

## Academic Article

---

# FACEBOOK: AN ALTERNATIVE LEARNING PLATFORM FOR ONLINE ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

---

Received: September 13, 2020

Revised: October 8, 2020

Accepted: October 14, 2020

---

Kiki Juli Anggoro<sup>1\*</sup> and Passakorn Rueangrong<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Faculty of Education, Naresuan University, Phitsanulok 65000, Thailand

\*Corresponding Author, E-mail: kikij63@nu.ac.th

## Abstract

The COVID-19 situation has pushed schools and universities to go online. This urgent situation requires immediate action. Therefore, teachers are demanded to make quick adjustments from face-to-face to remote teaching. At this time, a simple and easy way is preferable. Facebook is one of them. Facebook can act both as a Learning Management System (LMS) and a teleconferencing tool. As LMS, it can facilitate both asynchronous and synchronous communication and interaction as well as store various files related to the lessons. As a teleconferencing tool, it can facilitate a free, private, and successful real-time video meeting with students. Most importantly, as a popular social media application, many people are familiar with how to use it, thus making the transition easier for teachers and students. This article discusses and gives examples of how Facebook can benefit online EFL instruction, particularly in the time of COVID-19.

**Keywords:** Facebook, Online EFL Instruction, LMS, Teleconferencing Tool

## Introduction

Due to the COVID-19 crisis, universities around the globe including in Thailand has shifted from face-to-face to remote instruction. In Thailand, several universities began online instruction by March 2020 (Mala, 2020). Due to a lack of preparation, several shortcomings were observed. In addition to bad networks, lack of students' engagement was a major issue in online teaching.

Students tend to have a passive role in online classes. As active learning has been proven to have positive effects on students' learning in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings (Ashraf et al., 2013; Gholami et al., 2014; Han, 2014), this has become a concern. Koohang et al. (2016) also expressed that active learning elements are important for creating successful online courses. Therefore, a platform to conduct online instruction which facilitates students' active learning is needed.

To facilitate active learning in online classes in this urgent situation is not an easy task. Several EFL teachers may not have been well trained on how to utilize technology tools for online instruction including Learning management System (LMS) and teleconferencing media. Having to learn these platforms in a short amount of time might become a nightmare to some teachers. These teachers may require intensive training in order to operate these platforms. Therefore, a platform that is easy to use without rigorous training, yet can facilitate effective remote instruction is needed. Not only has been a popular platform for people of all ages, Facebook has also been used for educational purposes (Towner & Munoz, 2011; Allen, 2012; Kent & Leaver, 2014). It has been reported to improve students' engagement and achievement in EFL contexts (Kabilan et al., 2010; Akbari et al., 2016). Moreover, with its current updates, Facebook has the potential to make online instruction easier for both teachers and students. This paper discusses and shows how Facebook can be used as a Learning Management System (LMS) and teleconferencing tool in online instruction. Also, it presents a classroom exploration of the platform at the time of COVID-19.

### **Facebook as an LMS**

Learning Management System (LMS) is an essential part of online instruction (Black et al., 2007; Georgouli et al., 2008). It is used to share and store information as well as facilitate online interaction between students and teachers. However, to those who are new to LMS, it can be a complicated post. Moodle, Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams, for instance, are popular LMS, yet they might require the users to attend training. Therefore, in an urgent situation, they may not be the best option.

Facebook can act as LMS (Wang et al., 2012; Arabacioglu & Akar-Vural, 2014; Meishar-Tal, 2012). It contains pedagogical, social and technological affordances (Wang et al., 2012). It can be used to share and store teaching and learning materials. It also enables synchronous and asynchronous communication between students and students or students and teachers.

Moreover, it comes with various tools including poll, live video, and reminder which can benefit instruction. The following steps explain how teachers can use Facebook as an LMS.

### 1. Create a Facebook Group

First and foremost, create a Facebook group for a class. Select “private” group if you only want your students to access it. After that, tell the students the name of the group so that they can search and join it. The teachers can also share the URL with the students or create a QR code. This will make the process even faster. Then, accept the students’ requests to join the group. This means that teachers have control over who should and should not be in the group. Also, teachers do not need to be friends with students in order to invite them into the group.

### 2. Share and Store Information

Just like the Facebook newsfeed, members can write posts in the created group. The difference is the posts only appear to the group members. Several file types including texts, documents, slides, pictures, audios, videos, and many more can be shared and stored in this platform exclusively by the members of the group. These allow teachers to share and store learning materials and support various types of asynchronous learning at home. Figure 1 shows examples of different file types that can be shared by the members of the group.

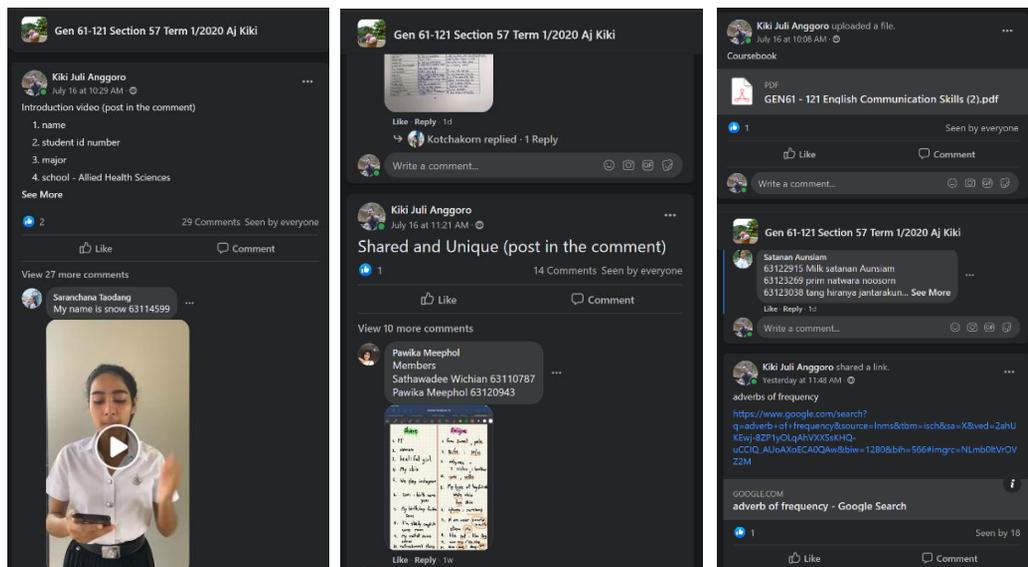


Figure 1 Sharing various file types on a Facebook group

### 3. Feedback

Giving feedback is an important part of instruction (Fisher & Frey, 2012; Leighton, 2019). As the Facebook group facilitates its members to interact synchronously or asynchronously, it can be used to give constructive feedback to students. Teachers can easily comment on students' files or work. Also, students can do peer assessment and give feedback to their peers' work. This enables them to learn from each other's successes and failures. Wanner and Palmer (2018) expressed that peer assessment can improve students' learning.

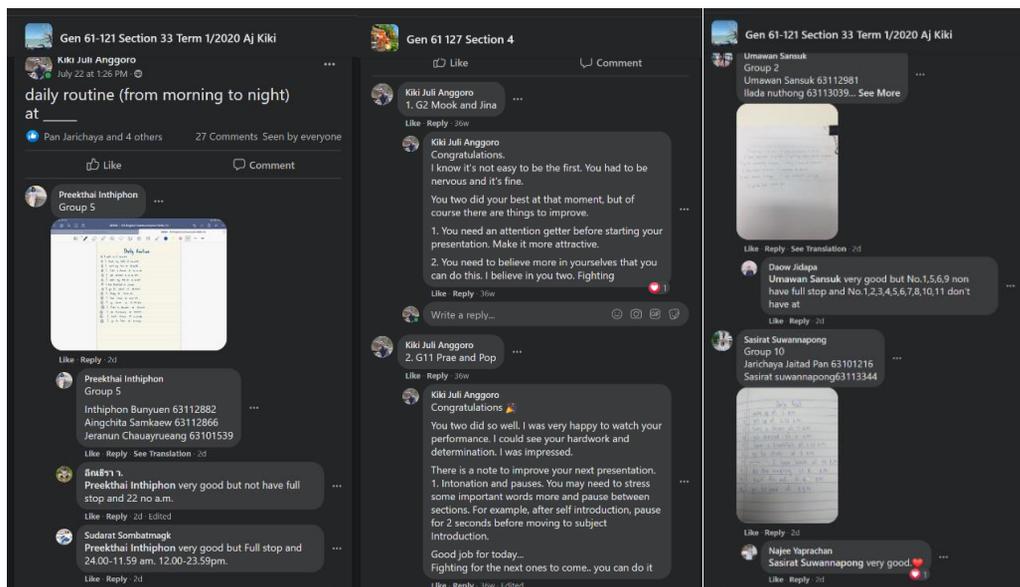


Figure 2 Feedback from peers and teacher

### Facebook as a Teleconferencing Tool

In addition to being an LMS, Facebook can be used to do a video chat through Messenger Room. This free platform can be used with no time limit by up to 50 people which is big enough for an EFL class. Also, just like popular conferencing tools including Zoom and Microsoft Teams, it has a screen sharing option that can be utilized in various ways during an online EFL instruction. Lastly, it can be connected to a Facebook group. Figure 3 illustrates how teachers can easily use the room by clicking “creating room”. The teacher does not need to re-invite students into the group and does not need to worry about privacy because only group members can have access to the room. The following steps explain how this platform can be utilized for a synchronous online instruction.

### 1. Start your online class

To start the class, simply click the “create room”. If the group already has a room group, teachers can simply click the “room” symbol.

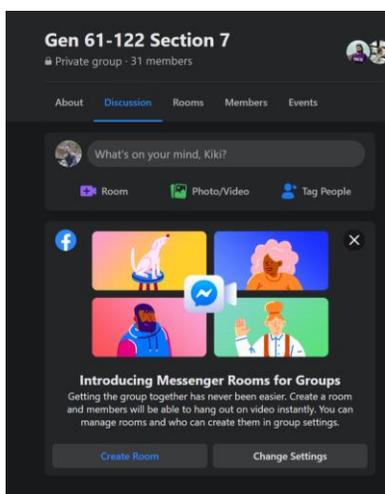


Figure 3 Creating a messenger room for a Facebook group

### 2. Synchronous communication with students

Teachers can see the faces of students and can communicate orally with them in real-time. Also, they can deliver the lesson, open question and answer sessions, monitor students' speaking practice, give feedback, and many more.

### 3. Maximize the screen sharing tool

This tool is very beneficial for online classes. As previously mentioned, teachers can use this feature to share files, modules, slides, videos, etc. with your students. For instance, when teaching teachers can show the book or slides to students. It can make them follow the lesson more easily. Teachers can even play videos or audios which can be used for listening practices. Moreover, students can also use the screen sharing feature. They can share their work with the class so that the teachers can give immediate feedback. Also, this can encourage peer assessment. A more advanced way of using screen sharing is by integrating an online interactive response system. For instance, a platform called Pear Deck can be simultaneously used with the room. This platform can boost your students' engagement and participation in online classes (Anggoro, 2020).

## Classroom Exploration: An Example of the Use of Facebook in Online EFL Instruction

### 1. Context

This platform was utilized for online instruction from July to September 2020 at Walailak University, Thailand. 30 First year students, 23 females and 7 males, aged 18-20 years old taking General English (GE) course participated in this study. The course is called English Communication Skills and focuses on four major English skills including reading, listening, writing, and speaking. Table 1 shows the content of the course. Facebook was utilized for online instruction starting from the fourth week of the semester as the face-to-face-class was moved online.

**Table 1** Content of English Communication Skills Course

Unit	Content	English Skills
1	Daily Routine	reading, listening, writing, and speaking
2	Festivals	reading, listening, writing, and speaking
3	Traveling	reading, listening, writing, and speaking
4	Future	reading, listening, writing, and speaking
5	History	reading, listening, writing, and speaking
6	Shopping	reading, listening, writing, and speaking
7	At the Restaurant	reading, listening, writing, and speaking
8	Holidays	reading, listening, writing, and speaking

### 2. Intervention

In the study, the intervention using Facebook as an LMS and teleconferencing tool was administered in three steps. The following figure illustrates how Facebook was utilized in the GE course for the remote instruction.



**Figure 4** Steps of Integrating Facebook

### 2.1 Before Lessons

Before each lesson, the teacher posted several materials and tasks on the group for the students to complete. When teaching speaking, for instance, the teacher posted several English expressions and videos of how to use them. Then, the teacher assigned students to complete a mini quiz or task. The quiz or task could be an individual, pair, or small group work. The students were able to turn in their answers in the comment of the quiz or task post as illustrated in Figure 1. This activity helped confirm that students had read the materials before taking the online class. The teacher was also able to find out what problems the students had. The activity was designed to be simple so that students would be encouraged to do it. At times, gamified online quizzes including Kahoot and Quizizz were integrated to perform the mini quizzes. These platforms have been proven to improve students' engagement and participation (Plump & Larosa, 2017; Licorish et al., 2017; Amornchewin, 2018).

### 2.2 During Lessons

During each lesson, the teacher focused on materials review, practice, and feedback. The teacher started the teleconferencing call using Messenger Room. Then, the brief reviewing session began. After that, feedback was given to students regarding their mini quiz or task. The teacher was able to orally give the feedback to the whole class and individual students. Then, the teacher started the practice sessions. In a speaking class, for instance, students practiced

using some expressions and their pronunciation and then received feedback from the peers and teacher.

### 2.3 After Lessons

After each lesson, the teacher assigned students to do some follow-up practice at home. The teacher gave a mini quiz or task to confirm students' understanding after the lesson. For instance, after learning how to use and say the expressions correctly, the teacher let students to work in pairs to create and then record a short conversation using the expressions. Students were encouraged to use messenger room to videocall and record the conversation. After that, they posted the video onto the Facebook group. Students were also asked to watch their peers' videos and gave feedback. This activity does not only provide more opportunities for the students to practice the expressions, but also to collaborate and learn from one another.

### 3. Learning Outcomes and Students' Perceptions

Both formative and summative assessment were utilized to measure students' learning outcomes. The weekly before and after class quizzes and tasks were used to assess students' performances throughout the term. Also, a final exam consisting of 60 multiple-choice questions, 1 writing, and 1 speaking test was administered. From the results, students showed satisfying performance. The mean of total scores including formative and summative assessment of the 30 students was 84.43 out of 100 (*SD*: 4.32). Therefore, most students got grade A in the course. In the evaluation of the course, students were asked to fill out a survey consisting of 5-item Likert scale questions and an open-ended section. The teacher received a means of 4.65 out of 5. This means that students showed positive perceptions on the teaching and learning process. However, this number does not solely represent the use of Facebook in online instruction, but the whole instructional process. However, in the open-ended section of the evaluation, several students highlighted the utilization of Facebook in online instruction. Some of them highlighted the learning environment using Facebook. A student expressed, "happy studying with teacher and friends on Facebook because easy convenient. I can work with friends too". Several students mentioned that Facebook made them more active. A student wrote, "Facebook make me active learning at home very much. I practice alone and with my friends and give comments."

### 4. Shortcomings of Facebook in Online Instruction

Despite having several benefits, when compared to Zoom and Microsoft Teams, Facebook was observed to have several weaknesses. One was that the Messenger Room could

not show both the screen and the camera simultaneously. Therefore, while explaining slides, for instance, students could only look at the screen while listening to the teacher's voice. Another weakness was a Facebook group could only have one video chat room at a time. Therefore, it was not be the best platform to create smaller groups for discussions. Lastly, the video chat could not be used by more than 50 people. Therefore, it was not suitable for several big university classes. Nevertheless, as Facebook rapidly makes updates and new improvement every now and then, these weaknesses may not be relevant in the future.

## Discussions and Implications

As the COVID-19 situation has forced educational institutions to move classes online, Facebook can be an alternative to facilitate successful remote instruction. This proves that Facebook can be used for educational purposes (Towner & Munoz, 2011; Allen, 2012; Kent & Leaver, 2014). Also, Facebook contains pedagogical, social and technological affordances (Wang et al., 2012) that allow synchronous and asynchronous learning activities that creates an active learning environment for students, thus making them more engaged. This is in line with previous studies claiming that the platform supports students' active learning (Kabilan et al., 2010; Akbari et al., 2016). However, there are several limitations of this study. First, this paper contains application notes and classroom exploration. It only reports the utilization of the platform in a small setting from the teacher's perspectives. Also, the reported data were gathered only from students' scores and course evaluation throughout the term. Lastly, the study did not have a control group in which the data could be compared to. Therefore, there are several gaps which can be filled with future studies. There needs to be future research which scientifically examines the effects of the use of Facebook in online instruction on students' English skills. Also, there needs to a more reliable study reporting the perceptions of students solely on the utilization of Facebook in online instruction as a Learning Management System (LMS) and teleconferencing tool.

## Conclusions

Facebook is undoubtedly one of the most used social media platforms. This makes Facebook an easy and simple option that can be used by teachers and students to administer effective online EFL instruction. This platform offers private groups which can be used as a reliable LMS which enables the sharing and storing of various file types as well as synchronous and asynchronous interaction. Also, Facebook provides Messenger Room that offers a free and

exclusive video chat with no time limit. When both the group and room are used integrally, Facebook has potential in hosting successful online EFL classes. It can facilitate learning activities before, during, and after lessons. All in all, Facebook can be a great alternative of online instruction. Even though this paper discusses how the platform can be used as an alternative medium of remote instruction in the time of COVID-19, it is believed that Facebook can potentially benefit teachers or practitioners who prefer a simple, free, yet successful tool to conduct general online teaching and learning classes after the pandemic.

## References

- Akbari, E., Naderi, A., Simons, R. J., & Pilot, A. (2016). Student engagement and foreign language learning through online social networks. *Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education*, 1(1), 1-22.
- Allen, M. (2012). An education in Facebook. *Digital culture and education*, 4(3), 213-225.
- Arabacioglu, T., & Akar-Vural, R. (2014). Using Facebook as a LMS? *Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology-TOJET*, 13(2), 202-214.
- Amomchewin, R. (2018). The development of SQL language skills in data definition and data manipulation languages using exercises with Quizizz for students' learning engagement. *Indonesian Journal of Informatics Education*, 2(2), 85-90.
- Anggoro, K. J. (2020). Pear deck. *RELC Journal*, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688220936735>
- Ashraf, H., Fatemi, M. A., & Naderi, S. (2013). The effect of active learning instruction on the intermediate Iranian EFL learners' listening comprehension ability. *International Journal of Linguistics*, 5(5), 225-242.
- Black, E. W., Beck, D., Dawson, K., Jinks, S., & DiPietro, M. (2007). Considering implementation and use in the adoption of an LMS in online and blended learning environments. *Tech Trends*, 51(2), 35-53.
- Fisher, D., & Frey, N. (2012). Making Time for Feedback. *Educational leadership*, 70(1), 42-47.
- Georgouli, K., Skalkidis, I., & Guerreiro, P. (2008). A framework for adopting LMS to introduce e-learning in a traditional course. *Journal of Educational Technology & Society*, 11(2), 227-240.
- Gholami, V., Moghaddam, M. M., & Attaran, A. (2014). Towards an interactive EFL class: Using active learning strategies. *The Clarion-International Multidisciplinary Journal*, 3(2), 67-74.
- Han, H. (2014). Transforming EFL classes from lecturing to cooperative learning. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 5(4), 948.

- Kabilan, M. K., Ahmad, N., & Abidin, M. J. Z. (2010). Facebook: An online environment for learning of English in institutions of higher education?. *The Internet and higher education*, 13(4), 179-187.
- Kent, M., & Leaver, T. (2014). *An education in Facebook?: Higher education and the world's largest social network*. Routledge.
- Koohang, A., Paliszkievicz, J., Klein, D., & Horn Nord, J. (2016). The importance of active learning elements in the design of online courses. *Online Journal of Applied Knowledge Management (OJAKM)*, 4(2), 17-28.
- Leighton, J. P. (2019). Students' interpretation of formative assessment feedback: Three claims for why we know so little about something so important. *Journal of Educational Measurement*, 56(4), 793-814.
- Licorish, S. A., George, J. L., Owen, H. E., & Daniel, B. (2017). Go Kahoot! enriching classroom engagement, motivation and learning experience with games. *International Conference on Computers in Education*, 755-764.
- Mala, D. (2020). COVID-19 fear pushes classes online. *Bangkok Post*. Retrieved from <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/1876594/covid-19-fear-pushes-classes-online>
- Meishar-Tal, H., Kurtz, G., & Pieterse, E. (2012). Facebook groups as LMS: A case study. *International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 13(4), 33-48.
- Plump, C. M., & Larosa, J. (2017). Using Kahoot! in the classroom to create engagement and active learning: A game-based technology solution for eLearning novices. *Management Teaching Review*, 2(2), 151-158.
- Towner, T. L., & Munoz, C. L. (2011). Facebook and education: a classroom connection? In *Educating educators with social media*. Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Wang, Q., Woo, H. L., Quek, C. L., Yang, Y., & Liu, M. (2012). Using the Facebook group as a learning management system: An exploratory study. *British journal of educational technology*, 43(3), 428-438.
- Wanner, T., & Palmer, E. (2018). Formative self-and peer assessment for improved student learning: the crucial factors of design, teacher participation and feedback. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 43(7), 1032-1047.