread news, pictures, and videos, could also be utilised as ELL platform. YouTube was the most popular among students which was perhaps due to the variety of videos, topics, and presentation available, as compared to Instagram which mainly focuses on still pictures. Twitter on the other hand, is more text-based and concise compared to other social media.

The three other SNSs (Pinterest, Keek, and LinkedIn) were less popular among the participants who showed neutrality, disagreement and lack of awareness of the SNSs' suitability for ELL.

4.8 Specially-designed SNS for ELL at university level

The participants were asked if they were interested in learning English language if an SNS was specifically designed to cater to university students. The 6-point Likert scale was modified into four categories of *Disagree*, *Neutral*, *Agree*, and *Don't Know* to illustrate the finding (Figure 20).

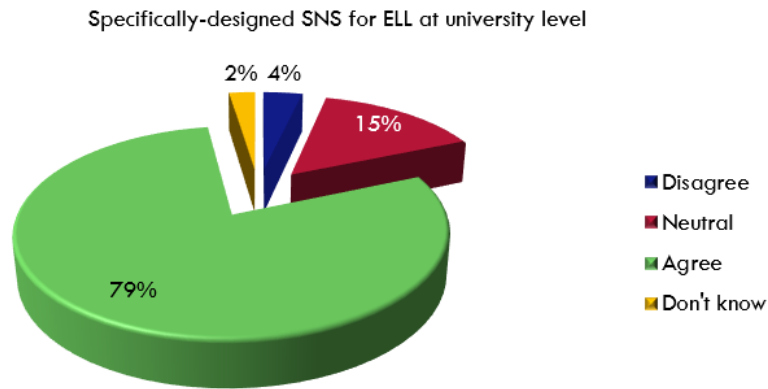


FIGURE 20: PARTICIPANTS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT SPECIFICALLY-DESIGNED SNSs FOR ELL AT UNIVERSITY LEVEL

Approximately 80 percent participants agreed that they would be interested in learning English using an SNS specifically-designed for university level. The high percentage of students' agreement may indicate their awareness and requirement for a proper SNS for ELL. On the other hand, the participants' who were neutral and disagreed with the statement may view SNSs as only being suitable for socialisation and entertainment purposes, such as found in previous studies (Pempek et al., 2009, Grosseck et al., 2011).

4.9 Cross-tabulation between variables

In this section I report a cross-tabulation of two variables in the questionnaire; gender and ethnicity, and the effect of Facebook use, to explore any possible relationships between them. The Mann Whitney U Test allows the comparison of two independent groups. It was used to compare the differences between gender, which consisted of two groups, male and female. As an extension of the Mann Whitney U Test, the Kruskal-Wallis H Test identifies any statistical differences between two or more independent groups, and was used to compare the differences between ethnicities, which consisted of four groups; Malay, Chinese, Indian, and Others. The items that were measured against the variables are on an ordinal scale.

The tests however did not explain the reasons underpinning differences between the groups. Following this, a mean score test was carried out to see any group(s) that scored higher than any other. Once it was determined that a group scored higher, I discuss and attempt to explain the differences between the groups by drawing upon previous literature, the current findings, and my professional and personal experiences as teacher and student.

As non-parametric procedures, there are several limitations to both tests. Firstly, there are no parameters to contain the variables, which make it more difficult to generalise quantitative statements about the population differences (Dallal, 2000). For example, in this study, I did not have control over how much exposure and access the students had to Facebook every day. Secondly, the nature of the tests preserves information about the order of data, but discards the actual values, which makes them slightly inaccurate, unlike parametric procedures (*ibid.*). This means that the statistically significant values from the tests does not equal practical importance (Gelman and Stern, 2006). However, these values often sensitise the research to issue to investigate and this is the approach that I have taken.

4.9.1 Genders and the effects of using Facebook on students' English language skills

The possible effects of Facebook usage suggested in the questionnaire were: English language skills, attitudes towards English learning, motivation for English learning, and self-confidence in this learning.

a) Gender and English language skills

TABLE 5: THE MALE AND FEMALE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE EFFECT OF FACEBOOK ON THEIR ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS

Item (Ever since they began using Facebook, the students felt they had...)	Male (%) (n=161-162)					Female (%) (n=455-457)				
	No	Unsure	Yes			No	Unsure	Yes		
			A little	*Mod	A lot			A little	*Mod	A lot
a) **Increased English proficiency	1.9	21.6	45.7	26.5	4.3	2.6	15.6	45.2	29.8	6.8
b) **Learned new English words	2.5	5.6	41.6	36.6	13.7	1.5	2.8	31.5	40.9	23.2
c) **Learned new English sentences	3.7	8	45.7	32.7	9.9	1.8	4	32.1	40	22.2

*Mod=Moderately

**Items that show significant differences between gender based on Mann Whitney U Test and mean scores

The male students reported to have experienced a *little* improvement the highest across all three items. A similar pattern is observed for item (a) among the female students, but we saw higher *moderate* improvement for item (b) and (c). This may indicate the female students' more positive perceptions of the English learning process on Facebook. Following a similar pattern, the female students reported higher percentages than the male students for *Yes (A little, Moderate, and A lot)* with: item (a) - 81.8 percent and 76.5 percent; item (b) - 95.6 percent and 91.9 percent; and item (c) - 94.3 percent and 88.3 percent. Both male and female students saw that they had acquired new English words, followed by new English sentences, and overall proficiency. Although the differences are quite small, it is noticeable that the female students tended to have more favourable views of their English language skills as a result of using Facebook. The statistical tests similarly showed significant differences between the three items that indicate variances in male and female students' improvement in their English language

skills. Presumably, the female students may possibly be more open to the learning experience on Facebook. All in all, the high percentages indicating improved skills may indicate a positive ELL experience on Facebook for both male and female students.

b) Gender and attitudes

TABLE 6: THE PERCENTAGES OF MALE AND FEMALE STUDENTS AND THEIR ATTITUDES TOWARD LEARNING ENGLISH ON FACEBOOK

Item (Ever since they began using Facebook, the students felt that...)	Male (%) (n=161-162)					Female (%) (n=456-457)				
	No	Unsure	Yes			No	Unsure	Yes		
			A little	*Mod	A lot			A little	*Mod	A lot
a) **They liked learning English more	3.1	9.3	30.2	28.4	29	1.1	5	19.5	35.3	39
b) **Learning English is easier	7.5	19.9	40.4	28	4.3	4.6	17.3	34.9	31.1	12.1
c) **English is more interesting	2.5	5.6	41.6	36.6	13.7	1.1	2.8	31.5	40.9	23.2

*Mod=Moderately

**Items that show significant differences between gender based on Mann Whitney U Test and mean scores

Following the patterns in Table 5, the female students showed a higher percentage of Yes responses (A little, Moderate, and A lot) for all three items than the male students. The differences are statistically significant, although not great. In line with this, the male students reported more uncertainty and negative views on all three items, compared to the female students. The percentages for Yes among female and male students were as follow: item (a) – 93.8 percent and 87.6 percent; item (b) – 78.1 percent and 72.7 percent; and item (c) – 95.6 percent and 91.9 percent. Both female and male students perceived English learning was more interesting on Facebook, and they liked the process.

c) Gender and motivation

TABLE 7: THE PERCENTAGES OF MALE AND FEMALE STUDENTS WHO WERE MORE MOTIVATED TO USE ENGLISH AFTER USING FACEBOOK

Item (Ever since they started using Facebook, the students felt more motivated to communicate in English ...)	Male (%) (n=160-161)					Female (%) (n=456-457)				
			Yes					Yes		
	No	Unsure	A little	*Mod	A lot	No	Unsure	A little	*Mod	A lot
a) **Offline	5.7	16.3	40.6	29.4	8.1	3.5	13.1	35.4	33.7	14.2
b) **Online	4	11.8	41	33.5	9.3	3.1	9	33.7	34.4	19.9
c) **With lecturers	5	13.7	47.2	27.3	6.8	4.2	12.5	39.2	32	12.1

*Mod=Moderately

**Items that show significant differences between gender based on Mann Whitney U Test and mean scores

In line with the patterns from Table 5 and 6, the female students felt a higher motivation to use English after their engagement with Facebook than the male students. The differences in percentages of Yes (A little, Moderate, A lot) responses between the female and male students however, are small across all three items, but are statistically significant with: item (a) – 83.3 percent and 78.1 percent; item (b) – 88 percent and 83.3 percent; and item (c) – 83.3 percent and 81.3 percent. More noticeable is the gap between male and female responses in respect to feeling a lot more motivated to use English. Again, the male students indicated higher uncertainty and negative responses to all three items compared to the female students.

d) Gender and self-confidence

TABLE 8: THE PERCENTAGES OF MALE AND FEMALE STUDENTS WHO FELT MORE CONFIDENT TO USE ENGLISH AFTER USING FACEBOOK

Item (Ever since they began using Facebook, the students found they...)	Male (%) (n=161-162)					Female (%) (n=455-457)				
			Yes					Yes		
	No	Unsure	A little	*Mod	A lot	No	Unsure	A little	*Mod	A lot
a) **Used English more daily	9.9	14.2	46.9	24.1	4.9	7	14.9	37.9	30	10.1
b) Were Not worried about making mistakes	10.5	17.3	27.2	31.5	13.6	11.2	18.6	31.9	25.8	12.5
c) Were More confident to speak	6.8	22.2	40.1	24.7	6.2	8.3	18.9	41.9	24.3	6.6
d) Were More confident to write	6.8	23	45.3	21.7	3.1	9	21.3	38.7	25.3	5.7
e) Were More confident to read	3.7	5.6	40.7	37	13	2.4	8.3	32.6	37.9	18.8

*Mod=Moderately

**Items that show significant differences between gender based on Mann Whitney U Test and mean scores

In Table 8, only items (a) and (c) followed the pattern of the items in previous tables where female students felt more improvement in skills and more positive attitudes. Items (b), (d), and (e) showed a higher percentage of male students' reporting Yes than the female students, although the differences are not great (0.4 percent - 2.1 percent). Only item (a) showed significant statistical difference in terms of male and female students' self-confidence to use English after engaging with Facebook. The female students reported to have used English more often in daily lives (78 percent), and felt more confident to speak in English (72.8 percent) after engaging with Facebook compared to the male students (75.9 percent and 71 percent). On the other hand, the male students were less worried about making English language mistakes (72.3

percent), and slightly more confident to write (70.1 percent) and read (90.7 percent) in English compared to the female students (70.2 percent, 69.7 percent, and 89.3 percent).

In general, the male students seemed to have more confidence in the skills of writing, and reading compared to the female students, and they were less afraid about making English mistakes in learning. This finding is noteworthy as despite having more favourable view of their language skills, attitudes, and motivation toward learning English, the female participants perhaps showed less confidence in using it.

4.9.2 Ethnicities and the effects of using Facebook on English language skills

The effects of Facebook usage can also be broken down by ethnicity in respect to English language skills, attitudes, motivation, and self-confidence. By ethnicity I mean that all students are Malaysians but they come from various ethnic groups (see earlier section: *The participant of the study*). There are Malaysian Malay, Malaysian Chinese, and Malaysian Indian. Other ethnicities refer to the Malaysian students who lived in Borneo who are of Kadazan, Iban, Bidayuh, Bajau etc. descent.

a) Ethnicities and English language skills

TABLE 9: THE PERCENTAGES OF STUDENTS BASED ON ETHNICITIES AND THE EFFECT OF FACEBOOK ON THEIR ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS

(Ever since they began using Facebook, the students felt they had...)

	Increased English proficiency					Learned new English words					Learned new English sentences				
	Yes					Yes					Yes				
	No	Unsure	A little	*Mod	A lot	No	Unsure	A little	*Mod	A lot	No	Unsure	A little	*Mod	A lot
Malay (n=439)	2.1	16.7	46	29.4	5.9	1.8	3.4	29.6	40.8	24.4	1.6	4.8	29.8	40.5	23.2
Chinese (n=135-136)	3.7	16.9	50.7	25	3.7	2.2	4.4	50	36.8	6.6	3.7	6.7	55.6	28.9	5.2
Indian (n=24)	4.2	12.5	16.7	50	16.7	0	4.2	29.2	28.8	37.6	8.3	0	37.5	33.3	20.8
Others (n=19)	0	36.8	26.3	16.7	15.8	0	0	31.6	47.4	15.8	0	5.3	26.3	47.3	21.1

*Mod=Moderately

**Items that show significant differences between gender based on Mann Whitney U Test and mean scores

Table 9 shows the breakdown of responses to skills development by reported ethnicity. The Indian students reported the highest improvement of English language proficiency (83.4 percent), and learning of new English words (95.6 percent). In contrast other ethnicities students showed the highest percentage of 94.7 percent for the learning of new English sentences on Facebook. The statistical differences of the percentages between the ethnicities are not significant across all three items which suggested small variances between the ethnicities' improvement of English language skills after using Facebook. A noticeable difference is the low percentage of only 58.8 percent other ethnicities students reporting Yes to the improvement of their overall English language proficiency after engaging with Facebook, compared to 81.3 percent Malay, and 79.4 percent Chinese. For item (b), high percentages were reported across all ethnicities: 94.8 percent each for Malay and other ethnicities students; and 93.4 percent Chinese students; besides the Indian students. Similarly, there were 93.5 percent Malay, 91.6

Indian, and 89.7 percent Chinese students who reported Yes to the benefits to the learning of new English sentences through Facebook use.

The percentages suggest that the Indian, Malay, and other ethnicities students had acquired new English words and sentences from their engagement with Facebook. It was perhaps due to this that the Indian and Malay students felt that their overall proficiency had increased. However, students of other ethnicities students reported the lowest improvement of overall proficiency. The Chinese students' percentages followed a similar pattern to that of the other ethnicities students, but showed higher percentages in terms of improvements in their overall proficiency. As such, perhaps it is fair to assume that the Indian and Malay students perceived the highest improvement in terms of their English language skills after engagement with Facebook.

b) Ethnicities and attitudes

TABLE 10: THE PERCENTAGES OF STUDENTS BASED ON ETHNICITIES AND THEIR ATTITUDES TOWARD ELL AFTER USING FACEBOOK

(Ever since they began using Facebook, the students felt that...)

	**They liked learning English					**Learning English is easier					**Learning English is more interesting				
	No	Unsure	Yes		A lot	No	Unsure	Yes		A lot	No	Unsure	Yes		A lot
			A little	*Mod				A little	*Mod				A little	*Mod	
Malay (n=438-439)	1.1	5.9	21.6	34.9	36.4	3.9	18.2	36.5	30.8	10.5	1.1	5.5	32.6	36.9	23.9
Chinese (n=136)	2.2	8.1	24.3	33.1	32.4	9.6	18.4	39	27.2	5.9	2.9	9.6	37.5	8.3	42.1
Indian (n=24)	8.3	0	8.3	16.7	66.7	8.3	0	2.2	50	29.2	0	6.5	16.1	37	44.6
Others (n=19)	0	5.3	36.8	31.6	26.3	5.3	31.6	42.1	15.8	5.3	0	10.5	42.1	36.8	10.5

*Mod=Moderately

**Items that show significant differences between gender based on Mann Whitney U Test and mean scores

A huge percentage of the other ethnicity students (94.7 percent) reported that they liked learning English on Facebook, and 89.4 percent found the process more interesting, but only 63.2 percent perceived it as easier. The Indian students reported the highest percentages for item (b) and (c) with 81.4 percent and 97.7 percent. They thus found the process of learning English on Facebook as interesting, for many very interesting, and they liked it (91.7 percent). Similar patterns were observed among the Malay and Chinese students where they perceived English learning on Facebook as interesting (93.4 percent and 87.9 percent), and they liked it (92.9 percent and 89.8 percent). Furthermore, it was seen as easier but with lower percentage agreement (77.8 percent and 72.1 percent). All three items that measured attitudes showed significant statistical differences. Based on the percentages, once again the Indian and Malay students may have benefitted the most from their engagement with Facebook. The Chinese students similarly gained positive experiences too from Facebook, but at slightly lower levels of agreement.

c) Ethnicities and motivation

TABLE 11: THE PERCENTAGES OF STUDENTS BASED ON ETHNICITIES AND THEIR MOTIVATIONS IN ENGLISH LEARNING AFTER USING FACEBOOK

(Ever since they started using Facebook, the students felt more motivated to communicate in English ...)

	**Offline					**Online					**With lecturers				
	No	Unsure	Yes			No	Unsure	Yes			No	Unsure	Yes		
			A little	*Mod	A lot			A little	*Mod	A lot			A little	*Mod	A lot
Malay (n=438-439)	3.9	14.2	35.4	32.2	14.4	2.7	11.2	38.5	32.8	14.8	3.9	12.3	45	29.7	9.1
Chinese (n=136)	4.4	15.4	43.4	30.9	5.9	5.1	5.1	27.2	39.7	22.8	5.1	14	34.6	33.8	12.5

Indian (n=24)	8.3	0	20.8	50	20.8	8.3	0	25	41.7	25	12.5	4.2	16.7	37.5	29.2
Others (n=19)	0	10.5	47.4	31.6	10.5	0	21.1	36.8	21.1	21.1	0	26.3	36.8	26.3	10.5

*Mod=Moderately

**Items that show significant differences between gender based on Mann Whitney U Test and mean scores

Table 11 breaks down data on motivation to learn English after using Facebook by ethnicity. Very high percentages (approximately 92 percent of the Indian students) reported that they were motivated to communicate in English in the offline environment after they started using Facebook. This is followed by 89.5 percent for other ethnicities, 82 percent Malay, and 80.2 percent Chinese students.

The Indian students again reported a similar percentage of approximately 92 percent of whom were motivated to use English in online environment after engagement with Facebook. This is followed by the Chinese students with 89.7 percent, Malay students with 86.1 percent, and students of other ethnicities with 79 percent. Notably, the Chinese students make up a higher percentage than that of the Malay and other ethnicity students in this item.

The students showed slightly lower agreement about being more motivated to communicate with lecturers in English after their engagement with Facebook. However, the percentages are still high and form the majority of the participants from each ethnicity group. The Malay and Indian students were highly motivated to communicate with lecturers in English with 83.8 and 83.4 percent. This is followed by the Chinese students with 80.9 percent and students of other ethnicities with 73.6 percent.

The statistical differences across all ethnicities were significant, although not great. The students' motivation to use English offline may be attributed to the transfer of online learning to an offline setting, where they applied the language expertise developed through the use of Facebook to real-life usage. The informal skills which students had developed in their online recreational activity had the potential to develop their formal literacy skills.

d) Ethnicities and self-confidence

TABLE 1 2: THE DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS BASED ON ETHNICITIES AND THEIR SELF-CONFIDENCE TO USE ENGLISH AFTER USING FACEBOOK

Item		Malay (%) (n=437- 440)	Chinese (%) n=136	Indian (%) n=24	Other ethnicities (%) n=19
**Used more English in daily life	No	7.7	8.1	12.5	0
	Unsure	16.4	11.8	0	15.8
	A little	44.2	31.6	12.5	42.1
	Yes *Mod	25.1	36.8	50	26.3
	A lot	6.6	11.8	25	15.8
**Were not worried about making English language mistakes	No	8.9	18.4	8.3	10.5
	Unsure	16.1	25	8.3	26.3
	A little	32.7	26.5	8.3	42.1
	Yes *Mod	28	24.3	45.8	5.1
	A lot	14.3	5.9	5.1	5.3
**Were more confident to speak in English	No	55	15.4	4.2	0
	Unsure	19.6	21.3	4.2	26.3
	A little	42.6	40.4	29.2	42.1
	Yes *Mod	25.1	20.6	37.5	21.1
	A lot	6.6	2.2	25	10.5
	No	7.1	14	8.3	0
	Unsure	22	23.5	4.2	26.3

**Were more confident to write in English	Yes	A little	40.7	38.2	45.8	36.8
		*Mod	25.6	19.1	29.2	31.6
		A lot	4.6	5.1	12.5	5.2
Were more confident to read in English	No	No	1.8	5.9	4.2	0
		Unsure	5.7	14	8.3	5.3
		A little	33	40.4	16.7	57.9
	Yes	*Mod	39.3	30.9	50	31.6
		A lot	20.2	8.8	20.8	5.3

*Mod=Moderately

**Items that show significant differences between gender based on Mann Whitney U Test and mean scores

Table 12 illustrates the distribution of students based on ethnicity and their self-confidence in the use of English after using Facebook. Approximately 88 percent Indian, 84 percent other ethnicities, 80 percent Chinese, and 76 percent Malay students perceived that they were more confident in the use of English after using Facebook. The finding again suggests that the Indian students had a more positive view and presumably higher self-confidence to use English after using Facebook. Perhaps, they already possessed a higher level of ability and the Facebook platform had given them the space to channel their thoughts and express their opinions more publicly and efficiently in English. There are four items that show significant statistical differences across the ethnicities in the measure of their confidence. However, the students did not show any significant variances in terms of their confidence to read English language content after engaging with Facebook.

Interestingly, the Malay students reported that they were less worried about making English language mistakes (75 percent stating this). This may indicate a level of self-confidence and positive attitudes toward English learning. Approximately, only 53 to 59 percent of the other ethnicities, Chinese, and Indian students were not worried about making English language mistakes after engaging with Facebook. Added to this, the

proportion of Chinese students who were worried about making mistakes were higher than that of students from other ethnicities with 18.4 percent. As such, perhaps it is fair to assume that many of the Chinese students were quite conscious of the quality of the output they produced. It may also indicate the Chinese students' lower level of self-confidence as compared to the students of other ethnicities. In terms of English language skills, the students felt a boost of self-confidence for reading skills, compared to speaking and writing. Approximately 95 percent other ethnicities and 93 percent Malay students reported higher self-confidence in their reading skills, while 88 percent Indian, and 80 percent Chinese believed this. On the other hand, lower percentages of 74 and 71 percent Malay, 63 and 62 percent Chinese, and 74 percent other ethnicities reported improvement in their self-confidence in speaking and writing skills. The Indian students however, reported high confidence in their speaking skills with 92 percent and writing skills with 88 percent. This suggests that the Indian students might have written more in English on Facebook compared to students of other ethnicities.

Conclusion

The statistical tests suggest that gender and race do affect the effects of Facebook on ELL. The male and female students differ in terms of English language skills, attitudes and motivation, to use English after engagement with Facebook, where female students exhibited higher positive perceptions toward using Facebook for ELL. In terms of ethnicity, the Indian and Malay students show variances in attitudes, motivation, and self-confidence to use English after using Facebook, where the Indian students demonstrated higher positive experiences in using Facebook for ELL.

From the cross-tabulation of genders and ethnicities with the effects of Facebook on students' English language skills, it is possible to draw the following, tentative, conclusions:

Gender

- Female students seemed to have a more favourable view of their English language proficiency, and more positive attitudes towards English learning process on Facebook, compared to male students. The differences in percentages although small, are not insignificant.
- Male students seemed to prefer using English in an online environment than offline.
- Female students may have more issues with self-confidence in the use of the English language, as they showed more uncertainty on more items, compared to male students.
- More male students tended not to be too worried about making English language mistakes compared to female students.

Ethnicities

- Many Indian students perceived that they had improved their English proficiency through the use of Facebook.
- The Indian students had the most favourable attitudes towards learning English on Facebook, and found the process easier.
- All ethnicities showed a little improvement in their confidence in writing skills, but the Indian students reported the most.
- Indian students perceived that their confidence in their reading skills had improved a lot, but their confidence in their writing skills was the least improved.
- Indian students were highly motivated to use English offline, online, and with lecturers after engaging with Facebook.
- Malay students tended to be least confident about speaking in English. Indian students were the most confident about speaking in English after using Facebook.

- Malay students felt confidence in their reading skills, but were least confident in their speaking skills.
- Many Chinese students acquired sentence structures and vocabulary from Facebook.
- Chinese students were the most likely to be worried about making English language mistakes. Indian students were the least worried about making English language mistakes, followed by students of other ethnicities.
- Chinese students were likely to be motivated to use English, but had self-confidence issues concerning their abilities.
- Other ethnicities reported moderate improvements in their confidence in the use of all the skills.
- The majority of students from all ethnicities reported that learning English on Facebook was interesting.

4.10 Stage Two: LMT100 data interaction analysis

This section presents the emerging themes from LMT100 interaction data, including the topics that the participants talked about, and the frequency with which the topics were discussed. The themes were derived from raw data following a rigorous processes described below:

4.11 Data analysis for Facebook interaction activity

The interaction threads were collected from the LMT100 Facebook group's wall and imported into NVivo. The term *post* is used to define the initiation of an interaction thread. In approximately 6 weeks, 117 posts (interaction threads) were published on the group's wall with the following distribution:

TABLE 13: THE DISTRIBUTION OF INTERACTION THREADS PUBLISHED ON THE LMT100 GROUP

Members who started an interaction thread	Frequency
Facebook	6
Students	72
I (Researcher)	36
University society	3
Total	117

The members who started an interaction thread in Table 5 are defined as follows:

- *Facebook*: The interaction threads were published by Facebook to notify that a group member had just joined the group, etc.
- *Students*: The interaction threads were updated by the university students.
- *I (Researcher)*: The interaction threads were shared by me.
- *University society*: The interaction threads were updated by the university students from specific societies.

There were 117 interaction threads. Seventy-two of them were initiated by 46 unique individual students. The 117 interaction threads generated 343 comments published by 67 individual students. The breakdowns of the group members who posted interaction threads and commented according to genders and ethnicities are presented below in frequencies and percentages:

The frequency of group members who initiated interaction threads based on genders and ethnicities

	Malay	Chinese	Indian	Others	Total
	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f
<i>Male</i>	7 (50)	5 (35.7)	-	2 (14.3)	14
<i>Female</i>	21 (63.6)	8 (24.2)	2 (6.1)	2 (6.1)	33

The frequency of group members who commented on interaction threads based on genders and ethnicities

	Malay	Chinese	Indian	Others	Total
	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f
Male	12 (66.7)	5 (27.8)	-	1 (5.5)	18
Female	41 (83.7)	6 (12.2)	1 (2)	1 (2)	49

In total, there were 89 unique individual students who made their participation visible in the LMT100 group by initiation of interaction threads and comments. This statistic excludes the students who *liked* a post. There were 170 unique individuals if the statistics include the students who liked, initiated interaction threads and commented on posts. These students may have participated repeatedly or just once during the six weeks' data collection period.

There are a number of points that could be discussed in relation to the questionnaire responses. However, we must bear in mind of a caveat that it is impossible to do a full relationship analysis as the number of members who made their participation visible in the group was relatively small.

- More female students (approximately double the frequencies of the male students) initiated interaction threads and commented in the group compared to male students.
- On the other hand, the questionnaire results indicated that the female students had issues with their self-confidence due to their uncertainties on more items than the male students. However, based on the rate of their participation in the LMT100 group, the female students demonstrated higher self-confidence to take part in an English learning platform compared to the male students.
- The Malay female students showed the highest degree of participation in the LMT100 group.

- Both male and female Malay students demonstrated the highest involvement in the group compared to other ethnicities. However, the numbers were far too low to substantiate the questionnaire reports that stated the majority of students from all ethnicities found learning English on Facebook as interesting.
- Contrary to the questionnaire response, the Indian students showed neither the most favourable attitudes towards learning English on Facebook, nor were they motivated to use English online, offline and with lecturers after engaging with Facebook. This is because, only two female Indian students made their involvement visible in the group, but only one of them was actively interacting with other members.
- Similarly, the Malay students showed more confidence to use English on Facebook compared to Indian, Chinese and other ethnicities students. This contradicted the questionnaire findings that indicated the Malay students formed the majority who were not confident to speak in English, and the Indian students were the most confident to use English. In line with the questionnaire findings, the Malay students showed high interest to communicate with their lecturers in English, which was evident based on their interactions with me.
- In contrast to the questionnaire results, the Chinese and other ethnicities students showed neither average nor improved confidence for all skills. The Chinese students were also not highly motivated to use English, which may perhaps be linked to their self-confidence issues as presented in the questionnaire findings.

Grounded Theory

At the second stage, the data was analysed using grounded theory to derive the final themes. The raw data were in the forms of the interaction threads. Each thread was analysed to understand the contexts of the interaction. Following Charmaz's (2006) guidelines for grounded theory, these questions were asked about the data during the coding process:

- What is going on?
- What are people doing?
- What is the person saying?
- What do these actions and statements take for granted?
- How do structure and context serve to support, maintain, impede or change these actions and statements?

An example of an interaction thread in the LMT 100 group is presented below, to illustrate the coding process that led to the development of final themes.

A Reading the dictionary.

How can we learn or further improve our language skills? Any tips?



Like · Comment · Unfollow Post · November 14 at 10:24am via mobile

and 4 others like this.

B just try to do anything in "English"; in writing, speaking...try n try, thats the main key to improve..
November 14 at 10:39am · Like · 1

C before this, myself used to improve language skills by reading newspapers everyday...but once i stepped into USM, i have no time to spend with newspapers...nowadayz im rarely read them.... 😞
November 14 at 10:41am · Like · 1

D By Reading the dictionary ! hehe.
November 14 at 10:46am via mobile · Like · 1

E reading is the bridge of knowledge' so,let's always be with the books,magazines,newspapers n anything that we can read..if we don't read for too long,i'm afraid that we wont know on how to spell the words..bwahaha
November 14 at 1:19pm · Like · 2

F watching MOVIE...enjoyable...
November 14 at 4:06pm · Like

Write a comment...

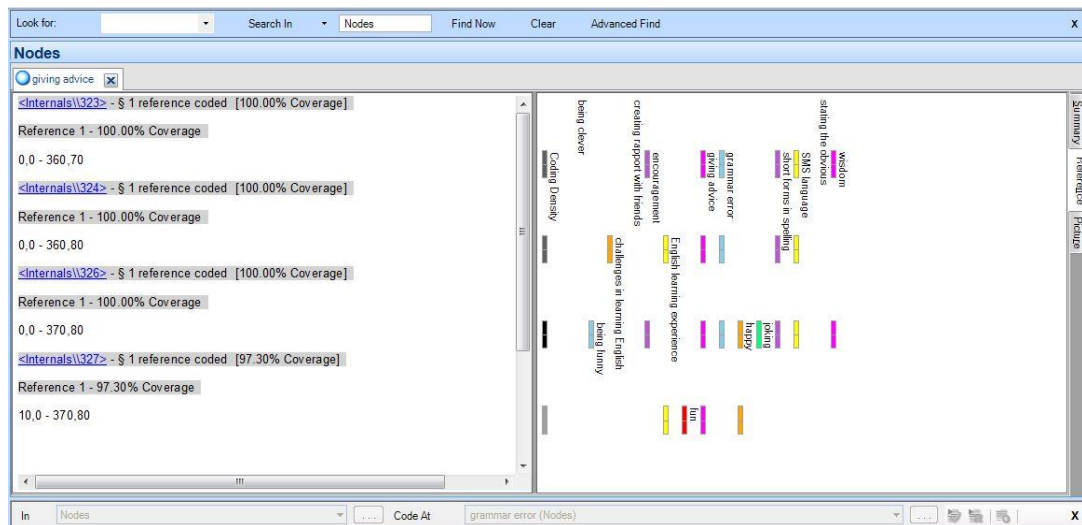
EXAMPLE 1: AN INTERACTION THREAD IN THE LMT100 GROUP

4.11.1 Open coding or free nodes

Example 1 shows a post published in the group by A, asking the members to share ELL tips. Based on the posts and comments, a set of initial codes, i.e. open codes, were generated in an open coding process. In NVivo, the open codes are known as the free nodes. The open codes or free nodes derived from Example 1 are listed below:

- non-academic post
- multimedia-based post
- picture
- English language
- initiate interaction
- giving advice
- encouragement
- English learning experience
- challenges in learning English
- joking
- being funny
- stating the obvious
- creating rapport with friends
- wisdom
- being clever
- happy
- fun
- grammar error
- short forms in spelling

A screenshot from NVivo below shows the relevant coding stripes that were derived from the open coding process:



SCREENSHOT 1: CODING STRIPES OF THE OPEN CODES IN NVIVO

The descriptions of the open codes from Example 1 are shown in Table 14:

TABLE 14: THE OPEN CODES FROM THE INTERACTION THREADS IN THE LMT100 GROUP

	Code	Description
1	Non-academic post	Posts that relate to other things than pure or practical academic information.
2	Multimedia-based	Posts or comments with multimedia elements such as pictures, videos, documents or links.
3	Initiate interaction	Posts or comments that attempt to start a conversation among members of the group.
4	Giving advice	Members share what they think are the right thing to do in a situation.
5	Encouragement	Members lend support to their friends to do something.
6	English learning experience	Members talk about their experience on how they learn English language.
7	Challenges in learning English	Members talk about the problems that they face in learning English.
8	Joking	Attempt at being funny.
9	Being funny	Members make joke to lighten up the interaction.
10	Stating the obvious	Members reiterating what have been said in previous comments or posts.
11	Creating rapport with friends	Members' attempt to be friendly with other members.
12	Wisdom	Members showing their critical thinking ability.
13	Happy	Members displaying their positive emotions.
14	Fun	Members displaying their fun side.
15	Grammar error	Grammatical error in posts or comments.
16	Short forms in spelling	Short forms used in spelling of words.
17	SMS language	Words, phrases, and short forms that are always found in SMS language.

Open coding was carried out for all 117 posts and 797 strips of interaction exchanges (i.e. posts and comments) from the LMT100 Facebook group. Strauss and Corbin's (1994) constant comparative approach was used to continuously compare the existing codes generated, with the new codes, to avoid repetition and to ensure the possibility of new codes. At the end of this process, 83 open codes or free nodes had been developed in NVivo.

4.11.2 Axial coding

Axial coding is used to sort the open codes into bigger groups of categories (Strauss and Corbin, 1994). At this stage, further analysis was conducted on the 83 open codes or free nodes to identify their relationship to one another. The main categories of themes developed from Example 1 and its open codes are as follow:

- Types of post
- Purpose of post
- Action
- Feeling or emotion
- English learning experience
- Grammar aspects
- Language

Table 15 illustrates the categories of themes and the open codes based on Example 1.

TABLE 15: THE THEMES DEVELOPED FROM THE OPEN CODES

Category	Open codes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Types of post</i> Whether the post is academic or non-academic. Academic post talks about pure academic information (lecture notes, assignments, etc.) and practical information (class schedules, venues, etc.). Non-academic post talks about everything else except academic information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • non-academic post • multimedia post
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Purpose of post</i> Intention to post updates on LMT 100 group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • giving advice • encouragement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Action</i> What the posts or comments intended to do or achieve. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joking • stating the obvious • creating rapport with friends • being funny • wisdom • happy • fun
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Feeling or emotion</i> Feeling or emotion portrayed by the posts or comments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English learning experience • challenges in learning English
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>English learning experience</i> Current or prior English learning experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • grammar error • short forms in spelling • SMS language
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Grammar aspects</i> Intentional or unintentional grammatical or spelling error in the writing of posts and comments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English language
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Language</i> Types of language used in post and comment. 	

At the end of the process, 10 main categories of themes were developed, with 72 codes and 36 sub-codes. Appendix C (page 494) shows the full list of themes and sub-themes developed from the interactions on the LMT 100 Facebook group. Some of these themes occurred more than others. The themes include the types of interaction threads found in the LMT100 group, the purpose of interaction threads, grammatical aspects, choice of language, the intended action of posts and comments, and feelings or emotions indicated by the posts. A general description of the LMT100 group's environment is presented below to give a clearer idea of its dynamic.

4.12 A general observation of the LMT100 Facebook group's environment

The LMT 100 Facebook group was observed for about six weeks, from September 2013 to November 2013. Prior to the observation, the participants were informed to use the group as an English interaction platform, discuss any topics, and post voluntarily. A month into the interaction phase, there were approximately 360 members in the group. The number kept growing and up to October 2014, the group had approximately 700 members. However, the number of members did not translate into active interaction activity. The members were generally inactive, which resulted in low participation rate. This was made apparent by:

- the lack of activities (i.e. interaction threads and comments) in the group
- the participation of the usual 20 active members, besides other members who only occasionally participated
- the declining number of members who commented or liked posts
- I was the main person who constantly posted in the group

I published the first post in the group to test the workability and visibility of the platform. The post was a web link of an article about healthy eating. Members started to join the group after accepting my invitation on Facebook. At the beginning, the group showed high interactive potential, as it was garnering interest from members. Students were asking to join the group (Example 2), sharing practical course-related information (Example 3), expressing themselves (Example 4), sharing multimedia elements to engage friends in conversation (Example 5), and posting interactive-based post to solicit responses (Example 5). After a while, however, the amount of posts decreased and I played a more active role as a participant observer to encourage interactions in the group.



EXAMPLE 2: A MEMBER ASKING PERMISSION TO INCLUDE HER FRIENDS IN THE LMT100 GROUP



EXAMPLE 3: A MEMBER SHARING PRACTICAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE LMT100 COURSE



EXAMPLE 4: A MEMBER'S SELF-EXPRESSION



EXAMPLE 5: A MEMBER'S WELL WISHES TO THE GROUP MEMBERS



EXAMPLE 6: A MEMBER SHARING MOTIVATIONAL QUOTE POSTER WITH THE MEMBERS

Examples 2 to 6 show the students' positive attitudes at the initial stage of the group interaction activity. They expressed themselves freely, shared news, and tried to engage with each other in interactions. At that stage, there were a growing number of members who liked, posted, and commented on the interaction threads in the group. Over time however, it was noticeable that the members who were active and maintained their interest in the group were the usual 20 members. Other members made an occasional appearance in the group by clicking like to the posts they enjoyed, commenting on other members' contribution, and so forth. However, a large number of members had never surfaced or contributed to the activities of the group.

Despite the encouraging initial interest from the group members, the activity in the LMT100 Facebook group did not peak. Eventually, there were fewer posts that relate to ELL, sharing of academic information, and promoting interaction. The Facebook page slowly transformed into an advertising platform whereby group members promoted university-related events and business products, solicited questionnaire participants for their courses, and so forth. Some posts were not even written in English, and were copy pasted from generic Facebook posts from other pages. Some examples of the advertisement in the LMT100 group are shown below:



EXAMPLE 7: A MEMBER PROMOTED A CAR WASH SERVICE AT ONE OF THE UNIVERSITY HALLS



EXAMPLE 8: A MEMBER ASKING HELP FROM OTHER MEMBERS TO FILL IN A QUESTIONNAIRE

Although there were still occasional posts from the 20 regular members who attempted to initiate English language interactions in the group, the lack of encouraging responses from other members might have disappointed them from being too active. Some examples of posts by members who tried to initiate conversation are as follows:



EXAMPLE 9: A MEMBER SUGGESTED THAT THE GROUP HOLDS A DISCUSSION PRIOR TO A TEST



EXAMPLE 10: A MEMBER SHARED AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE PRONUNCIATION LEARNING STRATEGY

As is evident in almost all of the examples, there were very limited number of members who participated in each interaction thread. Except for Example 3, not more than three members responded or interacted with each other in each thread.

To recap, the LMT100 group's objective was to provide students with opportunities to practice their English language interaction skills in a safe and friendly environment. They were invited to share their knowledge, life experience, course materials, or discuss any subject matters with one another. However, the group did not achieve this objective, as the members mainly used the platform to promote events, contests and businesses. These types of post were not always written in English, and did not often gain attention from members. Although there were some instances of knowledge sharing and interactive discussions, the frequency was far too low as being compared to the number of members in the group. Furthermore, most of the interactions were initiated by me, rather than the student participants. I posted a variety of updates to encourage interactions among members. The different types of post gathered different themes, and the frequency of participation differed. The types of posts that captured the students' attention are presented in the following section.

4.13 Types of Posts

This section presents the types of post shared in the LMT100 group. Firstly, the posts are categorised into three types; academic, non-academic, and socio-academic. The description of these categories is presented in the following section. Secondly, the purposes of the posts and comments published in the LMT100 group are also described.

4.13.1 Categories of posts: Academic, non-academic, and socio-academic

The topics in the LMT100 group can be grouped into two categories; academic and non-academic. Academic posts include purely educational information (e.g. assignments, lecture notes) and practical information (e.g. class schedules and venues), while non-academic posts include everything else. However, many of the posts shared

in the LMT100 group were social in nature but often related to the university context. This type of post is categorised as *socio-academic*, and added as a type of post from the LMT100 group, besides academic and non-academic. The socio-academic posts include university-related information or event such as advertisements of events and promotion of contests. For instance, Example 9 above is a socio-academic post. The three types of posts can appear in the forms of interactive-based or multimedia-based. Generally, there were more socio-academic posts and non-academic posts than academic ones, and there were equal amounts of multimedia-based and interactive-based posts on the page. Some examples that illustrate the types of posts are as follows:



EXAMPLE 11: AN ACADEMIC, INTERACTIVE-BASED POST BY A MEMBER ASKING FOR PRACTICAL INFORMATION ABOUT THEIR CLASS SCHEDULE IN MANGLISH (MALAYSIAN ENGLISH)



EXAMPLE 12: A NON-ACADEMIC, MULTIMEDIA-BASED POST THAT SHOWS A SIGN IN BAHASA MALAYSIA

4.13.2 Purposes of posts

The purpose of the posts in the Facebook group may be divided into three categories, which are to solicit information, share information, and promote or advertise. More detailed descriptions and sub-codes to the categories are shown in Table 16 below:

TABLE 16: THE PURPOSE OF THE INTERACTION THREADS IN THE LMT100 GROUP

			Description and example
Purpose of posts	Soliciting information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to interact to learn English to answer questions get participants to do something 	Example 11 shows a participant asking about their LMT100 class schedule. The post is categorised as academic as it relates to their official English class. However, there was nobody who answered this inquiry.
	Sharing information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> create jokes university-related event self-expression well-wishes 	Example 2 illustrates a post that informed about the first LMT100 course test. In this case, the information is academic as it directly relates to their English language course.
	Promoting or advertising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> university-related events and contests student representatives businesses 	Example 6 shows a poster, advertising a car wash service at one of the university hostels. This post is categorised as socio-academic, but was written in Malay language instead of English.
	Sharing, soliciting, and promoting information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to interact to learn English to answer questions get participants to do something create jokes university-related event self-expression well-wishes university-related events and contests student representatives businesses 	<p>There are a few unique posts that function to both share and solicit information, as well as to promote things or events. For instance, Example 8 asked help from the group members to fill in a questionnaire.</p> <p>Another instance is Example 9, where the post suggested that the group members discuss short stories in preparation for their quiz. However, the post was written in Malay language, despite its intention to invite English language discussion.</p> <p>Example 10 showed a participant sharing her favourite TV show that helped improve English language skills. Besides sharing information, she indirectly promoted the TV show to the group members.</p>

4.14 Intended action of posts or comments

The posts and comments written in the LMT100 group may give an indication of the students' feelings and emotions. This section presents the intended actions and the emotions or feelings that the group members attempted to convey. The interpretation of the group members' intended actions, and emotions or feelings, was based on the context of the interaction, and my knowledge of the Malaysian sociocultural values. The intended actions, and emotions or feelings, are described in Tables 17 and 18 below:

TABLE 17: THE (POSSIBLE) PURPOSES OF THE POSTS AND COMMENTS

Intended action of post/comment	Apologising	
	compliment	
	correcting grammar	
	creating rapport with friends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showing understanding • Shared secret
	Encouragement	
	Explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • telling stories • clarification • confirmation
	giving advice	
	giving instruction	
	giving opinion	
	Help	
	Joking	
	Persuading	
	Politeness	
	Promises	
	taking opportunity	
	Reminder	
	responding to posts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • answering questions • noting
	Request	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recommendation
	showing interest in something	
	self-experience	
Warning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • threatening 	
Welcoming		

TABLE 18: THE (POSSIBLE) EMOTIONS/FEELINGS THAT MEMBERS TRIED TO CONVEY BASED ON POSTS AND COMMENTS

Emotion or Feeling	Affection	• strong bond of friendship
	Agreement	
	Annoyed	
	Concerned	
	Confidence	
	Disagreement	
	Embarrass	
	Frustration	
	Gratitude	• appreciation
	Happy	• excited • fun
	Hopeful	
	Humble	
	in awe	• eagerness • intrigue
	Misunderstanding	
	Motivated	• interested to learn
	obligated to post/respond	• seriousness
	Panic	
	Proud	
	Sad	
	Sarcasm	
	Satisfied	
	Supportive	• friends • research
	Surprised	
	Sympathy	
Touched		
well wishes		

The actions and emotions are presented and discussed with examples. Notably however, there are many different ways to interpret the words, phrases and sentences from the posts and comments. Furthermore, each comment that responded to a post or to another comment may be intended for different purposes. There were several recurring themes for both the intended actions and emotional or feelings categories. The main themes for intended actions are *creating rapport with friends, showing interest in something, being polite, joking, explaining and encouraging*. The main recurring themes for emotion or feeling categories are *hopeful, being funny, happy, satisfaction,*

eagerness, and excitement. The examples of the intended actions, and emotions or feelings in posts are presented below.

4.14.1 Creating rapport with friends

A 1st week winner have been announced...Dont you guys also eager to grab the coolest prizes...So no waiting..Join the battle and snatch the gift..Hurry up guys we need to colour up our page with your pictures and taglines..MAKE IT SIMPLE..COME AND JOIN US...

1: persuading and promoting

B heartless... no reaction. hehehe

2: joking

A chance..

3: persuading

B hahaha.... just kidding.. later i join..

4: joking and promise

A tatz it..I love u bebeh...

5: gratitude, satisfied and happy

EXAMPLE 13: THE GROUP MEMBERS CREATING RAPPORT

In Example 13, the post was written by A to promote a photo contest in relation to the Deepavali festival (labelled 1). The participant, A, invited as many photo entries as possible from the members of the LMT100 group. The post (labelled 1) promoted the contest and persuaded members to submit their photos. This was made evident by the phrases used in the post, such as ‘grab the coolest prizes’, ‘no waiting’, ‘hurry up’, and ‘snatch the gift’. The emphasis on gifts or prizes indicated that the university students were generally attracted to instrumental things. At this stage, A may be feeling hopeful that the contest will attract the group members’ attention. However, there was only one other members (B) who responded to this invitation, and only I, liked the post. B jokingly

commented '*heartless... no reaction. hehehe*' (labelled 2). The comment in the form of joke indicated B's effort to create rapport with A. B and A might have known each other prior to the LMT100 group, which explained the joke and friendly comment to A's post.

Building on this, A further persuaded B to participate in the contest by emphasising its greatness. However, a smiley face which was placed at the end of the sentence showed A's attempt to appear less forceful. Nevertheless, the post showed A's hopefulness and persuasiveness to get B to join the contest. B replied to A's comment with a laughing sound '*hahaha*' and directly stated that she was joking, and promised A that she would participate in the contest soon. This further illustrated B's effort to build or strengthen rapport with A, and that she was in a fun, happy, and obliging mood.

The last comment, written by A, expressed satisfaction at B's promise to join in the contest. A further showed her appreciation and their close relationship by announcing that she loved B in a joking manner. In this example, the intended actions conveyed by the post and comments are *building rapport, persuading, promoting, joking, and making promises*. Meanwhile, the emotions that come into play could be; *feeling hopeful, satisfied and happy, being funny and having fun*.

4.14.2 Showing interest in something



EXAMPLE 14: A PARTICIPANT SHOWING INTEREST IN MANCHESTER UNITED TEAM PLAYERS

There were many instances of the participants showing interest in something. One of them was illustrated in Example 14, when I posted a picture of a football match. Only one participant, B, commented on the picture and highlighted the names of the team players in the picture (labelled 1). This shows her excitement upon recognizing her favourite players and eagerness to show her knowledge about them. I replied (labelled 2) by expressing surprise at the participant's ability to name the players when I could only recognize three of them. I then listed three other players' names by adding another name that had not been mentioned by B in her first comment. Indirectly, I was also sharing my knowledge of the team and correcting B's mistake. This could be a way of rapport building between myself and B, and inherently, I was seeking to encourage

more interaction from B and the other members. B replied by saying that she forgot to mention Rooney, and added an interesting fact about him (labelled 3). This fact was probably only known to real fans or people who were interested in football. Besides showing her level of knowledge, this comment illustrated her confidence in her assertion. Finally, I tried to be funny (labelled 4) by cracking a joke. However, none of the group members responded to my joke, which led to the end of the interaction thread.

From the interaction exchange, B's intended actions were to *show interest in something* and *share knowledge*. Added to this, I intended to *share knowledge*, *correct the participant*, *encourage more interaction*, *build rapport*, and *joke*. The emotional themes identified are *eagerness*, *excitement*, *confidence*, and *being funny*.

Another example of showing interest in something is shown below:



EXAMPLE 15: A PARTICIPANT SHOWING INTEREST IN THE GROUP MEMBERS' EXPERIENCE

Example 15 shows a post written by A to express her interest in the group members' life experiences. The feelings that she tried to convey were that of *awe* and *motivation*. She expressed her gratitude and appreciation to those who had shared their eventful lives in the group. I acted as participant B, and expressed my agreement that I enjoyed talking to the group members. I hoped that more members would share more about themselves, and indirectly encouraged more interactions to make the group more active. Participant A ended the interaction by promising that she would share more. In this exchange, the intended actions are *showing interest in something*, *encouraging interaction*, and *making promises*. The emotional themes interpreted include *in awe*, *motivated*, *gratitude*, and *appreciation*.

4.14.3 The act of politeness

There were several exchanges that may be interpreted as an act of politeness in the LMT100 group. The group members were particularly polite when they addressed, or interacted with me. This may be due to Asian culture that holds the highest respect towards authorities (Hu, 2002a). An example that illustrates the act of politeness is shown below:



EXAMPLE 16: A PARTICIPANT'S ACT OF POLITENESS AFTER AN INTERVIEW SESSION

After each interview session, I generally expressed my gratitude to the interviewees on the group's wall, and shared a little bit about themselves. This was to indirectly invite other members to talk about themselves, and to volunteer as interviewees too. However, after an interview with A, he thanked me for the interview opportunity (labelled 1) as at first, he was reluctant to participate. This shows that A was practising the act of politeness when interacting with me in the group. A might also feel obligated to thank me for the interview, as I was an authority. A's emotional state at this stage might be that of *appreciation, happiness, hopeful, obligated, and motivated* to be more active in the group and learn English language. Although he had limited English language ability, he strove to use the language to publish on the page.

In the first comment (labelled 2), I, as participant B, replied by thanking A and commended his interest in learning Bahasa Malaysia (the information gathered during the interview session). My intention was to express appreciation, compliment A on his passion, share information about A, and encourage A and other members to be more active in interacting in the group. Participant A replied to my comment by thanking me, and again, illustrated his *politeness, gratitude* and *humility*. However, he still made the same English language mistake, by using 'teach' instead of 'teacher', to refer to me.

The interaction exchange ended with my comment expressing happiness upon seeing A's participation in the LMT100 group. I further encouraged A to keep up his effort and ended the sentence with a smiley emoticon, to decrease the pressure of asking for more contribution from him. As such, in this example, the intended action themes were the *act of politeness, sharing of life experience, and encouragement*. The emotional themes included *obligation to show gratitude, motivated to learn English, and hopeful that A will learn more from the group*.

4.14.4 Encouragement

There were many instances of encouragement in the LMT100 group, such as encouraging participation and sharing of life experience (Examples 15 and 16), involvement in university-related events or contests (Example 13), and so forth. Based on these acts of encouragement, participant A in Example 17 shared a YouTube video link of a short story that they learned in the classroom. A's intention in sharing this might be to help the group members in their study, and share his knowledge or the information he received with them. As such, A was probably hoping that the group members appreciated his efforts, watched the video, and that the video helped ease their understanding of the short story.



EXAMPLE 17: ENCOURAGEMENT ON A'S EFFORT FOR SHARING AN ACADEMIC POST IN THE FORM OF A VIDEO

Example 17 shows that I was the only person who commented on A's YouTube video link. However, instead of talking about the content of the video, I, as participant B, complimented A on his effort to assist academic learning. The fact that there were no comments and very few likes on the post may suggest; the group members' disinterest in academic material, their familiarity with the short story, that they did not access the link, or that they accessed the link but did not feel the need to leave their footprints in the comments form. In this example, the intended actions of the post and comment could be that of *wanting to assist friends' learning, encouraging more active participation in the group, and appreciating s academic contribution to the group*. The emotional state in this interaction exchange might include that of *hopefulness, satisfaction, and appreciation*.

4.14.5 Explanation

There were a few instances of *explanation* in the LMT100 group. An example is shown below:



EXAMPLE 18: A PARTICIPANT EXPLAINING THE MOVIE CLIP POSTED ON THE FACEBOOK GROUP WALL

Participant, A initiated the interaction thread by sharing a video clip of a funny prank (labelled 1). Although interesting, the multimedia post only received two comments, from another participant, B, and myself, C. Participant A, may have shared the video to engage other members in interaction, joke and build rapport with them. Perhaps, she was hopeful that other members would access the link and feel interested in watching the video.

The post was replied to by B (labelled 2), who explained that the funny prank in the video was actually a promo video clip for the movie *Carrie*, which was screened in cinemas not long after the video went viral on the Internet. B showed her excitement and complimented the video by stating that it was the best prank. B's comment on A's post could be seen as a way to show interest in the movie, an act of politeness, and to

build rapport. B's emotional state might be that of *confidence* of the information, and *excitement* over the prank.

Participant A confirmed B's explanation about the prank video (labelled C). A's short and crisp answer might indicate her *obligation* to confirm B's explanation, and intention to end the interaction. A's response could be seen as *direct*, but *unfriendly*.

In order to get the interaction going, I, participant C added to the interaction by asking a question about the prank (labelled D), which was hoped to elongate the thread, by possibly getting a contribution from other members. However, nobody responded to my comment, which caused the interaction to end. To sum up, the intended actions gathered from the exchange include *sharing information*, *joking*, *explaining*, *confirming*, and *encouragement to interact*. The emotional states experienced by the participants could be that of *excitement*, *hopefulness*, *happiness*, *confidence*, *friendliness*, and *unfriendliness*.

4.15 Topics of interests

The previous section presented the general purposes, the intended actions, and the emotions or feelings from the posts and comments shared in the LMT100 group. It was apparent from the examples that not many threads managed to gather high interaction exchanges from the group members. Further analysis shows that the group members were more inclined to participate in certain interactive topics. Three topics that raised high participation from the group members were English language quizzes, university-related inquiries, and entertainment-based posts (songs, artists, movies). Notably however, the posts initiated by me generally gathered more exchanges than the

threads started by other group members. Of the 117 posts, 72 posts were initiated by the group members, while 36 posts were written by myself. The types of posts that gathered participants' attention are presented and discussed below.

4.15.1 University-related inquiry

There were several posts that may be categorised as academic and non-academic, but not all of these threads gathered participation from the group members. The ones that attracted the members' attention, usually inquired about university-related issues, and entertainment issues. An example of a university-related inquiry that was attractive is presented in Example 19. The thread received 14 comments from 11 group members, including myself. Perhaps, the high response on these topics was due to the students' knowledge of the university due to their experience as students.



EXAMPLE 19: A UNIVERSITY-RELATED INQUIRY THAT GATHERED THE MEMBERS' ATTENTION

Example 19 illustrated my attempt to get the group members to interact on topics that directly relate to their lives as university students, which were improvements that could be made by the university. The post received a number of comments from them. At some points, they lent support to each other's comments by expressing agreement to suggestions (numbered 1, 2, and 3). The instances highlighted by number 1 are discussed in greater detail.

The post solicited the group members' opinions on what could be improved by the university. A number of group members responded once and/or repeatedly to the

interaction threads, as they were interacting with each other. At the third comment, the participant, D, suggested that the university students should improve their manners. E then stated her agreement with D's suggestion. However, it seemed that D failed to understand the meaning of the phrase '*I couldn't agree more*', and assumed that E did not agree with her. D asked E's reason for disagreeing (comment 5), but E did not respond to D's question immediately. Only after 8 other comments by others that E came back on the interaction thread to explain her answer (comment 13). E then reciprocated, and asked D of her reason for wanting to improve the university students' manners, but this question was not answered by D.

A If... if you guys were given a chance, what kind superpower would you like to have? And why? (I'm bored, just trying to have a conversation down here). Btw. awang here. 😊

Unlike · Comment · Unfollow Post · November 7 at 1:43pm

and 2 others like this.

B i wanna have a power to control space and time...(like Hiro in heroes) 🤖👍

November 7 at 1:54pm · Like

A wow. that's pretty awesome. never think to have that kind of ability.

November 7 at 1:55pm · Like

B that power impresses me the most even tho there are many power shown in that tv show...

November 7 at 1:57pm · Like

A let's say, you were granted that power... which side will you be? the villain? or superhero?

November 7 at 1:59pm · Like

B most people will choose superhero..and i'm in that category of people.. 😊 but it can always turn the other way round

November 7 at 2:01pm · Like

A okay2. i get it. haha.

November 7 at 2:08pm · Like

A https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_9-9U6Rm46U

X-Men: Days of Future Past - Official International Teaser Trailer - UK
www.youtube.com

The ultimate X-Men ensemble fights a war for the survival of the species across ...

See More

November 7 at 2:11pm · Like · Remove Preview

A can't wait for it. haha

November 7 at 2:12pm · Like

B yeah...this movie too always gets me excited...gonna have to wait for it(it's been a long time since i watch 'em) 🤖👍

November 7 at 2:14pm · Like · 🔄 1

A kan? hi-5 dude. the last movie was extremely awesome. haha.

November 7 at 2:16pm · Like

B i got to spare some of my times to re-watch them...just thinking of it already give me the goosebumps..

November 7 at 2:23pm · Like

C invincibility.. well, that's what my husband would say. i tiru. hehe. what bout u, awg? u never told us what's ur preferred superpower

November 7 at 4:40pm · Like · 🔄 1

A me? well, i used n always imagined myself to posses those telepathic/telekinesis/mind reading/controlling/ kinda power. hoho.

November 7 at 5:10pm · Like

C mind reader?! that's awesome for u, but not for others. haha.

November 8 at 3:05pm · Like

A Hahah. That's the awesome part of owning it miss. Hahaha.

November 9 at 2:08pm via mobile · Like

EXAMPLE 20: A NON-ACADEMIC, INTERACTIVE-BASED POST THAT CREATED A SERIES OF INTERACTION EXCHANGE

Another example of a post that gathered a number of exchanges is presented in Example 20. This example however, was not university related. It was an interaction between two students who were interested in the same topic, instead of gathering a list of contribution from other group members. Participant, A, initiated the post in an attempt to engage the group members in interactions on the topic of superpower. Although only one other participant (besides me) responded to the post, there were about 10 exchanges between A and B about superpowers, and the then upcoming X-Men movie. This thread was remarkable because it managed to gather a high frequency of exchanges between two members, which was very rarely observed in the LMT100 group.

4.15.2 English language quizzes

The group members rarely shared anything related to ELL or other academic matters. However, when I started initiating threads in the form of English language quizzes, they showed high interest and participation rate in the activity. Two examples (Examples 21 and 22) are shown as below:

A

Murder of English

1. Pick up the paper and fall in the dustbin.
2. Both of you stand together separately.
3. Why are you looking at the monkeys outside when I am inside.
4. Will you hang the calendar or else I will hang myself.
5. I have 2 daughters both are girls.
6. Give me a blue pen of any color.
7. The principal is revolving in the corridor.
8. all of u stand in a straight circle
9. Open the Window - Let the AIRFORCE come in.

Like · Comment · Unfollow Post · November 13 at 5:57am via mobile

and 12 others like this.

A Find the problems with these sentences.
November 13 at 5:58am via mobile · Like

B 1. throw into dustbin
2. together separately?
3. when I am inside?? inside the monkey?
4. hang by myself
5. daughters are girls
6. blue, so no more any colour
7. at the corridor
8. straight circle?? straight line or round circle
9. airforce, lol.. the battle plane
November 13 at 6:05am · Edited · Like · x1

C 4.1 will hang myself(this one funny for me)
November 13 at 6:06am · Like · x1

B 9. airforce come in also funny..
November 13 at 6:07am · Like · x1

D I have a question here.
the sentences of no 5,6,7 look okay, but i can't detect where is the grammar error., especially "the blue pen of any color".
November 13 at 6:07am · Like

D oh..nampak.. give me the blue pen of any color"..
November 13 at 6:09am · Like

C or give me the pen of any color..
November 13 at 6:17am · Edited · Like · x1

E fall in the dustbin.
November 13 at 6:55am · Like

F give me a blue pen of any color, all of you stand in a straight circle,fall in the dustbin,both of you stand together separately, i will hang myself,
November 13 at 8:56am · Like

F best questions...
November 13 at 8:57am · Like

A Good job people. I agree with almost all of answers. But additionally, can we just check what revolving means?
November 13 at 9:13am via mobile · Like · x1

EXAMPLE 21: AN EXAMPLE OF AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE QUIZ THAT GATHERED A LOT OF INTEREST FROM THE GROUP MEMBERS

Example 21 shows a picture with inaccurate English language sentences. One of the group members, B, passionately provided the entire *correct* version of the sentences, the way he saw fit. Following his response, there were 4 more responses from other group members (C, D, E, F), who not only tried to correct the grammatical mistakes (D, E), but also announced that they could not see any mistakes in the sentences (C), and tried to help each other out (B tried to help D). Two of them expressed their excitement over the activity by stating how funny the sentences were (C, F). This shows that the students inherently had an interest and passion for ELL. They were interested to participate in activities that they thought could help improve their skills. The reasons for their low intensity of participation prior to this could be attributed to the lack of effort

in searching for English language materials, their familiarity with the Malaysian education system, sociocultural exposures, and the traditional way of learning, where teachers present content and exercises to students (Hu, 2002a).

A Quiz of the day.

Choose the correct way(s) to express agreement with someone. We will stick to the present tense for now.

a. I agree
b. I agrees
c. I'm agree
d. I agreeing
e. I'm agreeing

Like · Comment · Unfollow Post · November 17 at 2:01am via mobile

and 7 others like this.

B a...I agree ..
November 17 at 2:07am · Like

C present tense??
what i remember since a few years ago..the answer a kot..hehe..for e..i'm not really sure
November 17 at 2:18am · Like · 1

D maybe a.
November 17 at 2:28am · Like

E the answers is A
November 17 at 2:29am · Like

F i will go for A and E...
November 17 at 2:45am · Like

G a
November 17 at 3:13am · Like

H C
November 17 at 3:20am via mobile · Like

I c
November 17 at 3:50am · Like

J Al Ting ting ting...
November 17 at 4:12am via mobile · Like

K c
November 17 at 4:30am · Like

L I choose c..
November 17 at 7:38am · Like

M A maybe..
November 17 at 8:44am · Like

N I agree..
November 17 at 9:19am · Edited · Like

O my answer is A 😊
November 17 at 10:26am · Like · 1

P A
November 17 at 11:25am · Like

A The answers are a and e.

Agree = verb

Other similar correct examples:
a. I speak
e. I'm speaking

Speak = verb

c is very commonly used, but it is incorrect.
Other similar incorrect examples:
c. I'm speak
c. I'm sleep.

Sleep = verb

However, these sentences are correct:

I'm hungry.
I'm pretty.

Hungry, pretty = adjective

So, next time, use "I agree" to express agreement.

Do not use "I'm agree".

I hope this helps 😊
November 17 at 11:50am via mobile · Like · 13

L Ow..🙄 ok next time I use I agree...
November 17 at 12:53pm · Like

Q A
November 17 at 1:45pm · Like

R A and C
November 17 at 3:12pm · Like

A a is correct but c is incorrect. Do read the explanation in the comment above yes.
November 17 at 3:16pm via mobile · Like · 1

R oh i see..thank you 😊
November 17 at 3:17pm · Like

C kak ..dah agak dh jwapan dia..cuma yg E tu xsure sangat sebab jrang dngnr I'm agreeing..huhu btw thanks for the info.. buat lagi cmne..best main jawab2
November 17 at 3:19pm · Like · 1

J Thanks for the explanation kak shai, hifi
November 17 at 3:21pm via mobile · Like

A Hi Yes, I have to agree that "I'm agreeing" is quite rare.

InsyAllah we'll do more of this. You guys can come up with your questions too.

No problem, Just hoping I'm not giving any wrong explanation. Hehe.
November 17 at 3:39pm via mobile · Like · 3

S nice post I like playing with grammar!
November 17 at 3:48pm · Like · 1

B Grammar round..kikiki
November 17 at 3:49pm · Like

Write a comment...

EXAMPLE 22: AN EXAMPLE OF AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE QUIZ THAT GATHERED A LOT OF INTEREST FROM THE GROUP MEMBERS

Example 22 shows an update with a grammar question. The group members were asked to type in the correct answers based on the choices given. This format of activity

attracted even more participation from the students, which was probably due to its simplicity. The activity required very limited thinking and typing, and could be completed quickly. Following the Digital Natives argument (Prensky, 2001 b), the group members might have enjoyed simple, quick online tasks to further enhance their ability to multitask between activities on the Internet.

4.15.3 Entertainment-based posts

The group members showed distinct interest when talking about entertainment-based topics, especially songs and movies. Example 23 below illustrates the longest interaction thread in the LMT100 platform that centred on the topic of music suggestions. I asked the group members to suggest good songs to be added to my playlist. The post received a lot of songs suggestion, which indicated the students' eagerness to talk about music. This could be attributed to two reasons. Firstly, the students wanted to express their identities and personalities through their song choices. As young adults, the university students probably wanted to be associated with something popular and fashionable, and one way that this could be achieved was to link themselves with specific genres of music or celebrities. The ability to suggest good songs might also illustrate their keeping up to date with the current music scenes. Alternatively, the high frequency of responses to the post may simply be because the group members wanted to help me find good songs and simultaneously create rapport. One of the group members, D, even suggested that I avoided the songs he felt unworthy. All in all, many of the members were eager to engage in discussions about songs and music. They displayed excitement, passion, and interest when this topic was presented. The interaction thread is shown below:

A

Any suggestions for good songs?
I'm leaving for London on Thursday, so I would like to update my MP3 playlist to keep me off boredom!

Do share some of your favourite songs that you might have on your phones or laptops; songs that you keep listening to while studying. Any languages will do; English, BM, Korean.

I need to have a little bit of variety and zest in my live!

Many thanks and have a splendid day 😊

Like · Comment · Unfollow Post · November 25 at 5:18am

👍 and 11 others like this.

- B** "now" by troublemaker??hihi
November 25 at 5:19am · Like · 👍 1
- C** begin again taylor swift .
November 25 at 5:19am · Like · 👍 1
- D** dark horse-katy perry
November 25 at 5:21am · Like
- D** unconditionally-katyperry
November 25 at 5:21am · Like · 👍 1
- E** Bruno Mars-talking to the moon
November 25 at 5:28am · Like · 👍 1
- F** home-westlife...
i love the song so much..
November 25 at 5:30am · Like · 👍 1
- G** Yuna- colors
November 25 at 5:33am via mobile · Like
- H** The fox
November 25 at 5:36am · Like · 👍 1
- I** Bintang hati ku,jaga selalu hati mu,sendiwara cinta,huhu.. sy illu dgr lgu bm je.. 😊 lgu ct yg terbrubest jgk..
sume lgu bm sy tau la.huhu.. k. ckp je nk lgu pe t sy sent je..hihi
November 25 at 5:41am via mobile · Like
- J** What about love-austin mahone,just give me a reason-pink,diamond-rihanna,galau-five minutes.hehehe
November 25 at 5:50am via mobile · Like
- K** It girl - jason derulo
November 25 at 6:56am via mobile · Like
- L** top of thw world by the carpenter.
November 25 at 6:59am via mobile · Like
- L** *the
November 25 at 6:59am via mobile · Like
- H** Blitzkrieg bop- ramones
Ruby soho- rancid
Red hot moon- rancid
Do I wanna know- arctic monkeys
Why'd you only call me when you're high? - arctic monkey
Home sweet home- motley crue
Wrecking ball- miley cyrus
Roar- katty perry
November 25 at 7:00am · Like

- M** sweeter than fiction-taylor swift
you can't make old friend-kenny rogers
double rainbow-katy perry
don't let me be lonely-the band perry
November 25 at 8:37am · Like
- N** J.s bach he3
November 25 at 8:51am via mobile · Like
- O** english song or malay or what??
this time i love to hear rindukanlah by encik mimpi..hehehe
pengaruh cerita kt tv 3
November 25 at 9:29am · Like · 👍 1
- P** haha me too ! 😊
November 25 at 9:35am · Like · 👍 1
- P** well kak its sad to her that u gonna leave soon 😊 do come and visit us if u r back in Malaysia ! hehe.
my fav song is Little Thing by 1D. ya its not a new song but i just so in love with the lyrics ! haha
November 25 at 9:37am · Like · 👍 2
- M** maybe u can try story of my life by 1D too...
November 25 at 9:38am · Like · 👍 1
- Q** Carla Bruni - Quelqu'un m'adit 😊 take care kak
November 25 at 12:09pm · Like
- N** Don't you remember by Adele, impossible by shontelle.. We can't stop by miley Cyrus. Eheh.. Happy trip Kak
November 25 at 12:12pm via mobile · Like
- R** try alexendar rybak song the title is "singing oah" but some people say there are mistake in the lyrics maybe the grammar.. kak try to hear it.. and have a safe journey..
November 25 at 12:21pm · Like · 👍 1
- S** WESTLIFE'S songs...😊
November 25 at 2:07pm · Like · 👍 2
- T** korean songs??
November 25 at 4:13pm · Like
- U** ringa linga by taeyang
growl by exo
crooked by gd
no by bts 😊
November 25 at 6:37pm · Like · 👍 1
- T** fiction by beast
who you by gd
November 25 at 7:22pm · Like
- G** 3000 miles- emblem3 . Haha confirm homesick bila dengar
November 25 at 7:24pm via mobile · Like
- V** sudah cukup sudah sis...ma fav song..!!
November 26 at 2:53am · Like · 👍 1
- A** OMG! You guys are the best!
I'm gonna try and download all of them. If you have the MP3 versions, you can always share them here.
I'm so outdated, that many of the songs sound so foreign to me. But I love Talking to the Moon.

Keep the songs coming and do supply me with the MP3s too! Love love love!
Thank you guys! 😊
November 26 at 3:54pm · Like · 👍 3

D <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wiiRWoNlnYg>



Billboard Hot 100 - Top 50 Singles (11/23/2013)
www.youtube.com
Billboard Hot 100 Top 50 singles for 11/23/2013 The top 50 songs from the Billbo...
See More

November 26 at 3:55pm · Like · Remove Preview

A And I will never forget all of you. I'll be posting news and pictures until you get sick and tired of me! Muhahaha *evil laugh*

November 26 at 3:55pm · Like · 4

S 😊 Thank you Kak [redacted].. have anice trip..

November 26 at 3:56pm · Like

A 😊 That's very helpful. Thank you [redacted]

November 26 at 3:56pm · Like · 1

A Aww... touched.. sobs.. thanks [redacted]

November 26 at 3:57pm · Like

D ignore Miley Cyrus' song

November 26 at 3:57pm · Like

A [redacted] too late.. I already have Wrecking Ball on my playlist 😊

November 26 at 3:57pm · Like · 1

D [redacted] better not watch the music video.. too annoying

November 26 at 4:03pm · Like · 1

D <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8piAL5rD6wI> Shai Akma



The Wanted - We Own The Night
www.youtube.com
Word Of Mouth is out now: <http://po.st/WOMDeluxeYT> Follow The Wanted: <http://www...>
See More

November 26 at 4:10pm · Like · 2 · Remove Preview

A [redacted] Hahaha. Luckily I haven't, but thanks for the heads up 😊

November 26 at 4:19pm · Like · 1

D [redacted] you're welcome.. bring back some souvenirs for group 82 LMT100 students.. hahah

November 26 at 4:21pm · Like

A [redacted] ouhh.. the pressure 😊

November 26 at 4:25pm · Like · 1

W [redacted] taylor henderson - borrow my heart
jai weatford - your eyes...
both are finalist for xfactor aus....
not to heavy...

November 26 at 5:13pm · Like · 1

K [redacted] Unconditional katy perry

November 27 at 2:31am via mobile · Like · 1

X [redacted] Taman rashidah utama,misteri mimpi syakila:wings
Puteri seroja,laila namamu teratas:search

November 27 at 6:57am via mobile · Like

Y <http://youtu.be/XjwZAa2EjKA>



Katy Perry - Unconditionally (Official)
www.youtube.com
Download "Unconditionally" from Katy Perry's 'PRISM': <http://smarturl.it/PRISM>
O...
See More

November 28 at 8:26am · Like · 2 · Remove Preview

Y <http://youtu.be/5nNbIoK98XQ>



Siti Nurhaliza - Lebih Indah (Lirik)
www.youtube.com
Have fun listening & Thanks for watching ^^ Check out my channel at : <http://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-pyMo-ITmylXF7dxtGQJ-g/videos>

November 28 at 8:26am · Like · Remove Preview

EXAMPLE 23: A POST THAT SOLICITED SONGS SUGGESTION THAT CAPTURED A LOT OF GROUP MEMBERS'

ATTENTION AND INTEREST

4.16 Choice of language in the LMT100 group

The questionnaire responses suggested that the group members came from various sociocultural backgrounds. The multicultural demographic led to the adoption of multiple languages on the LMT100 platform. Even though the group was specifically created for English language interaction, there were several posts that written in other languages besides English, including Malay, Chinese, and Manglish (Malaysian English). Table 11 illustrates the languages used by the members to write posts and comments.

TABLE 19: THE TYPES OF LANGUAGES USED ON THE LMT100 INTERACTION THREADS

Choice of language	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• English language• English language slang• Malay language• Malaysian English (Manglish)• Other languages (Chinese)
--------------------	---

The posts written in English have been illustrated in the earlier examples. As such, the threads written in other languages besides English are presented with examples below:

4.16.1 English language slang

Due to the sociocultural interaction, slang was used by the group members in their posts and comments. Slang is defined as *“a type of language consisting of words and phrases that are regarded as very informal, are more common than speech than writing, and are typically restricted to a particular context or group of people”* (Dictionaries, 2014). Some examples of slangs used could be seen in Examples 3, 10, and 11 in previous sections.

A

Guys, just wanna inform u next week we have test for LMT 100 lesson 1, 2 & 3!! Good luck 😊

An extract from Example 3 to show the use of the word 'guys' and 'wanna' as an English slang

A

Happy Sunday peeps! hope your English will improve fr time 2 time..and dont forget to correct ur BM too!hihihi..

An extract from Example 12 to show the use of the word 'peeps' as an English slang

In Example 3, the word 'guys' was used to address the members of the group. In Examples 3 and 9, the participants used 'wanna' as a short form of 'want to', which was commonly used in SMS language. In Example 10, the word 'peeps' was used as a short form of 'people' to address the other members of the group. Perhaps, the English language slang was employed to achieve specific purposes, such as; to sound more modern, to make the typing of the messages quicker, and to make the messages sound more casual and friendly.

4.16.2 Bahasa Malaysia

A few participants purposely chose to write their posts and comments in Bahasa Malaysia. Bahasa Malaysia is the national language of Malaysia. As such, it was assumed that most students are familiar and comfortable with it. Perhaps, more students were able to access and understand the content of the posts and comments when it was in used. The students who chose to use Bahasa Malaysia may also be less confident of their English language ability to articulate thoughts and suggestions (see Example 9). Bahasa Malaysia may also be used due to the students' familiarity with official businesses such as writing formal letters or emails to the department or university. In the LMT100 group, Bahasa Malaysia was commonly employed when the members

promoted and advertised university-related events or contest. The students may have associated these types of post with official businesses, hence used Bahasa Malaysia to promote them. Most of these posts however, were generic and have been used on other Facebook pages too. Two instances of generic Bahasa Malaysia threads are shown in Examples 24 and 25. Example 24 shows a student who was campaigning for the university's election for student body, while Example 25 illustrates a post to promote a Family Day activity organised by a society at the university.



EXAMPLE 24: A CANDIDATE FOR THE STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES POSTED HIS CAMPAIGN AND MANIFESTO ON THE GROUP'S WALL IN BAHASA MALAYSIA

A

CEPAT! JANGAN LEPASKAN PELUANG KEEMASAN INI!
SESIAPA YANG NK JOIN BOLEH ISI NAMA, NO IC, NO MATRIK, NO
TEL, DAN DESA (dalam LINK dibawah) BAYARAN PERLU DIBUAT
SEBELUM 13 NOVEMBER 2013..MORE INFO CALL NO YG TERTERA
<https://www.facebook.com/l.php?u=https%3A%2F%2Fdocs.google.com%2Fforms%2Fd%2F1MsXdUzHqJxNXUyVPkBU6sVbZHB0t-EyGgh9PThB6Vls%2Fviewform&h=KAQFET2J1>



EXAMPLE 25: A POST TO PROMOTE FAMILY DAY AT THE UNIVERSITY. BOTH THE POST AND THE POSTER WERE WRITTEN IN BAHASA MALAYSIA

4.16.3 Manglish (Malaysian English)

Some group members adopted Manglish (Malaysian English) slang in their posts and comments. Manglish is a version of the English language that is influenced by a variety of Malaysian languages and dialects such as Bahasa Malaysia, Chinese, and Tamil. Presumably, Manglish emerged from the sociocultural influences of the Malaysian society's languages. Manglish is more noticeable in speeches, but there is also evidence of Manglish in written form, on the LMT100 site. Manglish commonly uses inaccurate sentence structure, grammar and word choices. In speeches, there are normally additional syllable such as *-mah*, *-meh*, and *-lah*, at the end of the sentences. According to Rajadurai (2004), there is a growing sense of pride to be recognised as a user of Manglish, as it indicates Malaysian identities. This resulted in sometimes exaggerated

speeches or pronunciation to project membership of the specific cultural community (ibid.). Some instances of Manglish used in the LMT100 group are illustrated below:



EXAMPLE 26: THE USE OF MANGGLISH TO INQUIRE ABOUT CLASS SCHEDULE



EXAMPLE 27: THE USE OF MANGGLISH, IN THE FORM OF PARTICLE –LAH TO RESPOND TO THE POST

Examples 26 and 27 demonstrate instances of Manglish used in the LMT100 group's posts and comments. The post in Example 26 was written with incorrect sentence structure, inaccurate word choices, and short forms. The post was written the way that the student would say it in speech. In Example 27, the comment by participant K (labelled 3) was written with the particle '-lah' at the end of the sentence. The particle -lah does not carry any distinct meaning, and could mean different things when used in different situations.

4.16.4 Other languages (Chinese) and English

There were several posts and comments that used a combination of other languages and English, such as Bahasa Malaysia and English, and Chinese and English. The first example was presented in Example 7 above, where the participants promoted a Car Wash service opening at one of the hostels. The post shared the phrase ‘Now Open’, followed by the name of the company, ‘Restu Car Wash’. The next paragraph described the car wash in Bahasa Malaysia, which was followed by a poster that applied a combination of Bahasa Malaysia and English. Another example of combination of languages employed in a post is shown below:



EXAMPLE 28: A POST IN WRITTEN IN MANDARIN AND ENGLISH TO ASK FOR LIKES

Example 28 shows a post written in Mandarin and English to promote a photo that was competing in the university’s Environmental Photography Contest. In the post, participant A requested that the group members to click like at the photo on the link he shared.

4.17 Grammar aspects

Previous examples of the interaction threads showed that not all of the posts and comments in English were grammatically correct. Table 20 illustrates some of the grammatical errors identified in the LMT100 group.

TABLE 20: THE GRAMMATICAL INACCURACIES IDENTIFIED FROM THE INTERACTION THREADS

SMS language	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• short forms
Spelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• spelling correction• intentional misspelling• unintentional misspelling
Grammar error	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• grammar• sentence structure

The text-based nature of Facebook interaction may have encouraged the usage of SMS-style language, such as short forms and intentional misspelling. Essentially, the fundamental of Facebook as a social platform saw that it was mainly used for informal interaction. Thus, its users may have been familiar with the employment of conversation-like language in writing posts and comments. This type of language production may have made the writing sounds friendlier and more casual, which is much more suitable for social purposes. The emphasis on content of the message, and the lack of English language skills, may also have resulted in grammatical mistakes and inaccurate sentence structures. Notably however, some “inaccuracies” such as spelling may be done on purpose, as part of being up-to-date with the Internet language. For example, English language slang such as *wanna* and *peeps*, was consciously employed, and did not indicate the students’ lacked of English language skills. Instead, it may be a strategy to appear friendly, fashionable, and more casual in the group, to build rapport with one another. Some examples related to grammatical aspects in the interaction exchanges are presented below.



EXAMPLE 29: GRAMMAR MISTAKES IDENTIFIED IN AN INTERACTION THREAD

Example 29 illustrates a post written by participant A to express her gratitude at being invited to join the LMT100 group, and hoped that her participation would improve English language skills. Despite her initial enthusiasm, she progressed to become a passive participant in the group. There were several grammatical mistakes committed in the post, such as incorrect choice of verb (*accept*), and inaccurate preposition (*to this group*). Regardless of the inaccuracies, the post was perfectly comprehensible. Another example of grammatical aspect is shown below:

The grammatical aspects identified in Example 30 are presented in a table. Table 21 describes the grammar-related issues based on each comment in the thread. The mistakes identified were in relation to spelling, grammar and sentence structure. From the comments, it is apparent that participant B committed a number of intentional and unintentional spelling and grammatical mistakes, such as short forms, slang, deleted apostrophes from contractions, incorrect tenses, deleted nouns, and inaccurate positioning of words. Other grammatical mistakes committed in other comments include inaccurate subject-verb agreement (comments 3, 4, 6, 9), inaccurate adjectives (comments 3, 5, 11), inaccurate prepositions (comment 4), incomplete phrase and sentence (comment 9), and inaccurate noun (comment 11).

A [redacted] Was just talking to [redacted] about movies!

I love romantic comedy, chic flick, thriller, horror, mystery and adventure movies.

One of the best movies that I've watched is MY BEST FRIEND'S WEDDING, featuring Julia Roberts. Shamelessly, I cried at the end. If you haven't watched it, go online and search for it. It's really fun.

What's your all-time favourite movies?

Like · Comment · Unfollow Post · November 21 at 4:06pm

- and 4 others like this.
- B** [redacted] CONJURING...actually it is not my favourite movie...but i just wanna share a bit on my experience when watchin tat mvie...i watched it 2 days b4 i come to usm in cinema with my 3 cousins(all girls)...when the it started im the one damn brave there...i adviced my cuzins to not scream when watching..but things happens oppositely throughout the movie...im the one screamed like hell...n i cried with full of tears on ma eyes...ma face gone wet...even i went out of the theater at the mid of the movie...!!! tat was the freaking moment in my life...!!!
November 21 at 4:12pm · Like · 🔄 1
- C** [redacted] I would go with The Three Musketeers...But there is one movie that I think its really exciting but shame that i have to go somewhere else before the movie end...Its Hunger Games : Catching Fire...The thrill was superb and the story line is massive exciting...Need to buy a new ticket....
November 21 at 4:18pm · Like
- A** [redacted] [redacted] you watched that movie in the cinema? you brave brave girl. I nearly peed in my pants watching it at home. that's one scary movie. the worst scene for me was when the mother was tied up to the chair and she started laughing until the white sheets covering her face were torn to reveal her eyes. creepy! luckily i watched it on a small tv screen. would have gotten nightmares otherwise.
November 21 at 4:22pm · Like
- B** [redacted] ohhh no...plz dont remind me bout that creepy scaring scenes...im alone in ma room...so now...my plan to wash my face b4 sleeping is cancelled... 😞
November 21 at 4:25pm · Like
- A** [redacted] [redacted] You already watched Catching Fire? Wow! How was it? Is it better than the first one? You lucky girl!
I watched the three musketeers recently on HBO. The setting is beautiful and the actress is gorgeous. But i was a bit disappointed with the storyline. It's a bit too simple for my liking. but it's a fun watch.
November 21 at 4:25pm · Like
- A** [redacted] Hahaha. [redacted] I'm so sorry! Forgot that you guys are at hostels. It's not too late to go wash your face. Go! Quickly! But be careful. The toilet might be slippery.
November 21 at 4:28pm · Like
- B** [redacted] hahaxox...tatz k..just washed...k sizzy...wanna sleep...itz fun to chit chat wif u...hope to get the chance again...gud nite...love u..! ❤️
November 21 at 4:30pm · Like

- C** [redacted] i watch The three musketeers because of the priest guy...he is so handsome...kind of my type...hahaha..well.....to me it was much better than the first one...the story connected well that although i left the first one about 1 year, i still can recall back what the first one is about (unlike twilight that seem to be quite a headache to recall)...the conflict is brilliant and the games are more interesting than the first one...overall....it is a must to watch guys and worth every penny you spent...
November 21 at 4:32pm · Like
- D** [redacted] <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?v=747886415239765...>
- Hunger Games**
Don't miss out on this year's biggest blockbuster; The Hunger Games: Catching Fi...
See More
Length: 0:30
- November 21 at 4:51pm · Edited · Like · 🔄 2 · Remove Preview
- E** [redacted] I love wachting mystery movie and comedy, for mystery and adventure I recommend sherlock holmes movie but the most movie I love to watch is Narnia
November 21 at 5:12pm · Like · 🔄 1
- A** [redacted] [redacted] i so have to agree with you. that actor is an eye candy. the only reason i watched that movie, in fact. haha.
[redacted] sherlock holmes is a good one. probably because jude law acted as well. have u watched the holiday? that's one romantic movie and jude law is gorgeous. haha.
November 24 at 12:59pm · Like
- E** [redacted] nope.. but I will try to wacth it next time..
November 24 at 8:16pm · Like
- Write a comment...

EXAMPLE 30: A POST THAT ENCOURAGED THE GROUP MEMBERS TO SHARE ABOUT THEIR FAVOURITE MOVIES

TABLE 21: THE GRAMMAR-RELATED ISSUES BASED ON EXAMPLE 30

Grammar aspects	SMS language	Spelling	Grammar error
Comment	Short forms, trends, intentional misspelling	Unintentional misspelling	Grammar and Sentence structure
2	wanna		<i>...before I come to usm in cinema...</i>
	tat		<i>when the it started im the one damn brave there</i>
	b4	advised	<i>I advised my cuzins to not scream when watching</i>
	im		<i>but things happens oppositely</i>
	cuzins		<i>im the one screamed like hell</i>
	n		<i>n I cried with full of tears on ma eyes</i>
	ma		<i>ma face gone wet</i>
3			<i>even I went out of the theatre at the mid of the movie</i>
			<i>tat was the freaking moment of my life</i>
			<i>...that I think its really exciting but shame I have to go somewhere else before the movie end</i>
4			<i>the thrill was superb and the story line was massive exciting</i>
			<i>I nearly peed in my pants...</i>
5	plz	scaring	<i>...creepy scaring scenes</i>
	bout		
	im		
	ma		
	b4		
8	tatz		
	sizzy		
	wanna		
	itz		
	wif		
	gud		
9			<i>...I left the first one about 1 year, I still can recall back...</i>
			<i>...unlike twilight that seem to be quite a headache to recall...</i>
13			<i>...mystery movie and comedy...</i>
		wath	<i>... but the most movie I love to wath...</i>

4.18 Stage Three: Data analysis of interview transcripts

The 25 interview recordings, ranging from 15 to 50 minutes, were transcribed on Microsoft Word, and imported into NVivo. The interview data were analysed using both a deductive approach (from pre-set interview questions) and an inductive approach (open coding). The deductive approach saw that the raw data was categorised into themes according to the pre-set questions (see section 3.7.2 for the interview guides,) asked during the interview sessions. As such, the interviewees' responses stemmed from the pre-set questions. These answers were often elaborated with in-depth details that went beyond the pre-set questions. When this happened, the open coding process was employed to create categories of themes to accommodate the elaborate responses. The processes of deriving data from both deductive and inductive approaches are presented with examples below.

4.19 Deductive approach

A deductive approach saw that the raw data from the transcripts were analysed based on pre-set questions from the interview guide. An extract from an interview transcript is provided below to show how the categories of themes were derived.

<p>S : So can you tell me the reason for your participation in the group? What interest you to participate in the group?</p>	
<p>AT : Mm sharing experience. Mm like giving opinions so that I can tell people the way I felt... the way I want to think about them... so so that they will know exactly I wanted to say... mmm the reason of why I'm not too active in that group is because exactly I do not know exactly what I'm going to say... uh and at the same time I do not know them very much I do not know them very well</p>	
<p>S : all right</p>	
<p>AT : So uh my style I like to do joke I like to make joke... so when I go in to do joke to them I think they might feel that they will feel irritates to me that's why I choose to be quiet rather than post keep on posting keep on writing so that's why</p>	
<p>S : So in your opinion to encourage more interaction from yourself you prefer if you know that group if you know the students?</p>	
<p>AT : Yes the more I know them the better but that was before this after this interview you got to see me differently</p>	
<p>S : Really</p>	
<p>AT : I won't stop posting</p>	

EXAMPLE 31: AN EXTRACT FROM THE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS ANALYSED DEDUCTIVELY

In the extract above, an interview session was conducted with participant AT. The first question asked was the reason(s) for his participation in the LMT100 group (labelled A). AT's stated that he wanted to share opinions with the group members, and to let other people understand his thoughts and feelings (labelled A). AT went on to explain the reasons for his non-participation in the group without being asked (labelled B). The reason(s) for students' non-participation in the LMT100 group was listed as one of the pre-set questions in the interview guide. Therefore, AT's elaboration of his non-participation was categorised accordingly, based on the categories of themes developed from the interview guide.

AT continued to elaborate on his response for non-participation by talking about his personality (labelled C). The elaboration about personality however, was not included

in the interview guide. It is new information provided by AT. Therefore, AT's elaboration (labelled C), was analysed using open coding to create new categories of themes that were not part of the pre-set questions in the interview guide. Based on AT's elaboration (labelled C), I asked a related question that was responded to accordingly (labelled D). As this question (labelled D) was created following AT's elaboration that was not part of the pre-set questions (labelled C), it was also analysed using open coding, to create suitable themes. The process of open coding is detailed in the next section.

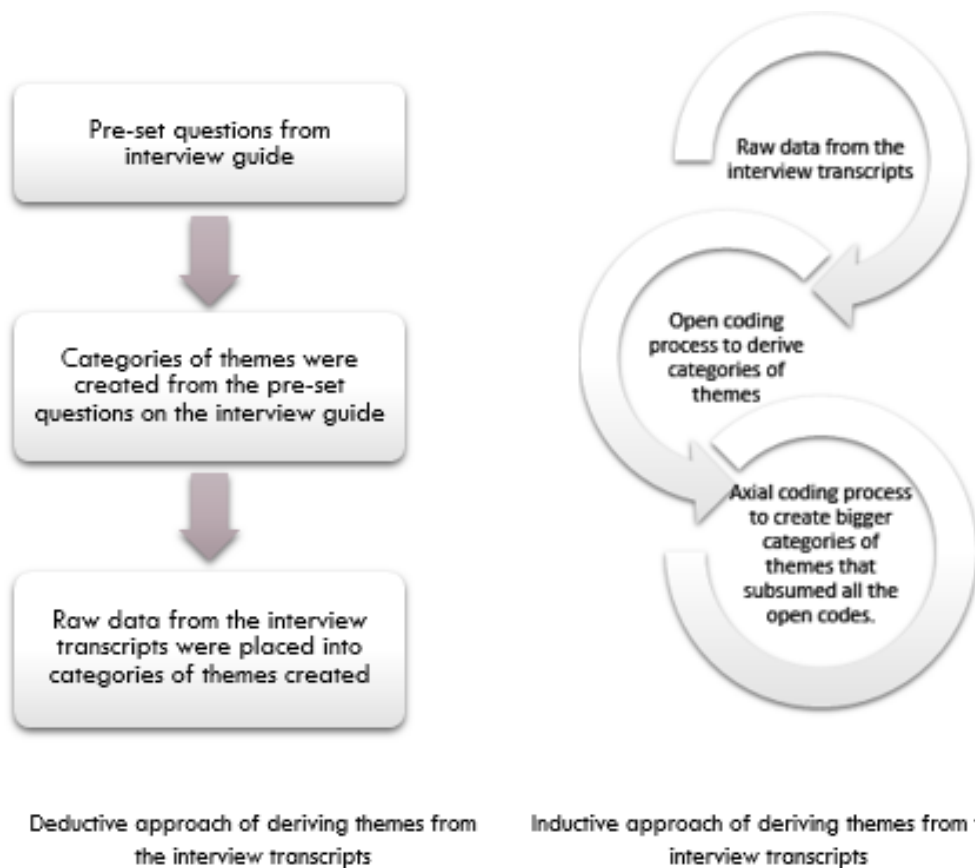


FIGURE 21: THE PROCESS OF DEDUCTIVE AND INDUCTIVE APPROACHES OF DERIVING THEMES FROM INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

4.20 Open coding: Inductive approach

Based on Example 31 above, the exchanges labelled C and D were analysed using open coding. The codes developed from these exchanges were:

- Liked to joke
- Feared that posts will irritate group members
- Preferred to interact with familiar people
- Will not stop posting after the interview session

To demonstrate how the coding was applied, a screenshot from NVivo, showing the relevant coding stripes for the extract, is shown below:

S : all right

AT : so uh my style I like to do joke I like to make joke... so when I go in to do joke to them I think they might feel that they will feel irritates to me that's why I choose to be quiet rather than post keep on posting keep on writing so that's why

S : so in your opinion to encourage more interaction from yourself you prefer if you know that group of students

AT : yes the more I know them the better but that was before this after this interview you got to see me differently

S : really

AT : I won't stop posting

Coding Density

- Like to joke
- Afraid that friends will be irritated by posts
- Promise to keep posting on the group
- Prefer to know friends before interacting

SCREENSHOT 2: A SCREENSHOT OF AN INTERVIEW ANALYSIS EXTRACT ON NVIVO

Screenshot 2 illustrates the open codes that had been derived from an interview extract. The open codes are described in Table 22 below:

TABLE 22: OPEN CODES THAT EMERGED FROM THE ANALYSIS OF AN INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Num.	Code	Description
1	Liked to make joke	Self-personality that liked to joke with friends
2	Afraid that friends will feel irritated by him	Felt scared that other members of the group would be annoyed by his posts and jokes.
3	Preferred if he knows the friends to interact	Would have been more active if he knows more members in the group.
4	Will not stop posting after the interview session	A promise made to continuously post in the group after the interview.

Open coding was carried out for all 25 interview transcripts, using Strauss and Corbin's (1994) constant comparative approach. During the process, the data and newly-created open codes were constantly compared to existing ones which were developed from previous transcripts. In total, 236 open codes were derived from the interview transcripts (see Appendix D).

4.20.1 Axial Coding

Further analysis was conducted on the 236 open codes to identify their relationships to one another. There were 30 main categories of themes derived from the 236 open codes. These themes are divided into 4 sections as follow:

- interviewees' background and characteristics (Theme 1)
- interviewees' issues with ELL (Theme 2 and Theme 3)
- themes that are general to Facebook (Theme 4 to Theme 11)
- themes that are specifically-related to LMT100 Facebook group (Theme 12 to Theme 30)

The full list of themes and their sub-codes are presented as Appendix D. More detailed information of the interviewees' background is presented in the following section.

4.21 Interviewees' demographic

The interviewees were conveniently selected based on their degree of participation in the LMT100 group. The participants were divided into *active*, *average*, *passive*, and *very passive* groups. Four to nine interviewees from each category were selected for semi-structured interview sessions. In total, there were 25 interviewees from. Table 23 provides the interviewees' details. The distribution of the interviewees is shown below.

TABLE 23: THE INTERVIEWEES' DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Name	Gender	Race	Course	Year of study	MUET Level (Band)	Degree of Participation
1. AE	Male	Malay	Communication	1	2	Active
2. UMN	Female	Malay	Mathematics	1	3	Active
3. JE	Female	Malay	Humanities	1	3	Active
4. TM	Female	Malay	Humanities	1	2	Active
5. SC	Female	Chinese	Industrial Technology	1	3	Active
6. ASYA	Female	Malay	Communication	1	3	Active
7. YHG	Male	Indian	Management	1	3	Active
8. MRL	Male	Bajau	Humanities	1	2	Average
9. AA	Female	Malay	Social Science	1	3	Average
10. MM	Female	Malay	Education	1	3	Average
11. HH	Female	Malay	Arts Graphic	1	3	Average
12. YHT	Male	Chinese	Humanities	1	3	Average
13. NNN	Female	Malay	Pharmacy	2	3	Average
14. EQ	Female	Malay	Management	1	2	Average
15. MFTI	Female	Malay	Communication	1	2	Average
16. AT	Male	Malay	Arts Music	1	3	Average
17. DZ	Female	Malay	Pharmacy	2	3	Passive
18. AND	Male	Chinese	Management	1	2	Passive
19. NHFZ	Female	Malay	Pharmacy	2	3	Passive
20. FB	Female	Malay	Communication	1	3	Passive
21. ANH	Female	Malay	Management	1	3	Passive
22. FAR	Female	Malay	Physics	1	3	Very passive
23. ZFM	Female	Malay	Humanities	1	3	Very passive
24. KHR	Female	Malay	Physics	1	2	Very passive
25. NIN	Female	Malay	Pharmacy	2	3	Very passive

- *Gender: 6 male and 19 female interviewees.*
- *Race: 20 Malay, 3 Chinese, 1 Indian, and 1 Bajau.*
- *Course: 17 Arts stream and 8 Science stream students. The distribution is as follows:*
 - *5 Humanities students*
 - *4 Communication students*
 - *4 Management students*
 - *4 Pharmacy students*
 - *2 Arts students*
 - *2 Physics students*
 - *1 Mathematics student*
 - *1 Industrial Technology student*
 - *1 Social Science student*
 - *1 Education student*
- *MUET: 18 Band 3 and 7 Band 2 students.*
- *Degree of participation:*
 - *7 active students*
 - *9 average students*
 - *5 passive students*
 - *4 very passive students*

The degree of interviewees' participation was determined by their activities in the LMT100 group. Appendix E shows the tabulation of the group members' scores based on their participation rate.

4.22 Presentation of themes

The interview data gathered a huge pool of information from the interviewees' perspectives as university students and users of Facebook. Due to the vast nature of data, only a few selected themes are presented in this section. Other themes are addressed in the Discussion chapter, alongside the results from questionnaire and LMT100 interaction activity. The themes presented in this chapter are:

- Theme 13: Reasons for participation in the LMT100 group
- Theme 14: Reasons for non-participation in the LMT100 group
- Theme 15: The LMT100 group environment
- Theme 16: The interviewees' feelings when participating in the LMT100 group
- Theme 17: Posting requirements in the LMT100 group
- Theme 19: Grammar correction in the LMT100 group interaction activity
- Theme 21: How did the LMT100 group affect English language skills?
- Theme 25: Recommendations to improve the LMT100 interaction group
- Theme 29: Challenges of ELL on Facebook

FIGURE 22: THE LIST OF THEMES THAT DERIVED FROM THE INTERVIEW DATA

The interviewees were selected from different categories to examine the similarities and differences in perceptions, behaviours, and experiences they had with the LMT100 group. The results of the analysis however indicated no major variances in their views and experiences. Most of them voiced out their interests, wants and needs to master English language, emphasised the importance of grammar mastery, and expressed their preference for non-compulsory, but authority-guided activities. One main difference between the interviewees was their openness in embracing new technologies for ELL, but this was not determined by the participation rate in the LMT100 group.

4.22.1 Theme 13: Reasons for participation

The reasons for the interviewees' participation in the group are;

- *To improve English language (13 occurrences)*
- *To make new friends (6 occurrences)*
- *To share and get information (4 occurrences)*

a. To improve English language

Instance 1: Reason for participation is to improve English language

Interviewee: EQ

S : can you tell me the reason for your participation in the group mm the reason that makes you want to join and interact in the group

EQ : because I want to see the group's activity, how are the activities, then there are posts in English right, so we can *improve our English* from there, uh you like to post articles, we can learn a lot from English cartoons and we can improve a little bit

Instance 2: Reason for participation is to improve English language

Interviewee: YHG

S : so can you tell me the reason for your participation in that group

YHG : the reason uh because the main reason is I wanna *increase my uh fluency of English* um that's the main reason because always my dad ask me to speak in English speak in English because in house always speak in Tamil right then most my friends are Malays and Indian so I'll speak with their language so English is lesser lah and before this when I was in matriculation I used to read a lot of newspapers but I have time but I come here so I got no time at all for reading newspapers

Instance 3: Reason for participation is to improve English language

Interviewee: MRL

S : so can you tell me why you participated in the Facebook group

MRL : mm okay the first factor that makes me interested in the group is to *improve my English language skills* although honestly uh that group is not very attractive to me, because honestly when we discuss language I am more interested in Malay than English uh and the second factor is your encouragement in that group, furthermore realizing that I am not very good in English makes me feel that the group is a good initiative even though I feel that my friends in majority do not join the group uh

EXAMPLE 32: REASON FOR PARTICIPATION – TO IMPROVE ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS

The three extracts in Example 32 show EQ, MRL, and YHG's reason for their participation in the LMT100 group, which was to improve English language skills. According to MRL, he realized that he was not very proficient in English, so the group served as a good initiative to develop his skills. My encouragement also led him to join the group. Added to this, EQ joined the group to check out the activities conducted, and

cited my postings of English cartoons as assisting ELL. EQ and MRL were average contributors to the LMT100 group while YHG was an active contributor. Both EQ and MRL were Band 2 MUET scorers while YHG obtained a Band 3.

b. To make new friends

Instance 1: Reason for participation is to make new friends

Interviewee: MM

S : so far in that group you've been reading the post and interacting for about a month and a half now uh do you feel that your English language skills have improved in any way or none at all

MM : there is improvement especially in speaking skills, how to use the correct sentences search for the correct one and the same in writing

S : okay

MM : from there we *can add new friends*

S : do you initially have intention to add new friends

MM : initially no because the actual reason was to improve English but in the group when someone asks questions, then other people comment, we have similar opinions, even though we never met, *I feel we can be friends with each other*

Instance 2: Reason for participation is to make new friends

Interviewee: NNN

S : so can you tell me the reason for your participation or non-participation in the Facebook group

NNN : reason

S : uh-huh

NNN : first to respond to what people write okay, second because sometimes it's interesting, interaction, we *can get to know other courses* because usually the ones interacting in the group are not from the same course, because the same courses already have their own groups

EXAMPLE 33: REASON FOR PARTICIPATION – TO MAKE NEW FRIENDS

The two extracts in Example 33 show two female interviewees, MM and NNN, who stated that they joined the group to get to know new people. Even though MM's initial intention was to learn English, she found that the interaction threads provided her with opportunities to meet new people sharing similar opinions. NNN echoed this by stating that her first priority when joining the group was to respond to other people's posts. She grew to enjoy this activity, as the group allowed her to interact with students from other courses. Both MM and NNN were Band 3 MUET scorers, and acted as average contributors to the group.

c. To share and get information

Instance 1: Reason for participation is to share and get information

Interviewee: AA

S : all right so firstly can you describe to me what motivates you to be actively involved in the group

AA : uh because the group is not that active so I think I should start new conversations or new posts so that the people in the group can interact with one another um furthermore the group is quite um hard to get people involved right, so why not I start the conversation uh start the topic first, secondly uh *I like to share some of the information that I get from the talk* and everything, so I share through the group so I want to see how the people [pause]

S : interact

AA : uh yeah interact... yeah that's it

Instance 2: Reason for participation is to share and get information

Interviewee: ASYA

S : so can you tell me the reason for your participation in the group whoever can start first I don't mind

AE : ASYA why don't you start first

ASYA : I participated in the conversation because uh it actually helps me lot to improve my English uh my writing uh English writing... and it's kinda like fun to see the feedbacks and all that yeah *share some thought*

AE : making new friends, making new friends

EXAMPLE 34: REASON FOR PARTICIPATION – TO SHARE AND GET INFORMATION

The two interviews extracts in Example 34 show two female interviewees, AA and ASYA, who joined the group to share and get information. AA indicated that she always attended talks and events organised by the university and felt the need to share what she learned with the group members. She created new topics of interaction with hope that other members would become more active in interacting and building knowledge. Likewise, ASYA stated that she enjoyed reading the feedback and sharing opinions with other participants in the group. AE added to ASYA's response by stating that making new friends was one of the reasons for his participation. AE and ASYA's interview was conducted together, as requested by them.

4.22.2 Theme 14: Reasons for non-participation

The interviewees were asked to disclose their reasons for non-participation in the LMT100 group. Although the participants may be categorised as an active member, there were always opportunities to contribute more to the group. The three main reasons for non-participation were:

- *Just to get information and check what was posted (8 occurrences)*
- *Shyness (7 occurrences)*
- *Busy (7 occurrences)*

a. Just to get information and see what is posted

Instance 1: The reason for non-participation is to get information and check what is posted

Interview: AND

S : okay so now can you tell me the reason that makes you don't want to participate in the group that much

AD : because I just see the update only I never create I never comment I just want to see the updates

Instance 2: The reason for non-participation is to get information and check what is posted

Interview: MFTI

S : can you tell me the reason that makes you don't want to be too active in the group

MFTI : the reason that I don't want to be too active

S : uh-huh like not commenting or not posting

MFTI : uh because there are a lot more inactive people so I open just to get info about the group or subject or anything, lecture is sometimes posted on Facebook, so I open to see that, I rarely comment, very rarely, see news feed, just open to see notification on the group

EXAMPLE 35: REASON FOR NON-PARTICIPATION: TO RECEIVE INFORMATION

Example 35 shows two extracts from AD and MFTI's interview transcripts. The reason for their non-participation in the LMT100 group was because their main intention was just to get information and see what was posted, instead of contributing to the interaction. MFTI achieved this by relying on Facebook notification that alerted her to new updates from the group. The lack of involvement puts AD and MFTI in the passive and average categories.

b. Shyness

Instance 1: The reason for non-participation on the Facebook group is shyness

Interview: ZFM

S : so can you tell me the reason that you're not very active in the group

ZFM: I feel so shy to active mm [pause] like... I'm not active on my own Facebook, I rarely update my status, I privatized my profile picture, I don't post because people will comment and I have to reply, I don't feel like doing that, so that's why if friends asked me to post 'there is a class tomorrow, please post on humanities or on bakal group, uh I don't want to', because other students will ask a lot of questions and I have to answer, so I feel shy, because it might lead them to check my Facebook account to see who I am [laughs]... that's why I never posted anything and my friends make fun of me because of that [laughs]

Instance 2: The reason for non-participation on the Facebook group is shyness

Interview: NIN

S : you were not really active so I'm considering you as a passive student, can you explain the reason that makes you don't want to participate in the Facebook group

NIN : the reason... uh actually it's not that I don't want to participate, when I look at the post I feel like commenting but I don't know how to join in the conversation and comment on it

S : uh okay

NIN : then I feel like posting something, for instance I watch videos on YouTube easy way to learn English but *I feel shy* [laughs] because it's just basic, *I feel shy* because other members might already have good English skills, it's not like high school, this is university, so they might have already known the basics like grammar and such, like when you post UK pictures share your experience there so I just open the group to see that, uh a member post an English show that she's interested in on YouTube uh

S : the Ellen DeGeneres show

NIN : uh Ellen right uh I accessed to watch that, it's interesting because it's funny so we can learn interaction from there

EXAMPLE 36: REASON FOR NON-PARTICIPATION – SHYNESS

Another reason for students' non-participation in the LMT100 group was shyness, as presented in Example 36 above. To some extent, shyness could be equated with low self-esteem. In the two extracts, ZFM and NIN stated that they were too shy to contribute actively in the group due to two reasons:

- ZFM feared that other students would be interested to start accessing her profile to get to know her better if she posted in the group.
- NIN feared that the posts that she wished to share in the group would not be valuable in terms of ELL to other members.

ZFM added that personally, she was not too active on Facebook, and all of her details and pictures were made private. She avoided the responsibility of posting any academic information updates, as she did not want to entertain any inquiries from other students. ZFM's introvert personality and reluctance to be academically active were reflected in her passive behaviour in the LMT100 group.

On the other hand, NIN asserted that although she felt interested to participate in some of the interaction threads, she did not know how to approach an ongoing interaction. Furthermore, the English language videos that she watched on YouTube, seemed a little

too basic and simple for the university students' level. This led her to believe that they were unsuitable for the group members' consumption.

Both ZFM and NIN were Band 3 MUET scorers, which puts them as members with the highest level of English proficiency. However, both of them demonstrated low self-confident when it came to using English in the group, which was evident by their reluctance and uncertainty to contribute to the group's interaction and knowledge building. Perhaps, the higher the English language skills, the more pressured the students felt to share the perfect posts in terms of language use and content.

c. Busy

Instance 1: The reason for non-participation on the Facebook group is busy

Interview: NHFZ

S : okay can you tell me the reason for your participation or non-participation in the group why you join the group and why you don't feel like joining too

NHFZ : in this for the LMT group

S : yes yes for the LMT group

NHFZ : okay I joined the group to get English information maybe I can get many friends there but the non-participant maybe because *I don't have enough time to give any to give any* [pause]

S : comments

NHFZ : uh comments there but I will always check everything that is posted there I will look at it and like it

NHFZ : there are a lot of groups and it is mostly like that because there is a big number of pharmacy students, 128, so it is difficult, Facebook makes it easier, so we have uh many groups for example for an assignment for a particular subject, we will create a group there to divide tasks and post assignments on Facebook too

S : okay even the lecturers are using it

NHFZ : there are some lecturers

S : are you active in the pharmacy Facebook group

NHFZ : uh

S : yeah because you feel it's more related

NHFZ : *more comfortable because uh we share things that have guidance on how to post something*

Instance 2: The reason for non-participation on the Facebook group is busy

Interview: NNN

S : okay can you tell me the reason for your participation or non-participation in the group

NNN : mm because *there are a lot of work, I don't have time to open the group, there are too many groups, there are 2 school's group uh 3 groups, the main one is our second year group, the one with everybody in it, there is the Muslim group, so there are 3, plus this group, so there are so many groups that sometimes I could not open the notifications for the group uh*

Instance 3: The reason for non-participation on the Facebook group is busy

Interview: ANH

S : can you tell me the reason for your participation or non-participation in the group

ANH: okay basically uh... I didn't expect that you'll be calculating all that [laughs]... okay so if I know that would have helped you I will participate more, it's just that *I don't have time for that because I'm working too*

S : oh yeah where are you working

ANH : *yes I'm working part time at switch apple store*

EXAMPLE 37: REASON FOR NON-PARTICIPATION – BUSY

In Example 37, NHFZ, NNN and ANH attributed being busy as a reason for their inactive participation. These interviewees stated that they were burdened with university work such as assignments and lab projects that hindered them from being too involved with the group. Both NHFZ and NNN who were in their second year of Pharmacy course disclosed that they had insufficient time to even check all of the Facebook notifications, let alone contribute to the group's content. NNN explained that her limited time to access Facebook was due to her involvement in four academic Facebook groups at the university, which were the second year Pharmacy group, the general Pharmacy group for all Pharmacy students at the university, the Muslim Pharmacy group, and the LMT100 English interaction group. NNN felt that her membership in the Pharmacy groups hindered her from being active in the LMT100 group. In relation to this, NHFZ asserted that she was more active on the Pharmacy Facebook groups than the LMT100 group, as she felt more guided in content sharing and discussion.

On the other hand, ANH stated that she did not have enough time to contribute actively in the LMT100 group as she was working part-time at a Switch Apple Store (instance 3). She stated that she wanted to become more active in the group to help me with my research, but her job and study had taken most of her time. ANH further elaborated that she had been working part-time since she was 16 years old, and her work experience assisted her English language development in a more practical manner.

4.22.3 Theme 15: The LMT100 group environment

The data analysis shows that the LMT100 group platform was not actively used by its members for interaction or information-sharing. The interviewees stated that this was due to the *LMT100 group's environment that was not very active, occupied with silent readers, and only attracted the usual, active participants (21 occurrences)*.

a. Inactive group members, silent readers and the usual participants

Instance 1: Facebook group environment – not very active, silent readers, and the usual participants

Interview: FB

S : mm whenever you open the group how do you feel the group is, not interesting or something could be done

FB : mm I think *not many people participate* not many people want to sometimes it's *not very active*, it's always you posting [laughs] to invite people to interact, but there *are a few students who are courageous enough outspoken*, but there are only a few, for example, like me who *just read the posts*

S : mm so if that's the case there will be very few participation like what we are seeing now, because there are many students like you who are silent readers

FB : mm *silent readers*

S : you read but

FB : feel scared to voice out [laughs]

FB : uh like that I actually wanted to reply to your comment saying that my favourite movie is this, I have typed it but I felt embarrass [laughs] so I deleted everything, it's okay *I will just read*, so I like it, so I think this type of post would be able to capture students' attention about movie, if we talk about current issues maybe there will be *a lot of silent readers* because not many are aware [laughs]

Instance 2: Facebook group environment – not very active

Interview: FAR

S : how do you feel reading the interaction and all

FAR: yeah... I think everyone want to improve their language uh at the same time you can see there many lack of the English grammar there and I admit that my grammar is poor too but at least we try to, but I'm a little embarrass that I did not post anything, because I don't have anything to share, but *the group is dull very dull*

Instance 3: Facebook group environment – the usual participant

Interview: HH

S : so you normally read that page daily right, what's your feeling when you read that page, do you feel that the interactions need to be improved mm do you feel bored or you feel it's not helpful at all uh things like that

HH : it needs to uh everyone should have participated with every comment, video, anything that is posted there because if there is only one person who post but there are thousands of members but *only two three people who commented*, it feels like nothing as everybody should interact

EXAMPLE 38: GROUP ENVIRONMENT – INACTIVE MEMBERS, SILENT READERS AND THE USUAL PARTICIPANTS

The three extracts from Example 38 illustrate the three main descriptions for the LMT100 group. From the extracts, it was gathered that the LMT100 group was inactive, full of silent readers, and only attracted a handful of active, usual participants. In Instances 1 and 2, FB and FAR agreed that the group was not very active, and FAR

went on to state that the group was very dull. FB elaborated that she felt as if I was the only person posting in the group to get participation from the other members. Nevertheless, FB acknowledged the members' who were courageous enough to be outspoken in the group. A similar point was echoed by HH in Instance 3, who argued against the effectiveness of the LMT100 group, if only a handful of members commented on each post, when the group had a larger number of members. Furthermore, both FB and HH implied that only the usual members kept contributing to the group's content in the forms of posts and comments, while the larger majority of the group members acted as silent readers. FB agreed that she was one of the silent readers who just read through the interaction threads without liking or commenting. Other interviewees who admitted to being silent readers include NNN, YHG, NHFZ, SC, MFTI, ZM, AT, JE, AND, and NNN, who relied on Facebook notification to keep up with the group's activities. Although FB wanted to share her opinions at times, she always felt embarrassed in contributing to the group. Quoting the post about favourite movies, FB explained that she had written a draft to respond to the thread, but felt too shy to share it, and deleted the writing.

4.22.4 Theme 16: The (possible) emotions or feelings when interacting in the LMT100 group

The interviewees stated their feelings/ emotional states when participating and interacting in the group as;

- *afraid that other students would judge them (16 occurrences)*
- *confident to post and comment (11 occurrences)*
- *not confident to post or comment in English (10 occurrences)*
- *did not know many people in the group (7 occurrences)*
- *not bothered that they did not know many people in the group (8 occurrences)*

a. Afraid that people would judge their posts or comments, low-self-confidence

Instance 1: Feelings when want to participate on the group – afraid that people would judge

Interview: DZ

S : okay do you sometimes feel like posting something but you're scared of posting things

DZ : uh yeah yeah yeah

S : why is that

DZ : uh because I'm afraid that it's not very academic posts

S : uh okay

DZ : yeah uh I was afraid that more *people would judge me for posting non academic stuff* than people judging me for academic stuff, like uh people assume I'm posting silly things that they feel are not good for themselves

Instance 2: Feelings when want to participate on the group – not confident to post or comment in English

Interview: MRL

S : uh is the Facebook group helping you because if you see your other friends, their English acquisition is much better than you, do you feel

MRL : down

S : uh are you scared

MRL : uh honestly like on the group that you set up, I join the group [chuckles] I'm not active because I realize that my knowledge in English language is very limited and I'm scared of inaccurate grammar

S : oh okay so you are scared of wrong grammar and all

MRL : uh-huh *people might criticize me* because of it, if I understand that's fine, but I might not understand mm

EXAMPLE 39: FEELINGS/EMOTIONAL STATES – AFRAID OF BEING JUDGED AND LOW SELF-CONFIDENT

In Instance 1, DZ stated that she felt feared that students would judge her based on her posts or comments in the LMT100 group, which may be non-academic and unsuitable for university level. On the other end, MRL stated that his limited English language ability made him inactive in the LMT100 group (Instance 2). He feared posting updates and comments with inaccurate grammar, and believed that he would not understand the content shared by other students in the group.

b. Confident to share posts and comments

Instance 1:: Feelings when want to participate on the group – confident to post and comment

Interview: AT

S : when you look at the Facebook interactions on the group do you feel confident to write or do you feel scared, do you feel as if people would judge you if you write or do you feel comfortable to express your opinion

AT : okay uh previously I do feel like that, I feel if I write this, *it's not that I'm scared of making mistake, I'm not scared to make mistakes, but I'm scared if people misinterpret what I say*, and they will figure out that my post is useless at all, sometimes I think what would they say if I post this, but actually I'm not scared of grammatical mistakes, I'm not scared, if it's wrong, it's wrong and if there are people to correct them, it would be better, I will learn from that... um after this, after the interview I feel it's okay, I feel what will be will be... just post what I want to post just sharing ideas opinions, let see if I could manage to do some recordings I will post them to on the group [laughs]

AT : because I am a talkative person in certain places but if I don't have to talk at certain places, I won't say anything... it's the same with writing, I will write anything at certain places but I won't write anything at certain places... for example like I said just now uh there are *many people whom I don't know and I'm afraid they will misinterpret...* that's the only reason actually, *I'm not afraid of wrong grammar* no I don't mind at all... if I am scared that people do not respond to me, let it be, let the post be there, I don't write to get 'likes'

S : that's sad

AT : uh there are people who post to get 'likes', come on what's the reason for the post, uh actually I'm not scared of that, I'm just afraid that *I don't know them fully yet, so I'm afraid they will misinterpret my statement* that's all that's the only reason, and like I said, after this interview I feel more courageous, it's not like that actually, I can write anything I want, and after I express my opinions and tell what I think to other people, I would be able to post

EXAMPLE 40: FEELINGS/EMOTIONAL STATES – CONFIDENT TO POST UPDATES AND COMMENTS

There were 11 occurrences in which interviewees expressed their confidence to post and comment in the LMT100 group. Most of these occurrences were echoed by Band 3 MUET scorers such as AA, JE, HH, NNN, TM, and SC. On the other hand, unlike MRL (Example 39), AT (Example 40) expressed that he was not scared of making grammar mistakes in his writings in the group. AT even wished for the group members to correct his mistakes so that he could learn from it. However, he was afraid that other members might misinterpret his writings, and fail to understand the messages he wanted to convey. By the end of his response, AT promised to contribute more, and ignore what other students may think of his writing. AT also repeatedly stated that he would post whenever he felt like it, but his intention was not to get attention or *likes* from the other members. Since he was an Arts student majoring in Music, AT promised to post some recordings of cover songs to make the group livelier, if he could manage it.

c. Did not know many people in the group, and were not bothered by this

Instance 1: Feelings when want to participate on the group – did not know many people in the group

Interview: KR

S : uh okay on the Facebook group don't you feel like interacting, sometimes some people feel like okay I want to learn English, so I'm going to push myself, I don't care if I make mistakes, I will still write, how is it with you, do you feel shy or are you scared of making mistakes or you simply don't want to do it

KR : I'm not afraid of making mistakes but I don't know how to interact like *we don't know the people so I don't know how to interact*, so I don't think it's needed... so with you I feel okay speaking with you

S : uh okay are you shy or something

KR : no I'm not shy uh broken [laughs]

Instance 2: Feelings when want to participate on the group – are not bothered that do not know many people in the group

Interview: AE and ASYA

S : all right just now you mentioned you like to interact with other students from other classes, does it bother you that you don't know half of these people on the group

AE : no I don't mind at all actually I don't mind because it won't bring any harm as it's in maya and virtual basically so I don't feel threaten of I don't feel unpleasant with them around, it's okay for them to ask questions or to like my posts to comment along during our interactions and what not, so it's okay I think I don't feel any harm

ASYA : [laughs]

S : do you feel the same

ASYA : yeah same [laughs]

EXAMPLE 41: FEELINGS/EMOTIONAL STATES – DID NOT KNOW MANY PEOPLE AND WERE NOT BOTHERED BY IT

In Instances 1 and 2 of Examples 41, KR, AE, and ASYA talked about their feelings when interacting in the LMT100 group with limited number of people they knew. To some extent, KR shared similar view with AT (Example 40), who felt uncomfortable interacting in the group, since they did not know many students. KR felt that she did not have anything to say to the new people; hence interaction with them was unnecessary.

On the other hand, AE and ASYA, and several other interviewees (YHG, AA, MM, HH, SC, and AH) felt that it was acceptable to interact with other group members whom they did not know, as they were in a learning environment. Except for AE who obtained Band 2, the rest of the interviewees were open to making new friends from the group were Band 3 MUET scorers.

4.22.5 Theme 17: Posting requirements in the LMT100 group

In line with the fundamentals of Facebook as an SNS, the LMT100 group exercised voluntary participation from its members. As such, no posting requirements or tasks were imposed for the members to complete. Due to this, the interviewees were asked of their feelings and perceptions over the structure of the LMT100 group. Some of the main responses were;

- *Voluntary nature of Facebook was preferable (16 occurrences)*
- *Did not need posting requirements for interaction (15 occurrences)*
- *Need posting requirements for interaction (12 occurrences)*

a. Voluntary nature was preferable, no posting requirements needed

Instance 1: Guidelines for interaction on the Facebook group – voluntary nature of Facebook was preferable

Interview: JE

S : so uh oh that group do you think there should guide like posting guideline, okay this week you have to post two writings, uh or should we maintain it as a voluntary thing like this, who want to post could post and whoever do not want to post don't have to do so

JE : I think *people won't do it* [laughs] isn't that right, so this means *we should do it voluntarily*, if you want to post, do, if you don't want to post, don't, but if we must have participation, there must be some *continuation or relation*

S : what's your view on the voluntary nature of the activity, like you are posting as you like, nobody is forcing you, do we need to have some sort of a guideline so that inactive people would be more active, we give some marks, if you are active we could probably give you bonus marks for your LMT 100 course

JE : oh is that it

S : how do you feel about that yeah

JE : mm for me if we are teaching something, we have to be open, we cannot say you have to do this, you have this guideline, you have to complete this, we cannot do that, we will feel bored really bored, like people will say this is not fun, I don't want to post on all these groups, I don't want to this, it's a barrier, *let the individuals be free* if they want to post something new that they feel is okay, that they feel is good for development, other people's things, we have to set them free, because for example like a business, we are persuading people, we want to influence them, we have to *give them freedom, not barriers*

S : so it's up to the students, we cannot force them

JE : mm

Instance 2: Guidelines for interaction on the Facebook group – did not need guidelines for interaction

Interview: TM

S : as you know on the Facebook group we don't have any structure, we don't have any guide, it's like a purely voluntary setting, so how do you feel about that do you feel that we need to have some sort of a guideline, somebody to urge the students to do some activities give some assignments or something like that

TM : assignments [laughs] uh I think um *the way that we are doing it now* in LMT like we can post anything we can comment anything and we can do anything, I think that's better because we don't have to like you know, be strict when we want to comment, we think for two days before commenting whether the writing is correct [laughs] because you know I remember what my teacher said, when you're at high school, he said as long as you are a student you have the license to make mistake, that's a license

S : true true, that's a very good way of putting it

TM : uh that's what I remember until now, I think that's true right, I think if we have the *freedom to post any comment or whatever in LMT* and then somebody will fix it, then we can collaborate with each other, if we make mistakes, other people will fix it, you know

EXAMPLE 42: POSTING REQUIREMENTS - VOLUNTARY NATURE WAS PREFERABLE

Instances 1 and 2 in Example 42 illustrate JE and TM's preferences for voluntary nature of the LMT100 group interaction activity. This indicates that they preferred the group without any interaction guidelines or posting requirements that could be a burden to the members. TM added that if tasks were assigned, the group members would feel less confident to participate in the group, fearing that they might commit grammatical mistakes. In TM and JE's views, students should not be reprimanded for making language mistakes; thus they should not be pressured into completing any tasks or assignments in the group. They felt that students must be given the freedom to decide their participation, rather than being forced to do something that they did not want to, and be burdened with it. Other interviewees including YHG, AT, DZ, AE, ASYA, FB, UMN, AND, and ANH similarly echoed that they preferred the activities in the group to be conducted voluntarily, without any posting requirements. Perhaps, members like YHG and DZ saw Facebook as a platform to relax. As university students, they were already loaded with coursework, so the idea of having tasks and posting requirements on an additional informal learning platform, was not appealing to them.

b. Posting requirements or guidelines needed in the LMT100 group

Instance 1: Guidelines for interaction on the Facebook group – needed guidelines for interaction

Interviewee: YHT

S : would you prefer if that group has some sort of a guideline or you have to do assignments on the Facebook group or there's a teacher to guide you, what's your opinion on that

YHT : I think that's good because if we don't have guidelines I think even if you post some short stories, there wouldn't be anyone reading it and *we will read it if we have assignments* that you give such as asking us to send report or send a summary today, what about this story, maybe, or what about do you know this word, or maybe give some sort of examples such as *examples of words*

Instance 2: Guidelines for interaction on the Facebook group – needed guidelines for interaction

Interviewee: NHFZ

S : okay do you feel mm if there's a learning task on the group would you feel better... graded learning task, I supposed you would feel better if there are grades

NHFZ : I don't think so, but if there are tasks, it would be okay because we would feel like we *have aims* mm like when someone wants to post anything or share information, because we have guidance, but when we don't have any guidance there, it's hard, for example like myself, *I don't know what to post*, because we don't necessarily have to post study-related materials right, we can share anything but

S : are you active in the pharmacy group

NHFZ : uh

S : yeah because it's more related

NHFZ : more comfortable because we share things with guidance on how to post something

Instance 3: Guidelines for interaction on the Facebook group – needed guidelines for interaction

Interviewee: SC

S : okay on the group now the format is voluntary, whoever want to post you can post, who doesn't want to post, you just keep quiet, there's no pressure that you have to do assignment, writing, no pressure, in your opinion, is that okay or do we need to have some sort of a posting guideline or structure where an admin or a teacher says okay today we have to do one writing one short story everybody has to post one short story, how do you think about that, do you think the voluntary nature of it is better or do you think we need some structure

SC : this is a part of our learning, okay [pause] both have their advantages and disadvantages, for the *voluntary* there's no pressure you know, if you want to learn when you have time, you learn, when you don't have time, it's okay to just leave it, then if we have pressure, we'll feel mm it's good, I think yeah it's good because *we will spend our time, a little time to complete the task* then we will improve, when we post it then teacher will correct us right, and *we will learn from that, so it's good*

EXAMPLE 43: THE NEED FOR INTERACTION GUIDELINES OR POSTING REQUIREMENTS

Instances 1, 2 and 3 in Example 43 above show extracts of interview transcripts of YHT, NHFZ, and SC who agreed that posting requirements or interaction guidelines were needed in the group, for several reasons; to get more active participants, to give the members more opportunities to learn new words, to raise awareness of the activity's purposes, and to acquire new knowledge from mistakes corrected by authorities. The general instructions in the LMT100 group had made NHFZ into a passive participant as she had no clue of the content to be shared with the group members. Accordingly, she

felt more guided in the Pharmacy Facebook groups, and acted actively by searching, sharing and discussing content with the communities.

4.22.6 Theme 19: Grammar-related issues

During the interview sessions, the interviewees strongly emphasised the centrality of grammar for their ELL. For example, while FB expressed her priorities for both grammar and content, she elaborated more on the importance of grammar (Example 44).

Instance 1: Interviewees' emphasis on grammar in English learning

Interviewee: FB

S : so for you which one is more important, grammar or the intended message

FB : both, sometimes when I write I will make sure that my grammar error is not that terrible [laughs], like if it's singular plural and if there are too much grammatical errors, I think it would be better if we don't post anything

EXAMPLE 44: AN INTERVIEWEE'S EMPHASIS ON GRAMMAR IN ELL

a. The need for grammar correction

Many interviewees strongly agreed that there should be some extent of grammar correction in the LMT100 group, in order to improve their ELL. Two extracts from the interview sessions illustrate the interviewees' belief that grammar correction of the interaction threads would benefit the development of their English language skills (Example 45).

Instance 1: The need for grammar correction on the LMT 100 Facebook group

Interviewee: ASYA

S : uh because we don't have any guidelines not many people are very active, so do you think we should have some sort of a guideline to get more people to participate

ASYA : mm uh what I mean here, correction is when people post something, post a status, I hope all the members of the LMT 100 have the courage to correct the mm, all the friends

AE : yeah friends' mistakes

ASYA : yeah friends' mistakes

AE : of grammatical error

ASYA : yeah I really hope so actually mm because when we don't have anyone, any of them that uh brave enough to correct their friends, I think there is no use of us posting things about English actually, so I think we should correct each other

AE : mm

S : correction in the sense of grammar correction

AE : grammar correction uh sentence structures vocabulary

ASYA : yeah

AE : spelling, that sort of things

S : would you feel comfortable if one of your friends correct

ASYA : yes

S : or do you want some authorities

AE : I don't feel offended

ASYA : yes [laughs] because we learn from it right

Instance 2: The need for grammar correction on the LMT 100 Facebook group

Interviewee: AND

S : uh so as you know because there's no posting guideline, there's no teacher mm sometimes whenever students post might not be very accurate in terms of grammar spelling, do you feel that there's a need for someone to be correcting all the grammar bits

AND: mm maybe we can do that to correct their sentences or their English, correct their English or mentor students to correct them

S : oh mentor

AND: uh yeah

S : so you wouldn't mind if any of the students correct your grammar, do you feel that's okay

AND: yeah

S : okay you wouldn't feel like okay, let say I'm posting something and then somebody commented on my grammar, would I feel offended, oh I don't want to write anymore because somebody is correcting me, do you feel like that or that's okay

AND: if there's someone to correct my English or comment on my posts I would be really happy

S : really

AND: because they can correct my sentences, improve my English too

EXAMPLE 45: INTERVIEWEES' EMPHASIS ON GRAMMAR CORRECTION IN THE LMT100 GROUP

Instances 1 and 2 in Example 45 show AE, ASYA and AND's emphasis for grammar correction. The areas of improvement required by them were vocabulary, sentence structure, and spelling. The three interviewees believed they would not feel disappointed if their grammar mistakes were corrected by the LMT100 group communities. They would instead feel very grateful to be presented with the learning opportunities.

Apart from the importance of grammar correction, other related discussions include; *who should correct grammar, how interviewees would prefer their grammar mistakes to be corrected, and how would they feel if their grammar mistakes were corrected.*

Who should correct grammar mistakes?

In Example 45 above, ASYA, AE and AND expressed their appreciation if their grammatical mistakes in the LMT100 group were to be corrected. The interviewees elaborated that they preferred their *friends (5 occurrences), teachers (5 occurrences), and both friends and teachers (7 occurrences)*, to correct their grammar.

Who should correct grammar mistakes? – Teachers and students

Instance 1: Grammar correction – should be conducted by both teachers and students

Interviewee: MFTI

S : uh in your opinion, who would be the most suitable to correct grammar, teachers or students themselves

MFTI : if the students can do it, that's okay, if it's the teacher, that's okay too

S : whichever, that's okay for you

MFTI : if we help each other

EXAMPLE 46: GRAMMAR CORRECTION SHOULD BE DONE BY BOTH TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

Who should correct grammar mistakes? – Teachers

Instance 1: Grammar correction – should be conducted by teachers

Interviewee: ANH

S : okay there's no teacher on the group, do you think we need a teacher that can guide, monitor, or correct mistakes or anything, or do you think students themselves are enough

ANH : we could do that, come up with a teacher to help improve English because sometimes if students do the grammar correction, the other student would feel irritated, so for someone like teacher, that is his/her job to correct mistakes, so I think that will help

EXAMPLE 47: GRAMMAR CORRECTION SHOULD BE DONE BY TEACHERS

Examples 46 and 47 illustrate two extracts from the interview transcripts, in which the interviewees expressed their preference for both teachers and friends, and teachers to conduct grammar correction for their grammatical mistakes in the LMT100 group. They believed that conflicts and arguments among the members could be avoided if teachers

were to correct grammar. If a student corrected another student's mistake, (s)he may be branded a show-off, which may lead to conflict that could jeopardise the group's harmony. However, some members such as AT and JE did not see the problems to be corrected by the more capable students because they believed that knowledge needs to be shared.

How the interviewees prefer grammar to be corrected?

The interviewees believed that grammar corrections should be addressed in two ways; public approach (17 occurrences), and private approach (16 occurrences). The public approach sees the grammar mistakes as being address on the group's Facebook's wall, while private approach involves the Message function between selected people. Public approach could be accessed by all of the group members, who can then learn new knowledge from their friends' mistakes. On the other hand, private approach would save the person being corrected from embarrassment. Several interviewees such as AT, however, did not see any problems with both approaches.

Instance 1: How grammar correction should be done – both public and private

Interviewee: AT

S : so how would you prefer for the grammar correction to be done, should it be done publicly so that everybody can see and everybody can learn, like on the wall, or would you prefer if it is done using private messages, so that we do not embarrass the people, how do you think

AT : uh actually I like and I agree with both, the difference is just if we post it publicly, we have to correct it nicely so that we don't hurt the individual and so on

S : okay

AT: but if we post message, we correct the individual's grammatical mistakes with longer explanation, with more, to make the individual understand, but at the same time we tell him/her that we don't mean to hurt her but we want to correct the mistakes so that he/she do not continuously commit the mistakes. This way the individual will not feel embarrass because nobody else know, it's just between you and I, like that, that's my message, so I agree with both

EXAMPLE 48: HOW GRAMMAR MISTAKES SHOULD BE CORRECTED – BOTH PUBLICLY AND PRIVATELY

Example 48 shows AT's preferences for both public and private grammar correction in the LMT100 group. However, he reminded that no matter the approach, grammar correction must be conducted very tactfully, to save the students from embarrassment.

Nevertheless, AT believed that private grammar correction allows for the explanation to be longer, and gives space for personal interactions between teachers-students and students-students.

Public grammar correction

Instance 1: How grammar correction should be done – public grammar correction

Interviewee: FAR, HAR

S : if we want to correct grammar, should we do it in a public setting let say on the wall so that everybody can see or should we make it private, it its private it's just between the writer and the person who correct right, other people might not learn anything, but it will not embarrass, but if we do it on the wall, everybody can learn, but t might be a bit embarrassing to the writer, what's your opinion on that

FAR: embarrassment, I think it's the second one

S : private

FAR: no no no the public one

S : public

FAR: at least other people can learn and we learn from them but the writer must

HAR: before that we have to tell the writer to be open-minded

FAR: uh

HAR: uh we have to tell him/her to be open minded, tell them not to be disappointed, we have to explain this to other people

FAR: ha

HAR: if we want to do it

FAR: if you want to do it on the group, you have to make a group's regulation

HAR: because Malaysian students would be disappointed

FAR : don't say students, we used to be like that [laughs]

EXAMPLE 49: HOW GRAMMAR MISTAKES SHOULD BE CORRECTED - PUBLICLY

During the interview session, FAR was accompanied by her friend, HAR, who also contributed ideas to the discussions. Example 49 shows an extract from the interview transcript. Both FAR and HAR expressed their preferences for public grammar correction. They believed that public grammar correction would be more beneficial to the group members, who can also learn from the mistakes. Prior to the correction, however, the members must be reminded to stay positive and opened to the learning experience. FAR further stated that the group must specify some guidelines, and rules and regulations to avoid conflicts among members. Following this, HAR added that the group members must be reminded to stay positive and adhere to the group's regulations, because "*Malaysian students would be disappointed*" if their writing products are corrected, which could hinder their learning participation and process. HAR's view

was similarly echoed by ANH who believed that Malaysian students would feel upset if people criticise their language mistakes, even constructively.

Private grammar correction

Instance 1: How grammar correction should be done – private grammar correction

Interviewee: ANH

S : mm right now there's no teachers or anybody who correct your grammar, your sentence structures

ANH: uh yes yes

S : mm how do you feel if we have someone who's doing all that, is it necessary to correct everything

ANH: uh to correct straightaway to point out her mistakes, her or his mistakes in front of everybody might not be necessary, maybe what you can do is if someone does something, maybe you can just PM

S : uh okay

ANH: doing it mm privately instead of doing it openly, uh I think for Malaysian, if we correct their mistakes, they will feel annoyed, but if you go overseas, they would be different, they would say thank you I'll improve, uh we have bigger ego

S : yes

ANH: [laughs] most of the students maybe cannot be corrected I think

EXAMPLE 50: HOW GRAMMAR MISTAKES SHOULD BE CORRECTED - PRIVATELY

Example 50 shows ANH's preferences for private grammar correction. She stated that it was not necessary for an individual's mistakes to be pointed out openly, as she felt that Malaysian students had bigger ego and would feel annoyed if their mistakes were corrected. She elaborated that Malaysians could not take advice from others, compared to foreigners who would express their appreciation if their mistakes were pointed out. As such, both HAR (Example 49) and ANH held the sentiments that Malaysian students were proud and cannot be corrected even if they make mistakes.

4.22.7 Theme 21: The effects of the interaction activity on English language skills

The interviewees were asked to respond to the question of how the LMT100 group had affected their English language skills. There were two extremes of response (Figure 51), which were that *the group did not help at all*, and *the group helped improve English language skills*:

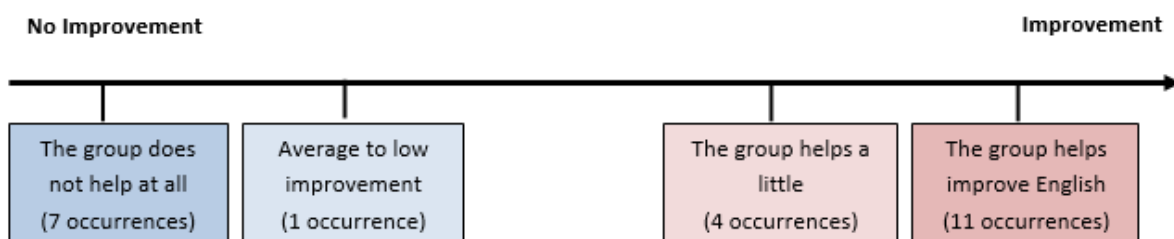


FIGURE 23: A THE INTERVIEWEES' PERCEPTIONS – THE EFFECTS OF THE INTERACTION ACTIVITY

a. The LMT100 group helped improve English language skills

Instance 1: LMT 100 group helps improve English skills

Interviewee: MM

S : okay so far, on that group, after you have read all the posts and interact, it has been about a month and a half now, uh do you feel that your English language skills have improved in any way or there's none at all
MM: there is, especially in the way we speak, like when we want to say something, we will try to use the most correct way, find the right way to write something

Instance 2: LMT 100 group helps improve English skills

Interviewee: NIN

S : so when you look at all the interactions on the Facebook group right, interactive post multimedia post, how do you feel it affects your English language skills, uh do they improve a little bit or is it not helping at all
NIN: mm basically it improve, it can improve, before this I do not know about the Ellen show, after that after I watch it, oh that's very interesting, it's interesting, sure sometimes she's funny right, she does ridiculous things, that time she wore the Halloween costumes, these costumes, but she has input to share with use, something new that we can remember, like when we look at something interesting, it makes us remember, when we learn vocabulary or things like that

EXAMPLE 51: THE LMT100 GROUP IMPROVED ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS

Instances 1 and 2 of Example 51 show MM and NIN's perceptions that the activities in the LMT100 group improved English language skills. MM stated that the interaction threads taught and encouraged her to find the most appropriate ways to say something in English. This suggests that the group assisted MM's communicative competence. NIN specifically pointed out that the post on The Ellen Show by HH, led her to find fun ways to learn and improve English. NIN seemed to enjoy the show, as she explained snippets of an episode passionately. Prior to HH's sharing, NIN was not aware of the show, and had never watched it. She also felt that her vocabulary expanded as a result of content sharing in the LMT100 group. Apart from NIN, there were a number of interviewees (DZ, TM) who found The Ellen Show enjoyable and improved their English language skills.

b. The LMT100 group did not help improve English language skills

Instance 1: LMT 100 group does not help improve English skills

Interviewee: SC

S : it has been about a month and a half now, so far do you think the post or the comment on the Facebook group itself, the content on there, does it help your English at all

SC: uh not yet, not yet for me, I want to speak fluently, like this, speak English even though it's broken English, but I build up my confidence

Instance 2: LMT 100 group does not help improve English skills

Interviewee: DZ

S : you as a member of the group, do you feel that the posts on Facebook group, the interaction that has been going on, do you think it helps your English language level at all

DZ: it helps me but I don't think others uh like I learn from your video like uh that kangaroo

S : deer crossing oh yeah

DZ: uh deer I watched it but I didn't comment right, so I watched what is it, uh I listened to what it says, that's something new for me, I take it, but I don't feel anyone else is like that

S : oh so you feel that it's helpful for you but not for others

DZ: uh I don't think they take it as something new, if like band 1 band 2, I don't know about them, but I feel they must be feeling what is this, why do we have to understand it, do we have to watch it, if we look at it, it will be a waste of time, because they don't understand, like that, that's what I think, if they can understand the slang, and can catch what it says, that's okay

EXAMPLE 52: THE LMT100 GROUP DID NOT IMPROVE ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS

Instances 1 and 2 of Example 52 show SC and DZ arguments against the LMT100 group as an efficient ELL platform. SC elaborated that the group failed to improve her English speaking skills. Her view was similarly shared by EQ and YHT, who felt that while the group improved vocabulary, it did not develop their speaking abilities.

On the other hand, DZ felt that the group improved her English language skills, but it may have failed to help the Band 1 and Band 2 MUET scorers, as they might not be able to understand the shared content. DZ specifically cited an audio recording shared in the group as a listening activity. She strongly believed that the other group members especially with Band 1 and Band 2, did not even try to listen to the recordings as they could not understand the English slang. Although this sentiment was DZ's perception of the members' characteristics, it was justified to some extent. MRL who was a Band 2 scorer in MUET, admitted that he did not listen to the audio recordings, out of fear that he would not understand it (as explained in the Example 53 below). He further stated

that his limited English language ability made him embarrass to interact with the other members of the group.

Instance 1: LMT 100 group does not improve English language skills - MRL does not listen to the audio recording

Interviewee: MRL

S : I posted an audio recording about deer crossing, did you listen to it

MRL: no

S : no, why, are you scared that you do not understand

MRL: I always check that group, if I understand that's good, if I don't understand I feel quite embarrass to join in the group, more over like I said just now, my limited English knowledge makes me feel discourage to interact with members of the group

EXAMPLE 53: NO IMPROVEMENT TO ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS – MRL DID NOT LISTEN TO THE AUDIO

RECORDING OUT OF FEAR THAT HE WOULD NOT UNDERSTAND IT

4.22.8 Theme 25: Suggestions that could improve the LMT100 group

The interviewees were asked to provide some practical suggestions on how the LMT100 group could be made better, to improve participations. There were a lot of recommendations and some that were highly agreed upon were *entertainment-based activities, allocation of rewards, social events, English language activities, opening the group to other students at the university, and creating smaller groups within the bigger LMT100 group.*

a. Entertainment

Instance 1: Suggestion to improve LMT100 group – entertainment

Interviewee: HH

S : what are the tips to speak in English to show that we are confident, if you how would you do it

HH: by doing research [laughs] no, if we watch movie, listen to the pronunciation, like when someone say something, we say it afterwards, so we'll feel more confident, if we don't know it how are we going to say it, so by listening by reading

W : maybe we can listen to songs or watch movies

HH: media

HH: yes I posted the Ellen show video once, I really want to help other people learn English but I don't want to do it every day because I don't want people to say that I'm looking for cheap publicity [laughs] because I would be annoyed if people keep posting the same thing, but if they intend to help people that's okay

S : mm but I've interviewed a few people who said that they really enjoyed the Ellen video and it's really helpful, they actually open the video to watch it

HH: because I don't like to learn something straight and quiet, I like to learn using jokes, because they make me happy, when we are happy, it is easier to understand

HH: uh another recommendation, don't change the language to Malay, learn English, we watch the English cartoon right, some are in Malay but the ones in English make us understand, ASTRO are corrupting and destroying this

W : uh that's right

HH: Chinese, Tamil, even CSI has Malay language option, that's a bad idea on AXN

W : that's weird, it also happens a lot in movies

HH: uh besides talk show we can watch AFC right, uh English, for people who don't like talk show they can watch the sand master, the baking cake, master cake chef and so on

W : uh making cakes

HH: English is fun if we can find something interesting

W : English songs

S : can you give some song examples

HH: songs that are not

W : famous songs

HH: but songs that are not too sexual, I don't like that, English songs that I like to hear uh, Maher Zain, there are a lot of meaningful words in his songs

EXAMPLE 54: SUGGESTIONS – MORE ENTERTAINMENT-BASED ACTIVITIES

Example 54 shows an extract from HH's interview. During the session, HH was accompanied by her friend, W, who also provided her views on the issue. HH and W mainly recommended more entertainment-based activities such as listening to songs and watching movies, to improve pronunciation. HH encouraged students to recite the words and phrases they hear from movies or songs to improve their speaking skills and build confidence. W believed that these activities could develop English language skills in general. HH explained that she listened to songs by Maher Zain, whose lyrics were meaningful, and disliked explicit songs.

HH introduced The Ellen Show to the group. The show became a hit among the interviewees who had never heard of it prior to HH's sharing. HH explained that she preferred to learn English through jokes, as those made her happy and eased learning process. She believed that English learning could be fun if students could find something that interest them. Apart from talk shows, HH recommended other reality programs on the ASTRO AFC channel such as the Cake Chef, and the Sand Master. HH emphasised that when watching English shows, students must not switched the language to their native languages (the options given by the channels were usually Malay, Chinese, and Tamil). A cable television company in Malaysia, ASTRO, offered a selection of movies and shows that can be viewed in multiple languages. Viewers had the options and flexibility to change the language for a show they wished to watch. This means that they could avoid listening to English language conversation, and watch movies in their native languages instead. HH felt that this was a bad move by ASTRO as it corrupted the viewers' minds and jeopardised language learning opportunities.

Although her sharing was highly likeable by the group members, she decided not to post frequently in the group, out of fear that other members would see her as attention seeker. She admitted that she would feel negative if other members shared similar posts every day, but if their intention was to help other students' learning, she would not mind it.

b. Rewards in terms of MyCSD points

Instance 1: Suggestion to improve LMT100 group - MyCSD

Interviewee: FB

S : uh so there are two issues there, first teacher and assignment, something to do, how do you feel about that, is it necessary to have assignments or tasks that all students must do, or should we retain it like this, who wants to post, do post, who don't want to don't have to

HAR: of course, I think teachers have to, I mean we need teachers on the group so that everybody can do the tasks, if not we will face problems too, so maybe we could do something, let say now we want MyCSD points so maybe who post will get extra points and so on.

EXAMPLE 55: SUGGESTIONS – REWARDS IN TERMS OF MYCSD POINTS

Example 55 shows that MyCSD points were suggested as a type of reward for students' participation in the LMT100 group. There were about 5 occurrences that MyCSD points were mentioned in the interview transcripts, but, it is an important finding as the reward was specifically unique to this university. MyCSD are merit points that must be gathered by the university students, to secure hostel rooms for the next semester year. To gain points, the students must participate in university-organised events. The higher their MyCSD points, the greater their chances of securing hostels. Example 55 shows HAR's suggestion that active members should be rewarded with MyCSD points. She also added that teachers' presence was needed in the group to guide learning process. Notably however, the process of rewarding MyCSD points to students based on their participation in the group was not as simple, as it relates to the university's administration, hence will take long formal processes.

c. Social events

Instance 1: Suggestion to improve LMT100 group – Create social event

Interviewee: KR

S : can you give some recommendations on how do we improve interaction on the Facebook group, like yourself, you don't know what to post, so is there any activity or types of posts that you feel could improve or encourage people to interact on the group

KR: u I think we go out for a picnic so that we could get to know each other, and during picnic you could explain what is LMT 100, when everybody knows each other

S : so in your opinion, if we know people it will be easier

KR: it's easier, yes like that

EXAMPLE 56: SUGGESTIONS – CREATE SOCIAL EVENTS

Example 56 shows KR's, suggestion for social events, such as picnic, to get the students to know each other, and improve their knowledge about the group. A similar suggestion was made by other interviewees, including AT, AA, AND, SC and ANH. KR believed that communication in the LMT100 group would be easier if members had already known each other. Besides picnic, other social events suggested were birthday parties, English-language games day, and outdoor activity such as hiking. However, HH reminded that social gathering may not be the best option as it would be hard to find a time that suits everybody's preference and schedule.

d. Opening the LMT100 group to other students at the university

Instance 1: Suggestion for the LMT100 group – opening group to other people

Interviewee: AA

S : okay correct me if I'm wrong but you mean get people who use English as their native language so you can see how their interaction is

AA: I think that not just LMT 100 students, we can get more friends, which maybe from Band 4, maybe they have more thoughts and they will post more

S : do you feel it's necessary for the students to be from this university students as well or just anybody

AA: anybody or from UK, some outsiders

AA: this group needs more people like your friends, if you can share more about UK it will get much interaction

EXAMPLE 57: SUGGESTIONS— OPENING GROUP TO OTHER STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY

Example 57 shows AA's suggestion to open the LMT100 group to other students such as the Band 4 MUET scorers. Similar view was shared by NIN who believed that the group should be opened to students from more advanced English proficiency classes so that the weaker students could interact with them. AA suggested that I invited some of my UK friends to generate more interest and interaction in the group. Added to this, EQ specifically mentioned that the group should be opened to the students in the *Bakal Mahasiswa* Facebook group, which gathered all first year students at the university.

e. Create smaller groups within the bigger LMT100 group

Instance 1: Suggestion for LMT100 group – creating smaller groups

Interviewee: ZM

S : what's your view on the use of facebook for academic, in the university there are a lot of lecturers and the organization itself that use facebook for academic, what's your opinion

ZM: facebook is a good platform, we can say that everybody has facebook, lecturers also have facebook nowadays, we can inform everything on facebook, there are a lot of benefits to us academically, but lecturers' notes on e-learning, we go on e-learning, upload and download the notes, print it ourselves, so we reduce the usage of papers at university, students print by themselves, lecturers do not bring a lot of notes, so facebook is good for academic, when we do in group assignments, then some of the more active students create another private groups for 4 or 5 of us, so we post information on the group, for example the WUS subject entrepreneurship basic, we have to set up a business, so there are 6 of us, SUH created our WUS group, there are 108 students on the course, we posted what business we want to do, on our private group there is only the 6 of us, so I joined in the conversation because there are only 6 of us

S : okay

ZM: yes on the group my friends will ask my opinion about the business so I will comment because there is only 6 of us

S : so you're okay in smaller groups

ZM: uh maybe we can do English activity, we can make the group smaller, how many people are there on the LMT group

S : that's around 300

ZM: mm so that maybe could be the way, everybody has they own way, but for shy people like me, I cannot participate in big groups, so we could do smaller groups

S : okay smaller groups

ZM: smaller groups, yes

EXAMPLE 58: SUGGESTIONS – CREATING SMALLER GROUPS

Example 58 illustrates ZM's suggestion that the members of the LMT100 group to be further divided into smaller groups to increase interaction opportunities. Based on her previous experience, ZM disclosed that she felt more comfortable to communicate and give ideas in smaller assignment groups, rather than in large groups. For example, there was a huge number of 108 students in an Entrepreneurship course. To ease the discussion process, some students initiated smaller Facebook groups for discussions. ZM's participation and contribution were more visible in the smaller groups, rather than in larger groups. She believed that this is the way to get shy people to feel more comfortable in articulating their thoughts in public spaces.

4.22.9 Theme 29: Challenges of ELL on Facebook

During the interview sessions, there were several stereotypes or sentiments, mentioned by the interviewees, which were highly likely to arise from their experience, sociocultural influence, and values they practised. These sentiments could directly and indirectly impact ELL and achievement at the university. Some of the stereotypes or sentiments that emerged during the interviews were:

- Malaysians downgrading fellow Malaysians as lazy, and could not take constructive criticism.
- Stereotyping students based on their origins; students from the East Coast of Malaysia (Kelantan and Terengganu) discouraged ELL.
- One race is better than the other; the Malays were lazy and negative, while the Chinese helped each other's learning.
- Foreigners were better than Malaysians; foreigners can take criticism while Malaysians cannot be advised.
- The importance of Malay rights.

a. Malaysians downgrading fellow Malaysians

One of the sentiments expressed by the interviewees was downgrading or stereotyping Malaysians with negative traits especially when it relates to ELL. Some interviewees such as ANH, FAR, HAR, and UMN, believed that Malaysian students did not take criticism well, compared to foreigners, which made ELL difficult to be conducted among friends on Facebook.

Instance 1: Challenges in learning English language - Sentiment

Interviewee: UMN

S : so far what's your view on the use of facebook group for English interaction, is it okay, is it not okay

UMN: it is okay for those who are really keen to learn but those who are not so, it's the same like the other pages, but I don't know why Malaysians, when we tried to talk in English people will look at us in a weird way, I don't know why, that's why people are afraid to talk in English

S : do you experience that

UMN: sometimes they just stare at us

S : university students

UMN : sometimes, and also people think that when we talk in English it makes us look proud, like wow

EXAMPLE 59: CHALLENGES IN ELL – SENTIMENT - MALAYSIANS CANNOT ACCEPT CRITICISM

In example 59, UMN felt that fellow Malaysians were not very encouraging when English was employed in daily conversations. According to her, bystanders tended to stare at people conversing in English, and regarded the users as being a show-off. This was one of the reasons that discouraged people from practising English outside the classroom. UMN admitted that university students were among those who reacted negatively to English language conversations. A similar view was shared by MFTI, who stated that she did not want to post anything in the LMT100 group because her friends always made fun of her when she used English. This hurt her feelings, and deterred her participation in the group. Added to this, HH and NNN specifically stated that the people from Kelantan and Terengganu discouraged the practice of English (Example 60). NIN had a first-hand experience of this situation, as she hailed from Kelantan. She elaborated that the negative attitudes toward English were especially obvious among people with lower educational backgrounds, whose minds had been programmed to despise English. NNN and HH believed that a majority of the East Coast people viewed English language speakers as posers, but reminded that not all of them had negative attitudes.

Instance 1: Challenges in learning English language - Sentiment

Interviewee: NIN

NIN: one more thing, the Kelantanese especially, if we use English, they will say that we are being a show-off, that is their mentality, especially those who are with lower education

Instance 2: Challenges in learning English language - Sentiment

Interviewee: HH

HH: how do we encourage people to learn English, because usually people from the East Coast rarely speak in English, so how do we help them

EXAMPLE 60: CHALLENGES IN ELL – SENTIMENT - PEOPLE FROM KELANTAN AND TERENGGANU DISLIKED

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

b. One race is superior than another in English language mastery

As a plural nation, the issue of race had always been discussed in various fields, including education, and English language achievement. The interview sessions involved students from various ethnic backgrounds and gathered their responses on the issue of ELL and practice. The common conception was that the Chinese were superior to the Malays in English language mastery. The Chinese were also generally viewed as more confident, hardworking, and smarter than the Malays.

Instance 1: Challenges in learning English language - Sentiment

Interviewee: JE

S : do you think that we need someone who can correct our grammar on the group, is it necessary

JE: it's necessary and beneficial so that we don't feel shy with our grammar error, there are so many judgmental people, but the disadvantage is that that person will be embarrassed, but that's our weakness, it's better that we feel embarrassed now rather than in the future, that would be worse, right now our English practice is very limited because we are afraid of incorrect grammar, but I don't mind that, for example, the Chinese don't really use the correct English but why can they be confident, it's not that the Malays can't do it, we can, let there be mistakes, right

Instance 2: Challenges in learning English language - Sentiment

Interviewee: FAR, HAR

HAR: we won't have any confidence to use English, so it's hard for the Malays to speak in English in Malaysia, because we get negative views if we use the wrong grammar

FAR: yeah

Instance 3: Challenges in learning English language - Sentiment

Interviewee: YHT

YHT: when I talk to my friends in Chinese, I sometimes add English or Manglish words, but my friends will make fun of me by saying that eh you don't know how to speak in Chinese is it

EXAMPLE 61: CHALLENGES IN ELL – SENTIMENT - ONE RACE IS SUPERIOR THAN THE OTHER

Example 61 illustrates JE, FAR, HAR, and YHT's views on races in ELL. JE, FAR, and HAR who were of Malay descent believed that Chinese students were more confident in using English language, and employed it more in daily conversations. JE stated that the Malay students often avoided English language practise as they were afraid of making mistakes, and getting negative views from other people. On the other hand, YHT who was a Chinese, explained that he faced similar problem within the Chinese community. His friends always made fun of him when he included English in his speeches. They would ridicule him by saying that there was no reason for him to use English, as he was fluent in Chinese.

Based on these responses, it is apparent that English language problems such as having low confident, producing inaccurate English speeches, and being ridiculed by friends, were not specific to any races. However, the sociocultural values and the belief that other races were always better than one's own, may have influenced the minds of the students. It is thus necessary to raise their awareness of the misconception, so that they would not feel too incompetent compared to others. By realising this, the learning process may be easier and livelier with students' participations and preparedness to interact with each other.

4.23 Comparing and contrasting interviewees' responses to the questionnaires, LMT100 interaction group, and interviews

This section compares and contrasts the 25 interviewees' responses to questionnaires, LMT100 interaction group and interviews to establish the consistency of their responses throughout the data collection process. The female to male ratio of participation in the LMT100 group was 5:2, which generally reflects the ratio of questionnaire responses

and the female/male ratio of students at the university. The data are presented based on the four participant categories of *active*, *average*, *passive*, and *very passive* in terms of their Facebook group participation. The questionnaire findings are presented, followed by the qualitative data from the LMT100 interaction group and interviews.

4.23.1 English language skills

The interviewees were asked to rate their English language skills in the questionnaire. Table 24 shows the distribution of the interviewees' ratings based on their participation rate in the LMT100 group.

TABLE 24: THE INTERVIEWEES' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS BASED ON QUESTIONNAIRE

Active participants

	Reading	Writing	Speaking	Listening
AE	Moderate	Moderate	Good	Moderate
UMN	Moderate	Moderate	Poor	Poor
JE	Good	Good	Good	Good
TM	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
SC	Moderate	Poor	Moderate	Poor
ASYA	Good	Moderate	Good	Good
YHG	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate

Passive participants

	Reading	Writing	Speaking	Listening
DZ	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Poor
AND	Poor	Poor	Moderate	Moderate
NHFZ	Good	Good	Moderate	Moderate
FB	Good	Good	Moderate	Moderate
ANH	Good	Good	Good	Good

Average participants

	Reading	Writing	Speaking	Listening
MRL	Moderate	Moderate	Poor	Poor
AA	Good	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
MM	Moderate	Poor	Moderate	Moderate
HH	-	-	-	-
YHT	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
NNN	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
EQ	Good	Good	Moderate	Moderate
MFTI	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Good
AT	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate

Very passive participants

	Reading	Writing	Speaking	Listening
FAR	Good	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
ZFM	Good	Moderate	Moderate	Good
KHR	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
NIN	Good	Good	Moderate	Good

a) Reading skills

All of the *active*, *average*, and *very passive* participants viewed their reading ability as moderate or good rather than poor. Of the *passive* participants, only one, saw his reading ability as poor. This was AND, a Chinese student who scored a Band 2 in his MUET. As a *passive* participant, AND did not contribute much to the LMT100 group in terms of generating content and interacting. He insisted that he joined the group to get the latest information and believed that the group was helpful in providing practical information such as the exam dates. During his interview session, AND gave short answers to the questions asked, but elaborated when probed. He believed that the LMT100 group had helped to improve his English language ability especially in the learning of new words and sentences. This occurred when he came across new words in other's posts, and simultaneously learned how to use the words in sentences. He also recommended outdoor language games that improved pronunciation.

It is also interesting to see that three out of five of the *passive* students (NHFZ, FB, and ANH), and three out of four of the *very passive* students (FAR, ZFM, and NIN) were the ones who rated their reading skills as good, compared to only two out of the seven *active* participants (JE and ASYA), and two out of the nine *average* participants (MM and EQ). During the interview sessions, these participants were very articulate and expressive, which may indicate their confidence and perhaps, higher English language ability. This may be substantiated by the fact that seven out of the nine *passive* and *very passive* participants were Band 3 MUET scorers, which marks them as possessing moderate English language proficiency. The other two, AND and KR were Band 2 MUET scorers.

b) Writing skills

Many of the *active*, *average*, and *very passive* interviewees perceived their writing skills as moderate. On the other hand, only three of the *passive* interviewees (NHFZ, FB, and ANH) believed that they had good writing skills. FB and ANH both stated that they were not very active on Facebook for two reasons. FB felt more comfortable using Twitter to get the latest information and interact with her friends, but she started to use Facebook a lot more when she enrolled at the university. On Twitter, she followed verified accounts such as the BBC News to learn English and attempted interactions in English with her friends. ANH did not have much time to use Facebook as she was occupied with her part-time job and course work. Her English skills improved a great deal, she claimed, when she had to use the language to converse with customers. On the other hand, NHFZ stated that she was active on Facebook for both social and academic matters, where she met new friends from different universities as well as engaged in discussions and circulation of information in the Pharmacy Facebook groups. Perhaps, it is for these various reasons that the three *passive* participants felt confident in their ability to write in English. FB believed that participation in the LMT100 group improved students' writing ability as they had to check the output, vocabulary, and grammar before posting any content. Like AND, ANH believed that she learned new words from other's postings, such as AE's. In her view, the group was helpful despite poor participation from other members. Although the group may have improved other students' ability, it did not assist her learning, as she was not an active participant. Similarly, NHFZ reported that the group did not improve her language skills, as it lacked information. ANH and NHFZ's assertion contradicted DZ's view who felt that the group helped her, but not other students. She believed that this was because she made an effort to engage with the content shared in the group, while others did not. She gave the example of an audio recording which I shared to expose the students to authentic English language conversation. DZ was

confident that she was one of the few students who took time to listen to it, while others ignored it, citing an incomprehensible accent. Her accusation was justified to some extent as two interviewees, MRL and AT admitted that they did not listen to the recording.

c) Speaking skills

A majority of the interviewees rated their speaking skills as moderate rather than good or poor. While only three *active* interviewees believed so, four *passive* participants, and all four *very passive* students agreed to this. No interviewees from the *passive* and *very passive* categories saw their speaking skills as poor, while one *active* (UMN), and one *average* (MRL) interviewees perceived this. UMN was a Mathematics student who scored a Band 3 in her MUET, while MRL was a Band 2 MUET scorer and was studying in the Humanities department.

Similar to the *passive* participants NHFZ, FB, and DZ, UMN and MRL felt that they lacked the ability to converse in English, which made them very reluctant to contribute more in the LMT100 group. Like FB, UMN typed and deleted her comments so many times because she feared being laughed at by other members. MRL similarly agreed and stated that he had very low self-confidence to participate actively in the group as he was scared of using the wrong grammar and being ridiculed by others. Regardless of what they thought, both UMN and MRL shared several posts in the group to get information and initiate conversation. One of UMN's posts was to learn about the war in Syria as she was passionate and felt responsible to lend a helping hand. In line with this, she believed that more non-academic, scientific, fact-type content should be shared in the group to attract more attention. MRL agreed that more non-academic interactions should be allowed in the group as long as English was used, to gauge

students' interests. Teachers might then have directed these non-academic interactions to become more academic. MRL shared an academic multimedia post in the form of a YouTube video link, related to the short story that they were learning in the classrooms. Both UMN and MRL's posts however, failed to receive any attention from the group members, which may be due to the complexity of the Syrian issue, and the information that they had learned in the classrooms.

Despite his perception of his English language ability and the issue of his lack of self-confidence, MRL admitted that he liked to make new friends on Facebook who shared the same interest. He befriended another Manchester United fan from South Africa, and conversed with him in English, with the help of Google Translate. Besides that, he and his friends from Sabah tried to improve their language ability by conversing in English. They promised that they would not let other people's views of English influence them as they wanted to improve themselves. In the same breath, UMN and friends also read more English language novels and newspaper to learn the language in a fun way. Both UMN and MRL were aware of the limitations in their English language abilities. As such they attempted several strategies to elevate their skills to the next level. Both of them viewed the group positively as a space for English language interactions, and the acquisition of new words. Like FB, NHFZ, and DZ, they hoped for more involvement from their friends to gain the group's full potential as an English language interaction platform.

d) Listening skills

Out of the four categories of interviewees, only the very *passive* participants did not regard their listening skills as being poor, as 50 percent of them believed that these were moderate, and others saw them as good. On the other hand, 28.6 percent *active*

(UMN, and SC), 20 percent *passive* (DZ), and 12.5 *average* (MRL) interviewees perceived their listening skills as poor. Out of these four interviewees, only MRL scored a Band 2 in MUET. The other three were Band 3 MUET scorers. MRL mentioned that he scored the lowest in his listening test. This may explain the reason that he refused to listen to an audio recording shared in the group, as he reasoned that he would not even understand it. DZ suggested on this issue that the weaker students may not benefit as much from the group due to their reluctance to engage with materials they thought were too complicated for them. Furthermore, DZ was frustrated that some posts and comments shared in the group had a lot of mistakes. She added that some content was irrelevant and would not help improve English language skills. As for UMN, she had always thought of English as a difficult language, and she aspired to improve her ability at university. Previously, she learned English mainly to pass her O level examinations. She felt that this was the reason that her skills were quite poor. Like DZ and FB, UMN aspired to participate more actively in the group. However, she felt inadequate with her English language abilities, which caused her to type and delete her comments in the group. At times, she felt uncomfortable using English publicly as she feared that other people may think that she was showing-off. As a result, she was probably not getting sufficient amount of practice to develop her English language skills.

On the other hand, SC emphasised her desire to be able to speak English fluently. She felt that the group did not assist her fluency, but boosted her confidence to use English in a public space. Similar to MRL and AE, SC viewed Facebook as a social platform, which made her feel natural interacting with people she did not personally know. Her confidence was illustrated when she actively used the LMT100 group to promote her business for the Entrepreneurship course she was taking.

Summary: Students' perceptions of their English language skills

In summary, the majority of the interviewees believed their English language skills to be moderate, rather than good or poor. There were however slight variations between the different categories of participants. The *active* participants (AE, UMN, JE, TM, SC, ASYA, and YHG) seemed to have confidence that their reading and writing skills were of moderate level, while the *average* participants (MRL, AA, MM, HH, YHT, NNN, EQ, MFTI, AT) felt that all of their skills were moderate. On the other hand, the *passive* participants (DZ, AND, NHFZ, FB, ANH) perceived that their reading and writing skills were good, but their speaking and listening skills were moderate. Finally, all of the *very passive* participants (FAR, ZFM, KHR, NIN) agreed that their speaking skills were moderate. Three of them (FAR, ZFM, and KHR) perceived similarly of their writing skills, while NIN saw her skills as good.

It is interesting to note that out of the four categories, only the *very passive* participants did not perceive that they had poor level of language skills. All of their perceived skills were either moderate or good. Some of the *active* and *average* participants similarly saw three of their skills as being at a poor level, i.e. writing, speaking and listening, but their reading skills were either moderate or good. On the other hand, some of the *passive* participants saw their reading, writing, and listening skills as poor, but everybody agreed that their speaking ability was either moderate or good.

It may thus be fair to assume that the *very passive* participants were quite confident with their English language ability, despite being silent readers in the interaction group. On the other hand, the participants who made the effort to be visible in the group had doubts about their ability. As such, the main reason for their participation was perhaps to practice, learn and improve their English language skills. Many of the

interviewees saw the group as beneficial for themselves or their peers; *active* (UMN, JE, TM, and YHG), *passive* (AND, FB, DZ, and ANH), *average* (MRL, MM, AA, EQ, and AT), and *very passive* (NIN, and ZFM) participants. The responses however may be due to the researcher's position as an authority. AND, UMN, TM, AT, MM, and ZFM agreed that the group improved English skills in general by introducing them to the correct ways of writing, and reminding them of what they had learnt previously. FB, ANH, JE, TM, YHG, MRL, and NIN believed that they had learned new vocabulary from the posts shared in the group, and from the videos introduced, such as the Ellen show. MRL and TM referred to dictionaries and Google Translate when they encountered difficult words.

There was a contradiction of views between YHG and EQ where, as an *active* participant, YHG believed that the group improved English interaction and speaking skills that led to fluency, rather than improving reading or writing. She added that Facebook in general may negatively influence English grammar, vocabulary, and spelling as a lot of short forms were in used. EQ, as an *average* participant, on the other hand, saw the group as helping in spelling and writing, rather than speaking. YHG's opinion was supported by another *average* participant, AA, who believed that the group developed their speaking skills as they had to think of the structure of the language to generate ideas. As LMT100 was not a tough course, she was confident that her English skills could be improved by chatting and interacting with peers in the group.

Another contradictory view was between ANH, DZ, and UMN. ANH believed that the group improved other students' skills instead of hers. Although she admitted to have learned a few new words from it, she felt that it was not very helpful. However, she

stated that this was mainly due to her busy activity of assignments and part-time work, rather than to the lack of members' participation in the group. On the other hand, DZ saw the group as beneficial for herself, rather than other students who were not bothered to engage with the materials shared, such as the audio recording of an authentic phone conversation in English language. This was substantiated by MRL and AT who admitted to have ignored the materials presented. The lack of effort showed by the group members frustrated her, which led her to assume that the group was less advantageous to others. She felt that while the group was not a waste of time, it was not helpful either. Her view was supported by UMN who stated that the group may become a platform for those who were really keen to learn, but other students may just see it like any other Facebook pages, and not take it seriously.

Several interviewees mentioned the failure of the group to improve their English language skills; *passive* (NHFZ), *active* (SC), *average* (MRL, AA, HH, YHT, and NNN), and *very passive* participants (KHR, and FAR). NHFZ, KHR, and HH viewed the lack of information as the group's weakness. The difference between them was that HH attempted to initiate conversation and share her learning strategy with the group members, while NHFZ and KHR refrained from being visible in the group. This view was similarly shared by YHT who stated that he chose not to be active in the group as it was unhelpful and he had many other Facebook groups. In order to improve his skills, he believed that more English exercises such as reading comprehension needed to be presented. Both YHT and SC aspired to be able to speak English fluently, and YHT emphasised his desire to learn fancy English vocabulary to make his speeches sound impressive. However, SC did not see the group's ability to improve her English fluency, but agreed that it taught her grammar, boosted her confidence to use English, and exposed her to an English language environment. Her view was similarly

articulated by YHG. Although AA believed that interaction had the ability to improve English language skills, she stated that her language ability did not improve from the group, as she loved to read but not talk. Furthermore, she felt that despite her effort to initiate conversation with the members, they were not very responsive, which hindered her further contribution. In line with this, NNN positively stated that more interaction with the members would improve her English language skills, but at that point, she felt very little development from her association with the group.

All in all, there were mixed views from the interviewees of the effectiveness of the LMT100 group to improve English language interaction and skills. There were more interviewees who expressed belief in the potential of the group, although this may be due to my position as an authority during the interview sessions. Nevertheless, the contradicting views were also invaluable to my research, as it is necessary to understand students' views, needs, and aspirations in developing teaching and learning processes integrated with social technology. Perhaps, by taking into consideration the suggestions made, and prolonging the period of data collection, the group members may become more active, and familiar with the group's purpose and structure, and interact more with each other and the content materials.

4.24 Languages used on Facebook

Table 25 shows the distribution of the languages used by the interviewees on Facebook. In the questionnaire, the items were measured using a 6-points Likert scale with the options of *Never*, *Seldom*, *Sometimes*, *Frequent*, *Always*, and *Others*. The table however only displays the tabulation of percentages for *Frequent* and *Always*, to show the languages that were commonly used. The figures mainly focus on the usage of English and its combinations.

TABLE 25: THE INTERVIEWEES' PERCEPTIONS OF THE LANGUAGES THAT THEY USED ON FACEBOOK

Active participants

	English	Malay	Mother-tongue	English and Malay	English and Mother-tongue	Malay and Mother-tongue	English, Malay and Mother-tongue
1. AE	Frequent	Always	Always	Always	Always	Always	Always
2. UMN	Always	Always	Always	Always	Always	Always	Always
3. JE	Frequent	Sometimes	Never	Always	Always	Sometimes	Sometimes
4. TM	Frequent	Always	Always	Frequent	Frequent	Always	Frequent
5. SC	Always	-	-	-	-	-	-
6. ASYA	Sometimes	Always	Always	Always	Always	Always	Always
7. YHG	Frequent	Sometimes	Sometimes	Always	Always	Always	Always

Average participants

	English	Malay	Mother-tongue	English and Malay	English and Mother-tongue	Malay and Mother-tongue	English, Malay and Mother-tongue
1. MRL	Sometimes	Always	Never	Always	Never	Never	Never
2. AA	Sometimes	Frequent	Always	Always	Always	Always	Always
3. MM	Seldom	Always	-	Always	-	-	-
4. HH	Frequent	Always	Always	Always	Always	Always	Always
5. YHT	Never	Sometimes	Frequent	Seldom	Sometimes	Never	Seldom
6. NNN	Seldom	Frequent	Always	Frequent	Frequent	Frequent	Frequent
7. EQ	Sometimes	Always	-	Sometimes	-	-	Sometimes
8. MFTI	Sometimes	Always	Never	Always	Always	Always	Always
9. AT	Seldom	Seldom	Seldom	Always	Frequent	Frequent	Always

Passive participants

	English	Malay	Mother-tongue	English and Malay	English and Mother-tongue	Malay and Mother-tongue	English, Malay and Mother-tongue
1. DZ	Seldom	Seldom	Seldom	Sometimes	Never	Seldom	Never
2. AND	Frequent	Never	Always	Seldom	Never	Never	Sometimes
3. NHFZ	Sometimes	Frequent	Always	Frequent	Sometimes	Always	Sometimes
4. FB	Frequent	Frequent	Never	Always	Always	Never	Always
5. ANH	Always	Sometimes	Seldom	Seldom	Seldom	Seldom	Seldom

Very passive participants

	English	Malay	Mother-tongue	English and Malay	English and Mother-tongue	Malay and Mother-tongue	English, Malay and Mother-tongue
1. FAR	Sometimes	Always	Always	Always	Always	Always	Always
2. ZFM	Never	Always	Seldom	Seldom	Never	Sometimes	Sometimes
3. KHR	Sometimes	Always	Frequent	Sometimes	Frequent	Frequent	Frequent
4. NIN	-	-	-	Always	-	-	-

a) English language

Four *active* interviewees (AE, JE, TM, and YHG) reported to have frequently used English language on Facebook. The interviewees exhibited high enthusiasm to practice and improve their English language skills during the interview sessions, hence their frequent usage of English on Facebook was expected. Family influence may have played a factor in influencing their behaviours. YHG reported that her father had always encouraged her to learn English by reading newspapers on a daily basis. Their close relationship had further motivated her to practice it. JE believed that her parents' position as government servants who were highly educated had influenced her behaviours, confidence, and English language ability. She articulated that many of her

friends with well-educated parents, had similar upbringings which made them comfortable, familiar, and confident in the use of English in daily life. In the same breath, TM stated that her love for English language began when her parents kept singing English songs from the Beatles. The words from the songs piqued her interest and she searched for their meanings in dictionaries. As such, although inconclusive, parental involvement and home environment may have influenced the interviewees' ability and confidence to use English in a public space. In the LMT100 group, AE, TM, and YHG made an effort to use English in their posts and comments. JE on the other hand, opted to use Bahasa Malaysia and share an article in Malay to exert her position as an UMNO supporter. She however interacted and replied to my posts in English on another thread. As such, her decision to write in Bahasa Malaysia was a conscious move to express herself, rather than her inability to use English.

Following this, two very *passive* participants (FAR and KHR), and four *average* interviewees (MRL, AA, EQ, and MFTI) agreed that they sometimes used English on Facebook. During the interview session, FAR mentioned that Facebook had become so institutionalised and formal, where announcements were made and assignments were distributed. It was due to the institutionalisation of Facebook that she and her friends opted to talk about personal issues on Twitter. However, perhaps the formality of Facebook had led to her usage of English in her discussions of assignments or course work with her peers. Both FAR and KHR did not take part in the LMT100 group as they felt that it was dull, and non-beneficial. KHR wanted to improve her language skills but did not see the point of participating in the group. She wanted to attend nearby tuition classes, which was encouraged by her father. Her effort to sometimes use English on Facebook was commendable as she preferred outdoor learning activity, rather than being confined to online interaction. After his interview session, MRL showed more

enthusiasm and involvement in the LMT100 group. Initially, he participated by leaving short comments on some posts. Although there were a lot of mistakes and issues with his writings, he tried his best to use English. After a while, he started initiating academic posts to share with the group members. He realised that his English language ability was at a poor level, and he strived to improve himself by using various strategies. He made an online friend and chatted with a Manchester United fan, and used Google Translate to find the meaning of new words he encountered. He and a group of friends also made a rule to speak in English for a period of time for practice. Although MRL agreed that technology could improve learning, he still appreciated the face-to-face interaction and learning process that he had with his class teacher, which he believed had improved his skills to be on a par with his peers. Based on MUET achievement, AA had better English language ability than MRL. This was also observed from their speaking skills during the interview sessions. AA posted several academic posts to encourage critical discussions from the group members, but the responses to these were not numerous. Her posts exhibited good English skills and critical thinking ability. She believed that language skills could be improved by chatting and interacting, and saw the group as a good practice medium. However, she did not improve as much from her involvement with it as she preferred reading to speaking. EQ's participation in the group was quite average as she only commented on some posts, rather than initiating any interaction threads. She agreed that the group had presented the students with opportunities to practice English, and there were no other reasons for them not to take part, except for laziness. Her view of Facebook writing was interesting as she felt that some mistakes may be intentional to follow popular styles of Internet language, such as short forms and SMS language. She emphasised however that grammar mistakes needed to be corrected, preferably by means of quizzes. Sharing similar enthusiasm with MRL, MFTI was highly motivated to join the LMT100 group to improve her English language skills. She felt that after finishing high school, her language ability had

declined, and she had forgotten most of the things she had learned. She saw the group as an opportunity to acquire new things and revise. However, she was disappointed by the lack of content presented in the group and did not feel the need to be actively involved in it. Like EQ, her participation was average as she simply replied to some posts, rather than engaging in interactions or initiating new content.

Two of the *passive* interviewees (AND and FB) reported to have frequently used English only on Facebook. Similar with FAR, FB informed that she was more active on Twitter, and only started to be active on Facebook once she entered university. On Twitter, she followed verified English-based accounts such as the BBC News to get information, and also acquire the language. As such, perhaps, the English-only writings that she frequently produced on Facebook were related to her discussions about assignments and courses. Nevertheless, she used English most of the times on Twitter to articulate her thoughts, thus it may be fair to assume that she was comfortable and familiar using English for self-expression. Like FB, AND stated that he was not very active on Facebook, but he did read all the posts in the group based on notifications received. He believed that the group had developed his English skills by the acquisition of new words. There however was no evident to support AND's frequent usage of English in the LMT100 group as he opted to become a *passive* participant. Perhaps he was more active interacting and sharing posts in English on his personal Facebook page.

One very *passive* (ZFM), and one *average* interviewees (YHT) reported that they never used English only on Facebook. As mentioned, parental involvement may have had an influence over the interviewees' behaviours and confidence in using English. In the case of ZFM, it may be the opposite of YHG, JE, and TM's situation. ZFM believed that her lack of confidence to use English was due to the fact that her family did not use English

at home. While she was growing up, her English language skills were so poor that her sister felt worried if she would be able to pass her exams. Perhaps, the lack of confidence had stopped her from using only English on Facebook. Similarly, YHT did not believe that he had the ability to speak English fluently, and he aspired to be able to. He wanted to acquire fancy English vocabulary to make his speeches sound impressive, and demonstrated high interest in the grammar content presented in the LMT100 group. Perhaps grammar mastery may underpin higher confidence to use English in a public space such as Facebook.

b) English and Malay

Quite high frequencies of five *active* (AE, UMN, JE, ASYA, and YHG), six *average* (MRL, AA, MM, HH, MFTI, and AT), and two *very passive* (FAR, and NIN) interviewees reported to have always used a combination of English and Malay on Facebook (Table 28). A possible explanation to this phenomenon was that these interviewees, except MRL and YHG were from Malay descent whose native language was highly likely to be Bahasa Malaysia. As such, the combination of English and Malay in speeches may be casual and familiar for them. In fact, during the interview sessions, some of the interviewees such as AE, AA, and HH casually code-switched English and Malay in their responses.

On the other hand, YHG who was from Indian descent mentioned that she commonly used Tamil and Bahasa Malaysia to interact with her friends. As such, she rarely got the opportunity to practice her English language skills, which justified her active involvement in the LMT100 group. It is interesting to note that following EQ's assertion, YHG's writings were filled with digital vernaculars in terms of spellings, short forms, slangs, and SMS language. This however, did not indicate her lack of English language

ability. In fact, it illustrated her skills in using the Internet language while still being able to get her message across. MRL who was of Bajau descent mentioned that while he could speak in his native language, he rarely did so with his peers and brother who was studying at the same university. He only used Bajau when talking to older relatives back in his hometown, as only a relatively small population knew the language. Although he did not have high confidence in his English language ability, he made foreign friends through mutual interests and tried interacting in English with them. Perhaps, this was when the combination of English and Malay was used. He relied on Google Translate to help him while chatting, as well as when he was reading English references for his courses.

Notably, two of the passive interviewees (AND, and ANH) reported seldom using the combination of English and Malay on Facebook. The lack of English and Malay usage by AND was understandable as he was of Chinese descent. Perhaps, he felt more comfortable talking in his mothertongue of Cantonese, or Mandarin, and English on Facebook, rather than Bahasa Malaysia. This was made clear during the interview session where he reported to be using either Cantonese or Mandarin on his personal Facebook page to interact with his peers and families. In the case of ANH, although she was of Malay descent, she mentioned that she had a Chinese foster family, and while she could not speak Hokkien fluently, she could understand what was being said. She came from an elite school where English was used as the language of communication. However, during her time there, she did not feel the importance of English, and felt that people who used it were being show-offs. However, when she started working part-time to support herself, she realised the importance of English to communicate with customers, who were largely foreigners. She believed that her practical use of the language through interactions had assisted her development and

ability. As she had to juggle her time between study, and part-time work, she did not have much time to dwell on Facebook. Perhaps this, and also her familiarity and confidence in using English, hindered her from using the combination of English and Malay on Facebook.

c) English and mothertongue

A large number of *active* interviewees (5 - AE, UMN, JE, ASYA, and YHG) reported always using the combination of English and mothertongue on Facebook (see Table 29). Besides YHG, the active interviewees mentioned were of Malay descent, thus it is highly likely and natural that their mothertongue or native language was Bahasa Malaysia. The interviewees gave similar responses to both items that they always used the combinations of English and Malay, and English and mothertongue on Facebook. YHG similarly responded the same way to both items, but her case was different as she is of Indian descent, which means that she always used the combinations of English and Malay, and English and Tamil on Facebook. She articulated during the interview session that she did not get many opportunities to practice her English language skills, as she commonly used Malay and Tamil with her peers. She used the group to interact in English, although she adopted a lot of the digital vernaculars. Another non-Malay active interviewee was SC. She however did not respond to the items, and only reported that she always used English on Facebook. As such, it is not known if she ever used Chinese in her writings on the platform.

In the cases of the *average* participants, there were two interviewees who were not of Malay descent. Those were MRL, a Bajau, and YHT, a Chinese. MRL reported that he never used the combination of English and mothertongue on Facebook, but always used the combination of English and Malay. In fact, he was more interested in learning

Bahasa Malaysia than English. His passion for Bahasa Malaysia was unique as not many higher institutions offer Bahasa Malaysia as a course, and students normally study it to pass the exams. On the other hand, YHT reported sometimes using the combination of English and mothertongue, but only seldom using the combination of English and Malay. He never used English only, sometimes used Malay only, and frequently used mothertongue only on Facebook. From his response, it may be fair to assume that YHT was more comfortable expressing himself in his native language of either Hokkien, Cantonese, or Mandarin. He however aspired to be able to speak English proficiently, fluently, and effectively by combining fancy English words in his speeches or writings. The fact that he tried combining English and mothertongue on Facebook indicated a certain extent of effort to improve himself. He however wished for more reading comprehension, and vocabulary and grammar exercises in the group to elevate his skills. Based on YHT's responses to the language items in the questionnaire, and his behaviour in the LMT100 group, JE's assertion of the non-Malay students' characteristics ring true. JE stated that the non-Malay students, especially the Chinese students were very hardworking and confident to practice using English despite their lack of ability. In exams, the Chinese students worked hard to memorise words or structures in order to score good grades even though they may not have understood the meaning of the words they were using. Perhaps, YHT's emphasis on vocabulary exercises in the group resonated with JE's description of their learning behaviours.

Two *passive* interviewees (DZ and AND) reported that they never used the combination of English and mothertongue. DZ was a female student of Malay descent, and AND was a male student of Chinese descent. DZ reported that she sometimes used the combination of English and Malay, but seldom used English, Malay, and mothertongue

only on Facebook. As DZ was a Malay student, I immediately assumed that her native language was Bahasa Malaysia. However, based on her responses to the two language combination items, she may speak a different mothertongue at home, one which she never used in combination with English on Facebook, as observed in the case of MRL. This observation may be generalised to the cases of two very passive participants, ZFM and KHR, too. ZFM reported to have always used Bahasa Malaysia, but seldom used her mothertongue. She seldom adopted the combination of English and Malay, but never used English and mothertongue on Facebook. In the same breath, KHR always used Bahasa Malaysia, but only frequently used mothertongue. She sometimes used the combination of English and Malay, but never used the combination of English and mothertongue. Therefore, ZFM and KHR may have different native languages than those of the Malay descent, which were unique to their own culture and geographical locations. ZFM hailed from Perlis, a state situated at the Northern part of Malaysia, while KHR came from Johore, a state at the Southern part of Malaysia. As for AND, he reported frequently using English only, and always used mothertongue only, but never used the two languages in combination on Facebook. Based on his responses, it may be fair to assume that AND preferred to opt for one language at a time, when writing on Facebook, and these languages were either English or his mothertongue of Cantonese, or Mandarin.

d) English, Malay, and mothertongue

The interviewees did not seem to be using the combination of the three languages very highly as only four percent *active* (AE, UMN, ASYA, and YHG), four *average* (AA, HH, MFTI, AT), one *very passive* (FAR), and one *passive* (FB) participants admitted to always adopting this on Facebook. Thus, perhaps not a lot of participants opted to use more than two languages when interacting on Facebook. Notably, some interviewees like the active participants regarded Bahasa Malaysia as their mothertongue, which was

evident in their responses to the questionnaire item. Some interviewees such as MFTI and AT however, may have practiced different native languages than Bahasa Malaysia based on their responses. While MFTI never used mothertongue only on Facebook, she always used the combination of English and mothertongue. Perhaps, the native language accompanied by English would make the writings more comprehensible to her peers, and easier for her to articulate. A similar observation can be made about AT's responses. He seldom used the languages in separation, but always used the combination of English and Malay, as well as English, Malay, and mothertongue, and frequently used English and mothertongue together. AT came from Kelantan, a state located East of Malaysia. As such, he may have practiced a different mothertongue than Bahasa Malaysia. Perhaps, AT felt a sense of accomplishment by writing using combinations of languages on Facebook, and being able to express his thoughts confidently to his target audience.

Summary

A number of multiple factors may have influenced the participants to choose the language(s) to be used in the online environment. These factors may perhaps be their familiarity with the language, confidence level to express their thoughts in the language, the target audience for which the messages were written for, and the contextual settings of the page or group. For example, in the LMT100 group, two of the group members decided to use both Chinese and English to promote their photos and get likes. Perhaps they felt that there were some students who could not understand English, hence the usage of the Chinese characters. The Chinese characters may also be included to assert their social identity, and to make personal connection with other Chinese students.

4.25 The effects of Facebook usage on English language skills

The questionnaire items were divided into several sections, namely; a) English language skills, b) self-confidence, c) attitudes, and d) motivation, and are presented as such.

a) English language skills

ACTIVE_INTERVIEWEES

TABLE 26: ACTIVE INTERVIEWEES' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS

	AE	UMN	JE	TM	SC	ASYA	YHG
1. English proficiency increased	Mod	A little	A lot	Mod	Mod	A little	A little
2. Learn new English words	Mod	Mod	A lot	Mod	A little	A lot	A little
3. Learn new English sentence structures	Mod	Mod	A lot	Mod	A little	A lot	A little

There were three items in the English language section (Table 26). The first item was to see whether the students' perceived English proficiency increased as a result of their engagement on Facebook. Out of the seven active interviewees, only JE believed that her proficiency increased a lot, while AE, TM, and SC felt a moderate improvement, but UMN, ASYA, and YHG saw it as improving by just a little bit. The second and third items were to investigate whether they felt they had acquired new English words and sentence structures from Facebook. JE and ASYA both believed that they had improved a lot in these areas, while AE and TM felt their improvements were moderate. However, SC and YHG saw only a little increment in these areas.

JE agreed that she learned new English words and sentence structures, as well as improved her proficiency through her engagement with Facebook, and the LMT100 group in specific. JE felt that vocabulary was important to be learned as she could memorise the word, even though she did not know the meaning. When people used the word in speech, she could learn to understand it. She claimed that on Facebook, she liked to share beneficial content, and left comments to express herself, especially in English, as it was a globally used language. She found it enjoyable to interact with others in the group, but understood that in reality not everybody liked English, as they could not understand it, hence ignoring the interaction threads. However, she believed that these students were just silent readers, and they did read the posts shared. She saw Facebook, Twitter, and blogs as improving language learning, because when people had to learn and understand the content they shared on their walls, which improved acquisition. As Generation Y, she believed that social media was their medium to learn language, rather than dictionaries. JE's English language ability was demonstrated in the LMT100 group when she chatted with me about IELTS and TOEFL. She used full English when interacting, albeit with some minor grammatical mistakes, which did not affect the meaning of the content. She however did not initiate any English-related content in the group, as the only post she shared was in Bahasa Malaysia, about the contribution of the previous Prime Minister of Malaysia. JE's positive views and attitudes towards her English language ability were attributed to her family background. She believed that she had excellent basics in English language, due to the environment that she was exposed to, as well as her highly-educated and career-oriented parents. Based on her experience, many of her friends with university-graduate parents, tended to be able to communicate well in English. This was unlike some students, especially like her classmates from Sabah, who did not have strong English language basics, and were not exposed to the language growing up. It was perhaps due to this that she felt that most of the LMT100 group members could not

help improve her language skills. Instead, she wanted to help them increase their ability. In her view, knowledge must be shared and it was her responsibility to help friends who required assistance. In short, JE seemed quite confident with her English language ability, and felt responsible for helping her peers rise to her level.

In the same breath, TM agreed that her parents exposed her to an English language environment by always singing English songs when she was younger. Whenever she encountered words she did not understand from the songs, she would resort to the dictionaries. She acted the same way when she participated in the LMT100 group, where she would check the meaning of words from other people's comments. She also felt that by speaking and commenting in English, her ability was much developed. This made her feel more confident, and eager to express herself. On the other hand, AE did not explain whether his language skills improved from the LMT100 activity. However, as most *active* members, he had very positive attitude towards English language interaction practice. In the LMT100 group, AE stated that he did not mind interacting with new friends, as it was through a virtual medium, where he did not feel threatened or uncomfortable. He was open if people wanted to ask him questions, comments, or chat with him, as he felt that it was not harmful. Perhaps, it was through this medium and activity that he felt his language skills improved moderately. However, he felt that there were just too many passive members in the group, and just the familiar faces interacted with each other. This affected the group's dynamics as it became boring, and made him feel reluctant to participate further. Similar to ASYA, AE did not see Facebook as a good platform for academic work except for the sharing of information and transferring notes. Both of them felt a traditional approach of pen and paper was the best way to learn. He needed someone to personally guide him face-to-face during the learning process and it felt weird if he was to chat with his

teachers or lecturers through the medium of Facebook. He however urged people to open their minds to Edmodo and other e-learning platform for online learning.

On the other hand, SC and YHG both felt that the LMT100 group did not improve their English language skills, but boosted their confidence, exposure, and grammar ability to use English in a more public space like Facebook. YHG further explained that the group contributed to fluency in speaking and interaction, as some activities made her think of the correct responses, but it did not improve writing or reading. Their interview responses tallied with the questionnaire items in which they felt little improvement to their English language skills, but SC perceived that her English language proficiency had increased moderately. Perhaps, she felt more adequate to express herself in a public space after watching other people's posts on Facebook. This was evident when she posted a well-written advertisement in the LMT100 group to sell phone cases from her Entrepreneurship course. She responded very proficiently to all the comments and inquiries that followed, which indicated her English language ability. She however felt that she was still unable to speak fluently in English, and desired to be able to achieve this. She did not view the group as being able to assist her in this area. Like SC, YHG engaged in a number of English language posts to promote events, as well as to chat to me about movies. In her writings, YHG used a lot of the digital vernaculars without jeopardising her meanings, which demonstrated her proficiency as an English language user. Similar to JE, and TM, YHG believed that her father's encouragement for English language learning made her strive harder to master it. She had a very close relationship with her father, who always reminded her to read an English newspaper on a daily basis. Her issue was with time management as she was occupied with course work and classes to be able to read and learn English.

In contradiction to SC, ASYA felt that she acquired new words and sentence structures from Facebook a lot, but her proficiency only improved a little. Similar to YHG, ASYA too used digital vernaculars in her posts and comments, which illustrated her English language ability. She was eager to debate political issues in the group, but like AE, she felt that the group members were not as much fun, as only the familiar faces were responsive to each other. At times, she felt the posts shared were irrelevant to the group, but felt fine as long as they were written in English. Despite her active usage of Facebook, ASYA shared similar views to AE that the traditional method of learning was the best. As with ASYA, UMN had an interest in political and humanity topics such as the war in Syria. In fact, she tried to initiate conversation on this topic, but to no avail. Perhaps it was through her readings on these issues on Facebook that she had improved her acquisition of new words and sentence structures moderately. Her response however tallied with her questionnaire report where she felt that her English proficiency only increased by a little after her engagement with Facebook and the LMT100 group. She felt that the group would be an advantage to those who were keen to learn, but for others who were not, it may be seen just like any other Facebook pages.

AVERAGE INTERVIEWEES

TABLE 27: AVERAGE INTERVIEWEES PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR ENGLISH LANGUAGE

	MRL	AA	MM	HH	YHT	NNN	EQ	MFTI	AT
1. English proficiency increased	A little	Mod	A little	Mod	A little	A little	Mod	Mod	Mod
2. Learn new English words	A lot	A little	Mod	A lot	A little	A little	Mod	Mod	Mod
3. Learn new English sentence structures	A lot	A little	Mod	A lot	Mod	Unsure	Mod	Mod	Mod

* Mod = Moderate

Out of the nine average interviewees, five of them felt that their English proficiency had increased moderately (AA, HH, EQ, MFTI, and AT), while four (MRL, MM, YHT, and NNN) saw a little improvement (Table 27). MRL and HH learned a lot of new English words and sentences, while MM, EQ, MFTI, and AT moderately improved in these areas. YHT and NNN however learned a few English words, but while YHT acquired moderate sentence structures, NNN was unsure about hers. AA felt she had improved just a little in both areas.

From his interview responses, MRL agreed that he learned new vocabulary from Facebook in general and from the LMT100 group too. However, he insisted that his language skills were so poor that sometimes he ignored the content shared in the group because he did not think he would understand it even if he tried. He expressed his appreciation for his class teacher's effort to ensure that he and his friends from Sabah were not left behind in the course, by giving them extra classes outside their class time. He believed that this had helped him improve tremendously in a short period of time.

From her questionnaire response, MM believed that her English proficiency had increased only a little bit, but she had learned a lot of new words and sentence structures through her engagement on Facebook. During the interview session, she explained that she felt improvement in her language skills as she had to find the most appropriate ways to write and respond to a post or comment. AA asserted a similar response that she learned to reply to a post by reading the comments should the same questions have been asked to her. Perhaps, this was the little improvement that MM observed from her engagement with Facebook.

AA, HH, EQ, and MFTI all viewed their language proficiency as increasing due to their engagement with Facebook. However, AA, HH, and MFTI did not feel that the activities in the LMT100 group had helped improve their language ability. According to AA, when she wrote on Facebook, she generated new ideas, in which she had to think about the structure of the language, and improved the way she talked. She viewed the LMT100 as not a very tough course, one where she could further develop her skills by chatting. However, her skills did not improve from the group because she loved to read but not talk. She also felt that it was quite difficult to improve as her interaction threads did not attract the responses that she wanted. In line with this, MFTI expressed her disappointment over the lack of useful content for language learning. As a result, she felt that her language skills were at the same level as before she joined the group. HH articulated similar views that although she wanted to help other students by sharing English learning strategies, she felt that the lack of responses from other members hindered her further involvement. To resonate with JE, YHT, and TM, HH believed that her status as the daughter of an English language lecturer had assisted her learning. She explained that she always listened to her mother's pronunciation of words, and learned by looking for the meaning of words in dictionaries. She presented herself as a confident user of the English language, and shared her learning strategy of watching talk shows.

In contradiction to HH, both YHT and NNN's reports to the questionnaire tallied with their responses during the interview in which they stated that their English language proficiency increased just by a little bit as a result of using Facebook. NNN believed that more interaction in the LMT100 group would have improved skills, but at that point in time, she felt very little development in her English ability. On the other hand, YHT asserted that the group did not improve his skills as there was no sharing of English

exercises such as reading comprehension. As it was not helpful, he was reluctant to be active, as he had many other Facebook groups which he felt could assist his learning. Similar to JE and SC, YHT wanted to be able to speak fluently using fancy English words. He hoped to be able to impress people with his simple, yet effective word choices. Perhaps, the fact that he had yet to acquire a wide range of vocabulary made him feel as if he had improved only a little in terms of learning new words, but had learned moderately in terms of sentence structures from Facebook.

PASSIVE INTERVIEWEES

TABLE 28: THE PASSIVE INTERVIEWEES' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS

	DZ	AND	NHFZ	FB	ANH
1. English proficiency increased	A little	Mod	A little	Mod	A little
2. Learn new English words	Mod	Unsure	Mod	A lot	Mod
3. Learn new English sentence structures	Mod	A little	Mod	A lot	Mod

* Mod = Moderate

Three interviewees, DZ, NHFZ, and ANH felt that their English proficiency had increased by only a little, while AND and FB believed they had improved moderately, after their engagement with Facebook (Table 28). Only FB learned a lot of new words and sentence structures from Facebook, while DZ, NHFZ and ANH acquired both aspects in moderation. AND however was unsure that he learned any new words, but believed he improved a little on sentence structures. Nevertheless, AND perceived that the LMT100 group had improved his English language skills. FB supported this by saying that it may be due to the fact that students had to check their writing, vocabulary, and grammar before posting. DZ agreed that the group was helpful for her development, but doubted that it helped other members of the group. She summed up the group as not a complete waste of time, but it was not that helpful either. On the other hand, ANH viewed the group as helpful to others rather than to herself.

VERY PASSIVE INTERVIEWEES

TABLE 29: VERY PASSIVE INTERVIEWEES' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS

	FAR	ZFM	KHR	NIN
1. English proficiency increased	Mod	A little	A little	A little
2. Learn new English words	Mod	A little	Mod	A lot
3. Learn new English sentence structures	Mod	A little	Mod	A lot

* Mod = Moderate

Similar to JE, ASYA, MRL, HH, and FB, NIN believed that she had learned new words and sentences from her engagement with Facebook (Table 29). However, she observed only a little improvement in her English proficiency. NIN specifically commended HH on her effort to introduce the Ellen show to the group, as she learned a lot of new vocabulary from it. As such, she viewed that the group provided information that could assist language learning. NIN's view was similarly articulated by NNN and DZ who enjoyed learning English from the Ellen show as it was funny and humorous. Like FB and DZ, NIN also felt compelled to leave comments on some of the posts shared in the group, but felt inadequate. She also desired to share some English learning tips such as 'the easy way to learn English', but felt embarrassed to think that the content was not up to university students' level. She did not feel very confident with her speaking skills as it was rated lowest during her MUET prior to university.

FAR believed that her engagement with Facebook had moderately improved her English proficiency, as well as helping her learn new English words and sentences. As she was a very passive participant in the LMT100 group, she did not make her participation at all visible. She however admitted to have visited the group and read through the content when notified by the Facebook system. In her view, the group was not very helpful in developing her language skills, as participation from members was scarce. It was thus quite interesting that she felt the content on Facebook had improved

her language skills moderately. Perhaps, the announcement and content shared by the university, department, small assignment groups and societies, were advantageous to subconsciously developing FAR's language skills. She explained that at times, her Facebook page was flooded with the same information that was re-posted by different societies. This repeated information may have helped FAR retain new words or sentences, hence subconsciously influenced her linguistic repertoire.

KHR also agreed that she learned new words and sentences from Facebook moderately, but her English proficiency only increased by a little. However, KHR believed that she did not learn anything from the LMT100 group as she did not feel the activities were helpful. Plus, she did not know what kind of content was suitable to be shared in the group, as she was more interested in face-to-face English learning, and outdoor activities. She explained that she was not shy or reserved, but felt clueless in finding suitable topics for interaction with other members. However, she believed that once she got to know more people, she would be more comfortable presenting herself in the group.

ZFM reported that she improved just a little bit in all three aspects of English language skills. She reported that she was not very active on Facebook, and her reason for creating a Facebook account was to play the Farmville game, rather than to socialise with people. She felt that the LMT100 group improved her skills a little bit as the content reminded her of what she had learned previously. To contradict YHG, JE, HH, and TM, ZFM explained that her lack of English language ability may be due to the fact that her family did not use English at home. She desired to contribute to the group, but like FB, NIN, NNN, and DZ, she would delete the comments that she had typed, as she feared being inaccurate and embarrassing herself.

b) Self-confidence

ACTIVE INTERVIEWEES

TABLE 30: ACTIVE INTERVIEWEES' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR SELF-CONFIDENCE IN THE USE OF ENGLISH

	AE	UMN	JE	TM	SC	ASYA	YHG
1. Use English more in daily life	A little	Mod	A lot	Mod	A lot	A lot	Mod
2. More confident to write in English	Unsure	Mod	A lot	Mod	Unsure	A little	A little
3. More confident to speak in English	Mod	A little	A lot	Mod	Mod	A lot	A little
4. More confident to read in English	Mod	A lot	A lot	Mod	A little	A lot	A little
5. Not worried making English mistakes	A lot	Mod	A lot	A little	A lot	A lot	No

*Mod = Moderate

Three of the *active* interviewees, JE, SC, and ASYA reported that they used English a lot more in daily life as a result of using Facebook. During her interview session, JE expressed confidence in her ability to use English due to her strong basics and family background. Similarly, ASYA's confidence to use English was illustrated during the interview session as she code-switched her responses from Bahasa Malaysia to English effortlessly when answering questions, and used English slang in her Facebook posts. On the other hand, SC expressed a lack of confidence about her English language ability, despite responding to questions in English, and posting a good English language advertisement in the group. She was concerned over her ability to speak fluently and use fancy vocabulary in her speeches. According to her, the university, departments and the students themselves used Facebook for academic purposes, such as sharing notes, discussing assignments, and generating ideas, which may have positively affected the students' language development, and boosted their confidence to use English more in daily life.

UMN and YHG stated that they moderately used English more in daily life after engaging with Facebook. Both YHG and UMN admitted that they were quite active on Facebook as they checked their pages based on the notifications they received. YHG however stated that she had deactivated her Facebook account prior to enrolling into university. When she realised how highly university life depended on Facebook for academic, social and practical purposes, she re-activated her account and started using it actively. A similar point was articulated by AND, FB, ANH, and AE who were only active on Facebook after enrolling into the university to catch up with announcements and university events. On the other hand, the most active member in the LMT100 group, AE, stated that he only used English a little bit more in daily life as a result of using Facebook. This may have happened as AE could not find the opportunity to do so as frequently as he would like. Therefore, when presented with a platform to practice English, he was actively involved to develop his skills. Or perhaps, he had already been using English to communicate on Facebook. Therefore, to be introduced to an English-based group was not an issue for him.

The interviewees were then asked about their confidence levels to write, speak, and read in English as a result of their engagement with Facebook. Many of the interviewees claimed to have learned new words and sentence structures from the LMT100 group. Perhaps however, there was not much content and opportunities presented for the students to practice these two skills, which hindered the development of their linguistic repertoire. This argument was in line with the views of AA, who said that her language skills did not improve from her involvement with the group as she liked to read but not talk. This suggests that she enjoyed getting input, but did not like producing output. The questionnaire responses of YHG and SC contradicted their responses during the interview as they stated that the LMT100 group had boosted

their confidence to use English publicly, which was also evident through the sharing of their English language posts. The group however did not improve their language skills, especially in terms of reading or writing, according to YHG. This may be because Facebook (and many other social networks) promoted writing, or texting the way we talk. This may have also contributed to AE and SC's uncertainty over their confidence in their writing ability as a result of their engagement with Facebook. While they were confident enough to be active and interactive in the LMT100 group, they may not have seen it as an improvement of "proper" writing skills, such as academic writing or essay writing. Instead, it may have been seen as speaking practice, rather than writing.

AE, JE, SC, and ASYA reported that they were not worried about making English language mistakes, while UMN felt this moderately, and TM a little. YHG however, disagreed. The students' perceptions of this issue are in relation to their responses to a question about mistakes and corrections in the LMT100 group. In her interview session, TM changed her view by taking a more relaxed approach to making mistakes. She stated that she did not feel as if she had to be really restricted when writing in the group. This was because she viewed making mistakes as part of the learning process for students. In line with this, AE, JE, SC, and ASYA stood by their responses to the questionnaire by stating that they were hoping for somebody to correct the mistakes in the writings posted in the group, so that everybody could learn something new. As pointed out by AE and ASYA, there was no need to feel offended if ones' mistakes were to be corrected as they were for all learners. ASYA further stated that there was really no point writing English posts or comments in the group if nobody was there to point out and correct the mistakes. ASYA, JE, YHG, and TM believed in public grammar corrections, to give equal opportunities for the group members to improve their learning experience, or learning from others' mistakes. They believed that it was

better to make mistakes and learn now, than in the future. However, they emphasised that it was necessary to do this in the right manner, so as not to deter the students' motivation to further participate in the group. In the same breath nevertheless, JE threw words of caution that students had to make sure that their posts contained as few grammar mistakes as possible, because wrong usage may get negative feedback and criticisms from other people. On the other hand, AE and UMN believed that grammar corrections needed to be conducted privately by direct messaging the students, to spare them from embarrassment, and getting negative impressions from other people. SC balanced this out by stating that the way grammar mistakes were to be corrected depended on the students. If they were open-minded, it could be done publicly, so that every member would benefit from it, but private messages would be better if they felt uncomfortable. Despite her active involvement in the group and her high usage of digital vernaculars, YHG stated that she was uncomfortable with making English mistakes. Perhaps, this was due to an experience she had when somebody criticised her writings publicly. Added to this, she may not see Internet language as mistakes, as articulated by EQ.

AVERAGE INTERVIEWEES

TABLE 31: AVERAGE INTERVIEWEES' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR SELF-CONFIDENCE TO USE ENGLISH

	MRL	AA	MM	HH	YHT	NNN	EQ	MFTI	AT
1. Use English more in daily life	A little	Mod	A little	Mod	A little	A little	A little	Mod	Mod
2. More confident to write in English	A little	A little	A little	Mod	Mod	Unsure	Mod	Mod	Mod
3. More confident to speak in English	A little	A little	A little	Mod	A lot	A little	A little	Mod	Mod
4. More confident to read in English	A little	Mod	Mod	Mod	A little	Mod	A little	Mod	Mod
5. Not worried making English mistakes	A little	Unsure	A little	Mod	A little	Unsure	Unsure	Mod	A little

*Mod = Moderate

Of the five items that measured confidence, HH and MFTI reported moderate improvements, in all areas (see Table 31). Similar to JE, HH seemed very confident in her English language ability which was due to her family background and learning experience. HH's usage of English in daily life may have been due to having foreign friends from South Africa. She explained that she had no choice but to use English in order to communicate with them, which had helped her improve tremendously. However, both HH and MFTI did not believe that the group had added to their linguistic ability. Added to this, MFTI was quite disappointed with the lack of content presented, as she was so eager to learn or be reminded of what she had learned in school. HH was frustrated due to the lack of participation from other members. Both HH and MFTI agreed with public grammar corrections, and MFTI added that although it may be embarrassing, it needed to be done.

On the other hand, MRL stated that he improved just a little bit in his confidence in all areas, after engaging with Facebook. Unlike HH who improved moderately as a result of her interaction with foreign friends, MRL did not experience this despite actively chatting with another Manchester United fan from South Africa. Perhaps, this was due to the fact that he relied too much on Google Translate to express his messages, rather than constructing his own words. Perhaps, the lack of opportunities to practice had resulted in his weak English language ability. In the group, he showed gradual improvement in his confidence when he started to share posts, rather than simply leaving short comments on other's posts. This may also have been a result of his teacher's effort to make sure that he was not left behind by conducting extra classes. He held positive views towards correcting mistakes as he urged other students to think that the process was to upgrade oneself, rather than bringing them down. Like TM, he saw that in seeking knowledge, making mistakes was normal. As such, he agreed with

public grammar corrections, but pointed out the delicateness of the situation. He shared similar views to YHG, who agreed with the presence of teachers to manage the learning process successfully.

AT believed that he improved moderately in every aspect, but only felt a little advancement in terms of making mistakes in English. This view contradicted his responses during the interview session where he positively expressed that making mistakes was common and one should not feel restricted in learning. However, he emphasised that students should be wary of the sensitive issues that may arise from sharing of posts and comments, such as racial, politics, and religions. He urged other students to be actively involved in the group so that he and other better students could help them improve their skills. This shows that he believed in his English language ability as he felt willing to teach others. Like SC, he felt that both public and private grammar corrections were suitable, and each had their positives.

AA, MM, YHT, NNN, and EQ saw a little improvement in their usage of English in daily life. AA saw moderate improvement in this area, which may be due to her eagerness in attending talks and events organised by the university. She shared a very academic post about intelligence which she gathered from one of the talks she attended. The post demonstrated her way of thinking and learning. However, both she and MM experienced only a little improvement in their confidence to write and speak in English, but moderate improvement in their confidence to read. AA's view tallied with her interview responses, where she stated that she liked to read but not talk, which may have resulted in the lack of improvement of her English language abilities from her participation in the group. NNN also experienced moderate improvement of her reading confidence, but only a little improvement in her speaking confidence.

However, she was unsure of her confidence to write. On the other hand, YHT had a lot of confidence to speak, moderate confidence to write, but only a little confidence to read in English. This view contradicted his interview responses where he aspired to be able to speak more proficiently using fancy vocabulary to give an impactful speech. The fact that he had a lot of confidence to speak after engaging with Facebook may indicate that it is a good platform to boost students' speaking ability. However, his little confidence in reading was justified as he mentioned the lack of reading comprehension exercises in the group, which did not help him improve his skills. Like YHT, EQ had moderate confidence to write, but only a little confidence to both speak and read in English.

AA, NNN, and EQ were unsure that they were not worried about making English language mistakes, while MM and YHT were a little bit more confident in this area. MM and EQ agreed with public grammar corrections so that students would be able to retain the correct information (MM), but it would be better to do a quiz type correction rather than simply pointing out somebody's mistakes (EQ). Both MM and EQ agreed that students may correct each other's mistakes, and the process would be easier (EQ), but MM believed a more knowledgeable person would give more accurate information. On the other hand, AA, YHT, and NNN believed that private grammar correction was more suitable, even though they would not object for public grammar correction to be conducted in the group. However, AA believed that if somebody were to point out and correct her mistakes publicly, she would stop posting and sharing information in the group. She also believed that grammar should be discussed in the formal classrooms, rather than in informal groups, such as the LMT100. In her view, Facebook group should be only to share and express opinions, rather than proper formal learning.

All in all, the participants did not seem to have a lot of confidence in their language ability and the majority agreed that their confidence levels had been developed by a little or moderate amount, rather than being improved by a lot.

PASSIVE INTERVIEWEES

TABLE 32: PASSIVE INTERVIEWEES' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR SELF-CONFIDENCE TO USE ENGLISH

	DZ	AND	NHFZ	FB	ANH
1. Use English more in daily life	A little	Mod	A little	Mod	A little
2. More confident to write in English	A little	Mod	Mod	Unsure	Mod
3. More confident to speak in English	Unsure	A little	Mod	A little	Mod
4. More confident to read in English	A little	Mod	Mod	A lot	Mod
5. Not worried making English mistakes	Unsure	Unsure	Mod	No	A lot

*Mod = Moderate

ANH stated that she was not worried about making mistakes when using English, and she perceived that her confidence levels to write speak, write and read in English had improved moderately. Her responses may be a result of a few factors that were elaborated during the interview session. Firstly, ANH studied at one of the urban, elite schools in Penang, where she mixed with students from various ethnicities. English was used as the medium of communication, and it may be fair to assume that she was comfortable and familiar with the language. Secondly, she had worked in part-time jobs since she was 16, which gave her the opportunities to engage in interactions with customers including foreigners. Accordingly, she got the chance to use English practically and authentically in conversation, which had helped the development of her language skills tremendously. More importantly, she mentioned that she felt more comfortable talking to the foreign customers as they did not mind her making mistakes in her speech, which boosted her confidence and ability. However, she only used a little more English in daily life after her engagement with Facebook, as she was not very active on Facebook due to study and work.

On the other hand, FB stated that she felt a lot more confident in her ability to read English language materials after her engagement with Facebook. This is interesting as FB explained that she was more active on Twitter, rather than Facebook. She only actively used Facebook for university-related purposes. As such, perhaps, the university-related posts and discussions on her Facebook pages had developed her reading ability. FB also believed that she used a lot more English in daily life after using Facebook. Besides these two aspects however, FB was just a little bit more confident of her speaking ability, but was unsure of her writing skills. Similar to YHG, she was concerned about making mistakes when using English. This view matched her behaviour in the LMT100 group and her interview responses, where she explained her interest to participate in the interaction activity. However, out of concern for making mistakes, she would delete her comments, and decided against contributing to the thread. An example was in the post about movies. She wanted to share her favourite movie, but decided against it. DZ and NNN faced a similar issue to FB. Added to that, FB elaborated that she was so concerned about making grammatical mistakes that she would choose not to post or tweet anything, if she was unsure about the accuracy of the content, due to her low self-esteem. However, she, alongside AND and NHFZ, preferred public grammar correction to be conducted in the group so that everybody could learn from each other's' mistakes.

Positively, NHFZ reported that she had improved moderately on her confidence levels to write, speak, and read, and that she was also not worried about making English language mistakes. However, she only used a little bit more English after using Facebook. NHFZ's ability to use English confidently may have been due to her activeness on Facebook for social and academic purposes. As a Pharmacy student, she belonged to three Facebook groups in which she actively shared and discussed

information and content related to her course. Besides that, she was also interested in socialising and making new friends from other universities taking similar courses, to compare and contrast their learning experiences. She was not active in the LMT100 Facebook group however, as she thought that the group was not very helpful for her English language development. She did not know what kind of information to share with the other group members and believed that a teacher's presence was needed to guide the students' interaction and posts.

Both DZ and AND were unsure if they were less worried about making English language mistakes after their engagement with Facebook. DZ did not seem to find Facebook very effective for English language improvement as she was also unsure about her confidence to speak, and only a little bit more confident about her ability to write and read in English, as well as only using a little bit more English in her daily life. On the other hand, AND felt moderately more confident to write and read in English, as well as using moderately more English in daily life, as a result of using Facebook. However, he felt only a little bit more confident to speak in English. While AND was not very active on Facebook, DZ logged on to Facebook based on how she felt. AND and DZ viewed the group as helpful to the development of their English language skills. Similar to FB, AND read the posts shared in the group, but decided not to participate, and similar to NHFZ, DZ was at a loss as to what to share in the group, and worried that what they wanted to share may not be beneficial and irrelevant to others.

VERY PASSIVE INTERVIEWEES

TABLE 33: VERY PASSIVE INTERVIEWEES' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR SELF-CONFIDENCE TO USE ENGLISH

	FAR	ZFM	KHR	NIN
1. Use English more in daily life	Mod	A little	A little	A little
2. More confident to write in English	Mod	Unsure	Unsure	Mod
3. More confident to speak in English	Mod	Unsure	Unsure	Mod
4. More confident to read in English	Mod	Mod	Mod	A lot
5. Not worried making English mistakes	A little	A little	Mod	Mod

* Mod = Moderate

NIN reported that she felt a lot more confident in her reading ability, and had moderate levels of confidence in her writing and speaking ability (Table 33). She was also moderately not worried about making English mistakes. However, she only used a little bit more English in daily life after using Facebook. Despite her moderate confidence, NIN was feeling a bit shy about participating in the LMT100 group. She explained that she wanted to share some English learning strategies, but was worried if the videos were in fact too simple for the university students' levels. In line with this, NIN believed that grammar corrections needed to be done privately rather than openly, even though it was for learning purposes. Like NHFZ, NIN also belonged to Pharmacy-related Facebook course, and she agreed that they used the group actively for academic purposes such as the sharing of information. Perhaps, by engaging with the content and information shared in the other Facebook groups was how she moderately improved on her confidence of her English language skills.

KHR similarly viewed that she was moderately not worried about making English language mistakes, and confident of her reading ability in English. Like NIN, she believed that grammar corrections were necessary in the LMT100 group, but should be conducted privately. She elaborated that she was not a shy person, but she did

not see the point of being active in the group as it was not helpful to her English language development. Instead, she requested that I share more interesting content such as an article on tips to be more confident when using English and such, as she wanted to improve her language ability. She was unsure of her confidence to speak and write in English, and only used English a little bit more in daily life after using Facebook.

FAR on the other hand, was moderately confident of her English language skills, and claimed that she used more English in daily life, after using Facebook. However, like FB, FAR was not very active on Facebook, as it had become so formal and institutionalised, and she chose to socialise with her friends personally on Twitter. FAR was only a little bit not worried when making English language mistakes after using Facebook. In accordance, she had a partial view on grammar corrections as like JE and YHG, she believed that not everybody could accept criticisms or comments, as they would feel embarrassed. In her view, we may correct grammar in writing, but may disappoint and deflate students' confidence if we do it in conversations.

Like FAR, ZFM also was only a little bit not worried to make mistakes when using English. She preferred private grammar corrections through direct messages to save students from embarrassment. In line with this, she only used a little more English in daily life after using Facebook. She was unsure of her confidence to write and speak, but felt moderately more confident to read in English as a result of her engagement with Facebook. Her behaviour in the LMT100 group tallied her responses during the interview session where she expressed her lack of activeness on Facebook, even on her personal account. She stated that she was not confident in her English language ability which may have been a result of the lack of encouragement from family.

However, her introvert behaviour on Facebook may have contributed to her elevated confidence to read English language materials. This is because when browsing through Facebook, ZFM may have been given every opportunity to engage with content that was of interest, without external pressure and time constraint. She could always come back to the content whenever she felt like it, and repeatedly read the content if need be. Therefore, it may have made her and other interviewees including FAR, ZFM, KHR, AND, NHFZ, ANH, AA, MM, HH, NNN, MFTI, AT, AE, and TM more familiar and comfortable in reading English language materials, after engaging with Facebook.

c) Attitudes

There are three items to demonstrate the students' attitudes towards English learning on Facebook, which were liking learning English, seeing the learning of English as easier, and seeing the learning of English as more interesting.

ACTIVE INTERVIEWEES

TABLE 34: ACTIVE INTERVIEWEES' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR ATTITUDES TO USE ENGLISH

	AE	UMN	JE	TM	SC	ASYA	YHG
1. Like learning ESL	A lot	Mod	A lot	Mod	A lot	A lot	A lot
2. Learning English is easier	A lot	Unsure	A lot	A little	Mod	A lot	Mod
3. Learning English is more interesting	A lot	Unsure	A lot	Mod	Mod	A lot	A lot

*Mod = Moderate

Three active interviewees, AE, JE, and ASYA showed very positive attitudes for all three items, which indicated their strong desire to learn English using Facebook. This complemented their high self-confidence in their English language ability, which had perhaps shaped their active behaviours to initiate interactions and respond to others' conversations in the LMT100 group. YHG similarly perceived that English learning was a lot more preferable and easier on Facebook, but she and SC only moderately believed that it was easier. This view falls in line with their responses during the

interview sessions where although they saw the LMT100 Facebook group as boosting their confidence to use English in a public space, it did not elevate their English language skills, especially in terms of reading or writing. It was interesting to note that while SC liked learning ESL a lot, she only moderately believed that it was more interesting on Facebook.

Alternatively, TM only saw that Facebook made English learning easier by a little, but UMN was unsure about this. As the mastery of English language involved a lot more elements such as reading, writing, speaking, listening, pronunciation, spelling, and grammar, Facebook may not provide a platform for elaboration broad use of English. In line with this, UMN was also unsure if English learning was more interesting on Facebook.

To sum up, the active interviewees had quite positive attitudes towards the three items, but TM and UMN did not perceive that English learning was a lot easier on Facebook, or more interesting.

AVERAGE INTERVIEWEES

TABLE 35: AVERAGE INTERVIEWEES' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR ATTITUDES TO USE ENGLISH

	MRL	AA	MM	HH	YHT	NNN	EQ	MFTI	AT
1. Like learning ESL	A lot	Mod	Mod	A lot	A lot	A lot	Mod	Mod	Mod
2. Learning English is easier	No	Mod	A little	Mod	A little	Mod	A little	Mod	Mod
3. Learning English is more interesting	A lot	A little	Mod	A lot	A lot	A lot	Mod	Mod	A little

*Mod = Moderate

Four interviewees, MRL, HH, YHT, and NNN claimed that they liked learning ESL on Facebook a lot (Table 35). Notably, all of the interviewees similarly thought that learning English was a lot more interesting when conducted on Facebook. According

to HH, she liked to learn English in a fun, relaxed setting, rather than a serious formal environment. As such, the variety of entertaining content on Facebook may have elevated her interest, and made her subconsciously acquire English language skills. Similarly, NNN probably liked learning English because she engaged in a variety of Pharmacy-related content through her involvement with three academic groups. By reading and interacting in English with the materials, other students, and lecturers, she may have been practising her skills, which resulted in improved ability and learning. Following this, the other five interviewees, AA, MM, EQ, MFTI, and AT liked learning English moderately after using Facebook. While three of them, MM, EQ, and MFTI believed that learning English was also moderately more interesting on Facebook, two of them AA, and AT perceived that it was only a little more interesting. Therefore, AA and AT may have liked learning English on Facebook, but they did not believe that it was particularly more interesting. Perhaps, they liked the ability to access a lot of stimulating and current content, but the learning of English itself, in terms of reading, writing, speaking, and grammar skills, may not have been as enjoyable.

Interestingly, however, both AA and AT, alongside HH, NNN, and MFTI, perceived that learning English was moderately easier on Facebook. Perhaps, the learning of English may have been easier for some skills, but not others. From some of the interview responses by YHG and MM, it appeared that the interaction in the LMT100 group had made it easier for them to learn how to respond to questions or comments, or to increase their communicative competence ability, but had not improved their writing skills. In line with this, MM, alongside YHT and EQ perceived that English was only a little bit easier to learn on Facebook. YHT wanted to improve reading comprehension and learn fancier vocabulary, but perhaps Facebook was not very suitable for these skills. On the other hand, EQ believed that students did not join the LMT100 group,

simply because they did not feel like it. As such, she urged that some guidelines or structures be outlined in the group, so that students could respond and engage with the content. As he believed that his English language skills improved tremendously from attending extra classes conducted by his class teacher, MRL did not believe that English learning was any easier on Facebook.

All in all, the average interviewees had quite positive attitudes towards the three items in general, although some did not feel that English was any easier to learn on Facebook.

PASSIVE INTERVIEWEES

TABLE 36: PASSIVE INTERVIEWEES' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR ATTITUDES TO USE ENGLISH

	DZ	AND	NHFZ	FB	ANH
1. Like learning ESL	Mod	A little	A little	A lot	A lot
2. Learning English is easier	Unsure	A little	Mod	A lot	A lot
3. Learning English is more interesting	Mod	A little	A little	A lot	A lot

* Mod = Moderate

FB and ANH had very positive attitudes towards using Facebook for English learning as they responded 'a lot' for all three items (Table 36). Perhaps, the attitudes had to do with their moderate English language ability. Added to that, FB's exposure to English-based Twitter accounts, and ANH's practical use of communicative English, may have influenced their positive attitudes towards English learning on Facebook. It is interesting to note the differences between DZ and NHFZ's contradicting perceptions of the items. While DZ liked learning English a lot and felt that English was a lot more interesting to be learned on Facebook, NHFZ only agreed a little to these items. However, while NHFZ felt moderately that learning English was easier on Facebook, DZ was unsure about this. Both DZ and NHFZ were Band 3 MUET scorers and enrolled

in the Pharmacy course. The difference between them was that while DZ showed more interest in the LMT100 group by engaging with the content presented, NHFZ dismissed it by saying that the group was not very helpful due to the lack of content and participation from other members. However, like NNN, NHFZ may have been acquiring English language through her involvement in the three Pharmacy Facebook groups, where she shared interesting information and engaged in English language discussions with other members. Accordingly, she felt she belonged more to the three groups as she knew the content and topics that were suitable to share and discuss. Both NHFZ and DZ suggested that the LMT100 group provided guidelines and ungraded tasks, to direct and increase participation rate. The topic suggested by DZ was the sharing of students' life experiences.

AND on the other hand, perceived a little benefit for all three items as a result of his engagement with Facebook. However, he suggested that the LMT100 group had been helpful in improving his language skills. Perhaps, he had more exposure to English language content in the LMT100 group compared to when he was using his personal Facebook account, which resulted in the change in his attitudes.

In summary, two of the passive interviewees, FB and ANH held very positive attitudes towards Facebook for English language learning, but the three other interviewees did not see it as highly advantageous.

VERY PASSIVE INTERVIEWEES

TABLE 37: VERY PASSIVE INTERVIEWEES' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR ATTITUDES TO USE ENGLISH

	FAR	ZFM	KHR	NIN
1. Like learning ESL	A lot	A little	Mod	A lot
2. Learning English is easier	Mod	Mod	A little	A lot
3. Learning English is more interesting	A lot	A little	Mod	A lot

* Mod = Moderate

NIN had very positive perception of her attitudes for all three items as she liked learning English a lot, felt that English learning is a lot easier and interesting on Facebook (Table 37). Like the other Pharmacy students, NIN was a Band 3 MUET scorer, who also belonged to three Pharmacy Facebook courses. While she may have the language ability, she lacked in confidence to use the language especially for speaking. She however did not perceive this as a problem from her questionnaire responses to the previous items. This realisation may have arisen when she wanted to participate in the interactive activities in the LMT100 group, but kept deleting her comment rather than posting it due to the lack of confidence.

In line with this, FAR felt that she liked learning English a lot and it is a lot more interesting on Facebook, but was moderately easier. ZFM similarly felt that it was easier, but she only liked learning English by a little. She also felt that English was just a little more interesting after using Facebook. Conversely, KHR felt that learning English was only a little bit easier, but felt moderately that she liked learning English, and it was more interesting. In contrast to AND, KHR attitudes towards learning English on Facebook seemed to be declining after her engagement with the LMT100 group. She was very passive in the group as she said she did not see any beneficial content that could help her master English. Instead she wanted to learn English from nearby tuition centres, and outdoor activities.

All in all, only NIN and FAR had very positive perceptions of her attitudes on the three items, while ZFM and KHR had mildly positive attitudes towards the items.

d) Motivation

There are three items under the students' motivation to learn English after using Facebook, which are motivated to communicate in English online, offline, and with lecturers.

ACTIVE INTERVIEWEES

TABLE 38: ACTIVE INTERVIEWEES' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR MOTIVATION TO USE ENGLISH

	AE	UMN	JE	TM	SC	ASYA	YHG
1. Motivated to communicate in English online	Mod	A little	A lot	Mod	Mod	A lot	A little
2. Motivated to communicate in English offline	Mod	A lot	A lot	Mod	Mod	A lot	A little
3. Motivated to communicate in English with lecturers	Mod	A little	A lot	Mod	A lot	A lot	A little

*Mod = Moderate

JE and ASYA felt a high sense of motivation for all three items, while AE and TM felt moderately motivated for all three items (Table 38). These interviewees' motivation carried through in the LMT100 group as they demonstrated active behaviours to initiate interaction and communicate with one another. Their motivation to learn English language was also exhibited during the interview sessions where they suggested a lot of activities to improve participation rate in the group. SC felt moderately motivated to communicate in English in online and offline environment, and a lot motivated to communicate with lecturers, after using Facebook. On the other hand, while UMN felt a lot of motivation to communicate English in offline environment, she felt a little motivated to use it online and to talk with lecturers. Perhaps, this was because what was repeatedly mentioned by various interviewees, such as AT, DZ, and JE, that sometimes, misinterpretation in interpreting written texts may lead to arguments and wrong judgment by other members. As such, UMN may feel that it was easier to

communicate and convey her messages in English, with the help of paralinguistic features in offline environment.

AVERAGE INTERVIEWEES

TABLE 39: AVERAGE INTERVIEWEES' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR MOTIVATION TO USE ENGLISH

	MRL	AA	MM	HH	YHT	NNN	EQ	MFTI	AT
1. Motivated to communicate in English online	A little	A little	A little	A lot	Mod	A little	Mod	Mod	Mod
2. Motivated to communicate in English offline	Mod	A little	Unsure	A lot	A little	A little	Mod	Mod	Mod
3. Motivated to communicate in English with lecturers	Unsure	A little	A little	A lot	Mod	Mod	Mod	Mod	Mod

*Mod = Moderate

HH was the only member who perceived a lot of motivation for all three items, while EQ, MFTI, and AT felt moderately (Table 39). In the LMT100 group, HH was quite assertive in sharing her English learning strategies and joining in on others' conversations. On the other hand, the other interviewees did not make their participation highly visible, even though AT specifically urged other participants to be as actively involved in the group, so that he and the other members with better English abilities could help them improve. In accordance to the above finding, AA perceived that she was a little bit motivated for all three items. AA however made some effort to initiate interactions even though her posts were academic in nature, and rarely gained interest from the group members. In real life however, she may not have used English a lot as she expressed that she liked to read but not talk. She was the only interviewee of the Malay descent who used full English during the interview session, which reflect positively on her language skills and confident.

MRL, MM, and NNN felt only a little motivated to communicate online, but only MRL and AA made highly visible efforts to initiate interactions and share academic knowledge with the group members. Meanwhile MM and NNN commented on others'

interactions rather than initiating interaction threads. Perhaps MRL and AA started to become more assertive in making conversations after they were comfortable with the group's structure and members. Although YHT felt moderately motivated to communicate online in English, he only made his participation visible when the topics of interaction involved grammar exercises and academic information such as tests and exams. This shows that his interest in English learning was mainly to improve his grammar skills, rather than to interact with the group members. Perhaps, in his view, the mastery of grammar would enable him to communicate more effectively in English, and could only be achieved through explicit learning. Or perhaps, he was more exam-oriented in the sense that he wanted to master English to be able to pass the examinations.

MRL felt moderately motivated to communicate offline in English, which was perhaps due to his effort to practice speaking skills with a group of friends from Sabah. However, he felt unsure if he was motivated enough to use English with his lecturers, which was perhaps due to the academic nature of the possible discussions. In the same breath, YHT was just a little motivated, but MM was unsure of her motivation to use English in offline environment. However, YHT was moderately motivated to use English with his lecturers, but MM was only a little motivated to do this.

To sum up, the average interviewees were moderately and a little bit motivated to use English in online and offline environments, and with their lecturers.

PASSIVE INTERVIEWEES

TABLE 40: PASSIVE INTERVIEWEES' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR MOTIVATION TO USE ENGLISH

	DZ	AND	NHFZ	FB	ANH
1. Motivated to communicate in English online	Mod	Mod	Mod	Mod	A lot
2. Motivated to communicate in English offline	Mod	Mod	Mod	A lot	A lot
3. Motivated to communicate in English with lecturers	Mod	Mod	Mod	A little	A lot

*Mod = Moderate

ANH was the only one of this group who reported a lot of motivation for all three items but she did not make her participation visible in the LMT100 group due to her tight schedule (Table 40). In the offline environment, her motivation to use English may have come from her part-time job where she used English to communicate with customers, who were largely foreigners. As she came from an urban school, ANH may not have had too many issues in the use of English when communicating with her lecturers, as she was used to this in high school.

DZ, AND, and NHFZ reported moderate motivation for all three items. Perhaps, DZ and NHFZ, like other Pharmacy students including NNN and NIN, were more active and used English highly on other Pharmacy Facebook pages instead of the LMT100 group. The same may be said for AND who may have been active on other English-based Facebook pages or other online pages, rather than in the LMT100 group.

FB on the other hand, felt highly motivated to communicate in English in an offline environment, moderately motivated in the online environment, but only a little motivated to talk to her lecturers. While FB mentioned that she was not very involved in the LMT100 group, she read all of the content, and had every desire to participate in the conversations. However, the lack of self-esteem and the fear of using the wrong

grammar in her writing put her off publishing her thoughts. However, she used Twitter a lot more to express herself and retweet others' writings.

In short, many of the passive interviewees felt moderately motivated to use English in online and offline environments, and when communicating with their lecturers.

VERY PASSIVE INTERVIEWEES

TABLE 41: VERY PASSIVE INTERVIEWEES' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR MOTIVATION TO USE ENGLISH

	FAR	ZFM	KHR	NIN
1. Motivated to communicate in English online	Mod	Unsure	Unsure	A lot
2. Motivated to communicate in English offline	Mod	A little	A little	A lot
3. Motivated to communicate in English with lecturers	Mod	No	A little	Mod

*Mod = Moderate

Only FAR was moderately motivated to use English in all three situations. Perhaps, FAR used English a lot more on Twitter, where she chatted about personal things with her friends, and only used Facebook to communicate more formal university information, in English or Bahasa Malaysia (Table 41). Her confidence to use English in all three situations may be due to her good English ability as she was a Band 3 MUET scorer.

NIN felt a lot of motivation to use English in online and offline environment, but only moderately motivated to talk to her lecturers in English. As a Pharmacy student, NIN may have used English more on other Facebook pages, like NNN and DZ, rather than in the LMT100 group.

KHR and ZFM however had rather low motivation to communicate in English online, offline and with their lecturers. ZFM and KHR were both unsure about their motivation

to use English online, which was shown from their lack of participation in the LMT100 group. Both ZFM and KHR felt a little motivated to communicate in English offline, which was apparent in ZFM's case, but KHR mentioned that she would like to learn English from a tuition centre rather than from online interaction. KHR similarly felt a little motivated to talk to her lecturers in English, but ZFM did not feel this at all. Perhaps, this was due to ZFM's rather introvert way of English learning and presenting herself online, as she mentioned that she was not very active in sharing information with her peers.

Summary

- Many of the interviewees were happy with the voluntary, task-less structure of the LMT100 group (AND, FB, UMN, SC, AE, ASYA, JE, TM, YHG, AT, ZFM). Some wished to be presented with ungraded tasks so that they knew the types of content and topics to share (NHFZ, DZ, SC, MRL, AA, MM, YHT, NNN, EQ, MFTI, and KHR).
- There were no major differences between the interviewees' responses based on the degree of their participation. In this sense, the active participants may share similar views to the very passive participants.
- Some participants viewed the group and Facebook in general as assisting the learning of new words and sentence structures, as well as developing their communicative ability. YHT wished for more vocabulary and reading comprehension activities. SC wanted to be able to speak more fluently. However, YHG felt that it did not improve writing and reading ability.
- Some of the active participants may also face issues with self-confidence in using English, like TM and SC. However, they made an effort to be involved in the learning activity.
- The passive participants may not necessarily have weak English language ability. Some of them like FAR and NHFZ had high self-confidence. However, they chose

not to be involved in the group due to various reasons such as not knowing the content to share, the lack of participation from other members, and insufficient learning content.

- Some students like MFTI, KHR and YHT believed that an authority should be responsible for the content and learning process.
- AND, DZ, AA, HH, EQ, KHR, NIN and JE did not see the need for teachers to be in the LMT100 group as it was created for students. On the other hand, NHFZ, ANH, UMN, SC, MRL, MM, YHT, NNN, MFTI, AT, FAR and ZFM believed that teachers would be able to guide their learning.
- AND, NHFZ, FB, ASYA, JE, TM, YHG, HH, MRL, MM, EQ, MFTI, AT, and FAR agreed with public grammar learning so that every member of the group would be able to acquire the same knowledge. On the other hand, ANH, UMN, AA, YHT, NNN, EQ, AT, FAR, KHR, NIN, and ZFM believed that grammar should be corrected in private to save the students from embarrassment. More specifically, AA believed that grammar should only be learned in formal classrooms, rather than on an informal platform such as Facebook.
- The university relied a lot on Facebook for communication related to academic and social purposes.
- Some of the interviewees (AND, ANH, UMN, SC, AE, JE, TM, YHG, MM, HH, YHT, EQ, MFTI, AT, FAR, KHR and NIN) wanted the content from the LMT100 group to be linked to their classroom learning. However, NNN disagreed by stating that they would learn the same things if this happened.
- The interviewees wanted rewards in the forms of MyCSD points (ANH, AND) and bonus marks (ANH, JE, YHT, NNN, NIN). However, AA perceived bonus marks as unfair because not everybody had the time to participate in the activities.

- Some recommendations included: outdoor activities (ANH, AND, KHR, AT), language games (AE, JE, NIN, ZFM, MFTI, AT), entertainment-based content (HH, TM, FAR, ZFM, AA, NNN), debate (YHG, MM, NNN), and competitions on Facebook such as storytelling or a sustainability video (EQ).
- Some interviewees held strong sentiments related to English language learning and usage:
 - ANH, FAR: Malaysians cannot take criticism when they are corrected. Foreigners are politer and did not laugh if we use inaccurate English.
 - JE: Many Malay students were not as assertive as the Chinese. The Chinese may not know the proper use of the English language but they had high self-confidence to use it. The Malays were too scared to practice it, fearing that they would make mistakes. It may be necessary that teachers help the Malay students at the university to elevate their language acquisition.
 - YHT: The Chinese students were also being ridiculed and mocked if they used English in their speeches instead of their native languages.
 - HH, NNN, MFTI, AT: People from Kelantan and Terengganu were not very supportive when it came to ELL, as they saw people who used English as arrogant.
 - NNN: The Muslim Pharmacist group was to share exam papers and religious information or events among the Malay students. This is because the Chinese students were doing the same among their communities.
 - DZ: Many Muslims cannot tolerate other's religious values.
 - UMN: Malaysians tended to regard people who used English as arrogant.
 - AE, ASYA: There are a lot of keyboard warriors with childish behaviour on Facebook, who cannot accept other people's views especially in political discussions.

Chapter 5: Discussions

5.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings presented from the three data collection methods of questionnaire, LMT100 interaction activity, and interviews. The results are compared and contrasted, as well as argued in relation to previous literature. It aims to explain the possible factors that influence the participants' perceptions and behaviour in the LMT100 group, as well as to highlight the students' needs and wants when using Facebook for ELL.

I divided this chapter into two sections. The first section addresses the three research questions. It explains the discrepancy between the participants' perceptions of using Facebook for English language interaction and their behaviours, as well as their reasons for participation and non-participation in the LMT100 group. To reiterate, the research questions are:

1. How do university students view the use of Facebook for English language learning (ELL)?
2. How do students use a Facebook group for English language interaction?
 - a. What types of posts and topics emerge from university students' interactions on a Facebook group for English language interactions?
3. How do students perceive the changes in relation to their English language skills after using Facebook for English language interaction?

The second section outlines other emerging issues from the data, such as the sociocultural factors at three levels of influences (personal, societal, and institutional) that may explain the participants' behaviour. Other issues include establishment of identities, digital vernaculars, students' autonomy in ELL on Facebook, as well as distracted participants and information overload.

Before that however, I revisit the discussion of the Big Idea that governed the direction of my study, i.e. language learning in a socially-mediated environment, to see its relevance to the findings, and suitability in English language learning.

The Big Idea – Language learning in a socially-mediated environment:

Does it work in my study?

The Big Idea taken seriously was that language is best learned in a socially-mediated setting, where students are immersed in an authentic environment to practise the TL. To this effect, I promoted a Facebook platform for students enrolled in an English proficiency course, to interact with one another for academic and social matters. These interactions were informal and unstructured to present genuine communicative experience, much like how children acquired rather than learned their first language (Krashen, 1982). To reiterate (Chapter 3: 130), I may have been influenced by the fact that I wanted the informal environment to work, despite some literatures suggesting otherwise.

The outcomes are interesting as the students' perceptions of ELL on Facebook did not match their behaviours in the LMT100 group. They perceived highly positive attitudes and motivations in the questionnaire, but their participation rate in the interaction

group was quite low, as only about 50 percent made their involvement visible through various forms of *posts*, *comments*, and *likes*. However, this is not to say that the interaction activity was completely unsuccessful. There was some extent of involvement from the group members who wanted to practise English language skills and improve their ability. When presented with interaction threads on topics they liked such as music, the students displayed higher participation rate. As such, much like in formal learning settings, it may be necessary to present students with activities or topics of interactions that they enjoy in gauging higher involvement and more successful learning experience.

A number of interviewees saw the interaction activity as effective in introducing new words and improving communicative competence from the observation of other students' writings. The questionnaire respondents similarly reported to have learnt new words and sentence structures the most from Facebook. Essentially, many students in Bernat and Lloyd's (2007) study saw vocabulary acquisition as the most important part of learning a new language, hence Facebook ability in assisting the learning of new words may need to be celebrated. This brings us to the Big Idea that touches on the issue of *learning vs acquisition*. The use of English language on an informal, and unstructured platform had given the students opportunities to acquire new knowledge that could enrich their linguistics repertoire. The acquisition process seemed to be effortless as students accessed the group with the intention of interacting with each other and engaging with the content shared, rather than to specifically learn a language skill. The fact that students voluntarily undertake an activity based on their interest is powerful, and demonstrates self-directed learning that may ease learning process. It may thus be fruitful to allow students space and opportunities to explore learning in a relaxed and enjoyable way without having the time constraint and

external pressure. Added to this, many of the interviewees preferred the voluntary and informal nature of the interaction activity that did not force students' participation. Although some required a little bit of structure as a guide, they still requested for non-graded voluntary tasks, which underlined their desire not to be tied down for online assignments. The issue of structure in informal interaction platform is further discussed in this chapter.

Essentially, practising the TL in a socially-mediated environment provides students with opportunities to write, interact and produce something for specific groups of audiences. In other words, students are able to use the TL for a purpose, which serves as a boost of motivation to create and produce (Krashen, 1982, Hammond, 1998). In the case of the LMT100 group, the members have used English for various purposes including chatting and socialising, self-expression, non-academic discussions, and promoting events. This may indicate the needs for their peers to learn about themselves as much as they wanted to understand other people's thoughts and opinions. Notably however, some argued against the effectiveness of the activity due to reasons such as; fear in sharing unsuitable materials to group members, and did not understand the types of appropriate content for ELL that could be shared. Some of the more *active participants* did not feel that they have gained substantial language input from the interaction activity, but felt a boost in their self-confidence to use English in a public space. For these participants, perhaps Krashen's (1985) comprehensible input theory ($i + 1$) may apply; perhaps, the input (i) that they received from the group was too easy, and did not go beyond their current level of English language ability. They already knew all the words and structures used in the group, hence were not acquiring anything new. However, this arrangement may be beneficial to others as interactions between better and weaker students may improve the weaker students' skills (Abu

Bakar, 2007). Despite the discouraging responses from some, many interviewees confirmed that they accessed the group to improve their language ability on a social platform. Therefore, the informal, unstructured, and voluntary Facebook environment may have encouraged students' usage of authentic English language production for a variety of interactive purposes. It follows the tradition that emphasises the effectiveness of language learning in a socially-mediated environment.

The findings thus indicate that there is a certain extent of interest and involvement from the university students to improve their English language skills through Facebook. However, like any other new learning strategies and platforms, it may take some time and effort to get the students to be aware and familiar with the informal learning environment. Their familiarity with formal learning environment may have influenced their thoughts and behaviours of how academic activities should be. Perhaps, students may participate with higher intensity in informal environment when presented with more relevant content that are tailored to their interests, mediated by a moderator at the initial stages. Therefore, based on the findings and arguments presented, I follow the assertion of previous studies that self-directed, participatory, and unstructured learning environment, which gives students the flexibility to associate or dissociate themselves from any learning content is powerful and attractive (Armstrong, 2014, Jahnke, 2013, Siemens, 2004).

First section: Addressing the key research questions

5.1 Research question 1: How do university students view the use of Facebook for ELL?

Often time, the mastery of English language is equated to intelligence. Although this may not necessarily be true, one cannot deny the importance of English as a lingua franca for various purposes of education, local and international businesses, and the innovative field of Science and Technology (The Malaysian Times, 2012, Malaysia Education Blueprint, 2013). English language has always been at the front and centre of Malaysia education system, but even after several years of instructions, the poor grasp of English among graduates was incomprehensible (Subramaniam, 2014). Perhaps, in line with the growing field of social media technology that is clearly attractive to students, new English learning strategies may be innovated to improve learning experience and outcomes. As such, the growing centrality of Facebook as an SNS may raise students' awareness of informal learning environment and self-directed learning that may be tailored to their specific interests. Following this, Research Question 1 examines the way a group of Malaysian university students view the use of Facebook for ELL.

The participants' views were measured based on the questionnaire responses and interviews. A majority of them perceived the effects of Facebook for ELL positively, which relate to the issues of *self-confidence, a sense of community, learning needs, accessibility of Facebook and personalisation*. A small number of participants however, held negative views of the effects of Facebook for ELL, which were interpreted in terms of *students' familiarity with traditional learning, the lack of awareness of informal online learning, and pedagogical lurkers*.

5.1.1 Positive views

a. A sense of belonging in online communities

The tenet of Facebook as an SNS was to allow connection and communication between individuals and community (Boyd and Ellison, 2007). This perhaps, was one of the reasons that the participants viewed Facebook as a motivating factor to be more communicative with friends and lecturers. More specifically, two interviewees, HH and MRL, believed that Facebook connected NS of English from all around the world with learners. HH emphasised that when placed in an environment that requires English, students have no choice but to use the language to communicate. In her case, she had to use English to converse with family friends from South Africa. Added to this, MRL chose to interact with a South African friend to discuss MUFC. Despite his inadequate language ability, he felt motivated and confident to express his views in a topic that he was interested in. This resulted in voluntary participation into the football community which may then gauge further involvement and discussions. It is thus fair to assume that as a globally-accessed SNS, Facebook has the ability to bring people with similar interest together. The interactions that take place within these groups may positively affect students' social, psychological, and academic development, by giving the feeling of connectedness, creating a sense of community, increasing self-confidence in using English and enhancing competency, promoting English cultural knowledge, and keeping in touch with NS of English (Wang and Chen, 2007, Briguglio, 2000, Sawir, 2005, Mun et al., 2011). Thus, in relation to ELL, Facebook has the ability to play a dual role of exposing students to language elements such as spelling and vocabulary, as well as shaping the feeling of confidence, motivation, and positive attitudes (Kabilan et al., 2010, Shih, 2011, Shih, 2013). The peer support they may receive from the specific communities they associate themselves with may further intensify the process.

b. Self-confidence and motivation to learn English

To reiterate, the majority of participants believed that Facebook had improved their self-confidence, motivation, and attitudes towards ELL. In line with this, the active interviewees such as YHG and SC felt a boost in their self-confidence and motivation to use English in public settings, but did not perceive the LMT100 interaction group as improving their language skills. My study was conducted at the same institution as Kabilan *et al.*'s (2010), four years after their research. A similar conclusion was derived where the participants perceived that Facebook enhanced their self-confidence to communicate in English. The consistent findings strongly indicate that Facebook is beneficial in the development of English language skills. The increase in self-confidence and motivation may be due to the implicit learning curve that the participants experienced from reading shared content and information circulated on Facebook. The authenticity of the language used may have also encouraged the students to express their views freely, without worrying too much about making mistakes (Nadzrah and Mickan, 2003, Kabilan *et al.*, 2010). Several interviewees, TM, JE, ANH and AT, articulated similar views that making errors and being corrected are part of the learning process, and they were neither scared nor embarrassed to experience this.

From another perspective, the participants' confidence to read and use English in an online environment may be due to the variety of translation software tools that are freely available on the Internet, such as Google Translate. The helpfulness of Google Translate was repeatedly mentioned by MRL during his interview, as he used the tool in online communication, as well as when he read academic references for his courses. Google Translate on Android and iOS mobile devices also has a voice feature that translated an utterance into the TL and read it aloud (Godwin-Jones, 2008). The

constant accessibility of language translation software on mobile devices may have eased ELL, in both online and offline environments. However, students must be wary that an over-dependence on such software may affect their ability and proficiency to use the TL spontaneously.

c. Participants' liked learning English on Facebook

The majority of participants and interviewees felt that English was interesting, and they liked learning English as a second language on Facebook. YHG and HH attributed the positive attitudes toward the relaxed learning experience, where they read authentic content for leisure based on their interest, instead of being forced to engage with topics they were not passionate about.

The multi-functionality of Facebook as a social platform may also be appealing to the students as it allows a lot of activities to be conducted simultaneously. These activities include socialising, communicating, networking, reading content, sharing files and conducting academic activities; which was similarly observed by previous studies (Boyd and Ellison, 2007, Selwyn, 2007a, Dennen, 2008, Pempek et al., 2009, Madge et al., 2009b, Selwyn, 2009a). Accordingly, the social and academic uses of Facebook indicate its accessibility for both in-school and out-of-school literacy practices that encourage the development of a seamless, continuous process of ELL, and bridge formal-informal activities (Wong et al., 2011, Thorne and Reinhardt, 2008). The emphasis on social and academic activities in-and-out-of-the-classroom makes it possible for students to be continuously exposed to new language elements.

Therefore, as an SNS platform, Facebook may provide students with continuous opportunities to practise their English language skills, where they spend most of their times outside the classroom. This addresses the problem of having insufficient platforms for English language use, such as experienced by Malaysian students in Australian universities (Briguglio, 2000, Sawir, 2005). In relation to this, Volet and Ang (1998) similarly argued that the internalisation of higher education in Australia lack interactions between local and international students especially those from Asian backgrounds. It is worrying that despite being immersed in an English-speaking environment, the Malaysian students in Australian universities found it difficult to practise their skills. This may be a result of low self-confidence, fast-paced speaking environment, and inability to express oneself fluently. As such, the text-based Facebook interaction that functions both synchronously and asynchronously, may provide students with a self-paced learning environment, while still maintaining the stream of information from the communities. For example, in Cain and PolICASTRI'S (2011) study, a group of Pharmacy students reported that they learned a lot of contemporary information in the field of Business Management in Pharmaceutical, and had more opportunities to communicate and discuss information with peers, teachers and external experts in the field.

Teacher-students' interactions and students-students' interactions

Cain and PolICASTRI'S (2011) finding resonated other literatures that found increased learning engagement among students with their peers and instructors, when technologies were in used (Kumar, 2009, Hamid et al., 2011b). SC, ZM, NHFZ and NNN similarly concurred that Facebook was highly used for communication with lecturers and course mates, in course-specific Facebook groups. The interviewees also reported associations with small assignment groups to ease the discussion process and

progress. The LMT100 Facebook group however, saw more interactive exchanges between the students-researcher, instead of students-students, which may be due to several reasons:

- The participants viewed me as an authority, thus felt obliged to respond to my posts to show respect.
- The participants viewed me as the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO) who could help them improve their skills.
- The participants were not comfortable talking to other group members whom they did not know personally.

In line with this, Tsui and Ng (2000) claimed that many students favoured teachers' comments, as teachers were viewed as figures of authority who ensured quality, although peer comments were also treated positively. Nguyen (2007) suggested that rapport between teachers-students was developed when teachers used various instructional resources to communicate with students. This practice increased students' learning engagement and encouraged their co-participation in creating and maintaining rapport with teachers (ibid.). As an authority in the LMT100 Facebook group, I tried to appear approachable and friendly with the members to elicit their participation, content contribution, and interaction. It was perhaps due to my authoritativeness and friendliness, as well as the participants' politeness that they felt more comfortable communicating with me, than with their peers in the LMT100 group.

d. Facebook mobility, personalisation and self-paced learning

Similar to Eren's (2012) finding, the majority of participants viewed Facebook as a positive supplement in the language classroom. Higher percentage of questionnaire participants agreed that Facebook introduced them to new English words and sentence structures, and boosted their confidence to read more English language materials. This

perception could be explained from a number of perspectives, namely mobility of Facebook, personalisation and self-paced environment. Firstly, as a Web 2.0 tool, Facebook was easily accessible from various mobile devices such as computers, smartphones, tablets and laptops, that allowed participants to work at individuals' pace and time (Warschauer and Healey, 1998, Sit et al., 2005). Being able to read English language materials at one's own pace could be tremendously helpful, especially for participants with limited English ability, as they are not monitored, pressured or timed, unlike what they experienced in the classrooms. In support of SNSs for academic use, Šimko *et al.* (2010) stated that many learning management systems (LMS) that function within the Web 2.0 structure, offered a lot of interesting features, but often neglected the need for personalization and adaptation during the learning process. Personalization of content or selective content reading on Facebook and other SNSs, is an indication of the participants' empowerment of autonomy, in search of the most suitable ways to fit their learning preferences on social media (Lee and McLoughlin, 2008). Conole *et al.* (2008) added that students selected appropriate technologies for their personal learning needs as they are immersed in a rich, technology-enhanced learning environment. Baird and Fisher (2005) termed these types of students as the net-centric generation who valued the opportunity to create self-paced, customized, and on-demand learning experiences.

Summary

A majority of the participants and interviewees perceived that Facebook had positive effects on ELL. The accessibility and popularity of Facebook among the university students could promote a safe and constantly accessible English interaction platform to encourage practise. The participants may have felt *a sense of belonging in the online communities, boosted self-confidence and motivation to master English, and preference*

for Facebook mobility, accessibility, personalisation, and self-paced environment. The multi-functionality of Facebook may thus help alleviate the issue of insufficient opportunities for English language practice.

5.1.2 Negative view

It is equally important to address the negative views in ensuring that all students will benefit from the potential learning experience afforded by SNSs.

a. The effect of using Facebook for ELL

The small percentages of questionnaire respondents and interviewees who held negative views of the effect of Facebook for ELL may be a result of several issues including; how they believed ELL should be conducted, and the unstructured and informal way that ELL was approached in the LMT100 group. YHT, FB, SC, and MM had definitive ideas of what constitute excellent ELL and the skills needed for its mastery. They repeatedly emphasised the need for vocabulary learning, grammar mastery and communication fluency. FB went on to state that she would rather not post anything online if she felt there were too many mistakes in her writing. FB's view contradicted AT and TM who believed that students should not be afraid to make mistakes as it is part of the learning process. FB's attitudes reflected the Malaysian students in Australian universities, who stated that even though they had the urge to contribute to discussions in tutorials and lectures, limited vocabulary and inadequate knowledge in expressing their thoughts, hindered them from contributing to the discussions (Shakir, 2009). This eventually affected their confidence to communicate and present ideas, which led to the decline in their English language ability. As reported by the 2012-2013 Malaysian Education Blueprint, insufficient English

language skills was one of the main reasons that hindered local employers from hiring university graduates for their companies (Malaysia Education Blueprint, 2013).

Other reasons for the participants' negative views are discussed in terms of *the lack of awareness of the Facebook learning experience, familiarity with traditional learning, and silent readers.*

b. Lack of awareness of informal learning experience

Previous studies reported that Facebook was mainly accessed by students for social purposes as it was relaxing, fun, collaborative and informative (Selwyn, 2007a, Resta and Laferrière, 2007, Boling et al., 2008, Chou and Chen, 2008, Selwyn, 2009a, Pempek et al., 2009, Llorens Cerdà and Capdeferro Planas, 2011, Grosseck et al., 2011, Madge et al., 2009b). This falls in line with the basic tenet of Facebook as a social rather than academic platform. Accordingly, YHG, NHFZ, YHT and HH stated that they accessed Facebook after a long day at the university to relax rather than having to conduct more academic task online. They urged that the content shared in the LMT100 group to be relevant to English language, informative and interesting. The responses indicated that the interviewees had specific views of how English leaning materials should be, and that they did not see usefulness of the content shared in the group as an English language materials. In other words, the participants may have narrowly viewed English learning content as something formal rather than informal, and must be assigned by authorities rather than self-generated. Added to this, many of the interviewees emphasised grammar mastery and vocabulary-enhancing activities in the group, which may suggest unawareness of how their recreational practices outside of school hours, may contribute to ELL. As observed in the LMT100 group, they saw limited values of a news article, but are in favour of explicit grammar

exercises on Facebook. In short, the participants may not be aware of the educational values of the content that were not specifically designed for ELL.

The lack of awareness of the informal learning experience may also be a consequence of irrelevant and uninteresting content materials, and information presented on Facebook. Students could easily ignore a content by scrolling down the pages, should they feel disinterested in certain updates. Perhaps, valuable English language content may have been buried in the frequent updates. Similar environment is seen on Twitter where old tweets get concealed by new constant tweets (FAR, interviewee). Although there were growing number of SNS users who produce information, share knowledge and develop multimedia (Kietzmann et al., 2011), some posts may not appeal to students due to various reasons such as uninteresting topics, and complicated language. In relation to this, Mun *et al.* (2011) found that Malaysian youths were more interested to read and discuss entertainment-based topics on Facebook, instead of being pre-occupied with more serious, critical issues such as political ideas and events. There is however, a growing consciousness among the university students with regards to Malaysian politics as JE and ASYA demonstrated their interest in debates and discussions on Facebook. Perhaps, this interest was essentially due to the easy access of information readily available on social media. To substantiate this, Muniandy and Muniandy (2013) found that at the moment, Malaysians commonly used SNSs for political purposes.

However, to concur with the previous finding (Mun et al., 2011), many participants in my study demonstrated selective reading habit and a penchant for entertainment-related topics. The lack of interest on general knowledge issues poses a real concern as it may create a generation of youngsters who has limited ability to discuss real-

world matters, besides entertainment. Added to this, reports also show that Malaysians were not reading as much as the citizens in developed countries, such as Japan and United Kingdom (New Straits Times, 2012a, Dermawan, 2013). Perhaps, this is where social media could be of purpose. SNSs such as Facebook relies on collaborative user-generated content. As such, it is highly likely that a piece of interesting information, posts, or multimedia is repeatedly circulated within a Facebook community by various users. The constant circulation of similar information may attract students' attention, even though the topics were not of their interests to begin with. An example is narrated below based on my observation:

“Diana has 200 Facebook friends. One day, a friend, Mark, shared a video titled ‘The Interesting Properties of Water’. Diana did not access the video as she was not interested in the topic. Later in the day, another friend, Amy shared the same video. Diana still ignored it. Over the course of 5 days, 11 of her friends had circulated the same video on their Facebook walls. Diana felt intrigued by this, and accessed the video to find out what was so interesting about it. From this, she learned something new even though she was not very interested in Science topics.”

To reiterate, the continuous circulation of information may raise students' awareness of breaking news or knowledge at local and global scales. This may expose students to authentic English language content and promote more intensive literacy practices.

- c. Traditional learning vs informal online learning
 - i. Familiarity with traditional learning system

The small number of participants who held negative views of the effect of Facebook for ELL, may have been too familiar and accustomed with the traditional classroom learning they experienced at school. For example, AE and ASYA who were both active contributors to the LMT100 group, still felt that face-to-face learning as the best way

to learn English language. Similarly, KR, passive participant requested a list of English tuition centres near the university, as she wanted to attend extra classes. MRL repeatedly expressed his gratitude that his English teacher gave him and his friends extra classes to ensure they were not left behind. These data indicated the students' preferences for a way of learning that they were used to, which supported the results of the following previous studies; forty-eight undergraduates in Turkey still believed that traditional language classroom-based is the backbone for language education (Eren, 2012); the translation method enhanced students' vocabulary learning by improving recall and retention to the meaning of words they learned (Ramachandran and Rahim, 2004); adult students showed preference for classroom-based delivery (Buch and Bartley, 2002); students saw face-to-face learning as valuable due to its immediacy, energy, and is a better fit with their learning preference, but appreciated the extra time they had to spend on online threaded discussions (Meyer, 2003). Despite the effectiveness of the traditional method, the online learning environment also has something to offer. Neuhauser (2002) found equal effectiveness of both online and face-to-face instructions when examined with test scores, assignments, as well as participation and final grades. A minor difference between the two groups was that the online group's average scores were slightly higher than that of the face-to-face group's averages (ibid.).

All in all however, Wegerif (1998) concluded that individuals' learning success or failure is dependent on how they viewed themselves, and the ability to change their feelings from an outsider's mind-set to an insider's mind-set. By having more of an insider's mind-set, students may be more responsible and in tune with their studies, rather than waiting and expecting to be educated by an authority.

ii. Students' prior experience with Facebook and academic activities

Participants' prior experience with Facebook and academic activities may have also led to the negative views. Firstly, the students felt that Facebook had become too institutionalised. The authorities at the university were too over-dependent on Facebook in circulating announcements and information (FAR, Interviewee). The students' bodies and societies also used Facebook to update and engage their members with events and activities. The students had thus received the same information repeatedly, which crowded their Facebook walls and flooded their notifications. It was due to this that FAR and HAR felt that Facebook had become too impersonal, hence restricted their engagement and interactions with friends and families. They shifted their personal activities to Twitter and only used Facebook for university and academic matters.

Secondly, the negative views may be due to the discrepancy in the students' views of academic activities on Facebook. They may have had certain ideas of how the process should be, and what the activities should look like, based on their previous learning experiences. However, when it differed from their expectations, they rejected the opportunities. The members of the LMT100 group, who had limited experience engaging with informal learning environment, may have found the activity was without purpose. They based their knowledge of learning on prior experiences and, requested for more grammar exercises to be presented by an authority. As such, when given a platform that required active learning engagement, they largely became passive participants who preferred to consume knowledge, rather than produce it. The inconsistencies between their expectations and reality may have negatively influenced their perceptions of Facebook for ELL. As such, they may resort to using Facebook for

its basic purposes of socialising and networking, than learning (Selwyn, 2007a, Grosbeck et al., 2011).

In summary, a minority of participants indicated their attachment to the face-to-face classroom learning, and reliance on authorities to provide ELL content and exercises. In this situation, students are to follow teachers' instructions and complete assigned tasks. Notably however, a large number of the LMT100 group members were the *silent readers*, i.e. the ones who never made their participation visible. Therefore, the question is, what are the silent readers' views of the effect of Facebook on ELL? Does their non-visible participation in the LMT100 group indicate their negative perceptions, as they prefer traditional classroom learning instead of online learning? Are they naturally an introvert, or do they view the activity as non-beneficial for their English language development? I do not have a definite answer for these questions as they are beyond the scope of this study, but future research may address these inquiries to further examine the silent readers' needs and preferences when it comes to ELL on Facebook.

iii. Online learning and face-to-face learning

The current second language learning theory emphasised social interaction and students' accountability over their own learning, and teachers to play more peripheral roles as facilitator (Nowrozi, 2011, Yunus et al., 2012). In line with the technological development, educators positively believed that academic activities on SNSs could be beneficial, as students are granted with the freedom to decide content, pace and personalisation of the learning process (Wegerif, 1998, Neuhauser, 2002, Meyer, 2003). Likewise, the participants in Hamid et al. (2011a) were positive that social networks had the ability to facilitate learning.

Based on earlier arguments and findings of previous studies however, online learning experience may be even more successful should it be complemented with traditional face-to-face classroom learning, especially at the earlier stages. Unlike the blended learning environment (McCarthy, 2010, Shih, 2011, Shih, 2013), the LMT100 group interaction activity was not followed up by any classroom discussions. The design may thus be unable to cater to the students who preferred the traditional way of learning, and had not fully comprehended the learning process in informal online environment. Therefore, students' non-participation in the LMT100 group may be possibly due to the disregard of a more structured pedagogical design, especially at the earlier stages of the learning process, as well as the lack of instructions given in raising students' awareness of what they had to do.

iv. CLT point of view

From the point of view of CLT, the lack of members' participation in the LMT100 group may be due to the cultural issue with regards to the roles and responsibilities of teachers and students. Cultural differences lead to discrepancies of ideas on students-teachers' roles and relationships in CLT classrooms (Hu, 2002a). CLT was deemed inappropriate for downgrading teachers' roles, from being the centre of knowledge and wisdom, to a more peripheral, supporting role. Harmer (2003) argued that the very act of teaching presupposes moral positions about the way knowledge and skills are passed on, and acquired in the classroom. Different students react to different learning styles, and respond differently to stimuli. As such, the language teaching goal that requires students to assume learning responsibility is a culturally loaded idea, which may be inappropriate for all (ibid.). Nevertheless, CLT's emphasis of students as active participants rather than passive recipients of information is highly valuable, and may be necessary to be promoted in the language classroom to a certain extent.

5.1.3 The issues of genders and ethnicities

There are a number of studies that have looked at the differences between genders and ethnicities in the usage of SNSs, but rarely investigated ELL in specific.

Hargittai (2007) found that gender was the only predictor of SNSs use, while other variables such as students' race and ethnicity, and parental schooling level showed no significant statistical difference with aggregate SNS usage. Likewise, Subrahmanyam *et al.* (2008) did not find any ethnic or religious group differences with regards to having SNS profiles, the kind of SNS, and to using instant messaging. Furthermore, many of the previous studies were US-based and demonstrated the findings of SNSs usage by students from races and ethnicities of White, African-American, Hispanics, Latinos, and Asian American (Hargittai, 2007, Lenhart *et al.*, 2010). It was reported that white SNSs users gravitated towards Facebook and LinkedIn, while the minority users tended to be on MySpace (Lenhart *et al.*, 2010). There is thus a lack of research in which the discussions of SNSs usage based on different ethnicities' in Malaysia could be based on. In relation to ELL however, Abu Bakar (2007) found that ESL students from similar ethnic groups, especially Malays, felt self-conscious when communicating in English among themselves. Similarly, a few Malay interviewees feared being criticised as show-offs should they use English to interact with each another. This however, was not specific to the Malay students, as a Chinese interviewee also explained being criticised when attempted to integrate English words in interaction with his Chinese friends. Yet, when Kasmoo *et al.* (2015) investigated the perceptions of Malaysians from different ethnic groups on the teaching and learning of Science and Mathematics in English, it was found that the Chinese and Indian respondents were most accepting of the statement that it is easier to learn Science and Mathematics in English, while the Malay participants were the most reluctant. They justified this result

by underlining Canarajah (2005) and Hamzah's (2010) discoveries that Chinese and Indian had better English language proficiency than the Malays, as many Malays lived in rural areas and were left with inexperienced teachers (Kasmo et al., 2015: 117). The unique findings of my study however could not draw the same conclusion due to small sample participants in the LMT100 group and numbers of interviewees. Furthermore, a majority of the Malay students who were interviewed portrayed themselves as highly educated and practised urban lifestyle.

Based on the findings from the questionnaire and LMT100 group, the female students seemed to have more positive attitudes towards learning English on Facebook compared to the male students, as they spent more time and effort participating in the interaction activity. This observation falls in line with Hargittai's (2007: 285) conclusion that females were more likely to use SNSs than their male counterparts. Duggan and Brenner (2013) added that women and younger adults were more likely than men to use an SNS of any kind, especially those who lived in urban settings than rural. More specifically, Lenhart *et al.* (2010) reported that while men had more profiles on LinkedIn than women, women were 10 percent more likely than men to have profiles on Facebook. Perhaps, this relates to Huang *et al.* (2013) discovery that while females felt more anxious than males in using Web 2.0 applications, it did not apply to SNSs and online video sharing tools. Females may thus felt more comfortable on SNSs compared to other social media applications, which explained higher participation in the LMT100 group than the male students. The female students' more positive behaviour may also be linked to stronger needs for intimacy with friends and family to alleviate isolation and aloofness, compared to men (Fogel and Nehmad, 2009). Although Subrahmanyam *et al.* (2008) found that more males had SNS profiles compared to females, the statistical difference was unreliable. This substantiates the

findings of my study that more female students had Facebook accounts and positive attitudes towards English learning on Facebook than male students. While my analysis demonstrated that the female students tended to be more active in initiating interactions and commenting in the LMT100 group, Lenhart *et al.* (2010) did not find any major differences in online content sharing and commenting, based on both genders, and races or ethnicities.

To add to the discussion, there were several points from Fogel and Nehmad's (2009) study that may resonate with the questionnaire findings, LMT100 data, and interview responses from my study. Firstly, it was observed that men generally exerted greater risk taking behaviour than women, and women participated in fewer overall risky actions on SNSs (*ibid.*). This may perhaps substantiate the male students' reports that they were not too worried about making English language mistakes on Facebook, compared to the female students. Gyimah *et al.* (2014) however found that male students made more errors than the females in English language expression writing. Moreover, when asked of their perceptions, Kasmoo *et al.* (2015) discovered that the male respondents had stronger acceptance that it is easier to learn Science and Mathematics in English, compared to the female participants. This may further suggest the laidback characteristics of men who do not take things too seriously. From their questionnaire, Bernat and Lloyd's (2007) found that more women than men viewed people who speak more than one languages as intelligent. This may be a reason why females tended to take ELL more seriously than males, which led to the belief that female students may be better at language acquisition than male students (Gyimah *et al.*, 2014). Secondly, it was concluded that female students showed more privacy concerns than males who felt better about including their phone numbers and instant messenger address on their profiles (Fogel and Nehmad, 2009). In accordance,

Subrahmanyam *et al.* (2008) found that males used more instant messaging than females. An example may be drawn from MRL (a male student) who used Facebook to chat with another Manchester United fan from South Africa, which indicated his lack of concern of his privacy. Similarly, AE (a male student) who was the most active members in the LMT100 group stated that he did not mind chatting with strangers as he believed that was what SNSs were designed for. Perhaps, it was also due to their lack of privacy concern that the men in Fogel and Nehmad's (2009) study had more numbers of friends compared to the women. On the other hand, a female in my study, NHFZ, stated that she only talked to other female students taking similar course at other universities in Malaysia to compare their learning experiences. She refused to talk to random strangers in online environment. NHFZ exerted very careful behaviour in selecting friends she would talk to; a behaviour which was similarly observed in the women's of Fogel and Nehmad's (2009) study. Perhaps, keeping private was the reason that the females in Bernat and Lloyd's (2007: 85) study felt slightly less likely to enjoy practising English with the Australians they met compared to the men who were more open to the experience. In line with this, Fogel and Nehmad (2009: 159) found that the female participants were more likely to write on other people's profiles to share thoughts and feelings, but men had more instrumental relationship styles such as doing activities together, rather than expressing feelings or thoughts. Similar conclusion was drawn by an earlier study by Rosseti (1998) (cited in Amir *et al.*, 2012: 107) on emails. Women used more support-offering expressions to deepen their relationships with the readers, as well as expressions of appreciation and thanks, while men used 'tighter' and less direct expressions (*ibid.*). Likewise, Amir *et al.* (2012) reported that female bloggers used more empty adjectives to express their emotions in their blog posts compared to male bloggers. This finding may justify the reason that the female students were more active initiating interactions and commenting in the LMT100 group than the male students. More specific examples to justify the findings

and demonstrate the differences between the female and male students' behaviours may be observed from the interaction threads and comments in the LMT100 group. DZ (a female student) wrote on the wall of the LMT100 group that she would like to learn more about the other members' experiences, thoughts and opinions, which indicated her sentimental approach. On the other hand, AE (a male student) initiated an interaction thread that objectively inquired of the group members' desired superpowers, which fundamentally portrayed his instrumental nature.

a. Gender and ELL

From the point of view of ELL, gender similarities and differences in male and female students learning strategies and language used in specific contexts are often investigated. Amir *et al.* (2012) looked at four Malaysian university students language used in blogs, and found that there were noticeable differences between the males and females use of intensifiers and lexical hedges. The female students tended to use more intensifiers to emphasise their points, and lexical hedges to show uncertainty and soften their voices. These language aspects may perhaps be evident in the interaction threads of the LMT100 group, but are not discussed to adhere to the scope of the study. There were however, no statistical relationship between language learning strategies (LLS) and gender (Shah *et al.*, 2013). This was concluded in a study of LLS patterns among students of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) at a public university in Malaysia (*ibid.*). Similar conclusion was drawn by Shuib and Azizan (2015) who investigated ESL students learning style preferences, where while both males and females showed strong representation of visual learners, there were no significant differences between genders on preferred learning styles.

At a more global scale however, a group of Iranian students demonstrated gender differences in LLS, where the females illustrated the tendency to use LLS as well as social and affective strategies more often than males (Zeynali, 2012). In relation to this, from the second language motivation point of view, many previous studies (Kissau, 2006; Burden and Lanvers, 2002; cited in Nahavandi & Mukundan, 2013) reported that male students were less motivated, demonstrated lower participation, and obtained lower marks than the females in the learning of French and English. Added to the point, Mathew et al. (2013) found that even though the male and female students in an Arab EFL contexts displayed equal amounts of motivation and anxiety in learning, the female students still outperformed their male counterparts in assessments and class participations. Thus, the female anxiety was seen as facilitating learning, while the male anxiety was counter-productive (ibid.). This theory may substantiate the higher number of female students' involvement in the LMT100 group than the male students. However, this is not to say that the male students were completely inactive. There was some extent of participation from the male students, which indicated their desire to improve English language ability.

Summary

In short, a majority of participants held positive views of the effect of Facebook for ELL, but it is equally important to address the negative views in maximising learning experience for all students. These students may be representatives of the larger university demographics.

Essentially, some participants expressed their appreciation for face-to-face classroom learning, where they depended on authority figures to provide information, content materials, and learning experience. The prior learning experience and their familiarity

with it may have influenced their online behaviours, especially in the new setting of an informal platform.

The unique findings from the interviewees suggested that there is no difference in the views between ethnicities regarding ELL on Facebook. However, previous studies suggested that the Chinese and Indian had more favourable views of English language, compared to Malay, due to geographical difference and learning opportunities. In terms of gender, the female students seemed to have more positive attitudes towards ELL on Facebook, but the male students demonstrated more confidence and security to use English on Facebook.

5.2 Research question 2: How do students use the LMT100 Facebook group for English language interaction?

This section addresses two main issues:

How did the participants use the LMT100 Facebook group for English language interactions?

What were the possible reasons for their demonstrated behaviours?

The findings suggested that the LMT100 group was used for both social and academic purposes, but the social-themed posts generally gathered more attention, which was translated in the forms of comments. The amount of academic posts shared were very limited, and mainly related to ELL.

I start off this section by underlining the rationales behind the design of the informal, unstructured LMT100 group, to discuss, compare and contrast previous literatures. It

then highlights students' participation patterns, and their behaviours in the group. The students' participation and non-participation are discussed in relation to their Asian background, which may have influenced selective interest behaviour in reading and learning topics, mainly for grammar quizzes and entertainment-based activities. The issue of silent readers is also addressed due to the majority of passive members in the group.

5.2.1 Rationalising the design of the LMT100 Facebook group

The LMT100 group was designed to be informal and unstructured, to be in line with the functions of Facebook. It thus shifted the bulk of learning responsibility from an authority to the group members, as Facebook relies on collaborative-generated content. It requires more social and responsible participations from students, while teachers play the peripheral roles of facilitators and guide (Nowrozi, 2011, Yunus et al., 2012). In other words, students are expected to become the manager of their own learning, instead of being dependent on teachers for instructions.

It was due to this tenet of SNSs that I decided against pre-defining sets of objectives or interaction topics to be discussed in the group. The participants were generally instructed to practise their English language skills by initiating interaction threads, responding to comments, and sharing information. The unstructured activity was to create autonomous, independent learners, who had unlimited access to the Web in search of relevant content and knowledge to be shared with their peers. The opportunities for constant access is indeed valuable in today's learning environment, as Internet is considered as the current defining technology for literacy (Coiro and Dobler, 2007). In support of this effort, Liu (2010) asserts that technology is able to accommodate the needs of younger generations. When they engaged in online

interaction, university students preferred to be associated with groups that are civically engaged, discuss ever-shifting contemporary topics, and most importantly, do not require access to membership (ibid.).

The unstructured LMT100 platform granted the participants with opportunities to openly share and discuss any topics of their interests, which emphasises the notion of authentic content and communication underlined by CLT. Meaningful language use and activities within a community of practice may lead to TL acquisition (Richards and Rodgers, 1986, Savignon, 1991, Lave and Wenger, 1998, Van Nguyen, 2010, Fang, 2011, Chang, 2011a). Added to this, Anderson (2008) outlines three forms of interactions in learning; students-teachers, students-students and students-content. Deep and meaningful learning is achieved when these three forms of interactions reach an optimal level. The LMT100 group saw some extent of interactions between students-moderator, students-students, and students-content, albeit at a limited, superficial, and unsustainable rate. However, it is quite difficult to ascertain the level of engagement between students-content, as no appropriate measure was employed to examine this.

In order to create a valuable learning environment, students must have something to talk about (Liu et al., 2002). The LMT100 group, thus encouraged students to discuss any social and academic topics of their interests, rather than being restricted to formal learning content. Based on their study involving participants studying English for Students of Other Languages (ESOL), Vann and Fairbairn (2003) wrote that teachers should capitalise on students' diversity, interests and expertise, rather than their weaknesses, in creating academically-relevant projects. This is because, pedagogical relevance plays important roles in motivating and maintaining students' interests and engagement in activities outlined (Barr, 2004). However, the absence of teachers'

presence in the LMT100 group may have caused a lack of focus among students, which was translated into lower rate of participation. The support and scaffolding from teachers and community members are important to further motivate students, increase self-confidence, and lead them to achieve beyond their expectations in learning (Vann and Fairbairn, 2003).

Online interaction activity is also valuable in linking formal and informal learning, as *“formal educational contexts and objectives may have limited relevance to the immediate – and mediated – social, communicative, and informational needs of students”* (Thorne and Reinhardt, 2008: 562). The process is termed *“bridging activities”* as it links classroom activities with digital language convention (ibid.). It is academically relevant in resolving the insufficiencies of formal environment, by connecting classroom learning experience to online interaction, to create a continuous and seamless English learning platform for university students (Wong et al., 2011). In comparison, McCarthy (2010) asserts blended learning environment as able to connect theory and practice, and international and local students, as well as allow more comprehensive learning in the physical classroom. A strictly online learning environment only on Facebook may cause *“a disconnection between the virtual and physical learning environments”* (McCarthy, 2009: 738).

- a. The absence of pre-defined learning objectives, guidelines, or posting requirements in the LMT100 group

Many previous studies argue the essentiality of having a structured learning activity. A successful SNSs-integrated learning environment may be achieved by outlining clear, pre-set objectives that are closely tied to the course (Meyer, 2003, Ally, 2004, Baird and Fisher, 2005, Kabilan et al., 2010). It is thus necessary to raise students'

awareness of what to be expected of them in online courses, using clearly described forms of discussion rubrics (Rovai, 2007). In realising this, it is the teachers who need to provide content and task-oriented online discussion forums on authentic topics, to motivate students' engagement and productivity (ibid.). The technological artefacts such as Facebook function neutral tools to serve teachers' objectives (Kanuka, 2008). This implies that despite the revolutionary ways that Web 2.0 manages, repurposes, and remixes online information, establishing the '*best practice model*' for learning requires careful thinking, testing, evaluation and research, on the part of authorities (Kamel Boulos and Wheeler, 2007). Educators must design meaningful problems or projects for students to pursue with the support of technology (Pope and Golub, 2000). In line with this, Ally (2004) stressed that online instruction is so much more than merely placing information or linking other digital resources on the Web. It requires students to use the Web to follow instructions, complete activities and achieve specific learning outcomes and objectives (ibid.). The design should thus provide engaging content that allows user to connect learning objectives and Web-based media (Baird and Fisher, 2005). In relation to this, several interviewees (YHT, EQ, AA, NNN, NHFZ, MFTI, ZM, KR, and SC) believed that the presentation of guidelines and instructions would have elevated their participation in the group. Many of them requested for entertaining, relaxing posts such as opinion-based inquiries, and self-expression to be shared in the group in eliciting more active, visible participations. This was due to their inability to find suitable content materials to be circulated among their peers, and their disinterest to engage with serious academic discussions. Having said that however, the interviewees requested for more participation guidelines without being given any formal, or graded tasks in the group.

Arguably however, the LMT100 group has already been initiating opinion-based, and non-serious discussion topics prior to the interview sessions, but was still unsuccessful in increasing participation rate. However, when presented with certain topics related to entertainment, and grammar, the students showed higher interest and involvement. As such, it may be fair to assume that it was not so much of the absence of guidelines, instructions or posting requirements that hindered participation in the group. Instead, it is the students' nature as introverts or silent readers in online environment that may have had an influence over their behaviour, as well as the probable idea that the activity was not beneficial to improve their ELL.

b. Social interactions in online learning environment

The design of the LMT100 group emphasised social interactions as English language practice. However, some academics have strong views of social interactions that; it can be expensive, it is not an important element for learning, and simple interaction is insufficient to facilitate cognitive presence in online learning (Garrison and Cleveland-Innes, 2005, Kanuka, 2008). Added to this, Kreijns *et al.* (2003: 349) stressed that *"the lack of social interaction [on social media] is due to the assumption that social interaction will automatically occur because the environment permits it"*. However, Kreijns *et al.* (2003) also reasoned that stimulated social interaction is always associated with and restricted to cognitive aspects of learning, while ignoring its importance for social relationship building, affiliation, impression formation, and the development of a healthy community of learning (*ibid.*). Ideal learning is viewed as having qualitatively richer text-based, asynchronous collaborative interactions on e-learning, designed with structure, specific objectives, content, feedback and leadership (Garrison and Cleveland-Innes, 2005, Kanuka, 2008). These assertions contradicted the design of my study that emphasises social interactions as English language practice. It however,

falls in line with Kreijn *et al.*'s (2003) suggestion to create “*non-tasks contexts that allow social, off-task communication (e.g. casual communication)*” that promoted impromptu encounters, as well as inclusion of presence and awareness of the learning community.

The voluntary-participation structure in the LMT100 group was well-received among the interviewees (AT, YHG, DZ, AE, ASYA, FB, JE, UMN, AND, TM, and AH) who viewed Facebook as a platform to relax and self-express, rather than academic. The task-less LMT100 group design was valuable, as Bull *et al.* (2008) found that students often lost passion and energy in formal classrooms when they have to address specific learning objectives under time-constraint. Time is even scarcer when technology is in used, due to teachers-students' limited technical ability, and insufficient equipment (*ibid.*). As such, based on previous studies that identified students' much higher social engagement on Facebook (Selwyn, 2007a, Grosseck *et al.*, 2011) than academic activities, the LMT100 group promoted informal social interactions than structured learning environment.

As Generation Y, most of the students grew up surrounded by technology (Prensky, 2001b), and Facebook was a familiar and popular tool. As such, the LMT100 group relied on members' sharing of information and interaction activities, based on their assumed passion for multimedia productions and high usage of Web 2.0 (Kreijns *et al.*, 2003). In hindsight, I may have placed too high of an expectation that the group members will interact with one another, just because Facebook was familiar, accessible and convenient for interaction and socialisation. This conclusion was drawn based on the lack of participation, interaction, and relevant English language content shared in the group, as the members largely consisted of silent readers, and only a handful of

active members. Evidently, this may have been influenced by the topics of interaction, which is elaborated further in relation to students' online learning interests.

5.2.2 The emphasis on students' interests in online learning

Vann and Fairbairn (2003) stated that topics of interests such as sports and music could be transformed into communicative projects, for TL exposure and cultural knowledge. This suggestion is highly relevant to the Malaysian context, as Tan et al. (2009) and Mun et al. (2011) reported students' preferences for entertainment-related issues, than complicated matters. The sharing of information that closely relate to students' interest, may promote informal learning that bridges social media and academic content. They may experience heighten sense of engagement when they are fully involved in the process of knowledge exploration and creation, rather than taking the backseat view as recipients of information (Bull et al., 2008). In relation to this, Dorsen et al. (2006), Dierking et al.'s (2004), and Falk (2001) presented that informal learning in the field of Science caters to specific students' needs and interests, within a social context of voluntary, and self-directed multi-faceted paradigm. To agree with this argument, I argued my study in terms of ELL, where it is necessary to allow students to decide on topics of their interests, in gauging their learning participation in informal online environment. However, the group was rather unattractive to the students, and caused frustrations due to insufficient content, and limited participation. It may be fair to thus assume inadequate meaningful and engaging communicative activities among participants.

Although sharing is the best way to interact, it is the function of the social media platform that determines whether sharing leads to interaction and relationship building among students (Kietzmann et al., 2011). Evidently, the LMT100 group had some

extent of rapport building among students-students, and students-moderator, although it was not highly substantial. This may be due to the limited visible interaction, and peer engagement among students, which perhaps indicated disconnection with one another, and implied the absence of strong relationship development in the group. It may be argued that the students did not have common topics of interests to gauge their interaction to each other.

Therefore, based on previous literatures on students' learning interests, I try to reason their behaviours in the LMT100 group. The issues addressed in the following sections include; *students' interest in interactive threads than multimedia threads, Asian students' traits, and selective interests.*

a. Students' interests in interactive threads than multimedia threads

The participants of the LMT100 group were generally more responsive towards interactive threads than multimedia threads. Admittedly, multimedia-based elements such as animations, demonstrations, video instructions, and text-based media are always associated with knowledge-based learning objectives (Baird and Fisher, 2005), rather than for ELL. Thus perhaps, the students may feel that the multimedia threads were not going to be as beneficial as interactive threads, hence paid less attention to it. The participants' fondness for interactive threads rather than multimedia threads contrasted Boling and Robinson's (1999) findings. In their study, the interactive multimedia group of students enjoyed the activity the most, but it was the cooperative group who showed higher learning improvement (ibid.). On the other hand, the participants in my study did not show distinct interest in the multimedia shared. This could very well relate to the issue of interest and need, as the multimedia materials were not of the topics of their likings.

Following Krashen's (1985) input hypothesis, I made it a point to share multimedia that I thought were a level higher than the students' then English language ability. For instance, an audio recording shared, exposed the participants to authentic language, and situation faced by native speakers of English. However, only a handful of the interviewees made an effort to listen to it. The reasons given were that they feared that the content will be incomprehensible, it did not stimulate their interest, and it required conscious effort to listen and pay attention. All they wanted to do after a long day of formal university learning was to do relaxing activities on Facebook, rather than engage with another learning material. As such, students may still reject a learning opportunity provided by an authority figure, should be outside the scope of their interests, preferences, and language capability. Apart from that, the participants were probably not very concerned about not listening to the audio recording right there and then, as most online multimedia could be easily retrieved, unless purposely removed from the Internet. Furthermore, constant Internet access, Web navigation skills, and the convenience of information-retrieval without having to rely on authorities, probably enhanced their nonchalant attitude towards the multimedia content presented in the group.

Arnett (1995) states that adolescents have the ability to choose a diverse range of media materials that suits their personal needs and personalities. For example, an interviewee, HH, who liked Sophie Kinsella's writings, downloaded her e-novels for leisure reading, which was probably due to the convenience, compatibility and media richness that are interesting to e-book readers (Lai and Chang, 2011). Likewise, Agichtein *et al.* (2008) found that social media such as *Yahoo! Answers* give abundance of both high-quality content and information sources as well as non-content information, which could be retrieved online based on students' interests and needs. In

support of these literatures, there were several occurrences where the participants in my study demonstrated information-retrieving skills from the Web, and shared multimedia content in the LMT100 group. This implied resourcefulness and independence in Web navigation to identify relevant content, circulate interesting materials, and contribute knowledge. For instance, the students showed interest in sharing music videos. I initiated the sharing of two music videos and an interactive thread about music. Several group members reciprocated this effort by sharing their favourite music videos. The threads, especially the interactive one, received a lot of comments from the group members. In fact, the interactive post generated the longest exchange of interaction thread, and attracted even the silent readers. There could be several possible explanations for the high participation rate. Firstly, the topic of music is interesting to the participants. Secondly, they were expressing personalities and identities to find friends with similar interest, or to be considered as up-to-date. Thirdly, they wanted to create rapport, and treat me like one of their own by offering help. All in all, the students in the LMT100 group were highly interested in topics related to music.

b. Students' interests in grammar quizzes

Apart from entertainment-related discussions, the LMT100 group members also demonstrated high interest in two other topics; grammar quizzes, and university-related inquiries.

The interest in grammar quizzes may be an indicator of the instructions they received in previous institutions, and perhaps the immersion into exam-oriented culture. Accordingly, Pandian (2002) and Che Musa *et al.* (2012) write that the Malaysian education system privileges examinations, which centres ELL around grammar, writing,

reading, rote learning, teacher-centred classrooms, and chalk-and-talk drills. The mastery of grammar and writing skills is often viewed as mastery of the English language (Che Musa et al., 2012). The emphasis on grammar and students' keenness to participate in grammar quizzes were repeatedly echoed by the interviewees. They viewed the mastery of grammar, and the acquisition of a wide array of vocabulary and sentence structures, as a huge portion of ELL. Several interviewees, such as MFTI and ZM, hoped that by joining the LMT100 group, they would be able to memorise the grammar they have learned in schools, to make them better students at university.

The CLT principles in which the Malaysian English syllabus is based on, may not be fully implemented due to practical issues such as time constraint; hence familiarised students with teacher-centred, grammar drills, and language exercises English pedagogy. In support of the traditional methods however, cultural differences may have caused further issues with the implementation of CLT in Asian classrooms. CLT was initiated in the Western countries where English language is practised. To learn it in the classroom may thus be effortless to both teachers and students. Too often, this is assumed to be natural for teachers and students from other parts of the world, especially Asia, where in reality, the opportunity to constantly practise English was scarce (Harmer, 2003, Hu, 2010b, Chang, 2011b). The lack of familiarity discouraged students from instantly participating in discussions and activities in CLT classrooms. They may also be pressured to participate in activities that are unappealing to them. Therefore, not only the clash of cultures between West and East demotivate students from learning, it may also lead to unsuccessful language teaching experience for teachers (Hu, 2002b). When this happens, both teachers and students may fail to benefit from the teaching-learning experience, and jeopardise language development.

Besides grammar quizzes, the students were also interested in expressing their views over university-related inquiries in the group. This may be due to their status as students of that particular university, which justified their opinions that were articulated based on their personal experiences. The LMT100 group may have thus acted as a medium to channel their dissatisfaction with the university's management, and facilities. This lends support to Selwyn's (2007a) conclusion that Facebook was used by university students to talk about practical academic information and faculty members, banter, and joke with each other.

5.2.3 Selective interests

The higher rate of participation in the topics of entertainment, grammar quizzes, and university-related inquiries, indicates the students' specific or *selective interests* in reading and learning. Schiefele (1991) argued the question of interest, based on Dewey (1913) and James' (1950) studies. Dewey (1913) distinguished interest-oriented learning from coercion-based learning that neglects students' interests. Both Dewey (1913) and James (1950) believed that students' interests were central to learning, and the result of interest-based learning is more worthy and valuable. On the other hand, pure instructional-based learning that neglects learning materials and students' interests has no value, and is not worthy to be pursued (James, 1950, Dewey, 1913). James' (1950: 402) view on selective interest may be seen in relation to the behaviours of the LMT100 group's participants;

"...millions of items of the outward order are present to my senses which never properly enter into my experiences. Why? Because they have no interest for me. My experience is what I agree to attend to. Only those items which I notice shape my mind – without selective interest, experience is an utter chaos".

In this sense, despite the abundance of English language materials on the Internet, only the content suited to the students' needs and interests could grab their attention and gauge their curiosity. When this condition is met, there is a possibility that students would be more involved in the learning process, and experience a heightened sense of engagement with the content. The recurring of similar process may educate and familiarise students, and increasingly transform them to become autonomous learners.

Three other possible reasons for students' *selective interest* behaviour are presented below, from the perspectives of *social media identity*, *disinterest in more serious, complicated issues*, and *students' motivation in ELL*.

a. Selective interests: To create social media identity

A possible reason for higher participation rate to entertainment topics was to create social media identities. Park *et al.* (2009) found that entertainment was one of the four primary needs for students to participate in Facebook groups. The other three are socializing, self-status seeking, and searching for information (*ibid*). Perhaps, the LMT100 participants who commented on the threads wanted to demonstrate their identities to the group, by introducing their favourite celebrities or genre preferences. For example, some participants who were very passive in the group suggested indie music from unknown celebrities, while one member directly advised caution against Miley Cyrus' songs. These behaviours illustrated attempts to associate or dissociate themselves with particular celebrities and genres, while establishing themselves as music lovers, or a know-it-all in music. This may get them to be considered as up-to-date, and fashionable among their peers.

In terms of gender differences, Barker (2009) reported that female teenagers spent more time engaged in SNSs, were more involved in entertainment, and communicated more with peer group members. My findings however show that both female and male participants were enthusiastic in expressing and establishing their musical preferences. These behaviours and activities may be associated with positive collective self-esteem, where students felt confident with their choices in music as an expression of their identities (ibid.).

b. Selective interests: Disinterest in more serious, complicated issues

Tan *et al.* (2009) found that Malaysian adolescents tended to shy away from serious and critical issues about Malaysian affairs. They however showed interests in entertainment topics (Mun *et al.*, 2011). Similar argument may be applied to the participants in my study. In the LMT100 group, there were two posts shared by AA and UMN on academic and political issues. AA solicited the group members' definition of excellence, while UMN asked for any updates of the war in Syria. Both posts, which touched on more serious, complicated issues, did not attract the group members' attention, except for me, who commented on the threads to encourage participation from other students. Following Meyer's (2003) argument that was based on Garrison *et al.*'s (2001) higher order thinking term of *resolution*; i.e. the lack of responses indicate students' disinterest in such serious topics, which may be due to the complexity or difficulty of issues raised, students' lack of skills, and the authorities' failure to emphasise the importance of the issue.

Besides AA and UMN who attempted to bring more academic and serious issues into the LMT100 platform, JE and ASYA expressed their interests in Malaysia political matters both in the group and during interviews. There is thus, a possibility that more

students enjoyed discussions of more complicated issues, but preferred to act as silent readers, or were too shy to voice out their opinions. Muniandy and Muniandy (2013) present that SNSs such as Facebook has empowered Malaysians to express their dissatisfaction about politics. This phenomenon was however, unobserved in the LMT100 group environment, which was perhaps due to the group's objective for ELL. As such, it may be fair to conclude that critical topics such as politics, are slowly gaining attention from the university students, who may be more willing to express their opinions when encouraged by authority figures. In contrast to a previous literature, the political issues presented in the LMT100 group was not of dissatisfaction, but as a show of support and respect for parties and politicians. Notably, the open platform of SNSs has allowed for various forms of interactions including debates, arguments discussions, and presentation of information, which could either bring people together, or created rifts based on their political beliefs.

c. Selective interests: Motivation in ELL

The LMT100 group was promoted as a voluntary, student-centred interaction platform, to supplement teacher-centred classroom ELL. This design falls in line with Falk *et al.* (2001) and Maor (2003)'s views of the values of informal medium in Science education. However, many of the group members acted passively as silent readers or pedagogical lurkers, which may be in relation to Ryan and Deci's (2000) Self-Determination Theory, which was an elaboration of Vallerand's (1997) Intrinsic-Extrinsic Motivation distinction. Paris and Turner's (1994: 222) explain motivation and self-determination theory in the following words;

"... the essence of motivated action is the ability to choose among alternative courses of action, or at least, to choose to expend varying degrees of effort for a particular purpose".

In this sense, the students may have inadequate self-determination or motivation to engage with the stimuli presented in the LMT100 group. Perhaps, they chose to be silent readers, and chose to engage with an alternative course of actions such as reading shared content, retrieving online information, and making their contribution visible only when the topics were suited to their interests and needs.

5.2.4 Silent readers: Preference for receptive learning

Like other previous researches of online learning, a majority of the LMT100 Facebook group members acted as silent readers. These were the students who never made their participation visible, and demonstrated passive behaviours in the online community (Nonnecke and Preece, 2003, Nonnecke et al., 2006, Farzan et al., 2010). Several interviewees who were passive participants reported that although they did not contribute to the content development in the LMT100 group, they made an effort to read everything shared, based on the notifications they received. These students were described as *silent readers*, who read most, if not all of the posts, but decided to become receptive, rather than active participants (JE, DZ, MFTI, AT, Interviewees). This finding thus contradicts Arnold and Ducate's (2006) study as it was reported that their participants engaged in a high degree of interactivity, and all types of social and cognitive presence in online environment.

The term *pedagogical lurkers* was used to describe *silent readers* in educational interaction on social media (Dennen 2008, Arnold and Paulus 2010). They are thus used interchangeably in my writing. Notably however, I did not employ any particular measure to identify *pedagogical lurkers*; hence there are no definite ways to ascertain if the students have accessed, read, or engaged with the content in the LMT100 group. Therefore, the following discussion of *silent readers* or *lurkers* is based on my

observation of the students' interaction patterns, interviewees' relevant responses, and previous literatures.

Nonnecke (2003) discovered that *lurkers* formed the majority in online groups, thus the existence of the *silent readers* on the LMT100 platform should be anticipated. This however contradicts Pope and Golub's (2000: 95) assertion that in an environment where technology is infused with learning, "*students participate actively and directly in their own education*". When a member accessed a thread on Facebook, it is marked as *seen*. The number of *seen* accumulates with the number of the members who accessed it. Frequently in the LMT100 group, the number of members who had *seen* a post was far higher than the ones who commented or responded to it. Nonnecke *et al.* (2006) observed similarly whereby despite their seeming inactiveness, *lurkers* still observed the messages on online platforms. As such, the students illustrated receptive learners' behaviours, where they accessed presented content, but did not feel the need to engage, discuss, or expand the knowledge. They were viewed as invisible members of the online communities (*i.e. those who accessed information presented, but chose not to share materials*) (Cranefield, Yoong, and Huff 2011), who chose to make their participation non-public (Nonnecke *et al.*, 2006). This is because their needs were met through observation, rather than public participation, and they felt sufficient just by reading and browsing the online discussion group (Nonnecke *et al.*, 2004). In line with this, Beaudoin (2002) found that students still learned and benefitted from being *silent readers*, as they spent a significant amount of time in learning-related tasks.

All in all, there are many forms that constitute *lurking*, and many of the students in the LMT100 group acted similarly to what was defined as '*not engaging in essential learning behaviours of dialogue and interaction*' (Arnold and Paulus 2010).

a. The values of silent readers in online communities

Following the above theme, *silent readers* should not be seen as having low-value and playing a marginal role in online communities. They are part of diverse online-offline communities, and play key roles in transferring online information to offline contexts (Cranefield, Yoong, and Huff 2011). The *silent readers* contributed to the LMT100 group in the forms of *likes* and *seen*, to show presence. *Lurkers* are not selfish free-riders, and once their initial temporary non-posting period is over, they do post and share in online communities (Nonnecke et al., 2004, Preece et al., 2004). This finding may be seen in relation to ZM's behaviour in the Facebook academic communities. As a passive participant, ZM explained that she behaved similarly on her personal Facebook page and other academic groups. She was not comfortable presenting her ideas and interacting in large communities. However, when was placed in smaller groups on Facebook, she managed to situate herself within the more intimate circles, and felt more comfortable articulating ideas and discussing points.

ZM, alongside other interviewees (DZ, MFTI and AT) stated that one of the reasons they were reluctant to share information within larger Facebook communities was to avoid peers' judgement of their personalities, and writing ability. In support of this, Cranefield *et al.* (2011) defined *pedagogical lurkers* as online followers, offline leaders. This definition is in line with my findings, where several interviewees repeatedly suggested social gathering among the LMT100 group members, to better know each other, so that they would be more comfortable interacting online. This justifies that some students were passive on online platforms, but outgoing in offline environment.

b. The differences between silent readers and active participants

Notably however, there were significant differences between students who lurked and those who posted in an online community (Nonnecke, Andrews, and Preece 2006). *Lurkers* were considerably less optimistic and less positive than active members (ibid.), and active students obtained higher mean course grades than *silent readers* (Beaudoin 2002). It may thus be fair to assume that passive students did not benefit as much as active students from online learning settings (ibid.). On the other hand, my findings contradict Beaudoin (2002) and Nonnecke *et al.*'s (2006) conclusions. The passive participants (MM, ANH, FB, and EQ) felt that the LMT100 group helped improve their English language skills in the forms of structure and vocabulary. Meanwhile, the more active participants (YHG, DZ, SC, and YHT) felt that the group boosted their self-confidence in interaction, but did not add to their English language development. Thus, in agreement with Dennen (2008), the act of writing online is not the only factor that contributes to students learning.

The *pedagogical lurkers* in Dennen's (2008) stated that they learned language skills by both posting and reading messages online. Students who participated in educational online activities to meet course requirements, were usually more focused on posting materials than reading shared information; hence were often less impacted by the activities (ibid.). This may explain the reason that passive participants in my study were more benefited in acquiring English language skills than active members.

However, there were two instances that follow Beaudoin's (2002) conclusions that passive members learned less than active students in online communities. While KR (a passive member) stated that she did not learn anything beneficial, AA (an active member) was positive that she learned more on sentence constructions from the

LMT100 group. Following previous literatures (Beaudoin, 2002, Nonnecke et al., 2006), active members and *lurkers* of online communities may be seen as two distinct entities. Although both communities directly and indirectly contributed and benefitted from online educational interactions, active members were naturally more valued, due to their existence, presence, and input in terms of knowledge construction (ibid.). Thus, Farzan et al. (2010) saw a need to identify the ways *lurkers* contribute and benefit the online communities, and how they establish presence on social media.

c. Asian students' traits

In relation to the issue of silent readers, the passive traits of Asian students have always been related to sociocultural influences (Ho and Crookall, 1995, Kember, 2000, Park, 2000, Wong, 2004, Chiu, 2009). However Cheng (2000) argued that to assume that all Asians are passive and reticent is a dangerous over-generalisation, and many Asian students have a strong desire to be more active in the classroom. For example, YHT explained that he felt obliged to respond to the interactive threads in the LMT100 group, especially the ones initiated by me, as he had high respect for my authority as a researcher and the group's admin. He felt rude and disrespectful to ignore my questions. To some extent, this behaviour shows the level of respects that YHT had for me, as an authority figure, in a voluntary-based interaction group, even though I had no influence over his formal learning and grades. HH and ANH similarly contributed content in the group, and became interviewees to help me with my research. To some extent, the effort to participate, even out of respect, shows the students' willingness to engage in the learning process.

Holding the highest respect for authority figures is a trait that is commonly associated with Asian students, such as observed in China and Thailand (Kember and Gow, 1991,

Kember, 2000, Cheng, 2000, Park, 2000, Wong, 2004, Wang, 2006, Hu, 2010a). besides showing respect for authorities, Asian students who follow Confucian Heritage Culture place emphasis on maintaining harmony, avoiding public conflict, and protecting authority's face and self-image (Ho and Crookall, 1995, Chiu, 2009). Following this, my authority as an ex-teacher at the university, a postgraduate student, and a person who possibly possessed better English language skills, may have influenced the participants' behaviour in the LMT100 group. They became slightly more responsive to my threads than that of their peers, to protect and maintain my face and public image, as well as to demonstrate respect and politeness. Their behaviours thus may imply obedience such as observed in the traditional classrooms, where teachers do more talking, while students listen passively, and often answer questions in monotonous ways (Hu, 2002b, Chang, 2011a). In this settings, teachers and students have a hierarchical but harmonious relationship, which is maintained as students are expected to respect and not challenge their teachers (Hu, 2002b). Therefore, the roles that teachers have to play in CLT classrooms do not match their views of teaching and learning process. This consequently leads to the unsuccessful implementation of CLT in many language classrooms.

d. Two metaphors of learning engagement in online environment

In relation to online learning, Kop (2011) echoed Sfard's (1998) two metaphors of learning engagement, namely *acquisition* and *participation*. Facebook, as an SNS and a new strategy in academic environment, has the ability to cater to both acquisition (implicit attainment of English language skills) and participation (interaction and collaborative content production) aspects of learning. The combination of both metaphors may create an engaging learning environment for students, albeit indirect and informal.

It is based on these two metaphors that the LMT100 group was designed. Many interviewees agreed that it had a lot of potential to promote ELL, although a majority of them was not actively involved in the interaction activity. Perhaps, different learning strategies on the same platform, such as teacher-guided or facilitated learning, may elicit more participation from the students, especially at the initial stages. It is often reported and assumed that more active and engaged participants acquire more skills and knowledge (Beaudoin, 2002, Nonnecke et al., 2006). However, Sfard (1998) suggested that no one metaphor is superior than the other; hence in pragmatics, other strategies of ELL may also be invaluable to the process.

Summary

This section elaborates how the participants used the LMT100 Facebook group for ELL and interaction. There is however, no straightforward answers as various issues came to play when Facebook is combined with learning. Students' interests in entertainment threads, and interactive posts, led to the discussions of selective interest in English language content. The emphasis on grammar quizzes instead of communicative activities illustrates prior learning experience and their view of how English language activities should be. This may have influenced their behaviour in the informal platform, and resulted in their disregard for authentic content shared in the group.

Furthermore, coming from mainly Asian culture, the students may have been practising the values of respecting authority, and engaging in teacher-centred learning environment. Other possible reasons for their behaviour in the LMT100 group may be related to identity establishment, relationship building, social engagement, disinterest in complicated issues, and motivation for ELL. Liu (2010) similarly identified that

identity establishment, relationship building and social engagement were the reasons for students' use of SNSs, besides direct communication and speed of feedback.

5.3 Research question 2 (a): What types of posts and topics emerge from the interactions in the LMT100 group?

This section discusses the topics that emerge from the LMT100 group interaction activity. It identifies popular topics of discussions, and the participants' behaviour on the platform. In Chapter 4, I have presented the following; emerging topics based on the types of posts, purposes of posts, grammar aspects, choice of languages, intended action of posts and comments, and participants' possible emotions or feelings. All of these categories were divided into bigger themes of; academic, non-academic, socio-academic, and promotional or business. These categories were similarly presented by Selwyn (2007a, 2009a) and Wesseling (2012) in their studies of undergraduate students' Facebook usage. It was found that the students used Facebook; to share educational, social, and practical information, reflect and recount university experience, banter with one another, as well as to play games, and relax (leisure purposes) (ibid.). It is thus clear that threads that fall under the *academic categories* were not purely educational in nature, but involved academia, and students' experiences at the universities.

There is however, a major difference between my study and previous literatures in the methods of data collection. While Wesseling (2012) distributed questionnaires to students, Selwyn (2007a, 2009a) studied the content of students' personal Facebook pages. Alternatively, I gathered the participants in an English interaction platform to

study their behaviours, and topics of discussion. The topics that emerged out of their interactions indicate the way they used an informal English language platform.

5.3.1 The use of LMT100 group for non-academic purposes

From my observation, there was very limited evidence to suggest that the participants discussed purely academic topics, such as Biology, Pharmacy, Arts, or Education. Several previous studies however proposed Facebook's suitability as an informal educational communication network for undergraduate students enrolled in various disciplines including Pharmacy, Political Science, and Public Relation (Malita, 2011, Cain and Policastri, 2011). The students' interactions in Cain and Policastri (2011) and Malita's (2011) studies were not purely academic in nature, but presented more contemporary issues and real world topics. Fundamentally, these studies' focuses were not on ELL, but on the content of other disciplines. English language was the medium to spread content and information. It may have been easier for the students to find relevant content materials due to the specific disciplines, such as Architecture, Urban Design, and Political Science. By knowing what to look for, students were able to use their Internet navigation skills to search for relevant topics and complete their writing assignments on Facebook (Malita, 2011, Cain and Policastri, 2011). Similarly, Shih (2011, 2013) and McCarthy (2010) showed that ELL could be successfully implemented on Facebook as part of the blended classroom instruction, when students were given writing assignments on specific topics. By using English as a medium for content delivery, the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) may have been used to educate students on learning strategies that assist both language skills and content-area instructions (Chamot and O'malley, 1987).

The students in my study were instructed to share any topics and content of their interests in the LMT100 group, for academic or non-academic purposes, to promote English language practice. However, the absence of definite topics may have hindered their active involvement, as they were clueless of things to share with the group members. The finding thus suggests that the participants' possessed limited awareness of what constitutes English language content and learning materials. Therefore, the big question is what constitute ELL in students' view? From the LMT100 group interaction data and interview responses, the majority of participants seemed to imply that the mastery of grammar, sentence structures, and vocabulary will make them adept users of the English language. For example, interviewees such as YHT and MFTI, repeatedly mentioned their expectations of more reading comprehension exercises, and grammar quizzes, to improve their English language skills. While there were evidences of a few participants who tried to inject elements of communicative practices into the LMT100 group, a majority of them were more interested to grab opportunities for grammar learning. As such, should SNSs such as Facebook be celebrated for communicative practice, or should they be used for the nitty-gritty of English language elements such as grammar learning? How should students be educated to view SNSs for ELL? There are no real straightforward answers for these questions, but it is important for the students to understand what constitute ELL as a whole, to allow them the freedom of accessing unlimited, interesting online materials that have the ability to add to their language skills and knowledge. The following section discusses this issue more explicitly.

5.4 What is academic for ELL?

This section discusses what constitutes ELL from the students' points of views, in order to craft learning strategies that may suit their learning and technological needs.

a. Students' narrow view of ELL

What constitutes ELL? Is there any specific content of ELL that can be considered as academic? In terms of formal learning, Cheung (2001) states that classroom textbooks often focus on grammatical structures and practice in isolation. Thus, grammatical elements could be the only academic thing in ELL. This is because, even when content knowledge, vocabulary acquisition, and reading skills differ from one student to another, the fundamentals of grammar remain the same from one discipline to another. As such, when it relates to ELL, grammar may be the first thing that comes to students' minds.

Grammar mastery is often viewed as the mastery of English language (Che Musa et al., 2012). This explains the high participation rate for grammar quizzes in the LMT100 group. Besides this and entertainment threads, the students were not keen to share any other English language materials, be it for academic or non-academic purposes, when given vast opportunities to do so. The reasons given by the participants were that they did not know what to share, busy with university work, and if they were to share materials from their disciplines, it would be incomprehensible to other participants from different courses. This suggests the students' view of academic is narrow and restricted, rather than holistic and practical. When they think about academic, the things that are called to mind are theories, rather than practical knowledge. For example, the Pharmacy students could share articles about the effects of vitamins on human bodies, or how to avoid dengue fever, while the Arts students could circulate articles or videos on painting tips. More importantly, the sharing of this practical information did not require the assistance of a specialist or students' enrolled in a specific course. These are all contemporary, real-world, general knowledge topics that relate to daily lives, that are comprehensible by many people, and are interesting to be read and shared.

However, the main concern about the circulation of these content is the quality and accuracy of English language in use, which Koltay (2010) described as the amateur-professional online content.

To reiterate, the students may have emphasised grammar and vocabulary learning, as they saw those elements as the way to achieve English language mastery. They were unaware as to what constitutes academic learning of the English language as a whole, which may have led to a narrow view of how English should be learned. It is thus essential that the students be made aware that ELL is so much more than just the mastery of grammatical skills. It also includes the ability to read, listen, speak and write, based on specific social and cultural contexts. Duff (2001) suggests that students participate in a variety of classroom discussions, and reading and writing activities to achieve this ability.

b. Online interaction based on pop-culture

Duff (2001) believes that language literacy would be more effective if conducted based on popular culture, mass media and noteworthy events. She suggests the North American pop culture as materials in accordance with her study. Pop culture may be seen in relation to entertainment topics that were preferred by Malaysian youths (Mun et al., 2011). In line with Heryanto's (2008) elaboration on Indonesian pop culture, the Malaysian students could benefit from the discussions of local bands, races, religions, dramas, sports, act of charity, and political debates, as those were some of the most popular topics on social media pages. These topics may attract students' attention and engagement, and provide them with the needed practice for English language development. Furthermore, the possibility of these topics to be discussed in both virtual and real world increases the possibilities for meaningful language literacy learning,

and the acquisition of transferable skills (Vann and Fairbairn, 2003). Wells and Chang-Wells (1992) agreed that linking online and offline worlds could benefit students and raise awareness of the interdependence of individual and society. This may also assist students' formal presentation and computer technology usage, which were deemed to be most challenging in academic literacy (Vann and Fairbairn, 2003).

c. What is academic in ELL?

Pope and Golub (2000) and Duff (2001) proposed that literacy in language learning is the ability to conduct critical thinking on social issues, join quick-paced interactions, and possessing high confidence. These skills were similarly required for efficient navigation of Web 2.0, but the infusion of technology must not affect content pedagogy (ibid). Instead, it must support students' active involvement, while simultaneously provide them with technical and pedagogical skills for creating new learner-centred classroom (Pope and Golub, 2000).

Present-day academic setting realises the importance and benefits of academic institutions' immersion in technology. For example, the university where I conducted my research employed Facebook to reach its students, announce news, and circulate information. Therefore, earlier definition of literacy in language learning is highly relevant to the 21st century ELL environment. This is because the technology of Web 2.0 does not only requires students' ability to retrieve information or conduct searches for English learning materials, but also develops based on students' expressions of ideas, opinions and critical views. Therefore, students' ability to situate themselves appropriately in online and offline environment, be critical and confident in discussing issues, as well as participate in quick-paced discussions may indicate a certain extent of their English language ability.

5.4.1 How I view what is academic in ELL: Socio-academic threads

I categorised grammar learning in the LMT100 group into the academic category; hence discussing grammar learning as the academic of the English language. On the other hand, Selwyn (2007a, 2009a) and Wesseling (2012) categorised university-related activities on Facebook as students' academic usage. Some of the activities in those studies such as recounting and reflecting university experience, bantering, and discussing about lecturers, could be categorised as both academic and non-academic discussions. This is because, the topics were related to the students' university lives, rather than discussing pure academic matters such as Biology, Education, or Computer Sciences. Therefore, in my view the students' activities in previous studies were more social in nature. Likewise, the LMT100 group observed the widespread circulation of promotional or business threads that were generally social, but form part of the university experience; hence may also be categorised as academic, following previous literature (Selwyn, 2007a, Selwyn, 2009a, Wesseling, 2012). Due to the academic and social nature of these posts, I categorised them as *socio-academic*. There were many instances of *socio-academic* threads in the LMT100 group that have been presented in Chapter 4.

Deil-Amen (2011: 72) explains socio-academic integration as the “*opportunities for specific instances of interaction in which components of social and academic integration are simultaneously combined*”. Tinto (1997) believes that activities that linked both social and academic lives are more valuable and develop fuller relationship among college students. In line with the sociocultural stance presented by many researchers (Wertsch, 1991, Lantolf and Pavlenko, 1995, Darhower, 2002, Warschauer, 2005, Van Nguyen, 2010), Tinto (1997) argues that the distinction made between academic and social learning obscured students from fully embracing the integration of socio-

academic experiences in learning. It was also argued that the integration of socio-academic moments grants students with a sense of belonging, identity and rapport development, as well as improvement of social capital and college competence that could assist career path (Bourdieu, 1986, Deil-Amen, 2011).

In Deil-Amen's (2011) study, the college students devalued purely social interactions, and described them as unwanted obstacles and distractions to learning. However, they favoured other students' willingness to be friendly for academic purposes or academically functional (ibid.). Based on this observation, the promotional or business threads may be seen as relevant and well-suited to the participants' lives as university students. Several interviewees explained that they joined the LMT100 group to make sure that they did not miss anything that was happening at the university, regardless of whether it relates to ELL or not. The sharing of promotional or business threads in the group was a frequent occurrence, although not all were posted in English. Eventually however, HH, complained about too much advertisement instead of English learning content. Despite being more social, rather than purely academic, the promotional or business posts raised the group members' awareness and social sense of the events.

The circulation of the promotional or business threads also demonstrated the group members' helpful behaviour in ensuring that their peers obtained the university merit points, MyCSD, from their attendance to the events. The MyCSD point is very much needed by the students to secure hostel rooms on university campus for the following academic years. Therefore, to concur with Deil-Amen's (2011) finding of college students, the socio-academic interaction in the LMT100 group may not be highly successful in generating responses from the group members. However, the circulation

of information was meaningful, as it concurred to the norm of expectations of an academic institution (ibid.).

In line with the socio-academic stance, other types of posts shared in the LMT100 group could also be subsumed under this category, as they were both academic and social in nature. Furthermore, the threads were shared as an attempt to improve the group members' interest and motivation in learning English language, but were entertainment-related. For example, HH shared the link of an Ellen DeGeneres show to educate the LMT100 group members of a fun, social way to learn English. Although the thread tried to be academic (i.e. to teach English language skills), its content was social, and discusses celebrities, Halloween parties, and musical talents.

a. Promotional or business posts in the LMT100 group

Promotional or business threads of the socio-academic categories were commonly circulated in the LMT100 group. The group was used extensively as an advertising platform for university-related events, which positively indicated the values of Facebook as a medium to spread news and announcements. The interviewees agreed that Facebook was excellent in connecting and facilitating university-students and students-students' communication for various purposes, including management, organization, accommodation and academic matters. Several interviewees went on to state that one of the main reasons they accessed Facebook on a daily basis was to catch up with university-related announcements. The interviewees' behaviour was similarly echoed by Chu (2011) who concluded that students who liked social media were more receptive to various types of applications, and were more likely to join Facebook to receive promotional messages.

Despite the reliance on Facebook for news, there were times when the participants felt overwhelmed by the amount of announcements, news, and promotions that popped onto their personal Facebook pages. FAR complained that this made her feel as if Facebook was no longer private for social interactions. As such, she used Facebook for university formalities, and Twitter for personal communication. Similarly, HH personally requested that I remove and block the spam advertisements (e.g. Telco services, and sim cards advertisements) that were neither related to ELL, or the university. As such, while the participants depended on Facebook for university-related announcements and news, they may not particularly prefer spam advertisements of products that were irrelevant to their university experience. In relation to this, Mun *et al.* (2011) concluded that Malaysian youths were neutral to the negative feelings about advertisements on Facebook. In the case of my study, perhaps it is fair to say that while the participants did not mind the adverts on Facebook, they were not overjoyed by them either. To follow Chu (2011), college students who were enrolled on Facebook groups, maintained more favourable attitudes towards social media and advertising, rather than non-group members. These students also disclosed higher levels of personal data self-disclosure on Facebook (*ibid.*).

The participants repeatedly mentioned that they were enrolled in so many university-related groups for courses, departments, and societies. At times, all of these groups promoted similar events simultaneously, and flooded their Facebook pages, to create viral advertisings. However, Chu (2011) asserts that, Facebook members illustrated connections with brands which warrant viral advertising on their pages. In this case, the brand is the university, and on Facebook connected the participants to the university through news and announcements. The news and announcements made by

the university became viral when students continued to share and re-share on their Facebook pages.

A majority of the interviewees revealed that at one point of their studies, they used Facebook to advertise their businesses for an Entrepreneurship course. The course required that they set up stalls and conducted buy-and-sell businesses for a day. Prior to the event, Facebook was used to promote their businesses, and advertise their products. Interestingly, after the day ended, SC advertised the remaining mobile phone cases that failed to sell in the LMT100 group. As such, not only did Facebook promoted SC's products prior to the event, but it provided a platform after the day ended, to keep the business going. The ubiquitous-ness of Facebook and its connective ability were probably the reasons for the burgeoning online businesses in Malaysia. The way that the LMT100 group was utilised shows the participants' familiarity with the convenience of Facebook as a promotional platform, but preferably for more university-related events than others.

The LMT100 group may have been one of many Facebook groups that students used to promote or advertise events and products, related or non-related to the university. Facebook as a Web 2.0 tool, had the novelty to make promotional efforts more effective as it directly engaged consumers, increased the speed of experience-sharing and reached out to larger audiences at one time (Thackeray et al., 2008, Mangold and Faulds, 2009). Besides connecting companies with their customers, social media advertising also allowed customers to reach each other directly. Communication thus became more precise, personal, social and interactive (Mangold and Faulds, 2009, Jothi et al., 2011). Essentially, consumers adopted the roles of active content co-creators for brands, companies, or organizations, where they modified, shared, and

discussed experience on social media (Kietzmann et al., 2011, Hanna et al., 2011). While media production from creative consumers may improve new economy for the brands, it could also provide a major potential disruption to the dominance of commercial media if the companies and customers fail to see eye-to-eye about the products (Lessig, 2004).

Waters *et al.* (2009) stated that for-profit organizations used social media to launch products and strengthen existing brand. In the LMT100 group, the events or products promoted were largely for non-profit educational purposes, took place for a very short period of time, and often related to the university. Rather than aiming to launch products or maintain brand names, the target of the promotional posts was to attract crowds of students. By co-creating content, promoting events and products and responding to adverts, the participants associated themselves with the brand of that particular events or products. For example, YHG promoted a photo contest, called the Festival of Light. Using the LMT100 group as one of the medium, she invited the group members to submit photos relevant to the theme. By doing this, she associated herself with the events and might be known to the group members as the co-organizer of the Festival of Light photo contest.

5.5 Participants' activities on LMT100 Facebook group

This section discusses the activities that took place in the LMT100 group. Mun *et al.* (2011) concluded that there were three main activities that Malaysian youths do on Facebook which were posting comments, sending instant message (chatting), and playing games. Similarly, the participants in this study agreed that they frequently used Facebook for interaction purposes with family, friends and lecturers, for both

social and academic purposes. Conversely, however, ZM stated that she opened a Facebook account to play online games (Farmville), rather than for communication purposes. In the LMT100 group, these two activities were directly or indirectly observed; sharing and getting information (including possible ELL materials), and making new friends and sustaining relationships (rapport building).

5.5.1 Making new friends and sustaining relationship

In line with the basic aim of Facebook as a social network, the participants in this study agreed that they used Facebook mainly for communication, for both personal and professional purposes. Velesiatnos and Navarette (2012) added that students enjoyed and appreciated the social learning experience afforded by online social networks, and enhanced each other's learning with support and encouragement. Besides communicating with families, the participants used Facebook to ease their interactions at university, for management and academic matters with administrators, teachers, and peers. Although the participants were quite happy to make new friends from the university, they had reservations about getting acquainted with complete strangers. They were more open to socialise with students at the same university. Therefore, echoing Boyd and Ellison (2007), the participants mainly used Facebook to connect and sustain interaction between people with existing relationship, rather than meeting new people. However, some interviewees, such as MM and NNN stated that they went on Facebook to meet new people in general. TM elaborated that she felt more comfortable interacting with female students, and felt shy around male students. This finding echoes Ullrich *et al.*'s (2010) study of communication patterns on Twitter, where the participants reported their preference to interact with peers of the same gender.

Selwyn's (2007a) finding concluded that one of the students' use of Facebook was to display supplication of humour. This was observed in the limited interaction of the LMT100 group, where the participants joked with each other and me. It illustrates their effort to use English as naturally as possible in conversations. The posts or comments in the form of humour or nonsense may serve as ice-breakers among group members, and encouraged them to be more open and comfortable with each other. According to Bell (2005), the language patterns used during humorous language play between NS and NNS could benefit second language acquisition and increase creativity. The interaction in the LMT100 group however, only involved NNS of varying abilities, without the presence of a NS. The absence of NS may have hindered participation from more group members to take part in the group. Besides adding to linguistics repertoire, language play through humour may also develop sociolinguistic competence (Bell, 2005, Bell, 2007). The cultural and linguistic barriers in humour, however, may cause offense in intercultural interaction, especially between NS and NNS (Bell, 2007). However, it was observed that conflicts were mitigated when humour was used in interactions, as speakers made adjustments to their speeches and interpretations of meanings (*ibid.*). The humour applied in the LMT100 group between students-students, and students-researcher did not seem to trigger any serious conflicts, but there were several occurrences of disagreements in the interactions. This may happen for two reasons. Firstly, the participants and I were similarly exposed to the Malaysian culture and background, hence we understood each other's' meanings and references. Secondly, the students and I may have applied humour mitigation techniques such as speech adjustments and situated meaning interpretations (*ibid.*) when they joked with each other.

Humour may also promote rapport. In an observation of classroom instructions, Nguyen (2007) found that the teacher was successful in engaging students' co-participation to create and maintain rapport, by interweaving rapport building into instructions to facilitate tasks. Due to the absence of instructional tasks in my study, I built and maintained rapport by using humour in the posts and comments shared in the group.

5.5.2 Facebook to share and get useful information

The majority of participants agreed that they used Facebook to share and receive useful information and multimedia. Similar finding was observed in studies by Cain and Policastri (2011), Eteokleous *et al.* (2012) and Guerrero and Rod (2013). More specifically, Saikaew *et al.* (2011) saw that Facebook was used informally by undergraduate and graduate students for discussion and the sharing of videos and document links. Essentially, they still actively shared new knowledge on the platform even after the class ended (*ibid.*).

There were some extent of knowledge and information sharing in the LMT100 group. I divide the information into three types; a) English language information, b) promotion and advertisement about university-related events, and c) interactive threads. The threads on ELL were in the forms of quizzes, reading articles and multimedia (i.e. audio recording and songs), while university-related promotion and advertisement of events frequently came in the forms of generic texts and related images (i.e. poster). Two participants also used the platform to distribute questionnaires as part of their academic activity.

5.6 Research Question 3: How do the university students view the changes in relation to their English language skills?

A number of interviewees (AT, EQ, AA, DZ, FB, MM, AND, TM, NIN, and ANH) were positive that the LMT100 group interaction activity had improved some aspects of their English language skills. The passive participants such as MM, FB and AND stated that the group taught them communicative structures that they could use in their online interactions. On the other hand, the more active participants such as YHG and SC, explained that the group did not improve their language skills, but boosted their self-confidence to communicate in English with their peers on social media. In relation to these findings, Mitchell (2012) found that a group of ESOL students reported improvement to both language ability and cultural competence after using Facebook. Added to this, a group of students in Chou and Chen's (2008) study, who were enrolled in a two week wiki-based programming language immersion, found the learning experience motivating and supporting learning outcomes. Similarly, many previous studies have concluded that social media were successful in improving writing skills, developing critical literacy, shaping identities, enhancing learning experience and improving second language writings (Chou and Chen, 2008, Sun, 2009, Sew, 2009b, Harrison and Thomas, 2009, McCarthy, 2010, Reid, 2011b, Shih, 2011, Chen and Bryer, 2012b, Shih, 2013).

5.6.1 The inconsistency in the active and passive students' views about the changes in their English language skills: Possible explanations

Several active and passive participants, held different views of the effectiveness of the LMT100 group. While the active participants felt that the group mainly boosted their self-confidence, the passive participants believed that their language skills were improved in terms of sentence constructions and communicative ability. This finding may

suggest that the active participants initiated a number of interactions to meet the group's objective which is to promote English language practice. As such, in relation to Dennen's (2008) conclusion, they may find the activity less beneficial, as they joined the group just to meet course requirements. On the other hand, the more passive participants or the silent readers took time to read the information posted by other members and learned new language elements from the process (ibid.).

Krashen's (1985) input hypothesis may also provide another perspective to the issue. The hypothesis sees that language learning materials to be introduced to students must be of a level higher than their current competence in ensuring acquisition of new English language skills. The hypothesis formulates $i+1$, with i representing the input and $+1$ indicating the language at a level higher. Following this hypothesis, the content shared in the LMT100 group may be slightly beyond the passive participants' ability, which led to their acquisition of new language skills. These input on the other hand, may be at a similar or lower level than that of the active participants' language confidence, which caused them to feel unaffected by the activity. Therefore, the more passive participants may have benefitted more in terms of acquisition in an online setting where students with very limited, limited, and moderate English language abilities were put together.

Meyer's (2003) argument offers another perspective that may have led to limited participation among the group members of the LMT100 group. The students often met in face-to-face settings, and inside and outside of the classrooms, which reduced their dependency on Facebook to share academic and social information. Furthermore, the advancement of instant messaging service has created a number of mobile applications such as Whatsapp, Line, and WeChat that effectively function as

information dispersal tools. This phenomenon may further decrease the participants' reliance on Facebook for quick circulation of information. Substantiating this, the students in Zakaria *et al.* (2010) and Hamid *et al.*'s (2011a) studies agreed that besides limited infrastructure and the lack of ICT skills, time management issue also hindered their educational participation on social networks.

5.6.2 Digital vernaculars and the Internet language

Baskaran (1994) wrote that a language is never in a freeze-frame, which means that it is always evolving based on its contexts of use, settings and era. The widespread use of Internet technology and new applications has resulted in a rapidly progressing language evolution especially in the informal forms, i.e. the Internet language (University Of Wales - Bangor, 2005).

Sykes *et al.* (2008) termed the Internet language as *digital vernaculars* which is “*intriguingly new and still evolving linguistic varieties*” (Crystal, 2001: 271). “*New stylistic forms that increase the expressive range of a language*” are developed at a very fast pace on the Internet, possibly on a daily basis (*ibid.*). However, the progression of the Internet language which widely uses English is not necessarily concerned with formal grammatical rules. This may be due to several reasons such as to blend in with specific communities of the Internet, lack grammatical knowledge and vocabulary, and the desire to communicate ideas quickly in a funny way. In short, Internet users deliberately choose the styles or trends of languages in an online environment.

One of the interviewees, EZ, raised the issue of Internet language when discussing the impact of the LMT100 group interaction activity on her English language skills. EZ however was uncertain if the members used Internet language as a style of writing, or whether they committed actual English language mistakes. She believed that some students may have made the conscious decisions to use digital vernaculars in their writings to appear informal, friendlier or up-to-date. As such, it is difficult to distinguish if the students deliberately or carelessly misspelled a word, or if the grammar mistakes were their ways of appearing informal and casual. EZ believes that the inaccurate spellings of words were a form of digital vernaculars employed by the students. Some examples of slang words that were spelled inaccurately are; *peeps* (people), *fr* (from), *wanna* (want to), *tat* (that), *ma* (my), *plz* (please), *b4* (before), and *wif* (with). Another digital vernacular, *deleted contraction* (i.e. *dont* for don't), was also commonly identified in the data. In relation to this, Godwin-Jones (2005), and Tagliamonte and Dennis (2008) characterised and differentiated instant messaging language (i.e. short forms, abbreviations, code words, and emotional language) from other digital vernaculars (i.e. typos, misspellings, swear words, colloquialisms, numeric forms, and propensity toward lowercase). YHG in particular, very frequently employed extensive digital vernaculars in her writings, which emphasises the fact that Internet users made personal, deliberate choices in language use when producing content in online environment.

However, the digital vernaculars allow the exploration of creative language use on the Internet, and "... *the new forms of Internet exchanges are far more important than the changes in vocabulary, grammar, and spelling*" (Crystal, 2001: 271). Therefore, rather than seeing it in a negative light, Internet language may promote artistic values among students. However, more extensive interaction data are needed to fully

understand the patterns of Internet exchanges in the community of Malaysian university students.

Conversely, the inaccurate structures in the LMT100 group produced by the participants, were considered to be non-deliberate errors that occurred due to their lack of English language knowledge. A reason to justify this argument is that the participants often strived to produce grammatically correct sentences in their writings. For example, YHG wrote “...*plz dont remind me of that creepy scaring scenes...*”, which illustrated YHG’s effort to produce a complete sentence, but unintentionally committed an error by using an inaccurate adjective (i.e. *scaring* instead of *scary*). Nevertheless, the spelling of *plz* and *dont* demonstrated her conscious decision to misspell the words *please* and *don’t*, as a style of the Internet language. Examples of deliberate productions of inaccurate grammar structures could be found on the social media website 9Gag, which promotes the sharing of images and animations. The images are often accompanied by witty and funny captions to tell a story. One image in particular (i.e. *Doge* as a slang for *dog*) is often accompanied by grammatically inaccurate phrases of captions such as *much wow*, *such okay*, and *very marketing*. Although these captions do not usually make sense, they are acceptable to the specific communities of 9Gag-gers (i.e. the group members of 9Gag) and sometimes influence other people’s language production on other sites.

Previous studies however, found only a small number of students who chose to employ digital vernaculars (Baron, 2004, Tagliamonte and Denis, 2008). In line with this, I concur that only a few participants such as YHG constantly employed Internet language in their writings. The limited use of the digital vernaculars in the LMT100 group was perhaps due to the platform’s aim, which was to promote English language

interaction and practice among students. This may have raised their awareness to stick to proper English language writings. Nevertheless, the social network platform of Facebook may have unconsciously influenced their natural use of digital vernaculars, especially in misspellings of words.

a. How do we view digital vernaculars?

The decision to purposely misspell words or to use inaccurate grammar reflects the evolution of language on the Internet, i.e. the development of *digital vernaculars*. Sykes *et al.* (2008) argued that *digital vernaculars* remained largely unaddressed in the second language classrooms despite the growing necessity to master the skills for professional, business, social, and academic purposes. I argue similarly that digital vernaculars are often trivialised in second language classrooms, and are stigmatized as non-proper slang, jargon, or style of communication. The question is, do we embrace these changes and link them to formal classroom learning to bridge the gap between online-offline learning? Or do we avoid it at all cost, so that it does not affect the formal, proper English language instructions? Crystal (cited in University Of Wales - Bangor 2005) agreed that the advent of Internet language created concerns among linguists and educators that it would lead to the deterioration of a language's quality. He however believed that the development of Internet linguistic should be celebrated, rather than opposed, but we must be aware of the suitable time and context to use them (*ibid.*). Likewise, Garrett (1991) boldly suggests that formal second language practice should also evolve to reflect relevant communicative practices, and provide students with the support needed to function effectively in a fast-changing language environment. Tagliamonte and Denis (2008: 27) also argued that computer-mediated language should not be treated as the ruin of the generation, but "*an expansive new linguistic renaissance*", as youngsters are usually well-versed in Internet sociolinguistic

resources. In line with this, Leu *et al.* (2004) and Sweeny (2010) saw that writings on online spaces as offering instructional advantages, and an infusion of new literacies. Therefore, rather than rejecting the evolution of Internet language, the pedagogy of second language learning should embrace the development and use students' knowledge to their advantage in the classroom. Whether it is desirable or not, the language of the Internet will keep changing, shaping, and reshaping the structures of online communication, especially with the emergence of various social media technology, such as multiplayer online games (Godwin-Jones, 2005, Ling and Baron, 2007). Eventually, it may become second nature to students in both online and offline environments.

Therefore, rather than completely rejecting the Internet language, it may be necessary that teachers and students find a common ground of its usage in formal and informal settings through the process of negotiation.

Second section: The sociocultural factors that influence the LMT100 participants' experiences and behaviours

5.7 Introduction

This section mainly discusses the sociocultural factors that may have caused inconsistencies in the participants' thoughts and behaviours of the issue of using Facebook for ELL. While the participants agreed that Facebook would be a good platform for literacy practice, they were reluctant to participate in the LMT100 English interaction group. The discussion of sociocultural factors leads to the argument about students' autonomy for ELL in an online environment. The many recent articles and studies that have pointed out the declining numbers of teens on Facebook are also presented to raise awareness of this phenomenon and to situate Facebook as an SNS in education.

5.8 The inconsistencies between participants' thoughts and behaviour

The participants' thoughts and behaviours were inconsistent when presented with the opportunity to practice English language interaction in the LMT100 group. While they express desire to use Facebook for ELL, they were reluctant to contribute actively in developing English language content. Thang (2005) who examined Malaysian distance students' perceptions of their English proficiency courses, observed a similar inconsistency in her students' perceptions and behaviours. The questionnaire responses reported preference for autonomy and freedom in ELL, but the interview indicated otherwise, where they requested more guidance and learning support from their teachers (*ibid.*).

The similarity of the findings suggests that Malaysian students were uncertain about how they preferred ELL to be conducted. The uncertainty in their thoughts and behaviours may have been a consequence of the sociocultural exposure they received at personal, societal and institutional levels. These exposures may have made the participants accustomed to a certain way of teaching and learning, which influenced their beliefs, thoughts, behaviour and outlook of academic. The three levels of sociocultural factors are discussed below.

5.8.1 Personal sociocultural factor

The participants' behaviour and interest in ELL may have been fundamentally shaped by their family background and the values that they adhered to. Several interviewees talked about their parental and family involvement in their academic lives, which indicates a close relationship that is often observed in Asian cultures. Fuligni *et al.* (1999) found that Asian and Latin American youth retained their parents' or families' collectivistic values and possessed stronger family morals compared with peers from European backgrounds, and when they become adults, their duties to support their families. These values however did not impact negatively upon their development (*ibid.*).

Strong family values may have influenced the ways the participants viewed ELL. Their parents may have previously received traditional teacher-centred classroom instructions with strong emphasis on grammar learning, drills and practice, and memorisation and repetition. The usage of computer technology may have been limited and when in use, it assisted in the presentation of more grammar exercises. Moreover, students may not get many communicative and interactive in teacher-centred classrooms. This ELL approach may have benefitted them; hence they may

have influenced their children to practice the same strategy. As such, the majority of participants were passive and did not seem interested to use the LMT100 platform for English language practice. They prioritised grammar learning, and wanted teachers to initiate the teaching and learning process, as well as present them with content materials. Communicative practice was still seen as unimportant compared to the structures assessed during examinations such as grammar, reading comprehension, vocabulary, and writing. Therefore, the participants may have been directly or indirectly influenced by the ELL experience of their parents or families, which shaped their thoughts and behaviours in the LMT100 group.

a. Family background and values

The interview process gathered the participants' family background and their direct or indirect involvement in the students' ELL. Several participants described their parents and families as being very close to them (AT, DZ), working as government servants and English language teachers (HH, JE), encouraging them to read and converse in English (YHG, SC, YHT), as well as loving to sing English songs (TM). On the other hand, ZM stated that even though her family was concerned with her ability to acquire English language skills, they never pushed her to pursue it.

The family influence had probably shaped the way the participants behaved in the LMT100 group. The participants with more involved families such as JE, HH, DZ and TM contributed more actively to the group compared to ZM, who was a very *passive participant*. However, ZM explained that she was naturally inactive on Facebook, as she felt uncomfortable if people judged her based on her writings. The data indicates that there are differences in the behaviour between active and passive participants in the group, namely the confidence to publicly practise English language skills. More

active students were more confident to practise their skills, while the more passive students tended to shy away. This behaviour may also be a consequence of parental or family involvement in their children's learning.

Desforges and Abouchar (2003: 4-5) state that '*at-home good parenting*' and parental involvement positively affect children's achievement and adjustment, as well as influence their levels of confidence and perceived roles, social class, and health. Studies also show that parental and family members can contribute to children's literacy development, and often positively influence educational outcomes (Auerbach, 1989, Hoover-Dempsey and Sander, 1995). Educated parents who read frequently and are involved in children's education, bring advantages to children's educational careers in terms of linguistic and cognitive skills, by providing a culture of school at home, to close the learning gap for children, as well as modelling positive examples to develop children's desired behaviour (Hoover-Dempsey and Sander, 1995, De Graaf et al., 2000). As such, perhaps it is fair to assume that the participants' parents or families who were more involved in their personal and academic lives were mostly highly educated, and came from a middle to high social class. As suggested by previous studies (De Graaf et al., 2000, Desforges et al., 2003), their knowledge had probably led to the modelling of positive examples to their children that shaped confidence and self-adjustment when confronted with new challenges such as expressing themselves in English on social media. In relation to this, Hargittai (2007: 282) found that there is some extent of relationships between parental education and use of some SNSs. Students with at least one parent with a graduate degree were more represented on the SNSs Facebook, Xanga, and Friendster, while students with parents who had less than a high school education are disproportionately users of MySpace (ibid.).

More specifically, Lewis and Lamb's (2003) study about fathers' influences on children's development echoes my findings. YHG explained that she was very close to her father, and he was responsible for influencing her interest in ELL and shaping her behaviour in the LMT100 group. This was interesting, as usually, females tended to be closer to mothers than fathers, as friends and mothers were rated highest for intimacy (Furman and Buhrmester, 1985). However, both fathers and mothers were relied on for affection, enhancement of worth, a sense of reliability and instrumental aids (e.g. monetary) (ibid.). As such, YHG's long-term attachment with her father may have been a consequence of *father's play sensitivity* (Grossmann et al., 2002) when she was growing, compared to her mother. Her father may have been more attached to his daughter which made him more sensitive, supportive, and appropriately challenging during play when she was younger. Likewise, Lewis and Lamb (2003) concluded that in some cultures, fathers become children's playmates, and consequently shaped socio-emotional development, and predicted better adult adjustment as compared to maternal involvement.

5.8.2 Societal sociocultural factor: Establishing identities on Facebook

The participants and their families are products of the society that they associated with, or the localised context (Lee, 2003). Different communities and groups of societies practice different values from one another. The differences in values influenced the way the university students viewed people, relationship and responsibility. It also leads to the association or dissociation with other groups of people, which resulted in the existence of sentiments, such as the feeling of superiority over other groups of societies.

Identity issues are complex and multi-layered in Malaysia, as a post-colonial, multicultural society (ibid.). These issues were in the forms of races, politics and religions

as observed in the LMT100 group and interview data. By associating oneself with these sentiments on a public platform such as Facebook, an individual is establishing his or her identity, and desired to be recognized as such. Some identified sentiments are discussed under the following sub-topics: sentiments of race, politics, religions, and digital vernaculars that shaped participants' identities in the LMT100 group.

a. Sentiment: The issue of race among university students

There are two types of race sentiments observed from the data, namely inter-race (sentiments between students of different races), and intra-race (sentiments between students of similar race).

Inter-race sentiment

In Malaysia, sentiments among individuals and societies arise as a result of a long-time policy enactment. The most commonly observed sentiments include politics, racial and religious issues that also appeared in the LMT100 interaction data, and discussed during the interview sessions. An example of a racial and religion separation was mentioned by NNN in her use of Facebook for academic purposes at the university.

NNN enrolled in two Pharmacy course Facebook groups, namely the 2012/2013 Pharmacy group, and the Muslim Pharmacy group. English language was commonly employed to mediate interaction in both groups. While the 2012/2013 Pharmacy group was opened to all Pharmacy students, the Muslim Pharmacy group was only accessible by Muslim (and largely of Malay) students. NNN stated that the Muslim Pharmacy group was needed to circulate information about the course, religious events, and exam papers among its members. These activities were done secretly in

the group as they believed that the Chinese students were not sharing examination-related information with the Malays too. She emphasised that she was not a racist, but felt that the Muslim group accommodated her needs to discuss and share information covertly. On one hand, this finding demonstrates the multi-functionality of Facebook in catering to the specific needs of students for academic purposes. There is however a need to address the issue of racial separation among students at the university, to promote more successful learning experience, and unity. The uncomfortable feeling around different races may have contributed to the limited interaction in the LMT100 group, which may result in the lack of English language improvement. Abu Bakar (2007) suggests that students could improve their English language usage by working in mixed ethnicities groups during work activities to encourage natural interactions. Although they may continuously employ code-switching, the practice could boost their self-esteem (ibid.). In relation to this, Ahmad and Jusoff (2009) demonstrate that a group of Malaysian public university students with low English proficiency showed positive attitudes towards teachers' code-switching, which also had a significant relationship to students' affective support and learning success.

To contradict Abu Bakar (2007), even though the students in my study were placed in a large mixed ethnicities group, there were very limited interactions observed between them. This however may be due to the absence of tasks for the students to work on together. Nevertheless, there was a particular interaction thread that showed a close relationship between participants from different ethnicities (YHG and NSH) who joked and supported each other's course. It shows promising signs that students may be prepared to overlook race, religion, and political stance in their pursuit of academic knowledge.

Intra-race sentiment

Besides inter-sentiments, several interviewees also raised the issue of sentiment within the Malay race. JE stated that Malay students often shy away from English language practice as they possessed very low self-confidence. This was unlike the Chinese students who may not have great skills, but were very persistent in improving themselves.

In relation to this, UMN, MFTI, and FAR felt that Malay students were not very supportive of their peers' efforts and desires to practice English language. They reported that they were often ridiculed and made fun of when they used English, especially by the Malay students from the East Coast of Malaysia (i.e. the states of Kelantan and Terengganu). This embarrassed them and made them reluctant to pursue it. FAR added that it was very difficult to change the Malay's perspectives about practicing English language in public. Abu Bakar (2007) concurred that students who practised English language to improve themselves often received criticism and negative remarks from their own ethnic group for being arrogant, or show-offs. Consequently, students who initially wished to interact in English, feared committing mistakes and being ridiculed by friends (Asraf and Ahmad, 2003).

Contrary to popular belief, this situation was not unique to the Malay students. A Chinese student, YHT, observed similar problems when interacting with his Chinese friends. He was mocked if he code-switched Chinese and English words during conversations. YHT viewed code-switching as a strategy to practice English, and believed that a good range of vocabulary mastery would make his writings and speeches better. He felt disappointed that his friends were discouraging of his effort and practice.

All in all, similar challenges were faced by students from various ethnicities in their pursuit to master the English language. They should be made aware that this type of learning problem is not unique to a specific race or ethnic. Therefore, rather than being racially segregated based on probable invalid assumptions, they need to pull their resources together, and use the opportunity to enhance their learning experience at the university.

b. Sentiment: Language and politics

In Malaysia, racial, religion and race issues are interconnected, but sensitive and controversial (Gatsiounis, 2006, The Economic Times, 2008, Abdul Rahman and Mohd Khambali@Hambali, 2013, Sipalan, 2013, Hong, 2014). Hjarvard (2008), asserted that media as a channel of communication has become an agent of religious change and primary sources of religious ideas. It is further proposed that media has subsumed the role of institutionalized religions not only by providing a sense of community, but also religious and spiritual guidance (ibid.).

English language in Malaysia has always been associated with its socio-political status from the era of the British colonisation. It resulted in the rejection of ELL among certain groups of students due to the fear that English language spreads Christianity and Westernisation (Mohd-Asraf, 2005). In line with this, Muniandy and Muniandy's (2013) findings found that SNSs such as Facebook have changed the dynamics of Malaysia's political state, with introverts becoming more outspoken in expressing their opinions or displeasure at Malaysia's political scene. This phenomenon, however, was not specific to the Malaysian context, as studies showed that almost all major party candidates in the 2008 US election, particularly the young adults, used social media for their campaigns, as early as during the 2006 midterm election (Hayes, 2008, Kohut

et al., 2008, Smith and Rainie, 2008, Gueorguieva, 2008, Kushin and Yamamoto, 2010).

Another famous example that substantiated the successful use of social media is the Arab Spring revolution. During these events, SNSs such as Facebook and Twitter played important roles in organisations and communication aspects, dispersal of information and propaganda, as well as connecting like-minded people and supporters that led to the new, major mass forms of global socio-political protests (Lotan et al., 2011, Allagui and Kuebler, 2011, Stepanova, 2011). This revolution is still ongoing in countries such as Egypt and Syria, and social media has become a one-stop source of news platform for Internet users. Apart from receiving the information circulated on social media, Internet users could add content and communicate new knowledge with one another.

On the other hand, Kushin and Yamamoto (2010) found that traditional Internet sources such as Yahoo! and MSN, affected participants' political self-efficacy and situational political involvement more than social media. Arguably however, it took many years and multiple election cycles for the Internet to be adopted as a political information source (ibid.). Therefore, the same process may be repeated, specifically SNSs for political expressions. Kushin and Yamamoto (2010: 626) believe that it is only a matter of time that the multi-functionality offered by social media (i.e. user-generated content, collaborative content creation, democratic values and socialization), is fully embraced by young adults' familiarity, comfort, and enthusiasm to become "*part of their political information repertoire*". In substantiating this, Park et al. (2009) found from a Web survey of 1715 college students that informational purposes were highly correlated to civic and political action than to recreational uses

on Facebook. This shows a growing dependence on SNSs to obtain politically-related information.

In line with Park *et al.* (2009), Kushin and Yamamoto (2010), and Muniandy and Muniandy's (2013) conclusions, there were two participants, JE and ASYA, who demonstrated distinct identities as political enthusiasts. JE clearly showed her interest and involvement in the Malaysian political scene by sharing an article about the former Prime Minister of Malaysia. The article and accompanying caption were written in the Malay language, despite JE's awareness of the group's aim to promote English interaction. JE was a Band 3 MUET scorer, and did not seem to have problems using English during the interview session. The employment of Bahasa Malaysia in her post thus seemed to be a deliberate choice to establish points and identity. The article was about Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad's (i.e. Tun M) contribution to Malaysia. The caption that accompanied the article says "*Hadam baik2*" (i.e. *digest well*), which was intended to convey "*Do not question Tun M's contribution to the nation*". Her Malay post may be viewed as sarcasm directed to the communities who disagreed with Tun M and his values. These communities usually supported different political parties than Tun M's. JE further exerted her political view during the interview session, and established her identity as a Malay student and a strong supporter of the United Malay National Organization (UMNO).

JE's behaviour may be linked to Harrison and Thomas (2009) and Greenhow and Robelia's (2009) findings that students and adolescents used SNSs such as LiveMocha and Twitter to establish their identities. In line with UMNO's principle, JE was very passionate in helping Malay students to perform well at the university and she emphasised that the Malays must look after one another. Indirectly, JE wished for the

university lecturers to help the Malay students in their studies. Based on her experience, she felt that the Malay students possessed poor English language skills, and would be left behind if they failed to improve themselves. While she appreciated Bahasa Malaysia, she believed that by learning an international language like English, Malay students would be able to revise better and be more successful in their future undertakings. On the other hand, ASYA did not explicitly mention her political stance, but stated that she enjoyed debating politics on Facebook. In fact, she felt that the LMT100 group was a suitable platform for political discussions. Despite her encounters with *keyboard warriors* (i.e. *online users who cannot accept other people's views*), she believed that there were a lot others who could discuss political differences rationally on Facebook.

5.8.3 Institutional sociocultural factors

My participants were the products of Malaysian education system. They had spent approximately 12 years at primary and secondary schools before attending university. Their prime years of mental and physical development occurred during these schooling years. Therefore, the exposure and values they received at schools were highly likely to have influenced and shaped their beliefs and behaviours at the university. Some factors at the institutional level that may have affected the participants' behaviour in the LMT100 group are discussed below in terms of *familiarity with traditional classrooms, exam-oriented culture, competitive rather than collaborative learning environment, and the absence of visible rewards.*

a. Familiarity with traditional classrooms

Several participants such as FAR and MFTI, expressed their disappointment with the LMT100 group, stating that it lacked informative English language content to help

develop their ability. Indirectly, it means that both FAR and MFTI expected that English learning content and materials to be presented by an authority into the group, much like how learning process happens in traditional classrooms. This falls in line with KR, ASYA, and AA's view that face-to-face learning is the best way for English language.

The participants' expectation and preference indicated their familiarity and high dependency on the traditional way of English language instructions, where teachers are responsible for the teaching-learning process. Teachers are expected to provide content materials, allocate tasks, and guide students' learning. The participants view ELL as formal, and centres on writing, grammar and reading comprehension. Ultimately, the purpose of learning is to do well in exams, as several interviewees (e.g. YHT and MFTI) and presumably a larger number of the LMT100 group members, were hoping that past year exam questions are shared on the site. Evidently, they were also more responsive to a thread that provide information about an English language test.

Pandian and Balraj (2010) argued similarly from the perspective of Science literacy in Malaysia that students were accustomed to a certain way of learning, where teachers spoon-feed content, and students used it to answer exam questions. Kahl (2013) supported this argument, stating that the dependency on teachers at school has led to the expectation that knowledge would be provided by lecturers at university. This behaviour inhibited the development of independent thinking and learning (Samah et al., 2009).

The spoon-feeding scenario at school level indicates the lack of exposure to research culture and knowledge construction. Consequently, when students were introduced to

an environment that requires research effort and exploration to create content, they felt disappointed that knowledge was not immediately available to them. There were high responses from the participants on grammar quizzes that followed the format of multiple choice exercises in the LMT100 group. It justifies that the participants responded positively when the learning content was presented to them by an authority, on topics that they felt could help their English language skills. As they were already very busy with university workloads and agendas, the last thing they needed was an informal learning platform that required time and effort for content construction. This may be one of the reasons that hindered their active participation in the group.

b. Exam-oriented culture

The exam-oriented learning culture may have created a group of students who prioritized certain aspects of English learning such as grammar, writing, and reading over interactive and communicative ability. According to Pandian (2002), and Che Musa *et al.* (2012), the Malaysian education system especially in school, privileges examinations that see too much of grammar learning, writing, reading, rote learning, teacher-centred classroom, and chalk-and-talk drill. Simultaneously, communicative competence with aspects of sociocultural influences is alien to students' learning. Mastery of grammar and writing skills is viewed as mastery of English language. Although speaking and listening skills were also formally taught in the classroom, they were given lower emphasis, and do not directly influenced exam results. This resulted in poor communicative skills among students, which was voiced out by YHT and SC.

Similar phenomenon was reported by Briguglio (2000) and Sawir (2005) that Malaysian students in Australian universities faced difficulties in improving English language skills, due to their prior learning experiences in schools that emphasised

grammatical aspects, but neglected listening and conversational skills. It is worrying that despite their immersion in an English speaking environment, the students still faced problems practicing the TL. This may be seen in relation to fast-paced speaking environment, low self-confidence, and poor communication skills. The advancement of social networks such as Facebook, may therefore provide a constant connection between NS and NNS to help alleviate the problem.

However, Kumar (2009) argued that students only enjoy integrating Web 2.0 into their education if it enriched their learning experience. Otherwise, it will not be used substantially, and taken for granted as another daily routine (ibid.). In the case of my study, the learning experience prioritised by the participants is grammar learning and examinations, where the interaction threads on these two topics saw high responses from the group members.

i. Competitive rather than collaborative learning environment

The tenet of SNSs such as Facebook is that they promote collaborative content construction. However, students' familiarity with exam-oriented culture may have resulted in competitive rather than collaborative learning environment. Perhaps, the students' lack of effort in sharing knowledge in the LMT100 group may be due to the fear that they will be outdone by their peers in examinations. In some Asian countries, this behaviour is termed as '*kiasu*', which is defined as "*obsessive concern with getting the most out of every transaction and a desire to get ahead of others*" (Hwang et al., 2002: 75). Brown (1999: 387) similarly defines '*kiasu*' as "*fear of dislike losing to others*".

'Kiasu' attitude is stereotypically associated with the Chinese, but notably, not all Chinese are alike (Hwang et al., 2002). Malaysia, as a multiracial nation has the highest population of Malay, Chinese and Indian citizens. The effect of living together as a nation may have caused some extent of behavioural influence from one race to another. For example, NNN assumed that the 'kiasu' Chinese students hid exam-related information from the Malays. Influenced by the behaviour, she and other Malay students acted in a similarly 'kiasu' way by creating the Muslim Pharmacy group to share information only among themselves.

Competitive behaviour has been ingrained in the students' behaviour since they were younger. At school, they were pushed to get the highest marks, graduate top of their classes, compete to get scholarship, and so forth. The individualistic way of learning may have shaped their personalities and learning strategies at the university. Even though university learning emphasises collaborative learning through projects, assignments, and outdoor activities, it is not easy to change the familiar ways of learning and living that the students were accustomed to. Thus, the low participation in the LMT100 group may be a result of students' individualistic, rather than collaborative engagement. To this end, it is fair to assume that the pedagogical *lurkers* are individualistic learners, as they take what they can get from other people, but did not give back, in terms of content and knowledge construction in online environment.

How social interaction is viewed as collaborative learning (CL)

In the case of my study, one may argue as to how social interaction could be considered as collaborative. In relation to this, Vann and Fairbairn (2003) wrote that their project was built on social interaction to achieve learning in a variety of ways including by collaboration with peers, teachers and other professionals. The premise

of CL involves joint intellectual effort by students who are working in groups to mutually seek understanding or create products, and total benefits are only achieved by active, well-functioning teams (Smith and MacGregor, 1992, Soller, 2001).

In the field of computer-mediated collaborative learning (CMCL), Harasim *et al.* (1995: 66) defined CL as “a learning process where two or more people work together to create meaning, explore a topic, or improve skills”. Panitz (1999) added to this definition by asserting that CL is a philosophy of interaction and personal lifestyle. It illustrates social interaction as a form of collaboration, by having the capacity to connect active people, for social and academic purposes.

In my view, by giving students the freedom to share interests, articulate thoughts, and disperse information, they would interact freely and actively with one another as a practice of their English language skills. However, based on Swan’s (2002) assertion, the LMT100 group may have not generate sufficient interaction opportunities to encourage students’ participation.

ii. Rewards: The absence of visible rewards

Several interviewees mentioned that the LMT100 group interaction activity was not attractive to them, as there was no visible reward offered. ANH, KR, and FAR stated that university students would be more interested to be involved in the activity should rewards in the forms of food, money, prizes, bonus marks or MyCSD points are given to the students based on their participation. Che Musa *et al.* (2012) similarly argue that students became reward-minded as a result of their exam-oriented learning culture, where high grades or scores motivated them.

Likewise, Othman's (2005) survey study found that 47 EFL students in a Malaysian private tertiary institutions had the instrumental goals of passing English examinations and develop future career. In line with this, it is apparent that the participants were more inclined towards instrumental motivation and extrinsic rewards in the forms of money (Gardner and MacIntyre, 1991, Panitz, 1999).

Reports show that students who were more instrumentally motivated studied longer than non-instrumentally motivated students (Gardner and MacIntyre, 1991). However, Noels *et al.* (2000: 61) clarified that expecting instrumental rewards to complete tasks "*does not necessarily imply a lack of self-determination in the behaviours performed*". Therefore, by offering visible instrumental rewards, more students may have participated and contributed knowledge in the group.

Notably, several participants such as ANH, EQ, and HH felt disappointed that they were not aware of the scoring system that I used to select active, average and passive interviewees. Although the score did not have any implications apart from selection purposes, the participants reported that they could not bear the thought of getting low marks in anything they do. This is perhaps another example of the "*kiasu*" behaviour among Malaysian university students, as they yearned to be the best, even though no repercussions come from it (Hwang *et al.*, 2002).

5.9 Students' autonomy in ELL: Does Facebook promote autonomous learners?

Ziguras (2001) proposes that social technologies have the potential to reduce spoon-feeding tendency in learning to student-centeredness. In a growingly techno-savvy world, social technologies could enhance students' engagement and interaction, promote critical thinking, allow discovery of new knowledge, track learning progress, provide platforms to vocalise thoughts, and give opportunities to develop soft-skills (Hamid et al., 2011a). These activities form the basis of autonomous learning, where individuals actively take charge of their own learning in an environment created by teachers (Holec, 1981, Little and Dam, 1998, Dam, 2000).

It is on the basis of developing learning autonomy among the university students, and alleviating their dependency on authorities that the LMT100 interaction group was introduced. Furthermore, Gonzalez and St Louis (2008) saw that interaction and collaboration are keys to promote language learning. More effective learning occurs when students actively add input during the learning process (ibid.).

In accordance with Pope and Golub (2000), I may have overlooked the fact that autonomous learning only involves changing roles between teachers and students, rather than excluding teachers' input or removing their responsibility over students' learning, due to my high expectations that the participants will engage with the LMT100 group. In learning autonomously, students play more central roles as managers of their learning, while teachers take the back seat as facilitators, designers and directors of learning. They offer suggestions and give useful advice in assisting students' learning (ibid.).

I placed the participants in an environment for English language interaction. Without teacher's presence, I acted as the group's moderator who prompted and gauged students' participation. However, the majority of group members were disinterested to be actively involved in the interaction activity, despite the general instructions and possibilities of open discussions. This led to the conclusion that the participants were still not ready to take charge of their ELL, despite being given full learning autonomy. The participants rejected the communicative opportunity, and expected that ELL content to be presented, despite the technological facility that is constantly available to them.

Thang (2005) and Thang and Alias (2007) agreed that a majority of Malaysian undergraduates were less autonomous in ESL learning due to sociocultural influences. They preferred the teacher-centred approach, where learning is fully guided by authorities (*ibid.*). As silent readers, the participants such as ZM and NHFZ admitted to take advantage and learned from other members' posts. Similar behaviour was reported in Zakaria *et al.*'s (2010) study that passive students were the ones who frequently accessed and downloaded information on education, events, announcements, products, courses and careers.

As such, the students' behaviours in the LMT100 group contradicted Idris and Ghani's (2012) assertion that Malaysian Facebook users were ready to construct knowledge, as well as engage with research culture and critical thinking on the platform. Based on the data, I concur with Kennedy *et al.*'s (2007) who argued that the Web 2.0 was not used as extensively for self-publishing and collaboration by the Generation-Y. Likewise, Prensky (2001b) states that the Generation-Y or the digital natives are not far more superior than their digital immigrant teachers in the usage of Web 2.0

technologies (Prensky, 2001b), and hence are “*not superior web geniuses*” (Nielsen, 2005: 48). Additionally, it was found that the ESOL students in Mitchell’s (2012) study possessed inadequate technological and language skills when using Facebook. In relation to this, the university of Cape Town students in Bosch’s (2009) study insufficiently explored the Facebook technology, despite their extensive use of academic networking around campus. In fact, Nielsen (2005) observed that adults performed better than adolescents in websites navigation.

Therefore, my data, supported by the findings from previous literature, argued against enhanced students’ participation, literacy practice and creativity when SNSs are used as part of learning (Greenhow and Robelia, 2009, Harrison and Barthel, 2009). However, as SNSs are integral to the students’ lives, it may be necessary to discover more strategies that fit their learning styles. As such, Kennedy et al. (2007) suggests that before changing any teaching and learning approaches, more researches are needed to fully comprehend university students’ needs and interests, to accommodate their preferred learning experience.

5.9.1 Distracted participants and information overload?

Another reason for the lack of autonomy or participation in the LMT100 group may be linked to distraction and information overload on the Internet. Similar to previous studies (Greenhow and Robelia, 2009, Yunus et al., 2012, Fewkes and McCabe, 2012), several participants reported that they were easily distracted by the amount of information updates and links shared on Facebook and the Web. As they had to scour the Web for informative interesting content to be shared in the LMT100 group, they may have been distracted by other online activities such as reading, playing games, chatting with friends, or simply clicking links after links on the Internet. This may

follow what Golub and Miloloza (2010) termed as impaired academic performance, which results from too much online multitasking and too many recreational activities.

Mayer and Moreno (2003) added that multitasking in an online environment may lead to cognitive load theory. As Facebook is a fundamentally social platform, participants who used it for both academic and recreational activities may have to split their attention. When too many tabs are opened on computers, the stream of information that accompany reading texts causes information overload (ibid.). This may be the reason that DZ, AA and NNN complained of too many university-related Facebook groups for academic and social. Many of them had at least three university-related Facebook groups that often circulated similar information, and notified similar events. By having to filter all of the information, while simultaneously using Facebook for academic purposes, may result in cognitive overload. It leads to low quality academic learning and impaired academic performance (Golub and Miloloža, 2010), which perhaps caused participants' disinterest to be actively involved in the LMT100 group.

Following Jackson's (2008) assertion, no matter how good individuals are at multitasking, they can never be as effective and efficient as when they are doing one thing at a time. To switch back and forth between activities increases mental works. The issue of cognitive overload, added to the fact the LMT100 group did not have direct connection with their formal English learning course, may have decreased the participants' interest to participate. They may feel that the interaction activity is a burden, and their participation will not add to their exam grades. Therefore, a large portion chose to be *silent readers* or *pedagogical lurkers*, who wanted to be benefited from others' contribution, but did not see the point in sharing information.

5.9.2 The Connectivism theory

Based on the findings and discussions, I would like to relate my study to the Connectivism theory proposed by Siemens and Downes (2008).

O’Keeffe and Clarke-Pearson (2011) state that any website that allows social interaction is considered as a social media site. This includes SNSs such as Facebook, Twitter, virtual gaming platforms, and e-learning platform. Weller (2007) argues that e-learning, as an interactive platform allows connections to be made with people and resources. Similarly, Facebook connects people and information. Kop (2011) elaborated that connection with people allows learning to be conducted in a communicative and interactive manner, while connection with resources equals users’ engagement with content. Therefore, the participants who viewed Facebook negatively for ELL may have not been reading or engaging with the content and information shared on Facebook, and not participating actively in interaction with other Facebook members.

Kop (2011) asserted that the participation metaphor could be appropriately linked to Connectivism theory proposed by Siemens and Downes (2008), where students were provided with a platform that allows them to be actively engaged with people and resources. The description of Connectivism fits the LMT100 group that provide students with opportunities for participatory communication, and content construction based on their interests, rather than learning by knowledge transfers from teachers. In line with the tenet of SNSs, the group relied on user-collaborated content. With the availability of various technologies, Connectivism theory asserts that *“learning does not take place in a single environment, instead, knowledge is distributed across the web, and people’s engagement with it constitutes learning”* (Siemens, 2005: 20). By allowing students to

share any web materials of their interest in promoting interaction among members, the LMT100 group followed the principles of Connectivism. The participatory environment also implied learners' autonomy and motivation which has been previously discussed. Although I agree with the theory of Connectivism that promotes connections between people and resources, notably, it lacked rigour in the fundamentals concept of participatory media (Bell, 2010). Evidently, a majority of students did not actively participate on an SNS platform without specific learning guide from an authority. To this end, it indicates the lack of autonomy in ELL, which may be influenced by their prior learning experiences, and other sociocultural influences.

5.10 Teens were distancing from Facebook

Low students' participation in the LMT100 Facebook group may be a result of the decline in Facebook users especially among teens (Marks, 2013, Bosker, 2013, Piper Jaffray, 2013, Harris, 2014, Farmer, 2014, Totka, 2014). Harris (2014) wrote that like other services before it, Facebook is facing a decline in users' interest, and will struggle to stay relevant in people's lives. Bauckhage and Kersting (2014) predicted that most social media including Friendster, MySpace, Secondlife and Yelp, would lose 80 percent of their users in the near future. Several reasons listed by Bosker (2013) and Farmer (2014) for the decline in social media users are loss of interest, privacy concerns, being unhappy with advertising and marketing and the feeling of discomfort that third parties had access to personal content. These reasons were similarly articulated by the interviewees in my study. As Facebook was the most popular SNS at one point, the decline in the number of users has become a highly discussed topic in the field of technology and economics (Bauckhage and Kersting, 2014).

Marks (2013) claimed that one possible reason for teens' resistance towards Facebook was that Facebook was trying too hard to get people to use the application. When they are being pushed to do something by adults, teens retaliate by looking for new social media platforms such as Twitter and Instagram, as they wish to participate in something on their own (ibid.). In fact, Instagram which is owned by Facebook, was quickly garnering attention from teens (Bosker, 2013).

Based on Mark's (2013) assertion, the participants in my study probably felt that I was trying too hard to harness their participation in the group, which caused their distance from the activity. In their view, I probably invaded their social space by associating academic activities with social platform. As mentioned by YHG, NNN, and DZ, Facebook was a space for students to relax after a long day at the university. Therefore, any academic activities or tasks may be viewed as a burden to them. By promoting participatory involvement and having no posting requirements, the students' membership may have been sustained, but the association that the group had with a formal university course may have resulted in the rejection of the interaction activity. As such, the strategy to reduce students' anxiety and promote autonomous learning in English language interaction through voluntary participation, was not as successful as what I hoped for.

To defend the declining numbers of social media users, I follow Marks' (2013) argument that Facebook is merely an application on the Internet. After a while, people get tired of one application and move on to the next big thing (ibid.). Marks (2013) cited the function of emails as an example, and stated that the "*death of email has been vastly over-exaggerated*" as they were still very much in use for professional purposes. For example, students used emails to interact with their lecturers instead of

Facebook-ing them. As such, although many studies have predicted the deaths of Facebook and social media in general, could this assumption too, be an over-generalisation?

Previously, emails used to connect people socially and professionally, but in today's setting, their functions have been narrowed down for professional and business purposes. Therefore, this theory of fashion could be similarly applied for SNSs such as Facebook. Currently, the Facebook platform is used for a variety of purposes, including networking, socialising, volunteering, communicating, businesses, as well as advertising, and education. When it becomes less popular and less relevant as predicted in the near future, its functions may transform into something else. Perhaps, like emails, it will play a more singular role such as advertising small businesses. If this happens however, it would not be the first time that the function of an SNS had been transformed into something else. This fashion was earlier observed with one of the pioneers of SNSs, Friendster, which was turned into a gaming platform (Boyd and Ellison, 2007).

Therefore, when a form of social media becomes less relevant among Internet users, it may be modified to assume different functions. If at that point in time the revamped application gathers students' attention, language educators could find ways and strategies to incorporate the new system into learning, in enhancing students' experience and improving pedagogical activities.

As Bauckhage and Kersting (2014) have stated, most social media services normally survived for 4 to 6 years before losing their users. The fact that Twitter and Facebook,

among other social media, have survived for about 7-10 years may positively indicate sustained Internet users' interest and dependency on the platforms. Reports have stated that Facebook is still a dominant force on the Internet, as it has one of the highest numbers of users (Bosker, 2013), but children between the ages of 8 to 15 feel that Facebook is more suitable for adults (Farmer, 2014), which explains the declining rates of teens' involvement on Facebook. Nevertheless, it implies that Facebook may still be valued by older teens such as university students.

Concluding remarks

I however, am not claiming that Facebook or other SNSs are a must-be-employed tool by English language educators in Malaysian universities. What I am simply asserting is that at present, Facebook is a widely-used tool by university students for in-school and out-of-school activities, and has a great potential for ELL. I have examined a strategy to employ Facebook informally in assisting English language interaction. Although the activity in the LMT100 Facebook group was not as successful as what I had hoped for, it neither forced the participants' interaction, nor their contribution for content development. The shortcoming of the activity was partly due to my lack of awareness of the sociocultural influences that may have influenced the students' view of teaching and learning process.

Therefore, despite the participants' possible dislike that I was trying too hard to promote English language interaction activity on a social platform, I believe that Facebook has the possibility to assist socially-mediated ELL, if the sociocultural influences are taken into consideration. The question is how do we ensure that students are not rejecting the learning experience, and improve their online participation? Since

I agree that ELL is socially-mediated, it requires students-students and students-contents' interactions for improvement. As such, it is necessary to be aware that English language can be acquired when students make an effort to interact with suitable English language materials in the form of texts, pictures, videos, audios and so forth that are abundantly accessible on the Internet. These activities would be made easier if they share their resources on SNSs such as Facebook. However, the issue is whether they are interested and comfortable enough to learn socially within an online community.

Summary

In this chapter, I have answered the three main research questions, based on the discussion of findings, and arguments from previous studies. In the second section, I present other arising issues from both the LMT100 interaction data and the interview responses, by drawing on previous literatures.

The discussion shows that Facebook has already been an integral part of the university students' social and academic lives. Socially, they used Facebook to keep in touch with their friends, and families, as well as to make new friends at the university. Academically, Facebook was used to circulate university-related announcements, discuss assignments in small groups, and advertise products or events. In the LMT100 group, the posts circulated were largely of a socio-academic nature, where the social information was confined by the academic setting of the university. In terms of promoting English language practice, the group was not quite successful in generating interactions among members, as a huge number only participated as *silent readers* or *pedagogical lurkers*. There were very limited substantial content and knowledge

shared in the group. This issue was addressed from the points of sociocultural influences at three levels; personal, societal, and institutional.

I conclude that the participants were not ready to function as autonomous learners for ELL on a public SNS such as Facebook. This is because, they still held the belief that ELL must be initiated by authorities, who present content with priority on grammar learning. Although the participants held positive views over the integration of Facebook for ELL, they required proper guidance, task instructions and step-by-step prompts to engage them in the interaction activities. This indicates that at university level, students were still very dependent on teachers to progress in learning, rather than engaging in research culture and independently improving themselves, as they are surrounded with adequate technological facility to support their learning. However, it is important to note that the students would probably feel much safer and more comfortable to interact and initiate conversations if they are divided into smaller groups. Furthermore, perhaps, this may be one of their first exposures to an informal online environment for learning, which may cause doubt and uncertainty in their course of actions.

All in all, we cannot assume that the Generation-Y students would enthusiastically embrace every technologically-afforded learning opportunity presented to them. Many factors may hinder their active involvement, including prior learning experience, and parental involvement. It is also necessary to raise the students' awareness that ELL is so much more than the rote grammar learning, reading comprehension, and essay writings. Perhaps it may be best if the informal use of SNSs is integrated with formal classroom learning at the initial stages, to give students more experience and exposure to ELL in an online environment.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.0 Introduction

Given that English language mastery is a priority for nation building and career development (New Straits Times, 2012b, Malaysia Education Blueprint, 2013), I tried to find strategies to integrate SNSs into ELL. The SNS-based English learning strategy also aimed to improve the standards of English language mastery among students, as the 2013-2025 Malaysian Educational Blueprint (2013) presented a decline in the English language achievement at two levels of national examinations.

As a fairly new technology, SNSs play a big part in students' lives for various purposes including communication, gaming, networking, socialising, businesses, and academic (Selwyn, 2009a, Pempek et al., 2009, Veletsianos and Navarrete, 2012, Chen and Bryer, 2012b). Access to SNSs is made easier due to advances in mobile technology that allow users to be connected from anywhere, at any time. Following this, I was interested in examining the Malaysian university students' perceptions, experiences, and behaviours when presented with an informal English language interaction platform on Facebook, and to identify the effects of the activity on students' language skills. To achieve this, three methods of data collection were employed, namely questionnaire, the LMT100 English interaction group, and semi-structured interview.

This chapter summarises the key findings by revisiting the research questions, and discusses its implications for practical use. Finally, I acknowledge the limitations of this study, and outline several recommendations for future research.

6.1 Summary of key research findings: Revisiting research questions

This study looked into Malaysian students' perceptions, experiences, and behaviour with regards to the suitability of Facebook for ELL. The key findings are presented based on the order of the methods of data collection that answer the research questions, and are concluded at the end of the section.

The findings of the study have added some knowledge to the body of literature in the field of SNSs and second language learning. Although the absence of clear pre-defined objectives during the LMT100 interaction activity may challenge the argument made by previous studies, it helped illustrate students' non-preparedness and low autonomy in using Facebook for ELL. They were more responsive when content materials were presented by an authority, and desired for voluntary participation, non-graded tasks. This finding thus implies that clear learning aims may guide students' learning and dictate content sharing, but excessive guidance and tasks may burden the students.

All in all, through my study, I suggest a new strategy for ELL using Facebook informally, where students were responsible in contributing content and knowledge to support each other's learning. Koo (2008) asserts that learning in the 21st century requires teachers and students to work together as co-authors and co-producers of content knowledge, and Azman (2000) calls for the accentuation of in-school and out-of-school activities to create continuity in students' literacy practices. Many Malaysian students however, were still unaware that learning is so much more than passing exams. The emphasis on exams directed their focus towards certain aspects of ELL, such as grammar, writing and reading comprehension, but neglected the communicative and listening skills that were not directly tested in examinations.

6.1.1 The effect of Facebook on ELL

The questionnaire was implemented at the first stage of data collection to gauge the participants' perceptions of the effect of Facebook on their ELL. A majority responded positively that Facebook was helpful in the acquisition of vocabulary and sentence structures, improving their confidence to read English language materials, increasing their ability to use English more in daily lives in online-offline environments, and decreasing their concerns over mistakes in language production.

However, a slightly lower number of participants reported improved confidence in writing and speaking in English as a result of Facebook usage. In essence, although they liked learning English using Facebook, they agreed that the process was not necessarily easier. Based on their MUET scores, a majority of the first and second year university students were moderate English language users, but there were a small number of participants who had limited and very limited abilities. Accordingly, they rated their English language skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening as moderate and poor, rather than good. All in all, they reported great interest in participating in a specifically-designed SNSs to assist university students' ELL.

In terms of genders, the female students demonstrated more positive perceptions of their attitudes in the learning of English language on Facebook, compared to the male students. This was substantiated by the participation of more female members in the LMT100 group compared to the male students. Ethnic-wise, the Indian students had the most positive perceptions in using Facebook to learn English, but this was not substantiated in the LMT100 group due to the lack of participation from students in general.

6.1.2 The themes and topics that emerged from the LMT100 group interactions

From the 622 questionnaire participants, about 360 of them joined the LMT100 interaction group. Out of the 360 participants, only approximately 20 of them were actively interacting in the group. The rest of the participants were largely inactive and acted as silent readers. Many of the threads shared in the group centred on advertising and promoting university-related events and services. Nevertheless, a small number of participants shared academic and non-academic posts in the forms of multimedia and interactive threads, to engage other group members in discussions. However, these posts usually received very minimal or no attention at all.

Although the participants were largely inactive, there were three topics that gained their attention; entertainment, grammar quizzes, and university-related inquiries. These behavioural patterns indicated that the participants' *selective interest* behaviour in the LMT100 platform where they participated more actively on some topics, but not others. The entertainment threads, especially on music, generated high interest from many of the participants (besides the already active ones) as they probably wished to express their personalities and be seen as up-to-date.

University-related inquiries received high responses from the participants perhaps due to the provision of space where they can express their dissatisfaction with the university. The interest in grammar quizzes indicated students' concern for ELL in ways that were familiar to them. During subsequent interviews, participants disclosed that they practised rote grammar learning in their primary and secondary years, and felt that grammar mastery was the key to ELL. Therefore, they might have felt that the grammar quizzes in the LMT100 group were the only ELL activities that could help

them develop their skills. Based on this, it is assumed that the majority of participants still followed the traditional method of ELL that emphasises grammar practice and exercise, due to their prior learning experience. Perhaps, the participants were insufficiently exposed to more communicative online activities that may provide them with different learning experience.

I however am not arguing against the traditional learning method, or that online learning is the only way to achieve English language mastery. I am able to report is that the participants seemed to rely heavily on traditional face-to-face classroom instructions for ELL, although they were highly dependent on Facebook for any academic and social updates at the university. This dependency, high accessibility and ease of SNSs use could be adapted into formal and informal academic learning to provide continuity in their learning.

6.1.3 How students perceive the changes in their English language skills after engaging with the LMT100 group

The interviewees were selected and divided into four groups, based on their participation rate in the LMT100 group; *active, average, passive, and very passive*. Despite the differences, there were no distinct varieties in their responses to the interview topics. The interviewees reported that the main reasons for their membership of the LMT100 group were to *learn English language, gather information about the LMT100 course, and make new friends*.

On the other hand, they did not participate in the group because they were *too shy, busy with course works, not knowing what materials were suitable to be shared with the*

group, and only being interested in gathering information shared by other friends. Added to this, one of the challenges that that may have innately hindered participants' active involvement in the group was the presence of racial stereotypes such as Malay students who could not be constructively criticised, Chinese students being more hardworking and fluent in English, and unlike foreigners, Malaysians will get upset if their mistakes were corrected. These racial stereotypes may have affected the way the students acted in the group, fearing that their contribution would be negatively judged by their friends, and they would be seen as show-offs.

It was gathered from the interview session that these racial stereotypes, coupled with political interests that stemmed from students' personal, societal and institutional sociocultural influences, had segregated students into race-based groups in sharing academic resources on Facebook. A Malay group would not share their academic resources with the Chinese groups, as they believed that the Chinese groups were doing the same. Furthermore, one interviewee believed that teachers should help the Malay students more at university, suggesting that a racial distinction was a serious issue that had been ingrained in their minds. This issue should not be taken lightly, as it affects learning and the development of knowledge at a bigger level in a university setting.

In terms of the effect of the LMT100 interaction activity, the participants' views were divided into two. Several interviewees reported that the LMT100 group was not helpful in assisting ELL, due to the lack of relevant content presented to them. On the other hand, other interviewees believed that the group had helped to improve their communicative competence in online interaction and raised their awareness about suitable vocabulary, phrases and sentence structures. More specifically however, the

more active participants stated that while the LMT100 group failed to develop their English language skills, it boosted their self-confidence in using English in daily interactions.

The findings also suggested that the participants' existing English language ability did not determine their engagement levels with the LMT100 group or their passion for ELL. An interviewee, AE, who was a Band 2 MUET scorer, was the most active contributor in the LMT100 group, while the majority of participants who were Band 3 MUET scorers acted very passively. However, MRL who was also a Band 2 scorer possessed visibly lower English language abilities than AE. Notably, MRL, who at the start of the research stated outright that he was not interested in English language, slowly increased his participation in the group, from publishing short comments to sharing more academic information.

Therefore, it should be borne in mind that different students have different learning preferences. While some proficient students may be active learners who wanted to improve themselves and help others, others may be passive learners who prefer to read and think, rather than write and speak. On the other hand, while some weaker students were very shy and possessed low self-confidence, others were interested in participation in more hands-on, outdoor activities. In the case of MRL, he took some time to get himself comfortable within the group before starting to become more involved. Alternatively, AE was very confident and active from the start. These varying preferences and abilities among students calls for more accommodating ELL approaches. The integration of classroom learning and online SNS learning could offer a strategy that caters to and balances a wide range of students' needs and preferences. In one setting, the students' learning process is controlled by teachers and

formal instructions, while in another, students are given the freedom to manage their own learning preferences on an informal platform.

Summary of key findings

Despite the participants' very positive perceptions that Facebook could improve English language skills, the LMT100 group was not very effective in promoting interaction, due to the lack of participation from group members in terms of content development. While some of the more passive interviewees reported improvement in their English language skills as a result of their involvement in the group, the more proficient English language users were indifferent to the group interaction's effect. Many of them, however, agreed that the group managed to boost their confidence in English language interaction.

Therefore, there was an inconsistency between the participants' perceptions, experiences, and behaviour when presented with the Facebook platform for ELL, as their self-perceived learning needs were not in line with their actions. However, based on previous studies, the lack of visible participation on online activities did not indicate that the students were learning any less. Instead, as silent readers, passive students may have been learning more than the active ones, and improving the group's dynamic by socially bringing everybody together (Beaudoin, 2002, Nonnecke and Preece, 2003, Nonnecke et al., 2006, Dennen, 2008, Farzan et al., 2010).

Alternatively, the participants may already be accustomed to the familiar process of traditional classroom learning, where teachers play more central roles in ensuring students' development. This, combined with the societal, and institutional sociocultural

influences that centralised exam-oriented learning, may have led the students to think that the LMT100 interaction activity was pointless, hence hindering their active involvement.

Several interviewees argued that they were inactive in the group, as they did not know what kind of materials were suitable to be shared. Therefore, the question is what types of content constitute ELL? Do all English language materials qualify as learning materials? And what are the strategies that students should adopt when selecting content to be shared on an English learning SNS? Based on the findings, I argue that almost all English language materials qualify as learning materials, provided that the content and language are suitable, ethically relevant, and non-controversial. Following this, many socio-academic posts in the LMT100 group were not suitable to be categorised as academic materials, but did not completely fall into the non-academic category either. For example, SC shared an English language post to promote mobile phone cases. This post, although inherently social and non-academic in nature, was shared due to the Entrepreneurship course that SC was taking during the semester. Therefore, the fundamental reason for the post was academic, and it was published within an academic setting. These types of post were the ones categorised as socio-academic. Accordingly, a post that talked about superpowers by AE was categorised as non-academic, and grammar quizzes were categorised as academic.

To sum up, the Internet world offers an abundance of content materials that could be employed for ELL on SNS platforms. The issue is what strategies might be employed by language teachers to ensure that that learning process, knowledge dissemination,

and students' interest and motivation are captured and sustained on these online social platforms?

Based on the findings and discussions, it may be concluded that the university students were not prepared to become autonomous learners of ELL. A majority expected the authorities to provide content and materials for their ELL on the Facebook group, instead of playing the active roles of knowledge producer on a social platform. However, the effort to create continuity in students' in-school and out-of-school literacy practice needs be elevated, so as to build familiarity with more independent-based learning. It is necessary to raise students' awareness that ELL is so much more than grammar learning and passing examinations. Although grammar aspects are the foundation of English, students should also see that English learning is not only restricted to grammar exercises and quizzes. Online English language skills, including communication, writing, listening and reading, also need to be introduced to students, for their survival in the progressively digital world.

Concluding remarks

The findings showed that the informal English language interaction group on a Facebook platform was not attractive to the university students. However, there are several matters that need to be addressed.

Firstly, I probably had too high an expectation that university students will jump at any opportunity to practice English language skills on a popular platform like Facebook. I did not take into consideration the personal, societal and institutional sociocultural influences that may have underlined their perceptions and behaviours in the LMT100

group, including their familiarity with traditional activity, explicit grammar learning, and teacher-centred classrooms.

As with previous studies, the LMT100 group observed a majority of silent readers, and only about four percent of active group members. However, I did not extensively examine this issue to further probe students' preferences to become silent readers instead of active participants. The assumption that were discussed earlier (i.e. students' familiarity with traditional learning etc.) may offer an additional perspective to this phenomenon.

It is true that even in a classroom, it is difficult to gauge active participation from all students, as they are individuals with different characteristics and learning preferences. With the growing widespread use of social media in students' lives, it would be tremendously beneficial if these reasons were to be explicitly discovered and underlined.

To reiterate, I am not suggesting that SNS usage in second language learning as automatically leading to positive achievement or language acquisition. Rather, I proposes that SNSs may offer another ELL strategy that could raise students' awareness for in-school and out-of-school literacy practices. Although the LMT100 group was seen as ineffective in the sense that it was not able to get a lot of active students' participations, their membership and minimal effort to make their participation visible should be commended. This is because to engage in a learning experience without the rewards of bonus marks, grades, or money is powerful and indicate a certain level of self-directedness, albeit at a trivial level. It may be

necessary to cultivate the small interest into bigger ones by introducing the online interaction activity progressively, instead of directly asking them to initiate interaction, and contribute knowledge on their own. To this end, long term Facebook interaction, and teacher-guided, non-graded and participatory activities may be conducted and implemented to gradually transform students into autonomous learners.

6.2 Implications of the key findings in the use of SNSs in ELL

The design of the LMT100 English interaction group was ineffective in gathering students' participation, and developing their language skills. As such, I propose several key factors to be considered when Facebook is used as a supplement for second language learning. This study shows that the key learning factors on a Facebook platform are interrelated, with one element depending on the other to create a wholesome learning experience, and invite students' participation (see Table 42).

TABLE 42: THE INTERRELATED ELEMENTS WHEN FACEBOOK IS USED FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE INTERACTION

<i>Key factors</i>	<i>Descriptions</i>
<i>Students' language ability</i>	In a group, students may have varying English language abilities. Weaker or less comfortable students may need more encouragement, guidance or support from the moderators, teachers, or peers, while the better ones may be able to proceed independently.
<i>Sociocultural values (personal, societal and institutional)</i>	Students may receive different exposures to English language due to their upbringing, geographical locations, family background, and socio-economic. While some may be familiar and comfortable being in an English dominant environment, some may feel foreign. By being aware of these values, moderators or teachers may strategize the informal activities to ensure maximum benefits to all participants.
<i>Purpose of activity</i>	When students are aware of the purpose of an activity, they would be able to participate better. This does not mean that the activity has to always be formal. In an informal environment, questions or information related to the students' lives or interests may give them a sense of purpose and direction in their responses.

<i>Topic/content of interaction</i>	The topics and information circulated in an informal environment that are tailored to the students' interests may gather higher participation rate and attention. In the case of this study, entertainment-related topics, university-based discussions, and grammar quizzes were popular among the students.
<i>Teachers' presence</i>	The students may feel a sense of learning with the presence of a teacher, moderator or More Knowledgeable Other (MKO) when presented with an informal group for ELL. The authority is needed to correct students' mistakes to demonstrate some extent of explicit learning.
<i>Posting requirements</i>	Teachers/ moderators and students need to negotiate the posting requirements that may or may not be necessary in the group, to increase participation rate.
<i>Language aspects (choice of language, grammar aspects, code-switching, quality of language)</i>	Teachers/ moderators and students need to negotiate the types of language that may or may not be permissible on the platform, including the use of digital vernaculars and SMS language.

6.2.1 Implication 1: Understanding students' learning characteristics

The inconsistency in the participants' perceptions, experiences, and behaviours of the effect of Facebook on ELL indicates that they acted differently in online and offline environments. They may exert active behaviours in the classroom, but become non-visible on the online platform, and vice versa. The weaker students may feel less confident and marginalised on in a fast paced face-to-face setting, but could take time to formulate their responses in online asynchronous environment.

Therefore, it may be necessary for educators to fully understand students' characteristics, and potential behaviours when presented with a Facebook platform for ELL, to ensure effective learning experience and positive feelings. To this end, some strategies that could accommodate students' personalities and learning needs include, creating smaller discussion groups, partnering them with friends with higher language skills, and initiating interesting topics of discussion.

However, no matter how popular SNSs are among students, engaging with academic activities on the platforms may not be highly prioritised and perhaps disliked, as Facebook is a fundamentally social platform, where it is used leisurely in users' own time. Therefore, any association that it has with academic matters may not be as effective as when it is used for fun. As such, the fact that Facebook was a social platform instead of an academic medium, may have inherently affected the students' non-participation in the group. As such, should Facebook and other SNSs be employed as English learning tools? I would argue in favour of this, as I believe that ELL should be socially-mediated, where students are presented with opportunities to interact with both content materials and other people. To avoid resentment about learning on a social platform, it is necessary to raise students' awareness that ELL is a social process that could be achieved using various means, such as communication, watching videos, listening to music, and reading fan fictions, instead of only doing grammar exercises, reading comprehensions, and essay writings. It is also necessary to repeatedly remind students that social or recreational content and activity may add to their linguistics repertoire. Their prior experience may have shaped their minds to think that ELL mainly centred on grammar learning. Therefore, it is not easy to change the way they see how English language should be taught and learned in the age of social technology.

Students should be presented with opportunities to become familiar with formal and informal learning experience on SNSs, which is not only interactive and fun, but also promote autonomous learning. Arguably, they may resent the invasion of academic activities on social platforms, hence the informal design of my study may be effective if it is moderated at the initial stages as a guide to the students. However, is there any ELL strategy that is fully embraced and accepted by all students? I do not believe so.

Students are probably accustomed to a learning strategy after it has been implemented for a certain period of time. Perhaps the same could be argued in the employment of SNSs in English language interaction. When given space and time to develop, students may progressively embrace the experience. The process to completely accept new learning tools, and develop autonomously may require a longer period of time, prompts and guidance from educators.

In my view, the introduction of SNSs into English language interaction was an effort to create a fresh, fun and enjoyable learning opportunities. Like other academic activities that are introduced into the classroom, students should meet the teachers halfway and participate in the learning experience. In creating these opportunities, I had tried to limit any possible burden to the students by neither forcing their membership in the group, nor outlining any posting requirements, to avoid being seen as *trying too hard* to encourage participation. To achieve this, it is necessary that educators understand the students' characteristics and learning preferences.

To reiterate, I am neither claiming that the implementation of SNSs for ELL as a must, nor will it be fully embraced by students upon implementation. It is simply acknowledging that SNSs offer a new, modern way to promote English language interaction among students which could bridge the gap between formal and informal literacy practices. What I failed to take into consideration was that the students who were accustomed to the traditional way of learning may need more guidance and time to become familiar with the activity. More practical implications are discussed below in an attempt to promote an English learning strategy on SNSs.

6.2.2 Implication 2: Finding a balance between traditional and online learning

Due to the students' characteristics and familiarity with classroom learning, educators need to find the strategies to balance traditional and online learning. This is because SNSs use for academic matters do not induce automatic learning or autonomous learners. Instead, it is highly likely that the students will retain their classroom behaviours that were influenced socioculturally, and shaped online learning. For example, the participants showed a great interest in grammar learning during the LMT100 interaction activity and interviews. They viewed grammar mastery as the key to becoming proficient English language users. This view may be a result of prior learning experience, and despite being completely sound, may be quite difficult to be realised on a Facebook platform designed for interactions. This is not to say that grammar learning cannot be conducted on Facebook, but it may be necessary for students to be aware that English mastery also involves other elements such as critical thinking, communicative competence, and inference skills.

Added to this, it is essential to raise students' awareness that online Facebook learning requires active involvement in content construction and discussions with fellow learners. They have to play more central roles, while teachers take a step back to facilitate and monitor the process. Therefore, it would be more effective if educators could find ways to balance students' familiarity with traditional learning and Facebook learning that appeal to students' characteristics and needs. This process will not be straightforward, as each student brings their own views, behaviours and sociocultural practices into learning, which creates dynamic communities with ever-expanding knowledge and ideas in online environment.

6.2.3 Implication 3: Defining the purposes of the activities, and selecting topics based on students' interests

A learning strategy goes hand-in-hand with the aim or purpose of an activity. These aims range from promoting interaction, learning sentence structures, constructing English language content, and so forth. When both educators and students clearly understand the purpose of an activity on Facebook, they may be able to act accordingly during the learning process. For example, I aimed to promote English language interaction among students in the LMT100 Facebook group. Although it was ineffective, about 20 participants were actively involved in initiating interactions. The rest made their participation visible through the means of likes or short comments. Fundamentally, these participants understood that the group required their efforts to contribute content and interact with other members. However, the majority of participants refused to make their involvement visible, which may be due to several reasons such as familiarity with traditional learning (reliance on authorities to provide input), low English language proficiency, and lack of confidence. As such, the implication may be that Facebook activities require educators' guidance, especially at the early stages of the learning process.

Educators have to play multi-faceted roles in ensuring students' comprehension of the learning aims, initiate the learning process, guide students' interactions, and maintain sensitivity on the platform. In ELL, educators need to decide if students' language mistakes should be corrected immediately or later, or be treated as part of the Internet language. This is because there are online websites that purposely use incorrect forms of English in grammar and spelling to achieve specific purposes, such as associating with a specific community, being a trendsetter, pioneering the creation of cool phrases and suchlike. For example, one of the famous phrases on the Internet, "Y U No has

[things]” or *“I is sad”* are constantly used to achieve comic effect in widely circulating Internet memes. This and other English-related issues will be determined based on the purposes of the Facebook activities identified prior to the learning process. For example, if the focus of the Facebook activity is to promote English language interaction, students should not be directly or immediately penalised for using incorrect grammar. Teachers and students could also negotiate the types of language that could be used on the platform, which may change according to the activities to be conducted.

The purposes of the activity will also determine if posting requirements or voluntary participation should be implemented to gauge students’ involvement. For instance, if the activity wishes to build students’ confidence to share information, a posting requirement of one update per month from each student would be helpful to sustain their effort and participation. The minimal requirement of the activities is that they would not burden the students, and provide opportunities for knowledge sharing and discussions. Instrumental rewards in the forms of university merit, bonus marks in exams, money, and food could be allocated to further encourage students’ participation on Facebook activities for ELL.

After the purpose of the lesson has been defined, educators need prior knowledge of the students’ topical interests before deciding on a Facebook activity. This may be done by employing a simple survey that solicits students’ preferred Facebook topics of discussions. Most importantly, it would be helpful if educators are ready to accept that as a social space, students have the freedom to share anything they desire. This includes promoting or advertising university-related events, personal businesses and services to their friends. Unless educators are very strict in rejecting these types of post from the Facebook platform, there is no way that they can control the content

generated by the students. However, instead of looking at the advertisements as spam, these materials could be employed as part of English language activities on the Facebook platform. The topics of discussions, and the *do and don'ts* could be negotiated between teachers and students through a dialogue process in ensuring an effective ELL platform.

6.3 Limitations of the study

There are several limitations to my study. Firstly, the LMT100 interaction activity was conducted for six weeks before the data was collected. However, the activity could have been made longer, to ensure that the participants were comfortably situated within their new friends. A longer period of interaction activity may have led to higher participation rate. The six weeks period in this study included a week of term break, which may have kept the students away from their computers and decreased their possibly active involvement. The group was not terminated immediately after the six week period to further monitor the activity, but I played a less active role in initiating interaction for the group members. Notably, the group became even less active than before the data collection procedure.

Secondly, the convenience sampling method made it difficult to ensure if all group members in the LMT100 group were students of the LMT100 course. An example of this was the participant who decided to invite her friends to join the LMT100 group although they had not taken the course for the semester. Similar situations may have happened with other participants without my knowledge. Although a majority were LMT100 students, I cannot be certain that all of them were in fact enrolled in the course for the semester.

Thirdly, the research briefing during my classroom visits may not have been clear to some students, which could potentially cause confusion, and develop different expectations of the LMT100 group. There were participants with very limited English language ability in these classes. My briefings were conducted in English, which may have jeopardised some students' comprehension of the research, which caused them to avoid the group altogether, or to expect an English learning portal to be presented to them. For example, MFTI stated that she was very interested in joining the group after meeting me, but felt disappointed that the group lacked content to assist her ELL. Perhaps, I should have used Bahasa Malaysia for the briefings, and repeatedly reminded them that the group emphasised their interactive behaviour and content contribution as the main learning activities.

Fourthly, the instructions may not be as clear, due to the error made to the questionnaire design. The cover page of the questionnaire consisted of a flow chart that illustrated the research process and what the students were expected to do. It also contained my details and contact number. The cover page was intended to be detachable from the questionnaire, and kept by the participants. However, the error in design caused the cover page to be non-detachable, without taking another page of its content. Therefore, the flow chart was only used during the instruction, to illustrate the process of the research. The questionnaire had to be collected as a whole, after the participants finished answering them. Perhaps if the cover page had been given to the students, their understanding of the study design may have been strengthened.

Finally, the selection of the interviewees based on their LMT100 group participation may not have been totally fair, as the criteria that determined their scores were very loose. For example, the participants were awarded 1 point for every *like* they gave

to posts and comments. It was very easy to click the button *like*. If a participant *liked* 20 posts and comments, (s)he would gather 20 points and be categorised as an active participant. However, if another participant initiated interaction by posting 3 multimedia posts in the group, his or her score would only be 15 points, and that would situate him or her as an averagely active participant. Added to this, I valued short comments (e.g. “ok”) and long comments (e.g. “Me? On Saturday I’ll be having *adikarma’s* introduction day. And Sunday, perhaps not doing anything. Hewhewhew. Hoho”) similarly, in which they were all rewarded 3 points. This could be seen as unfair due to the difference in participants’ efforts to write their comments, initiate and maintain interaction, and share their opinions with friends. Therefore, more specific scoring criteria should be constructed to determine students’ participation rate on the Facebook platform. Perhaps, more detailed criteria such as ‘*an active participant shares at least 10 multimedia post, publishes at least 15 comments, and likes at least 20 posts and comments*’, could be outlined to make the process more just.

Alternatively, a prior survey could be conducted by asking the general public the definition of active, average and passive Facebook users. Based on the responses, the scoring criteria for Facebook participation could be outlined. Further questions that could be included based on the scoring criteria are: Do active students mean better learners? How does the quality of language impact on the scoring criteria? And should the length of comments be a determinant of the scoring criteria?

6.4 Recommendations for future research

There are several recommendations that may examine this area of research in a different light, strengthen the data, and increase validity and reliability of the results. Firstly, future studies might link the Facebook activity with students' classroom learning by rewarding their online participation with minimal bonus marks for their course. The purpose of this research would be to examine the students' behaviour when instrumental rewards are presented to them based on their online involvement. The findings of the study could be compared and contrasted to the results of this research.

Secondly, I employed a voluntary-based participation in the LMT100 group. Following this, future studies could set minimal posting requirements in the Facebook group to examine students' involvement and interest in the activity. Perhaps by having posting requirements, they would feel more guided in their participation and become more interested in collaboratively learning on the platform. Alternatively, there is a possibility that students might feel pressured by the group's requirements and worsen the tension between the social and academic uses of Facebook. This is a matter to be rectified between teachers and students before the initiation of the activity. To reiterate, I am not claiming that Facebook will solve the problems of ELL. Instead I am suggesting a learning strategy that may be effective and appeals to second language students.

Added to this, future research could clearly outline the purposes of the Facebook platforms and ensure that students understand them. For example, if the Facebook activity was specifically designed to improve grammar skills, students need to be made aware that authorities or friends can openly correct or comment on their mistakes, so that other students could learn from this process. This is important to avoid

conflict between teachers-students and students-students, and to ensure that their motivation, confidence and learning interest are intact.

To further improve students' content contribution on the platform, future studies could specify a theme or a topic for each week. For example, in Week 1, the topic of discussion may be Sports and students are encouraged to post any content materials that relate to sports, using a variety of interactive and multimedia forms. In week 2, another topic would be specified, and a similar process will be conducted. Perhaps, this strategy may guide the students in their activities on the Facebook platform.

Thirdly, a blended learning approach that integrates classroom learning and online SNS learning may examine students' perceptions and behaviour, as well as the effects of the activities. Studies by Liang and Bonk (2009), McCarthy (2010) and Shih (2011, 2013) who developed the blended learning approach found the activities successful and beneficial to students. Therefore, these types of studies would be advantageous to add to the practical approach of ELL in the Malaysian context. At the same time, more knowledge of the blended learning method may be developed and added to the existing body of literature.

Fourthly, future studies could examine the effect of mobile technology in the use of SNSs for academic matters. Studies of this type have not been fully tapped in the Malaysian context. Today, almost all students possess mobile devices ranging from smart phones, tablets, laptops and so forth. These devices are almost always located in close physical proximity to their owners as they are constantly in use. As such, mobile technology may play substantial roles in aiding students' daily activities. It would be

interesting to examine if the integration of mobile technology would improve students' interest in ELL, as previous studies have argued that mobile technology has the ability to provide continuous seamless learning (Godwin-Jones, 2008, Lu, 2008, Cochrane and Bateman, 2010, Wong et al., 2011, Hussin et al., 2012). Therefore, this area of research may be tapped into, as mobile technology is growing exponentially, and is largely utilised by SNS users. In fact, studies have shown that more teenagers access SNSs such as Facebook and Twitter on smart phones, rather than laptops and computers (Lenhart et al., 2010, Brenner, 2013).

Fifthly, future studies could also invite university students who are NS of English language to provide NNS with authentic English language communication experience. Perhaps, students would feel more motivated to interact in the presence of NSs, as the language produced is purposeful. However, Alptekin (2002) argued that English language must be learned in relation to students' sociocultural setting, instead of adhering to the culture of the TL, to make the learning experience more accommodating to cross-cultural settings. Added to this, Timmis (2002) found that teachers and students from 45 countries did not have the same values in the way they viewed informal, NS spoken grammar. While students had an idealised notion of the NSs' norms, teachers were moving away from these norms (ibid.). As such, in SNSs, both NS and NNS are given much space and time to present their opinions and thoughts which are mediated by their sociocultural values. Therefore, apart from learning language, both parties would be exposed to cultural values, which may enrich their experience and make learning more significant.

Next, different research approaches may yield different results although they examine a similar issue. As such, different research frameworks such as the

phenomenography approach, and the ethnography approach could examine students' perspectives and experiences of the effect of Facebook on ELL. Both approaches take longer time but they place the researchers in the shoes of the students, which could further increase understanding of their progressing needs and wants in ELL.

Finally, future studies could look into the three levels of sociocultural influences on ELL which are personal, societal and institutional (see Figure 29). This is because not only do these sociocultural values influence students' way of learning, they also impact their outlook of the academic world as a whole. For example, it was concluded by previous studies that Malaysian students had an exam-oriented view of learning (Pandian, 2002, Che Musa et al., 2012). Therefore, future studies may want to study these factors in detail, to further understand the impact of the sociocultural influences in ELL.

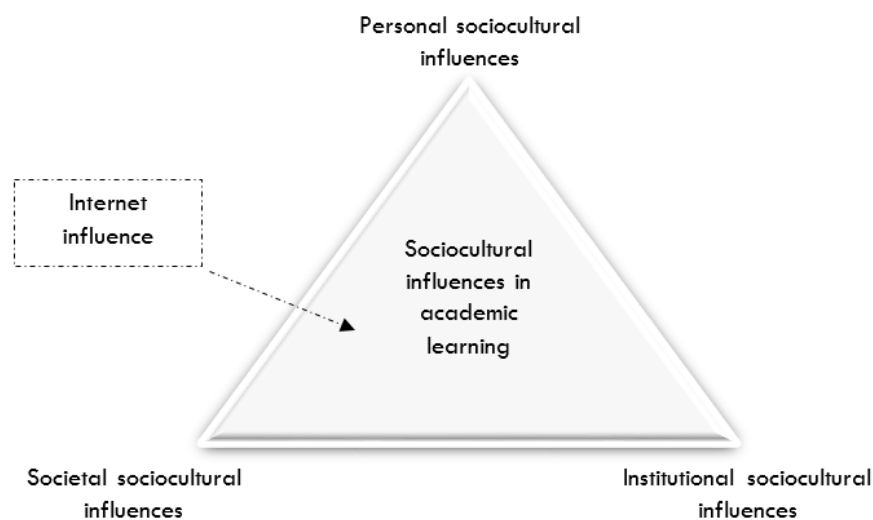


FIGURE 24: THE THREE LEVELS OF SOCIOCULTURAL INFLUENCES IN ACADEMIC LEARNING

However, with tremendous progress in the technological world, students' learning priorities might well change. The sociocultural influences may or may not play as integral function in the students' lives as they did before. The big names in technology

such as Bill Gates and Marc Zuckerberg took a different path in lives, in which they decided not to further their education to a higher level, but still managed to be immensely successful. These factors and the fact that information is so readily available online, may shape individuals' minds differently. For example, despite their families, teachers, and societies' encouragement to solely focus on academic matters, some students may have started to become entrepreneurs to fulfil their dreams of becoming successful. As such, it would be interesting to see if students' priorities and thoughts are influenced by the information they received from online environment or the Internet influence.

To conclude, it is hoped that the implications and recommendations presented will yield effective ELL strategies that are in line with students' dependency on SNSs technology.

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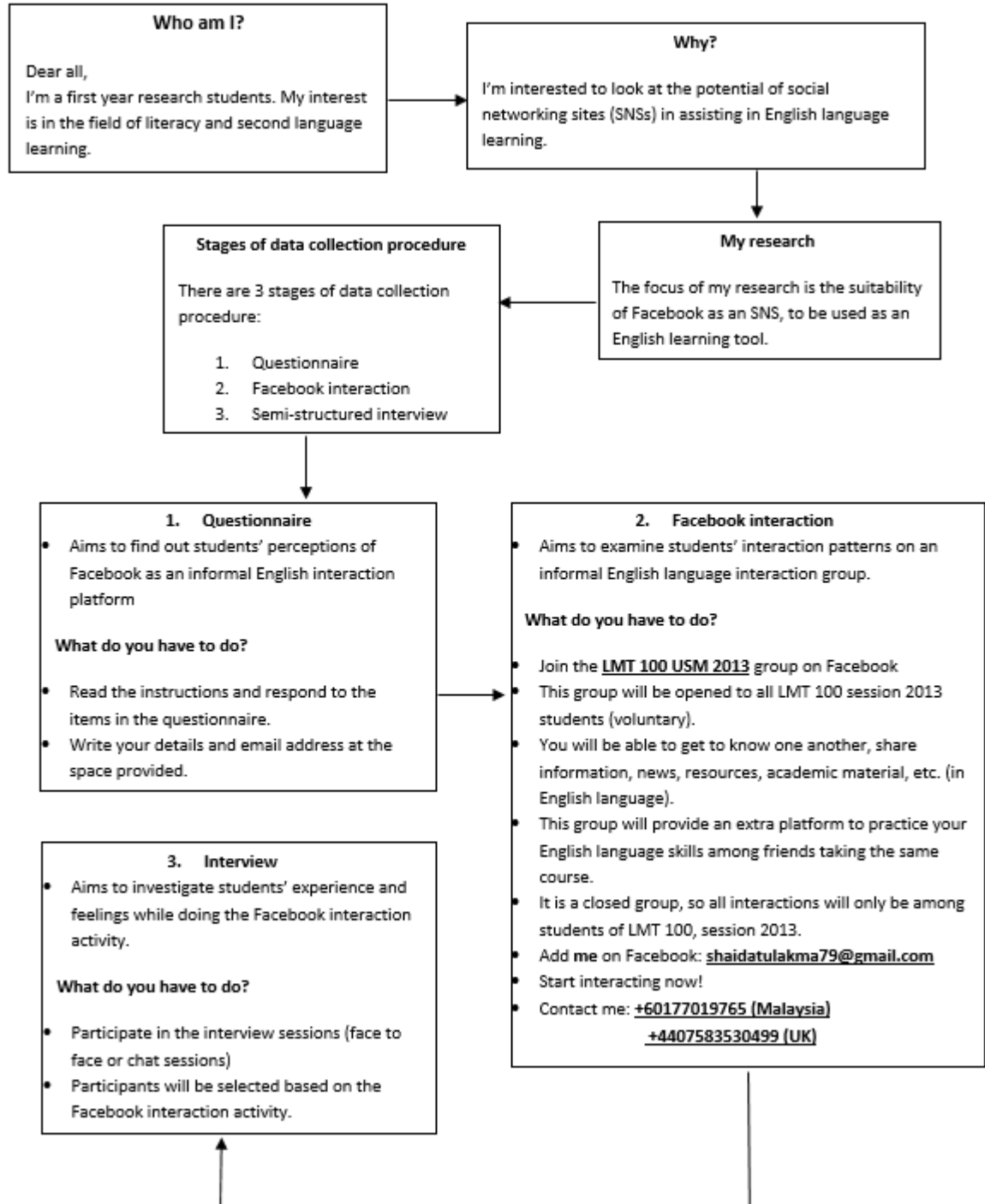
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Appendix A



SECTION A: GENERAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE ABILITY

Instruction: Please tick one response only for each statement. Please provide a response for each statement.

1. I would rate my English language skills as:

	Poor	Moderate	Good
Reading	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Writing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Speaking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Listening	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

SECTION B: USAGE OF FACEBOOK

Instruction: Please tick one response only for each statement. Please provide a response for each statement.

2. I have a Facebook account?

- Yes (If YES, please proceed to Question 6 and onwards. Please also answer section E for background information. THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION)
- No (If NO, please proceed to Question 3, 4 and 5 only. Please also answer Section E for background information. THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION)

3. I don't have a Facebook account, but I (have):

	Yes	No
a. Heard about Facebook?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Read about Facebook	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Visited the Facebook website?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Know of someone who has a Facebook account?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Thought about creating a Facebook account?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Know the function of Facebook?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Others (please specify): _____

4. Although I know about Facebook, I am not bothered to create an account.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. I don't have a Facebook account because:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
a. Facebook is not important for informal interaction.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Facebook is not important for formal interaction.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Facebook is not useful for information sharing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Facebook is not useful to play games.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Facebook is not useful to keep in touch with my friends and families	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. My friends and families are not on Facebook.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. I do not have time to open or maintain a Facebook account.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Others (please specify): _____

SECTION C: PRACTICE OF FACEBOOK

Instruction: Please tick one response only for each statement. Please provide a response for each statement.

6. I have been a member of the Facebook community for:

- Less than a year 1-3 years 3-5 years More than 5 years

Others (please specify): _____

7. I login into my Facebook account at least:

Daily More than once per day once a week once a month

Others (please specify): _____

8. I do the following activities on Facebook:

	Never	Seldom (once in 2 weeks)	Sometimes (once a week)	Frequent (once in 2-4 days)	Always (at least once a day)
a. Interact with family and friends.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Read and share opinions /useful information.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Read and share multimedia elements (<i>photos, videos, blogs, and links</i>).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Read and share academic-related matters with my course mates and lecturers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Create networks of friends for social purposes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Create networks of friends for academic purposes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. Create networks of friends for business-related purposes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Others (please specify): _____

SECTION D: LEARNING ENGLISH WITHIN THE FACEBOOK ENVIRONMENT

Instruction: Please tick one response only for each statement. Please provide a response for each statement.

10. Ever since I began using Facebook, I find that: ...:

	No	Unsure	Yes, a little	Yes, moderately	Yes, a lot
a. My English proficiency has increased.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. I use English more often in daily life than before.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. I am more confident to write in English.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. I am more confident to speak in English.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. I am more confident to read English language materials.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. I learn new English words.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. I learn new English sentences.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. I am motivated to communicate in English in the real world.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. I am motivated to communicate in English on Facebook and other online sites.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. I am motivated to communicate in English with my lecturers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k. I like learning English as a second language.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
l. Learning English is easier.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
m. Learning English is more interesting.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
n. I am not worried about making mistakes when using English.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Others (please specify): _____

11. Other than Facebook, the following social networking sites are suitable as English language learning tools:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
a. Twitter	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Instagram	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Pinterest	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. LinkedIn	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. YouTube	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Keek	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Others (please specify): _____

12. Edmodo is a social networking site (SNS) that is specifically designed for second language students in secondary school.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't know
I am interested to learn English using a social networking site (SNS) that is especially designed for university students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

SECTION E: DEMOGRAPHY

Instruction: Please tick one response only for each statement and fill in the blanks where necessary.

- Gender : Male Female
- Age : _____ years old
- School of study: _____
- Year :
 First year Second year Third year
 Fourth year others (please specify): _____
- MUET Level:
 1 2 3 4 5 6
- Race:
 Malay Chinese Indian Kadazan Iban
 Others (Please specify): _____

CONTACT INFORMATION

In order to further contribute to the findings of this research, please fill in your contact details below (with emails that you use for your Facebook account so that I could invite you to join the LMT 100 Facebook group). Your kind cooperation is highly appreciated. Thank you.

Name : _____
 Mobile number : _____
 Email : _____

Appendix B

Thematic-content analysis steps to analyse the LMT100 interaction data and interview transcripts

Steps (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992)	Phase (Braun and Clarke, 2006)	Facebook interaction analysis Details	Interview analysis Details
Step 1 <i>Selecting the unit of analysis</i>	Phase 1 <i>Becoming familiar with the data</i>	The second research question addresses the academic and social-related themes that emerge in the LMT100 group. I repeatedly read the transcripts and make a list of potential codes to get familiarise with the data.	The third research question addresses the students' feelings, experiences and attitudes when participating in the LMT100 group interaction activity. The interview transcripts were repeatedly read and coded to be familiarised with the data.
Step 2 <i>Creating and defining the categories</i>	Phase 2 <i>Generating initial codes</i>	<p>A sample set of data from the LMT100 group was analysed to generate initial codes. The coding process offers a way of organising and gaining meaningful patterns of data and must be done in a cyclical or repeated process until all possible themes have been generated.</p> <p>The abundance of data from the raw transcripts was reduced and simplified into more manageable analytic codes. At this stage, data was reduced to categories that allowed me to identify segments of the data that share a common category or code (Coffey and Atkinson 1996). Seidel and Kelle (1995) outlined three</p>	<p>A set of initial codes was generated by analysing a sample set of data from the interview transcripts. Repeated analysis was conducted to ensure that all possible themes are discovered.</p> <p>The process of data reduction was conducted to reduce and simplify the abundance of data into more manageable codes.</p> <p>The important data that emerged from the data reduction process were analysed to discover the possibilities of new perspectives in data complication process.</p>

		<p>ways to conduct data reduction and coding process; a) noticing relevant phenomena, b) collect examples of the phenomena and c) analysing phenomena to find similarities, differences, patterns and overlying structures.</p> <p>Data complication process must also be conducted by asking questions about the data, to generate working framework and theories that fit the data. It serves as a means to provide new perspectives in the ways data are viewed and analysed (Coffey and Atkinson 1996).</p> <p>The themes generated were examined in terms of its relationship and patterns with other themes. Other processes involved at this stage were open coding, coding sheets, grouping, categorization and abstraction.</p>	<p>The themes that emerged from these processes were linked together to identify their relationship to one another.</p>
<p>Step 3</p> <p><i>Pretesting the category definition and rules</i></p>	<p>Phase 3</p> <p><i>Searching for themes</i></p>	<p>A small sample of text from the LMT100 interaction data was matched against the emerging themes and sub-themes.</p>	<p>The themes created was pretested to ensure that they cover all statements in the interview transcripts.</p>

Step 4	<p>To determine consistency in data coding, intra-coder reliability was applied where I repeatedly coded the same data until no further themes emerge and all the data were categorised.</p>	<p>Selected interview transcripts were read through and coded (intra-coder reliability). The themes, descriptions and coding were presented and discussed with a field expert to test their reliability and validity.</p>
<p><i>Assessing reliability and validity</i></p>	<p>The emerging themes and sub-themes were presented and discussed with a field expert to determine the validity of analysis, as well as ensuring limited biasness as a result of fatigue, personal experience or differing perceptions. In order to increase confidence and validity of analysis, emerging academic and social-related themes were also analysed against categories from existing studies to see similarities and differences (Downe-Wamboldt 1992, Downe-Wamboldt and Ellerton 1985).</p>	
	<p>Additionally, the interview sessions at the third stage of data collection procedure offered another method to triangulate the themes that emerged from the LMT100 interaction group.</p>	

Step 5 <i>Revising coding rules in necessary</i>	Phase 4 <i>Reviewing themes</i>	The data that support the themes was gathered from the Facebook interaction transcripts. New themes were created to fit some data that did not fit into the pre-established ones. This process was repeated until all data were categorised under suitable themes.	The coding was revised. Themes were added and deleted based on suitability.
Step 6 <i>Pretesting the revised category scheme</i>		The new themes were tested to ensure validity and consistency in categorisation. New themes were developed when some data fall out of the pre-established themes.	The revised themes created were pretested to ensure that they accommodated pertinent data in the interview transcripts.
Step 7 <i>Coding all the data</i>	Phase 5 <i>Defining and naming themes</i>	After the necessary themes and sub-themes were created, the data in the Facebook interaction transcripts were analysed and categorised accordingly.	Once the themes were validated, all the data in the transcripts were coded repeatedly from various perspectives to derive at every possible interpretation.
Step 8 <i>Reassessing reliability and validity</i>	Phase 6 <i>Producing the report</i>	The result of the LMT100 data analysis that were related to the units of analysis, were discussed with a field expert to ensure reliability and validity. Previous studies stated that the emergent themes must be conceptually and empirically grounded, reflect subject of study in reliable manner and illustrate links between the result and data (Dey 1993, Kyngäs and Vanhanen 1999, Polit and Beck 2004).	The data were presented and discussed with a field expert to ensure validity and reliability.

Appendix C

The list of open codes and categories developed from LMT 100 Facebook group interaction		
Category/Themes	Open codes	Sub-codes
Types of Posts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> academic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> quiz university-related <ul style="list-style-type: none"> event contest students course-related <ul style="list-style-type: none"> questionnaire
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> non-academic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> promotion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TV shows, websites services news related to English language self-expression
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> multimedia-based 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> picture video website link document
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> interactive-based 	
Purpose of posts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> soliciting information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> get participants to interact get participants to learn English get participants to answer questions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sharing information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> create jokes content from university-related event self-expression well-wishes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> promoting or advertising 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> university-related events and contests student representatives businesses
Grammar aspects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SMS language 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> spelling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> spelling correction intentional misspelling unintentional misspelling
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> grammar error 	
Choice of language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> English 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> English slang 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Malaysian slang 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Manglish</u> 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Malay language 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other languages 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other languages and English 	
Intended action of post/comment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> apologizing 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> compliment 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> correcting grammar 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> creating rapport with friends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Showing understanding Shared secret
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> encouragement 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> explanation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> telling stories clarification confirmation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> giving advice 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> giving instruction 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> giving opinion 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> help 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> joking 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> persuading 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> politeness 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> promises 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> taking opportunity 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reminder 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> responding to posts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> answering questions noting
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> request 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> recommendation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> showing interest in something 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> self-experience 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> warning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> threatening 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> welcoming 		
Emotion or Feeling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> affection 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> agreement 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> annoyed 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> concerned 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> confidence 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> disagreement 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> embarrass 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> frustration 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> gratitude 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> happy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> excited fun
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> hopeful 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> humble 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> in awe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> eagerness
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> misunderstanding 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> motivational 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> interested to learn
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> obligated to respond 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> panic 		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> proud sad sarcasm satisfied 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> supportive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> friends research
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> surprised sympathy touched well wishes 	
Comments diverge from initial topic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> total divergent diverge and terminate diverge and return to initial topic 	
Emoticons		
Members who post	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> researcher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> post comment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> post comment
Facebook formality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> inviting and adding students 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> general Facebook information 	

Appendix D

Codes and sub-codes that derived from the interview transcripts		
<i>These codes and sub-codes are categorised into pre-set themes that are formed from the questions asked during interview sessions.</i>		
Themes	Codes	Sub-codes
Interviewees' background and characteristics		
1. Students' backgrounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Course at university 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Malay English Difficult courses How English is learnt in LMT class Language preference Memorization
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family background 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students' characteristics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cannot write or speak spontaneously Feel shy to showcase talent Students' principle Students' quest for knowledge Students' talent Students' position Style of talking – make jokes
Interviewees' issues with English language		
2. English language issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Different English ability Perceptions of English language levels Importance of English in course Problems with learning the course in English 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> English learning experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building confidence Only for exams
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disappointment 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facebook and English language issue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eager to learn Yes, Facebook helps English skills Short forms Does not help reading University students cannot live without Facebook Good for English language learning.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenges in practicing English 	

3. Strategies to improve English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen to English songs on YouTube Look into dictionary for unknown English words Read English newspaper Google translate English improves because of other activities too 	
Themes that are general to Facebook		
4. Purpose of Facebook account	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business Group discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correcting friends' mistakes Save time Smooth learning environment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With family With friends Keep in touch with friends Social interaction
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep up with university events, university pressure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share and get knowledge and information Look at important updates or information
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal updates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not excessive personal updates Share pictures
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rarely posting updates Self-expression Talk about important things with friends 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intention to use Facebook 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet new people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In USM environment, not outsiders Learn about their lives
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Play games 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peer pressure 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use informal language on personal Facebook Second account 	
	5. Frequency of accessing Facebook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Before each class Frequency accessing LMT 100 group

6. Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Block certain websites Wi-Fi Good internet connection 	
7. Advantages of Facebook as a social tool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business promotion Entertainment Future career Group discussion 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve language skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writing platform
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet new people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social network Social skills
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multimedia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share multimedia
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Charity good deeds Learn about events for MyCSD
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share and get information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Religious sharing Learn new things
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share opinions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential of Facebook page Ideas not restricted
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustain relationship 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Free 	
8. Disadvantages of Facebook as a social tool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Depend on how people use it Do not see face to face 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fraud 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dangerous for young children Money Hack
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gossips 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Misinterpretation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hurt other people with our writing Making judgement towards other people characteristics
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Argument 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negative comments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adult pages; porn, violent 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neglecting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Studies Family
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Private details 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Viral videos Sign in location kills privacy
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Befriending strangers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social boundary

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Computer virus 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addicted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waste time
9. Facebook as academic tool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facebook is not personal anymore 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facebook becomes more formal Lecture notes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower trend 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not check Facebook all the time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Missed important posts, missed information
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not everybody has Facebook 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People with no Facebook
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preference for traditional learning Personal groups for academic 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practical information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social information
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intention to use Facebook 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sometimes helpful
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convenient Facebook to tell about e-learning 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give ideas freely to stranger Solicit and get help from friends
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers/lecturers' posts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not have to see face to face Save time Interact with teachers/lecturers Marks and grades Some lecturers hate Facebook
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mainly used in USM 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bakal Mahasiswa group Reach every student in university
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not invading personal Facebook space 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many people with Facebook 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> University students cannot live without Facebook
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notes Multimedia Sharing website links
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Save money 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce papers

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trendy technology-wise 		
10. FB as English interaction tool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Like interacting widely 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not suitable • Problems in spelling • Not suitable if only with local friends • Other groups that are related to course are more suitable 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sometimes suitable • Exposure to English language environment • For boosting confidence • Not improving fluency 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suitable • For people who want to learn • Generation Y • If have foreigner friends 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If know more people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not matter if don't know other students to interact 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suitable • If used properly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business promotion • Not anti-other religions • Not funny videos to embarrass others 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase confidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facebook video call 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not only for entertainment • People far apart to interact 		
	11. Other SNSs for academic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edmodo 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rarely accessed
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E-learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More to uploading documents • Some teachers do not upload in e-learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blendspace 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combine social and academic SNSs not a good move 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need SNSs for academic purpose • Instagram 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advantages of Instagram • Disadvantages of Instagram; only pictures 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possibility for other social media 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preference for Facebook 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many people are using it • Students' activities to record songs • Suitable for English interaction
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skype 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group discussion on Skype
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Twitter • Advantages of Twitter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow credible twitter accounts • More personal • Short, concise sentences • Use English to interact on Twitter
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disadvantages of Twitter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cannot create groups • Must be made private • Not secure • Self-expression • Too public for English interaction • Word limit • No twitter account
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WeChat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not for English learning
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YouTube 	
Themes that are specifically related to LMT 100 Facebook group		
12. Types of posts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not too much academic • Relates to LMT 100
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-academic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comics • Current issues • English newspaper • Entertainment • Information • Political issue • Problems face by students at university and in learning English
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both academics and non-academics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As long as in English • How to improve English language • Not personal posts • University related
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interactive-based 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher response than multimedia • People want to share experience • Make new friends • Nice questions • Politeness • Writing skills

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multimedia-based 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Entertainment Lower response than interactive post Maybe not interesting multimedia People do not understand Students have to spend time to look Video
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post that students disliked 	
13. Reasons for participation in LMT 100 Facebook group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attracted to British accent Depend on mood Make new friends 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have many other Facebook groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct discussions in English
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Because researcher asked to join 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To help research
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make the group alive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Naturally active on Facebook
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share and get information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In English
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read posts To check out activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respond to posts
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Related to their LMT 100 course 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To improve English language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family encouragement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep up to date with university events 	
14. Reason for non-participation in Facebook group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Because researcher asked to 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Busy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working part time
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not know about scores 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not know many people in the group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Friends do not join the group Prefer if know the students to interact
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not know what to share 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not know what to post Course not related to others
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not want to comment on unimportant posts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Posts that are not very beneficial
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not know how to join in conversations 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facebook is too general 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People will see every comment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feel that group is not important 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group is not beneficial
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Humble 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Just to get information and check what is posted Naturally not active on Facebook Prefer Malay language Shy Use Twitter more 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lazy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other people can give more commitment
15. Facebook group environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feelings when open the Facebook group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boring Not boring
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disappointed 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fun 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grab chance to ask English questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vocabulary
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Like quizzes, pictures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Easy to memorize
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make new friends 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members try to speak English 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not enough information 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The usual participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Passive students Not very active
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not wasting time but not overly beneficial 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peer support 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Problem with grammar 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read all posts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer to notification Silent reader
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very helpful 	
16. Feeling when want to participate on the group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Afraid 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making mistakes People misinterpreting, get offended People 's judgment If people do not respond
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Willing to correct friends' mistakes in face to face setting 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not afraid 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> That people do not respond Making mistakes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check dictionary if not sure before posting 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Competitive 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confident 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not be afraid to use English Do not be shy Lack time

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Realize that other people make mistakes too
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not confident 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low self-esteem Shyness Scared that other people might know more
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct to the point 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not know many people in the group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prefer if know students to interact Shy around male students, okay around female students
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not care that do not know many people in the group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Because it is educational setting
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embarrass because did not post anything 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not know what to post 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge about course not related to other students Doubting suitability
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Never feel like commenting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not interested to post
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Want to post/comment but did not do it Reason for not posting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feel like have basic English knowledge Depend on the posts/issue The group is not beneficial language-wise
17. Guideline for interaction on the Facebook group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not need guideline for interaction on FB group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Afraid of making grammatical mistakes in postings Already busy with work Complaint of being restricted The need to find outside market for career Facebook is to relax Cons of guidelines Freedom No pressure on members Members will not do the task given Misinterpretation Sensitive issues
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need guidelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not know what to say to each other without guidelines Simple questions give reasons to participate in group Not burdensome tasks Not many people will participate without guidelines Give prompts

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pros of guidelines Students will spend time doing tasks Sustaining interaction Self-expression Students know what to do
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bonus marks for tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fair Feel the need to improve Increase participation Preferable if it leads toward exam Not fair Tasks should be ungraded Embarrass if get low score
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rewards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tangible things; money, food
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequency; not daily 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Voluntary nature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Depends on students Give a little force Not a burden but inactive students Not many people will participate Voluntary nature is preferable
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activities must be made compulsory 	
18. Linking classroom topics to Facebook interaction activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weaknesses Not preferable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facebook is to relax Share information and news
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Benefits Preferable Compulsory/needed Sometimes necessary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exercise For improvement Recap what has already been learnt Not every day, if too much, members will get bored For exams Have not mastered topics Help weak students Make clear advantages Learn short stories from classroom modules Do it in a fun way For discussion
19. Grammar correction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who should correct grammar? Both teachers and students Admin-researcher Students 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoid argument with friends
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correct in writing, do not correct in conversation 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dependent on people 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feeling if grammar is corrected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embarrassment Not embarrass if corrected for grammar mistakes Learning process Think positive Now, feel okay if people correct grammar Will not be posting again if corrected Some people cannot be corrected
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grammar learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not matter if students make mistake In formal classrooms Repetition
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need grammar correction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purpose of group Rule when correcting grammar Sentence structure To avoid committing the same mistakes Poor grammar
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The way grammar is corrected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not embarrass of disappoint students Do not dispute opinions Provide correct version
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Private grammar correction; personal messages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If public correction, other students might regard the corrected students lowly Not showing off
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public grammar correction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other people can learn too
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trend in writing: SMS, internet language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Language development Wrong spelling
20. Grammar vs message	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grammar is more important Always forgot grammar rules Do not worry too much about grammar Message is more important than grammar 	
21. How Facebook group affect English language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvement Build confidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Average to low Need more meaningful, fun activities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not help improve English Facebook group is not helping at all 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not help weak students Do not help speaking
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help improve English 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve a little

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get students to think Give input Help friends improve Learn to answer questions Memorization, to recall Spelling Vocabulary Writing Know the right way to say something
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students' responsibility to improve English 	
22. Peer teaching and learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Friends helping other friends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Friends sharing information Many friends are weak in English Mentor Responsibility to help other friends, improve in English language Teachers or more knowledgeable other must help The potential of Facebook page
23. Researcher's presence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not disturbing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cannot see the researcher Learn from other people's experience Researcher helps a lot Stories about UK Students have respect and boundary
24. Teachers' presence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not need teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Afraid it will affect grades Do not want to follow instructions Not comfortable interacting Non-formal setting Okay for people to correct mistakes Feel pressured Students' private group Teachers might feel offended Researcher's presence is enough Want to learn from friends rather than teachers
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not matter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrator's responsibility
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not too many Not excessive interference Correct mistakes Guidance Help Malay students Motivate students' participations Sensitive issue Teacher must attract students' attention Number of teachers does not matter

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bring students to another level
25. Recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need more meaningful, fun activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More fun, relax topics
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create social event 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why social event is not a good idea Updating events
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage participation from all students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More contribution from other members Sharing and posting ideas/opinions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> English language activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blog Comprehension Contest Story telling Video making Crossword puzzle Debate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why debate is not a good idea Fill in the blanks Quiz Games (e.g typing master) Jokes Sentence construction Short stories Vocabulary Writing Skype with members
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Everyday life topic Simple questions Students do not understand complex questions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share life experience Share UK experience USM experience Motivational stories
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Favourite band, songs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Songs, lyrics
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grammar 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mind map 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Movies, TV shows, videos 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn English from subtitles Do not use dual languages when watching cartoon Current generation vlogger Ellen Degeneres show Recording of English materials and subtitle
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One full English-speaking day 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read novels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Articles Electronic forms 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read the dictionary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electronic dictionary
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recap what has been learnt 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Google translate 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> List of good English tuition places 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open group to other students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bakal Mahasiswa group LSP classes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practical information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practical info rather than technical English knowledge Theory is still important Tips to be confident
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reward 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food MyCSD Not highly necessary
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smaller groups 	
26. Hope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better posts; grammatically correct Guideline by admin Learn together 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LSP 300 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exam papers Syllabus
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More active people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members to share opinions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promises after interview 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved attitude after interview
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strive to change for the better 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be more fluent in English 	
27. Posting responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Authority Not students' responsibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members will follow Benefits from other students' posts
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers' responsibility 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students' responsibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feel the need to help friends Help other students improve English language
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It does not matter 	
28. Other Facebook groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic departments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal and serious announcement English language Discussion Bakal Mahasiswa group Assignments Societies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Businesses 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religion-based • Course-based
29. Issues with using FB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keyboard warrior • Political issues • Curse language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dealing with keyboard warrior • Ignore keyboard warrior
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentiments that relate to Malaysian and Malaysian students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students from East Malaysia (Kelantan-Terengganu) • Educational policy • Hindrance over practicing English • Malay rights • Malaysian traits • Religion • The use of Facebook for academic
28. Facebook social conventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>like</i> or comment when post is important 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>like</i> to show that they have read the posts 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>like</i> to end conversation 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how <i>seen</i> is defined 	

Appendix E

<i>How interviewees' scores are calculated to determine their degree of participation in the Facebook interaction activity</i>						
The score distribution is as follow: Post with multimedia – 5; Post – 4; Comment – 3; Like - 1						
Students	Frequency				Total	Degree of participation
	Post with multimedia	Post	Comment	Like		
1. AE		I	IIII IIII	III	37	Active
2. UMN		I	IIII III	IIII I	34	Active
3. JE			IIII III	IIII II	31	Active
4. YHG	I		IIII II	II	28	Active
5. TM			IIII	IIII II	19	Active
6. SC			II	IIII IIIII III	19	Active
7. ASYA	I		IIII	I	18	Active
8. MRL			III	IIII I	15	Average
9. AA		II	I	III	14	Average
10. MM			III	IIII	13	Average
11. HH			III	IIII	13	Average
12. YHT				IIII IIIII II	12	Average
13. NNN			I	III	6	Average
14. EZ				IIII I	6	Average
15. MFTI	I			I	5	Average
16. AT				IIII	5	Average
17. DZ			I		3	Passive
18. AND				II	2	Passive
19. NHFZ				II	2	Passive
20. FB				I	1	Passive
21. ANH				I	1	Passive
22. FAR					0	Very passive
23. ZFM					0	Very passive
24. KHR					0	Very passive
25. NIN					0	Very passive

Appendix F

4.9.3 Statistical Tests: Mann Whitney U Test

As the data from the questionnaire is ordinal, the Mann Whitney U Test is appropriate in finding any significance of the results.

a. Gender and the effects of Facebook on ELL

The Table below shows the results of the Mann Whitney U Test on gender and the effects of Facebook on ELL.

The p-values from Mann Whitney U Test to determine any significant differences between gender		
	Items	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
English language skills	English proficiency increased	.095
	Learn new English words	-.000
	Learn new English sentences	.000
Attitudes	Liked learning English	.000
	Learning English is easier	.006
	Learning English is more interesting	.003
Motivation	Motivated to use English offline	.010
	Motivated to use English online	.002
	Motivated to communicate with lecturers	.036
Self-confidence	Used English more daily	.024
	Not worried about making mistakes	.280
	More confident to write	.456
	More confident to speak	.866
	More confident to read	.131

The p-values shown in the Table is two-tailed. As I am looking at a one-tailed test (females > males), I halved the p-values to arrive at a one-tailed p-value. For example: The one-tailed p-value for item *English proficiency increased* is $0.095/2=0.0475$.

In each case:

If $p > 0.05$, I accept the H₀.

If $p < 0.05$, there is significant evidence to reject H₀.

If $p < 0.01$, there is a strong evidence to reject H₀.

If $p < 0.001$, there is a very strong evidence to reject H₀.

*H₀ is Null Hypothesis. H₁ is Hypothesis 1.

The H0 and H1 for each item are as follow:

H0 and H1 for gender and the effects of Facebook on English language skills			
	Items	H0	H1
English language skills	English proficiency increased	The average increased in English language proficiency for females is equal to the average in English language proficiency for males.	The average increased in English language proficiency for females is greater to the average in English language proficiency for males.
	Learn new English words	The average increased in learning new English words for females is equal to the average in learning new English words for males.	The average increased in learning new English words for females is greater to the average in learning new English words for males.
	Learn new English sentences	The average increased in learning new English sentences for females is equal to the average in learning new English sentences for males.	The average increased in learning new English sentences for females is greater to the average in learning new English sentences for males.
Attitudes	Liked learning English	The average who liked learning English for females is equal to the average who liked learning English for males.	The average who liked learning English for females is greater to the average who liked learning English for males.
	Learning English is easier	The average who felt learning English is easier for females is equal to the average who felt learning English is easier for males.	The average who felt learning English is easier for females is greater to the average who felt learning English is easier for males.
	Learning English is more interesting	The average who felt learning English is more interesting for females is equal to the average who felt learning English is more interesting for males.	The average who felt learning English is more interesting for females is greater to the average who felt learning English is more interesting for males.
Motivation	Motivated to use English offline	The average who felt motivated to use English offline for females is equal to the average who felt motivated to use English offline for males.	The average who felt motivated to use English offline for females is greater to the average who felt motivated to use English offline for males.
	Motivated to use English online	The average who felt motivated to use English online for females is equal to the average who felt motivated to use English online for males.	The average who felt motivated to use English online for females is greater to the average who felt motivated to use English online for males.
	Motivated to communicate with lecturers	The average who felt motivated to communicate in English with lecturers for females is equal to the average who felt motivated to communicate in English with lecturers for males.	The average who felt motivated to communicate in English with lecturers for females is greater to the average who felt motivated to communicate in English with lecturers for males.
Self-confidence	Used English more daily	The average who used English more daily for females is equal to the average who used English more daily for males.	The average who used English more daily for females is greater to the average who used English more daily for males.

	Not worried about making mistakes	The average who were not worried of making mistakes for females is equal to the average who were not worried of making mistakes for males.	The average who were not worried of making mistakes for females is greater to the average who were not worried of making mistakes for males.
	More confident to write	The average who were more confident to write for females is equal to the average who were more confident to write for males.	The average who were more confident to write for females is greater to the average who were more confident to write for males.
	More confident to speak	The average who were more confident to speak for females is equal to the average who were more confident to speak for males.	The average who were more confident to speak for females is greater to the average who were more confident to speak for males.
	More confident to read	The average who were more confident to read for females is equal to the average who were more confident to read for males.	The average who were more confident to read for females is greater to the average who were more confident to read for males.

Conclusion: Gender and the effects of Facebook on ELL

P-values to accept or reject H0 for gender and the effects of Facebook on English language skills			
	Items	p-value	Conclusion
English language skills	English proficiency increased	0.0475<0.05	Significant evidence to reject H0
	Learn new English words	0.0002< 0.001	Very strong evidence to reject H0
	Learn new English sentences	0.0000< 0.001	Very strong evidence to reject H0
Attitudes	Liked learning English	0.0001<0.001	Very strong evidence to reject H0
	Learning English is easier	0.003<0.01	Strong evidence to reject H0
	Learning English is more interesting	0.0015<0.01	Strong evidence to reject H0
Motivation	Motivated to use English offline	0.005<0.01	Strong evidence to reject H0
	Motivated to use English online	0.0011<0.01	Strong evidence to reject H0
	Motivated to communicate with lecturers	0.018<0.05	Significant evidence to reject H0
Self-confidence	Used English more daily	0.012<0.05	Significant evidence to reject H0
	Not worried about making mistakes	0.14>0.05	Accept H0
	More confident to write	0.228>0.05	Accept H0
	More confident to speak	0.433>0.05	Accept H0
	More confident to read	0.0655>0.05	Accept H0

From the Table above, we could see that there are significant differences between the male and female participants' perceptions for the improvement in their English language skills, attitudes, and motivation to learn English after engaging with Facebook. However, only one item for self-confidence shows significant difference between the gender, while the other four items are equal. The P-values do not tell us the direction of the association. As such, I manually checked mean responses for Female and Male groups. If the Female students' mean scores are bigger than that of the Male students, they indicate the Female students' higher level of agreement to the items compared to the Male students.

Mean scores between male and female students to identify if females' scores are greater than males' scores			
Items		Male	Female
English language skills	English proficiency increased	3.0988	3.2259
	Learn new English words	3.5342	3.8140
	Learn new English sentences	3.3704	3.7692
Attitudes	Liked learning English	3.7099	4.0614
	Learning English is easier	3.0186	3.2873
	Learning English is more interesting	3.5280	3.7877
Motivation	Motivated to use English offline	3.1813	3.4201
	Motivated to use English online	3.3168	3.5908
	Motivated to communicate with lecturers	3.1739	3.3531
Self-confidence	Used English more daily	3.0000	3.2127
	Not worried about making mistakes	3.2037	3.0985
	More confident to write	2.9130	2.9736
	More confident to speak	3.0123	3.0197
	More confident to read	3.5000	3.6236

Based on the statistical scores, the female students show higher improvement in their English language skills, as well as more positive attitudes and motivation towards English learning. Perhaps, this may be due to the females' higher willingness and interests in English learning or academic matters in general. In terms of self-confidence, the female students might have used English more in daily lives as compared to their males' counterpart. However, both males and females were equal in their self-confidence to speak, write, and read in English after engagement with Facebook. This may suggest that both male and female students have similarly felt a boost in their English language skills as a result of their activity on Facebook.

a) Ethnicity and the effects of Facebook on English language skills

The Table below shows the results of the Mann Whitney U Test on ethnicity and the effects of Facebook on ELL. As there are four categories in the variable ethnicity, I use the Kruskal Wallis test to identify if there are any significant differences between the categories.

Kruskal Wallis Test to determine any significant differences between categories of the variable ethnicity		
Items		
English language skills	English proficiency increased	.030
	Learn new English words	.000
	Learn new English sentences	.000

Attitudes	Liked learning English	.027
	Learning English is easier	.000
	Learning English is more interesting	.000
Motivation	Motivated to use English offline	.018
	Motivated to use English online	.012
	Motivated to communicate with lecturers	.100
Self-confidence	Used English more daily	.000
	Not worried about making mistakes	.000
	More confident to write	.037
	More confident to speak	.000
	More confident to read	.000

From the table, all of the p-values are smaller than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$). This indicates that there are significant differences in the students' perceptions of the effects of Facebook for ELL.

From the descriptive statistics presented earlier, I found that the Malay and Indian students exhibited the least variation in responses so that if there were significant differences between these two groups there would also be such differences with other groups. To determine any significant differences between the Malay and Indian students, I use the Mann Whitney U Test.

Mann Whitney U Test to determine any significant differences between Malay and Indian students		
	Items	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
English language skills	English proficiency increased	.013
	Learn new English words	-.521
	Learn new English sentences	.412
Attitudes	Liked learning English	.017
	Learning English is easier	.001
	Learning English is more interesting	.000
Motivation	Motivated to use English offline	.044
	Motivated to use English online	.076
	Motivated to communicate with lecturers	.018
Self-confidence	Used English more daily	.000
	Not worried about making mistakes	.010
	More confident to write	.082

	More confident to speak	.001
	More confident to read	.576

The p-values shown in the Table is two-tailed. As I am looking at a one-tailed test (Indian > Malay), I halved the p-values to arrive at a one-tailed p-value. For example: The one-tailed p-value for item *English proficiency increased* is $0.013/2=0.065$.

In each case:

If $p > 0.05$, I accept the H0.

If $p < 0.05$, there is significant evidence to reject H0.

If $p < 0.01$, there is a strong evidence to reject H0.

If $p < 0.001$, there is a very strong evidence to reject H0.

The H0 and H1 for each item are as follow:

The H0 and H1 for the Malay and Indian students and the effects of Facebook on English language skills			
Items		H0	H1
English language skills	English proficiency increased	The average increased in English language proficiency for Malay students is equal to the average increased in English language proficiency for Indian students.	The average increased in English language proficiency for Indian students is greater to the average in increased English language proficiency for Malay students.
	Learn new English words	The average increased in learning new English words for Malay students is equal to the average in learning new English words for Indian students.	The average increased in learning new English words for Indian students is greater to the average in learning new English words for Malay students.
	Learn new English sentences	The average increased in learning new English sentences for Malay students is equal to the average in learning new English sentences for Indian students.	The average increased in learning new English sentences for Indian students is greater to the average in learning new English sentences for Malay students.
Attitudes	Liked learning English	The average who liked learning English for Malay students is equal to the average who liked learning English for Indian students.	The average who liked learning English for Indian students is greater to the average who liked learning Malay for Indian students.
	Learning English is easier	The average who felt learning English is easier for Malay students is equal to the average who felt learning English is easier for Indian students.	The average who felt learning English is easier for Indian students is greater to the average who felt learning English is easier for Malay students.
	Learning English is more interesting	The average who felt learning English is more interesting for Malay students is equal to the average who felt learning English is more interesting for Indian students.	The average who felt learning English is more interesting for Indian students is greater to the average who felt learning English is more interesting for Malay students.
Motivation	Motivated to use English offline	The average who felt motivated to use English offline for Malay students is equal to the average who felt motivated to use English offline for Indian students.	The average who felt motivated to use English offline for Indian students is greater to the average who felt motivated to use English offline for Malay students.

	Motivated to use English online	The average who felt motivated to use English online for Malay students is equal to the average who felt motivated to use English online for Indian students.	The average who felt motivated to use English online for Indian students is greater to the average who felt motivated to use English online for Malay students.
	Motivated to communicate with lecturers	The average who felt motivated to communicate in English with lecturers for Malay students is equal to the average who felt motivated to communicate in English with lecturers for Indian students.	The average who felt motivated to communicate in English with lecturers for Indian students is greater to the average who felt motivated to communicate in English with lecturers for Malay students.
Self-confidence	Used English more daily	The average who used English more daily for Malay students is equal to the average who used English more daily for Indian students.	The average who used English more daily for Indian students is greater to the average who used English more daily for Malay students.
	Not worried about making mistakes	The average who were not worried of making mistakes for Malay students is equal to the average who were not worried of making mistakes for Indian students.	The average who were not worried of making mistakes for Indian students is greater to the average who were not worried of making mistakes for Malay students.
	More confident to write	The average who were more confident to write for Malay students is equal to the average who were more confident to write for Indian students.	The average who were more confident to write for Indian students is greater to the average who were more confident to write for Malay students.
	More confident to speak	The average who were more confident to speak for Malay students is equal to the average who were more confident to speak for Indian students.	The average who were more confident to speak for Indian students is greater to the average who were more confident to speak for Malay students.
	More confident to read	The average who were more confident to read for Malay students is equal to the average who were more confident to read for Indian students.	The average who were more confident to read for Indian students is greater to the average who were more confident to read for Malay students.

Conclusion: Ethnicity and the effects of Facebook on ELL

P-values and to accept or reject H0 for ethnicity			
	Items	p-value	Conclusion
English language skills	English proficiency increased	0.065 > 0.05	Accept H0
	Learn new English words	0.2605 > 0.05	Accept H0
	Learn new English sentences	0.206 > 0.05	Accept H0
Attitudes	Liked learning English	0.0085 < 0.05	Significant evidence to reject H0
	Learning English is easier	0.0005 < 0.001	Very strong evidence to reject H0
	Learning English is more interesting	0.000 < 0.001	Very strong evidence to reject H0
Motivation	Motivated to use English offline	0.022 < 0.05	Significant evidence to reject H0

	Motivated to use English online	0.038<0.05	Significant evidence to reject H0
	Motivated to communicate with lecturers	0.009<0.05	Significant evidence to reject H0
Self-confidence	Used English more daily	0.000<0.001	Very strong evidence to reject H0
	Not worried about making mistakes	0.005<0.01	Strong evidence to reject H0
	More confident to write	0.41>0.05	Significant evidence to reject H0
	More confident to speak	0.0005<0.001	Very strong evidence to reject H0
	More confident to read	0.288>0.05	Accept H0

From the Table above, the Malay and Indian students showed significant differences in three categories which are attitudes, motivation, and self-confidence, but not language skills.

The P-values do not tell us the direction of the association. As such, I manually checked mean responses for Indian and Malay groups. If the Indian students' mean scores are bigger than that of the Malay students, they indicate the Indian students' higher level of agreement to the items compared to the Malay students.

Mean scores between Indian and Malay students to identify if Indian students' scores are greater than Malay students' scores			
Items		Malay	Indian
English language skills	English proficiency increased	3.2050	3.6250
	Learn new English words	3.8246	3.9583
	Learn new English sentences	3.7904	3.5833
Attitudes	Liked learning English	3.9954	4.3333
	Learning English is easier	3.2580	3.9167
	Learning English is more interesting	3.7699	4.4167
Motivation	Motivated to use English offline	3.3904	3.7500
	Motivated to use English online	3.4579	3.7500
	Motivated to communicate with lecturers	3.2785	3.6667
Self-confidence	Used English more daily	3.0638	3.7500
	Not worried about making mistakes	3.2273	3.7917
	More confident to write	2.9863	3.3333
	More confident to speak	3.0638	3.7500
	More confident to read	3.7045	3.7500

Based on the statistical scores, the Indian students show more positive attitudes and motivation, as well as boosted self-confidence to use English language for speaking and writing after their engagement with Facebook. Perhaps, this is due to the sociocultural factors of personal, societal, and institutional that influence their familiarity with the English language. In terms of English language skills, both the Indian and Malay students demonstrated equal improvement, which may suggest Facebook's suitability as an English learning tool. Added to this, both races are also equally confident to read English language materials after engaging with Facebook, which may be related to personalised content, and self-paced activity.