FACEBOOK: BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN CLASSROOM ENGLISH AND REAL WORLD READING FOR NON-NATIVE LEARNERS OF ENGLISH

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Facebook, a social networking website, is used as a global multi-purpose cyber board in a variety of fields such as education, politics, entertainment, science, and business. Utilizing this easily accessible website in the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) or in the ESL (English as a Second Language) learning scenario could be crucial for the development of integrated English skills for EFL learners. From the researcher's teaching experience, EFL classroom reading materials are limited to commercial textbooks or selected reading articles based on instructors' interests. In order to promote extensive reading and strengthen reading skills, EFL learners should expose themselves to authentic reading outside the classroom and be provided with alternative sources of English learning materials. Based on the popularity of Facebook, this study therefore aimed to encourage extensive reading by employing the website as a cyber forum for EFL undergraduate students, who then shared their reading topics and their reflections on applying classroom reading strategies to reading English in real world contexts with other Facebook members. This eventually led to the main research question: To what extent did EFL undergraduate students develop their extensive reading on Facebook? The study methodology was designed for qualitative, action research conducted with a group of 31 undergraduate Thai students taking the course, "Reading and Discussion". The data for the findings was derived from two sources: 1) from the articles, new words, reading strategies, reflections, and comments posted on Facebook during the 14 weeks of the university semester, and 2) from the responses to a structured interview questionnaire. The data was then qualitatively analysed and categorised relative to the main research question and other related aspects. The findings revealed that female participants were likely to read and post topics related to health care, beauty, and fashion, while males were more interested in current news and different content-based topics. Results on effective strategies included using context clues to guess the meaning of new words, and analyzing the first sentence of each paragraph of an article to scope the subject area, the topic or the direction of the article. In addition, new words, idioms, and expressions learned from each article were detailed. The main conclusions drawn from this study covered the advantages of using Facebook for bridging the gap between classroom English to authentic English reading in real world contexts. Discussions on the drawbacks and implications of Facebook were also included in the study.

Keywords: Reading strategies, Social networking, EFL/ESL learning, English reading, Facebook.

INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the four macro skills necessary to be continually developed in learning and using a language for effective communication. In the contexts of teaching and learning English as a foreign language (EFL), reading skills appear to play a more dominant role than the other three skills (i.e. listening, speaking, and writing). English reading skills, in particular, tend to be frequently employed in everyday reading for different purposes. For instance, product brands, labels, electrical appliance manuals and advertisements are mainly presented in English, as well as information from the Internet. English users or learners are therefore familiar with using English reading skills to obtain information from a variety of sources surrounding them.

However, in academic contexts, readers usually employ both general reading skills and specific strategies to achieve their reading goals. When the EFL/ESL context of English reading is taken into account, awareness of appropriate reading strategies seems to be crucial for the development of reading performance. Research findings on using reading strategies and strategy-based instruction have demonstrated that explicit teaching of strategies has raised awareness and enhanced the reading performance of EFL learners (Boonkit 2007). This research result is expected to support extensive reading in real world contexts, which consequently links the experience or skills the students gain from the classroom with reading extensively in real situations. Based on the strategy-based instruction employed in reading classes, it has been observed that specific strategies, such as learning to analyse complicated sentences in each paragraph of a reading passage or article, produced interesting results. These included, in particular, the achievement of success in reading comprehension and the understanding of vocabulary. This study is therefore designed to focus on the analysis of complicated sentence structures, with the aim of obtaining and understanding information while at the same time guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words within a reading text.

The employment of Internet social networking websites, such as using weblogs to enhance the development of the English skills of EFL university students in a Thai context, was found effective (Noytim 2010). However, no research on the integration of Facebook with EFL/ESL learning for undergraduate students in the Thai context has yet been conducted. As Facebook is currently the most popular social networking website this study focused on utilising this easily accessible website as a discussion forum for course participants to activate their English reading strategies learned from the classroom and promote their extensive reading activities outside the classroom. This is one way of applying classroom English to real world contexts, an ultimate goal of teaching and learning English in EFL/ESL contexts. In addition, independent or autonomous reading on a variety of topics in the real world would enrich the world knowledge and English reading skills of the EFL learners.

In order to maximize the objectives of the course "Reading and Discussion", in which this action research was to be conducted, the study was designed to employ Facebook as a web board for the research participants to reflect their strategy use in academic reading, and to express their opinions related to reading topics in class, other topics chosen by themselves or those posted by their Facebook friends.

The employment of Facebook as a discussion board for the course participants was expected to encourage the EFL learners to use their English in an active way, particularly to link their classroom English experience to real world contexts.

This study therefore posed three research questions: 1) What strategies were used effectively in English reading?, 2) To what extent did Facebook enhance the development of

reading and discussion for Thai EFL undergraduates?, and 3) What reading topics or issues were popularly posted and discussed on Facebook?

The study was expected to reveal contributions to EFL/ESL academic reading such as the awareness of using appropriate strategies for effective reading, and other by-products of employing the familiar Facebook website as a discussion board. The strengths and weaknesses of employing Facebook in EFL/ESL learning would be additional results of the study. The design of the study was intended to link classroom reading to real world reading and also to integrate Internet technology with an EFL/ ESL classroom environment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The reviews of related literature for this study covered aspects of the nature of reading and comprehension, learning strategies, reading strategies, extensive reading, and Facebook, a social networking website.

The Nature of Reading and Comprehension

Reading can be defined as the process of recognition, interpretation, and perception of written or printed material (Sheng 2000). While reading, readers usually try to gain information from the text, either a short or long reading text. Reading comprehension occurs when readers understand the meaning of the written material. At this stage conscious strategies are employed to a certain extent, which leads to understanding. Thus, the process of reading deals with language form, while comprehension, the end product, deals with language content.

Another view on reading is that reading is a process of communication from the writer to the reader. It involves the recognition of letters, words, phrases, and clauses, and in some respects, it can be considered a simpler process than comprehension. Comprehension, on the other hand, is a process of negotiating an understanding between the reader and the writer. It is a more complex psychological process and includes linguistic factors, such as phonological, morphological, syntactic, and semantic elements, in addition to cognitive and emotional factors. The reader receives information from the author via the words, sentences and paragraphs, and tries to understand the inner feelings of the writer (see also in Sheng 2000). Thus, when EFL/ESL readers want to read any reading text, they should put themselves in the writer's position and then ask themselves what the exact message, opinion, or argument the writer wants to express in their text. This text analysis would assist readers to gain the main points during reading or during their communication process with the writer. Aspects relevant to reading comprehension are documented in the following items.

Reading in EFL/ESL Contexts

Reading is considered a complicated process, especially reading for comprehension in EFL/ESL contexts. When EFL/ESL readers want to read English for comprehension, they usually employ a number of accumulated language learning factors. To be able to claim that comprehension occurs, readers need to elicit all the language elements that play a significant role in reading comprehension. These include functions of words in the text, the topic of the text, the structure of each sentence, the structure of each paragraph in the text, the main idea of the text, the main idea of each paragraph, the meaning of key words in the text, the writer's point of view, the

writer's attitude, the writer's writing style, and structures of essays or articles (see Thuss 1999). In addition, other essential practices involve prediction during the pre-reading activities; guessing meanings of words and understanding the main idea, references, and details during the while-reading; and analyzing the text for inferences or implications during the post reading activities. In other words, when reading, readers engage in integrated activities such as recalling word meanings, inferring, and drawing conclusions, which are all intertwined aspects of the act of comprehending.

When academic reading is taken into account, reading for comprehension is essential in academic learning areas, in both EFL and ESL, to professional success, and to lifelong learning. In a review of the second language reading research, Grabe (1991) asserts that the crucial importance of reading skills in academic contexts has led to considerable research on reading in a second language. Levine, Ferenz and Reves (2000) also emphasize that the development of the learner's ability to read academic texts is considered one of the most important skills that undergraduate students of English as a foreign language (EFL) and English as a second language (ESL) need to acquire. To confirm that choices of reading strategy play a significant role in the reading skills development, Shuyun and Munby (1996) note that ESL academic reading is a very deliberate, demanding and complex process in which the students are actively involved in a repertoire of reading strategies. Current research has shown that, based on the specific needs of their research projects, professional readers make choices as to what to read. That is to say, when readers encounter comprehension problems they use strategies to overcome their difficulties. Different learners seem to approach reading tasks in different ways, and some of these ways appear to lead to better comprehension. It has been noted that some strategies lead to success; however, some readers are not successful when they try to use a variety of strategies to gain comprehension. This indicates that training on the employment of appropriate strategies for a particular type or topic of the text still needs to be stressed.

Bottom-up versus Top-down Processes

Reading in a second language requires an analysis of the task facing the non-native reader. There are a number of aspects of the problem that the reader has to overcome and the two types of reading processes (bottom-up and top-down) are employed during the following reading activities.

- Identification of word meaning
- Recognition of grammatical cues
- Recognition of print and orthographic cues
- Use of contextual information
- Use of background knowledge
- Discrimination of author's intention
- Discrimination of main and supporting points
- Reconstruction of the argument
- Recognition of the type of text.
  (McDonough 1995, p. 36)

McDonough (1995) has also summarized the bottom-up as the text-driven process and the top-down as the concept-driven process. In other words, the bottom-up process focuses on the use of language-specific knowledge to decode language elements such as recognition of syntactic

structure, lexical cohesion, word meaning, punctuation, morphology, etc.(p.37). While, the top-down process is activated when the emphasis is on the use of pre-existing knowledge of text structures and content to predict or anticipate the events and meanings of the reading text.

Similarly, researchers on reading in a second language pointed out that readers often use two processing skills to comprehend the text, which include bottom up and top down processing skills (Carrell 1988). Birch (2002) also emphasized that reading is seen as interaction between top and bottom reading processes taking place between reader and text, and between reader and writer. Fluent readers often integrate both bottom-up and top- down processing skills for their full comprehension. To detail the reading process, Gagne et al. (1993) subdivided the reading process into four subgroups: *decoding, literal comprehension, inferential comprehension, and comprehension monitoring*. The first two subgroups involve the bottom up processing skills; the latter two subgroups involve the top down processing skills.

Decoding, composed of automated basic skills, is the procedure whereby readers try to change the code of print and make it meaningful. At the level of literal comprehension the reader uses knowledge attained through the decoding processes to begin full comprehension of a text beyond the word level.

Literal comprehension is composed of two processes. The first is lexical access, which begins once the decoding process has activated the word precept in long term declarative memory. Since words possess both denotative and connotative (or contextual) meanings, it is through the process of lexical access that the reader selects the correct interpretation for the word in the context being read. Selection of the correct interpretation is dependent on the reader's store of declarative lexical knowledge. The second element involved in literal comprehension is parsing, the process whereby the reader combines word meanings through the syntactic and the linguistic rules of language to achieve meaningful ideas. Both lexical access and parsing, which are dependent on decoding skills, combine to provide literal comprehension (Gagne et al. 1993).

The third process, *inferential comprehension*, is a mix of automated skills, conceptual understanding, and strategies. Inferential comprehension is composed of three sub-processes: integration, which produces a coherent representation of a text; summarization, which functions to provide for the reader an overall representation of the writer's meaning which can be stored in declarative memory; elaboration, the process whereby the reader brings prior knowledge to bear upon the writer's meaning (Gagne et al. 1993).

The fourth and final component of the reading process is *comprehension monitoring*, a mix of automated skills and strategies. The function of comprehension monitoring in skilled reading is to ensure that reading goals are being accomplished effectively and efficiently. It is composed of four sub-processes: goal-setting, strategy selection, goal-checking, and remediation or correction (Gagne et al. 1993). As Grabe (1991) argued, "a description of reading has to account for the notions that fluent reading is rapid, purposeful, interactive, comprehending, flexible, and gradually developing" (p. 378).

Learning Strategies

The term, strategies, has a variety of implications. In the area of second-language learning, McDonough (1995) divided the meaning of this term into four different categories (e.g. an organizing principle or policy, an alternative to calculate by rule, compensation, and plans). The category of 'compensation' appears to be the most appropriate meaning of the term 'strategies' in second/foreign language learning. Generally strategies are used to overcome communication

breakdown and they are also used to form alternatives within the target language to solve problems encountered by second language users.

A general definition of learning strategies would be "specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective and more transferable to new situations." (Oxford 1990, p. 8). Learning strategies have received a lot of attention since the late 1970s and the investigation of language learning strategies has advanced our understanding of the processes learners use to develop their skills in a second or foreign language learning situation.   Learning strategies play an important role in second language acquisition (SLA) and this has been highlighted in the research by O'Malley & Chamot (1990).

The concept of "learning strategies" is based in part on cognitive learning theory, in which learning is seen as an active, mental, learner-constructed process. A seminal definition of language learning strategies was developed by Oxford (1990), and is described as specific, self-directed steps taken by learners to enhance their own learning. The most comprehensive language learning strategy scheme, the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), developed by Oxford, separates strategies into two strategy orientations and six strategy groups: (1) a direct learning orientation, consisting of (a) memory, (b) cognitive, and (c) linguistic deficiency compensation strategy groups, and (2) an indirect learning orientation, consisting of (a) metacognitive, (b) affective, and (c) social strategy groups.

The first step in strategy instruction is the generation of awareness, which can be accomplished by introducing the concept of learning strategies and having learners complete a learning strategies use assessment. Assessment activities such as surveys, think-alouds, diaries, and group discussions do not explicitly or directly implement strategy instruction. Instead they can be used to help students reflect on their own intuitive and pre-existing intentional strategy use.

At the attention level, the language learning strategies model is introduced and learners note which strategies are used for specific learning tasks and objectives, thereby developing an individual database of learning strategies. Intentionality is an active step in which learners autonomously select strategies for learning objectives on the basis of a triangular fit of individual learner/learning objective/learning strategy, and their increasing experience.

Reading Strategies

Reading strategies are considered part of learning strategies. Reading strategies indicate how readers conceive of a task, how they make sense of what they read, and what they do when they do not understand. Such strategies are used by the reader to enhance reading comprehension and overcome comprehension failure. In other words, reading strategies designed to improve reading comprehension have a number of purposes: 1) to improve understanding of the organization of information in a text; 2) to make reading a more active process; 3) to improve attention and concentration while reading; 4) to enhance understanding of the information presented in a text; 5) to increase personal involvement in the reading material; 6) to promote critical thinking and evaluation of reading material; and 7) to enhance registration and recall of text information in memory.

Scope of Reading Comprehension Strategies

Reading strategies are mainly used to enhance the understanding of information in the text or to avoid failures in comprehension. Many factors are involved in failures in text comprehension,

most of which are caused by readers. Examples of such factors include a lack of interest in the topic or text, or failures to understand the meaning of words, sentences or organization of texts. Therefore, strategies designed to eliminate comprehension difficulties can be used by both students and instructors. The scope of strategies includes the following.

- Strategies related to the interests and concentration of readers
- Strategies related to vocabulary
- Strategies related to text organization
- Strategies related to the general language abilities of readers

Readers use reading strategies so that they are more effective and efficient as readers. Therefore, effective strategies in learning foreign or second languages in SILL (Oxford 1990), particularly the strategies relating to reading used by EFL/ESL readers were integrated into this research. Basically, EFL/ESL teachers or learners are familiar with a number of strategies suggested for foreign or second language learners and the four strategies usually emphasized in reading English in academic contexts include predicting, guessing from context, skimming, and scanning.

Suggested Reading Strategies

As strategies are considered 'tools' for readers to make their reading successful, types of strategy for academic English reading are suggested in a number of textbooks for EFL/ESL learners (Hartmann 1999; Hartmann & Blass 1999; Oxenden &Latham-Koenig 1999, 2001). These strategies are detailed in EFL textbooks; they are therefore considered as basic or general reading strategies for non-native speakers of English. A list of suggested strategies is as follows:

- predicting content from headings
- looking quickly through the text for information
- retelling what you have read
- remembering information from a text
- using topic sentences to understand a text
- separating fact from opinion
- understanding groups of words or sentences, not just individual words
- guessing unknown words from the context
- using a dictionary when you cannot guess important words
- highlighting important words and writing them down in a notebook
- making inferences
- skimming for main topics
- finding details
- understanding parts of speech
- keeping a word journal
- determining point of view
- understanding pronoun references
- making predictions
- understanding idioms
- thinking ahead

- reading for the main idea
- using pictures and captions to preview
- using maps and graphs
- organising information
- outlining the information

Shang (2010) conducted research on reading strategies in Taiwan and reported interesting findings on three effective reading strategies, which were cognitive, metacognitive, and compensation strategies. The study revealed that the most frequently used reading strategy was the metacognitive strategy, followed by the compensation strategy, and then the cognitive strategy. In addition, there was a significant positive relationship between the use of reading strategies and perceptions of self-efficacy. However, reading strategies in this study were found to be unrelated to reading achievement.

A similar study related to reading strategies and reading self-efficacy was conducted with a hundred and eighty two sophomore English majors in a university in China. The findings showed that reading self-efficacy was significantly positively related to the use of reading strategies in general and the use of three subcategories of reading strategies: metacognitive strategies; cognitive strategies; and social/affective strategies (Li and Wang 2010).

Extensive Reading

Extensive reading refers to reading a wide range of texts in English. Day and Bamford (1998) realize the importance of extensive reading and stress the value of extensive reading: 'good things happen to students who read a great deal in the new language' because their lexis gets richer, their skills in the language improve and, therefore, they become more confident learners. Bell (1998) also emphasized that providing EFL/ESL learners with extensive reading programs was effective in terms of enhancing the development of English learning skills, motivation, and autonomous learning. Apart from this, Day and Bamford (2002) supported the encouragement of EFL students to read extensively by focusing on real-world reading materials that were appropriate for the linguistic ability of the students and covered topics that interested them.

When the target language learners are encouraged to read a variety of texts extensively, they will develop a number of reading skills; for example, reading extensively helps them to read faster and understand more, helps them to read in meaningful phrases, rather than word-by-word, increases their confidence in their reading, increases their knowledge of vocabulary, consolidates grammatical knowledge, and helps to improve writing proficiency and oral fluency.

Basic principles and practical reading guidelines have been documented in research and articles on successful reading, which cover the following (Ono, Day & Harsch 2004).

- Read for general understanding.
- Ignore unknown or difficult words. Skip them and continue reading.
- Avoid using dictionaries.

When students read extensively, it is not necessary to read for 100 percent comprehension. On the contrary, they should simply read for general, overall understanding. This means that they should be able to follow the general storyline and grasp the main ideas of the text. In extensive reading, the aim is to read a great many books, so it is in the learners' best interest not to struggle over every detail and worry about the exact meaning of every word or phrase.

Teachers can also encourage students to change their habits of relying on dictionaries whenever they encounter unfamiliar words. Introducing context clues might help them to read faster and understand the main points at the same time.

Sometimes, however, it is not possible to guess the meaning of some key words, especially when there are many unfamiliar words in the text. In such situations, students are allowed to consult a dictionary (Ono, Day, & Harsch 2004).

Nation (1997) asserted the significance of extensive reading activities in his study, stating that the advantages involve improvement in reading and associated skills, covering broad areas of language use, knowledge, and affective benefits. Learners could also develop writing skills while enjoying English learning and realizing the value of English study. Employing extensive reading programs was in accordance with interviews conducted with thirty-six teachers in New Zealand supporting positive attitudes and the learning benefits of extensive reading programs in language centres or higher educational contexts (Macalister 2010).

Strategies for extensive reading in English for EFL/ESL students usually involve the two approaches of reading, namely the bottom-up and top-down approaches. In the bottom-up approach, readers generally focus on language elements such as grammar, vocabulary and cohesion, while the employment of their background knowledge of content and text organization plays an important role in the reading process, using a top-down approach (Singhal 2006; Varaprasad 2009*)*.

Facebook

Facebook was designed by a Harvard student, Mark Zuckerberg, and a few classmates in 2003 and it was launched in 2004 (Stone 2006). It is a free-access social networking site that is privately owned by Facebook, Inc.

Facebook is currently the most popular social networking website. It can be a platform for an organization, such as a school or business, which helps members identify each other. It is also a website for members to post their profiles including names, birthdates, pictures, and interests.

FACEBOOK is the registered trademark of Facebook, Inc. (Facebook 2011). Apart from Facebook, there are a number of popular social networking websites worldwide, such as Twitter, MySpace and LinkedIn.

According to Moir (2010), Facebook and Twitter are considered popular tools as they provide business advantages because they created interactive communities. Red (2009) points out that Facebook is beneficial for both business contact and global communication among Facebook members.

Facebook, as a means of cyber communication, could lead to risks such as the posting of inappropriate photos which might result in having trouble when applying for a job (Stone 2006). This example could raise awareness for the use of caution in using social network websites.

Research into Facebook becoming involved with EFL/ESL has found to be limited. However, other aspects of social networking websites such as Facebook and Twitter have been investigated in terms of using these websites as alternative media for democratic society. This study was written in the Thai language. It was found that these social networking websites were effective to some extent for interest groups to share their views in social sciences (Nakthong &Thammaneewong 2010).

Most EFL/ESL learners in this cyberspace era tend to be familiar with Facebook or Twitter, therefore this study has integrated Facebook with a teaching and learning approach. The rationale behind the use of Facebook was to encourage natural ways of reading in real world contexts

combined with posting what the students read, while at the same time sharing comments on their friends' topics. This was expected to help the learners, especially those in EFL contexts, to be able to link their classroom reading skills to real world use of reading and to encourage them to develop their critical thinking skills when reading either the topics they chose themselves or other Facebook friends' topics.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology of the research procedure was comprised of three major sections: research framework, subjects and research instruments, and data collection and analysis.

Research Framework

Employing Facebook, a social networking website, as a gap-bridging instrument between classroom English reading experiences and strategies and reading in real situations, performed by non-native learners of English at university level.

Classroom Reading Experiences and Reading Strategies	Facebook as a Discussion Board	Real World Reading as Extensive Reading Activities
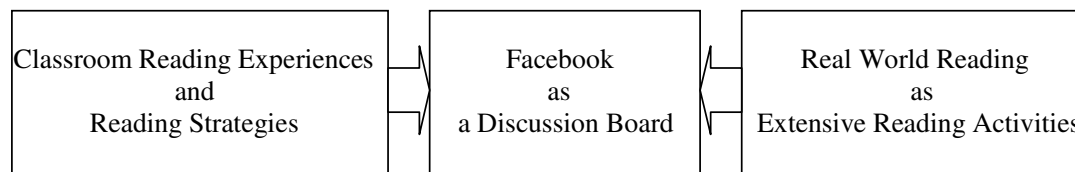
In this framework of the study, the implications of teaching English for communication, task-based language teaching, and considering English as a global language as detailed in Nunan (2002, 2003, 2004) played an important role in the research design.

Subjects and Research Instruments

The Research Subjects

The subjects for the study were obtained from one group of approximately thirty students of the regular course 412 101 Reading and Discussion, a required course for second year students expecting to take English as their major or minor subject in Semester I of the academic year 2010 at the Faculty of Arts, Silpakorn University. The participants were invited to use Facebook as a discussion board on a voluntary basis. Twenty-eight subjects regularly participated in the reading activities initiated and used Facebook as a board to reflect their reading topics, strategies used, and also what they learned from their independent reading outside the classroom.

The Research Instruments

The instruments used for the data collection consisted of the following items:

1. Instruction sheet for reading activities and registration for a Facebook account.
2. A structured questionnaire.

3. Facebook information posted by the research participants: reading topics, strategies used, and what was learned from real world reading activities.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data Collection

The data collection of this study started in late June, 2010, the first month of the first semester of the new academic year in Thailand. The data collection procedures were as follows:

1. The students in one class of the course 412 101 were introduced to an extensive reading activity performed outside the classroom. Their participation was on a voluntary basis.
2. Facebook, one of the most popular social networking websites, was selected to be used as a discussion board for the research participants to share their reading topics, reading strategies, and what they learned from their reading in real world contexts. This activity was considered as one way of encouraging EFL students to use their four integrated English skills in real world communication.
3. Each participant was encouraged to read topics in real world English and he/she could invite their Facebook friends to post their reflections and to share reading ideas, strategies, and new vocabulary.
4. The researcher was also invited to read and give comments on each participant's reading topics.
5. The research participants were encouraged to feel comfortable when posting topics. There were no limitations of number of topics, however, for this study, they were encouraged to link their reading strategies learned from class to their reading in real world situations.

Data Analysis

For this paper, the posted information retrieved from Facebook and the participants' responses on the structured interview questionnaire were analysed for the research findings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study were presented based on the research questions. Twenty-eight participants voluntarily participated in the research, however not all of them became regular readers and Facebook users. Therefore, the information used for the research findings was retrieved from the information posted by 'regular' Facebook users and from the responses from the questionnaires on using Facebook in the reading activities.

1) What strategies were used effectively in English reading?

2) To what extent did Facebook enhance the development of reading and discussion for Thai EFL undergraduates?

3) What reading topics or issues were popularly posted and discussed on Facebook?

1.   What strategies were used effectively in English reading?

The reading strategies, as reported by research participants, to be effective for reading English in real world contexts are displayed verbatim in Table 1.

Table 1 Effective reading strategies posted on Facebook.

Reported effective reading strategies
I read the whole paragraph once then read it again and find the definition of the words, I don't know their meaning. After that, I read it again.
There are a few complicated sentences in this article. I have to read slowly to understand in some sentences.
I scan it quickly. This article is complex. I just look up unknown vocabularies in dictionary to understand
This is a short, easy paragraph. I take a little time read it and i can understand the whole paragraph without using dictionaries
I scan it quickly once. Then I reread the whole article again
I read the article slowly and understand in one time. Then I use dictionary to find the definition of some vocabularies I don't know.
I read the whole paragraph once then read it again and find the definition of the words, I don't know their meaning. After that, I read it again.
Some sentences are rather complicated, so I have to analyze the structure carefully. It helps me a lot!
Firstly, I read the title and the first paragraph carefully, and try to understand it clearly. I have to read it twice!! Secondly, I scan the whole article quickly in order to form my knowledge background about the topic. Next, I read the whole passage and try to guess the meaning of unknown words by findings its clue. I will use a dictionary, if I can't find its clue.
Firstly, I scan all of the text to see what it is talking about. next find some words that it is interesting and look up for the meaning in my dictionary. then I read all of the text again to make sure that I understand it right.
I scan it quickly at first ... Read by skip unknown vocabularies. Then read it again by look up some complicated vocabularies in dictionary so that I can understand the whole of this article.
I scan it quickly and then look up some words in dictionary.
The way I read this article is firstly scan all of article and surely I don't understand what the purpose of this article, so I read it again and again at least twice times to try to understand what the author says. Finally, I make sure I understand it all, so I put this article on my Facebook and share to my friends.

I guess unknown words by their contexts.
Firstly, I read the first paragraph, and then imagine what the next paragraph will talk about. This strategy helps me understand the article vividly.

Discussion of the Findings

Reading strategies and how to use them for academic English reading were regularly emphasised in the classroom and were found to be effective to some extent (Boonkit 2007). The research participants were encouraged to use any type of reading strategy learned from the classroom when they read texts or articles of interest to them in real world reading contexts. The participants tended to employ basic reading strategies such as reading the title, reading the first paragraph, scanning the whole paragraph, and guessing the meaning of new words using the context clues. All the strategies applied to read real world English were found to be in accordance with the findings and suggestions in previous studies related to EFL learning and reading strategies (see also McDonough 1995; Nation 1997; Nunan 2004; O'Malley & Chamot 1990; Oxenden, & Latham-Koenig 2001; and Oxford 1990). The activity of reading outside the classroom and posting articles to share with Facebook friends was found to help the EFL undergraduate students to link their classroom experience with their independent reading of different topics mainly available on the Internet. Facebook was an easily accessible discussion board for them to post articles, or to express ideas or comments on their friends' topics or articles, and also to read their friends' comments. Facebook could be considered to be an academic board for the research participants. They had freedom in their extensive reading, which was believed to gradually help them improve their English skills and critical thinking processes.

2. **To what extent did Facebook enhance the development of reading and discussion for Thai EFL undergraduates?**

The research participants reported what they learned from the extensive reading activity in terms of contents and vocabulary, which was likely to enhance the development of their reading skills and also provided them with the opportunity to naturally use their four integrated skills of reading, writing, thinking, and expressing ideas, comments or reflections in real world contexts. The findings in this section were analysed based on the responses from the structured questionnaire. They are displayed as verbatim responses in Table 2 and Table 3.

Table 2. Advantages of using Facebook for reading and discussion.

Advantages of extensive reading and using Facebook
It can help improve English by posting what ever you want, we can speak with native speakers; native speakers can correct or comment our English
I think it's useful for life. I can practice my English by choosing the articles I'm interested in and translate by myself. I know a lot of vocabulary and I know what my friends like or are crazy about.
I think this activity can reinforce my writing skills when I express my opinion by writing during the discussion. When using the board, it made me think over for the best sentence posting on the board.

It's good. Students can talk to each other and to teacher about way to learn the subject than in the classroom.
It's a good way to improve reading and writing skills. I can share ideas and my friends an share ideas on the board.
It's good that using Facebook can link classroom English to real world English.
This activity helps support other skills like computer skills. Students would read articles that are interesting to him or her. Students will receive news that happened recently in the world. It's good to update new things while improving English skills.
It's convenient, not complicated to use to practice using English skills.
It's useful and improve reading skills. It helps broaden our perspective on internet. We can express and exchange ideas with our friends with freedom.
It's very useful. It can link the students to the real world because we can form the idea from reality many articles from the outside.
It's very useful. It give Facebook to use it in an appropriate way.
It's good to me to use Facebook to learn or express ideas in English, to show my opinions in English,that is a good way to practice my English skills.
It's helps to use everyday English.
I can think and write in English better.
It's useful as Facebook can be a means for communication and share knowledge.
It's useful because English is used to talk with friends, instead of Thai
It's good. It improved my skills. I got the knowledge and advantage from internet more than common.

Table 3. New words reportedly learned from each article.

Article Title	New Vocabulary
Caring for your keyboards	brethren, sturdy, blot, adequately
A coffee gift basket	pricey, prohibitive, affordable, cellophane, brew, grinder
Quick tips: defining an Asian eye	crease, lash, multiple, pale, lid, striking, applicator, dip in, smudge, coat with, wiggle, sparse, q-tip
How to Lose Weight - The Basics of Weight Loss	drastic, infomercial, subtract
What are the benefits of wholegrain cereals ?	mainstay, starchy, endosperm, intestinal
Maybelline, our history mascara	concoction, formula, notion
Korean wave ..	coin, overwhelm, surpass, momentum

Discussion of the Findings

The responses, which related to the advantages of extensive reading outside the classroom and using Facebook, were derived from the students taking the course Reading and Discussion. Almost all the course participants showed positive attitudes towards the use of Facebook for the reading activity, which accordingly enhanced the development of their reading and discussion skills, particularly through integrating the English skills in their reading and giving comments on the topics or articles posted by other Facebook friends. It was a good opportunity for them to reflect on why they chose the topics and what they learned from reading each topic or article. One of the reasons why most participants supported the idea of using Facebook to bridge the gap between reading English in the classroom and real world reading was that at the time when the research took place, Facebook seemed to be the most popular social networking website for the research participants, other undergraduate peers, and others interested in cyber communications (Red 2009; Moir 2010). In addition, the new words obtained from each article and posted on Facebook could be strong evidence that the extensive reading activity could help the participants to learn new vocabulary, which consequently enhanced the development of reading of EFL learners (Singhal 2006; Varaprasad 2009).

However, a few participants of the study also expressed concerns when using Facebook as a discussion board for their extensive reading activities. The limitations of using Facebook to post topics or articles read included their time management when using Facebook, the inconvenience when accessing the Internet, and Facebook often distracted them and encouraged them to spend more time on other Internet searching activities, apart from posting reading articles and giving comments on their Facebook friends' articles.

3.   What reading topics or issues were popularly posted and discussed on Facebook?

More than 70 different topics were posted during the four months (June-September, 2010). These topics showed the individuals' interests. Knowing the areas of the students' interests could be beneficial for classroom materials in terms of choosing reading topics for the course. The titles of the articles posted on Facebook are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Titles of articles posted on Facebook.

Participants	Article Titles
P 1 Female	Take a walk, live longer
	American fried rice is not from America
	Can your neck tell you if you're overweight?
P 2 Male	A day in the life of a flight attendant
	Caring For Your Keyboards
	The importance of networking in business
P 5 Male	Capitalism is much more than an economic system
	Scientists See Serious Health Risks in Gulf Oil Spill
P 6 Female	A coffee gift basket …

	Aromatherapy
P 7 Female	Maybelline, our history mascara
	What are the benefits of wholegrain cereals
P 9 Female	Protecting your eyes from the sun
	The Health Benefits of Listening to Music
P 10 Female	Does drinking ice water burn calories?
P 12 Female	13 foods with natural umami*
P 15 Female	Quick tips: defining an Asian eye
	How to Lose Weight - The Basics of Weight Loss**
P 17 Female	Letter from Apple Regarding iPhone 4
P 19 Female	Don't just sip it, eat it!
P 21 Female	Cappuccino coffee
	Sugar Free Chocolate
P 23 Female	Simple Strategies to Stay Happy
P 27 Female	Korean wave ..
P 28 Female	How to lose weight fast without exercise
	* popular topics as they received most comments from Facebook friends

Discussion of the Findings

Between late June and early September, 2010, more than seventy articles in different topic areas were posted by twenty-eight research participants. Some participants posted more articles than others. Time constraints/management when using the internet and Facebook were likely to limit their frequent participation in this reading activity.

The findings in this research question were interesting in that female participants tended to post topics related to health care and beauty, while the topics posted by the male participants appeared to be more content-based. It was also found that the topics that were close to their health or personal appearance improvement were found popular for Facebook friends. For example, the topic 'How to Lose Weight - The Basics of Weight Loss**'** and the topic '13 foods with natural umami' received nine comments on Facebook, which was the highest number of comments received from all the other articles or topics. This could support the theory that those two topics, which were close to the participants' health and appearance, were found interesting to the participants. However, other topics or articles also received a variety of comments from Facebook friends. The findings could be useful for EFL lecturers when they select topics and design reading courses at the undergraduate level.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The study of using Facebook, a social networking website, as a bridge to link the classroom English experiences of EFL undergraduate students in the Thai context, has revealed substantial outcomes in terms of the students' capabilities when applying English in a real-world setting. The findings of the study have supported the main purpose of learning English in non-native environments in that students can use English for communication. In other words, this study has encouraged the students to develop their reading skills and using a variety of reading strategies learned in the classroom. More importantly, the effectiveness of using a learner-centered approach, independent reading, and extensive reading tended to gradually develop among the research participants and consequently strengthen their real world English skills. In addition, the research design of integrating Facebook into the language pedagogy could help raise EFL students' awareness of using social networking websites to serve not only their own everyday socializing activities with Facebook friends, but also for academic purposes. Extensive reading activities could broaden the students' world knowledge based upon the individuals' topics of interest. The comments on the reading topics posted by other Facebook friends appeared to enhance the development of the students' critical thinking skills. Advantages, however, usually go together with drawbacks. The limitations of students' use of Facebook to post topics or articles included their time management when using Facebook, the inconvenience of access to the internet, and the fact that Facebook often encouraged them to spend more time on other Internet searching activities, besides posting reading articles, and giving comments on their Facebook friends' articles. These disadvantages could limit their time for academic purposes.

The implications of Facebook or other social networking websites could be varied depending on research purposes, research designs, and the contexts where English is used; for example, encouraging EFL students to use Facebook with native speakers of English so that they could expand their vocabulary and world knowledge content in different fields. However, proper guidance from teachers in the use of social websites would be beneficial and one of the suggestions for EFL learners at every level.

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