

# Reflective practice paper

## Exploring students' reflective writing on Facebook

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### Abstract

According to our experience, facilitating online reflective writing via Facebook motivates students to improve their writing skills and reflective thinking. Six students and a teacher from an urban school in the northern region of Malaysia were involved in this study. The qualitative data in the form of online archives were categorized as *reflection-in-action* (feedback and self-correction) based on Garrison et al.'s (2000) cognitive presence. Additionally, *reflection-on-action* which comprised the students' reflective journal demonstrated their thoughts and feelings while engaged in the Facebook environment. Data suggested that feedback only related to grammar and sentence structures (micro aspects). There was no feedback relating to organization and content (macro aspects). The reflective journal revealed that Facebook can be considered as a successful platform to enhance students' narrative writing. The findings of this study have implications for teaching and learning activities in web-based environments.

**Keywords:** Facebook, Web 2.0 online writing, learner reflections.

### 1. Introduction

Great expectations are attached to the affordances of social networking sites in educational contexts. Among all the social networks, Facebook is considered as a popular site. Although it was initially not designed to construct learning experiences, Facebook represents a good opportunity to move beyond the temporal and spatial restrictions of traditional classroom teaching (Rodríguez, Ignacio & Elia, 2015) and allows students to meet their peers in their own space and utilize the environment with learning resources (Bosch, 2009). Learners are able to communicate with their teachers, peers, receive announcements, updates and collaborate outside the classroom. One of the advantages of Facebook is that students are familiar with it and feel at ease when used for educational purposes (Ramires & Gasco, 2015). It is furthermore ubiquitous and it is pertinent for research to explore the pedagogical practices that can be implemented with Facebook for educational purposes.

Despite a multitude of research and best practices relating to Facebook, there is a dearth of research relating to writing skills and Facebook (Razak & Saaed, 2013). Although Facebook allows students to write, it is important to note that writing in the virtual world such as in Facebook is process-less: "writing becomes an act of moving from immediate composing to instant publishing" (Klages & Clark, 2009, p. 33). Klages & Clark highlighted a number of legitimate concerns and queried how to engage students and help them to value process as a necessary tool for becoming more articulate in their writing and how to help students to code switch between their use of technology with friends and its use in academic and professional situations.

There is a need to intensify our research focus toward the students' perspective to assess the quality of the work they have performed and try to explain success and failures in completing a given task when they are engaged in online writing in an environment such as Facebook. To achieve this, students' reflection-in-action and students' reflection-on-action were explored in this study.

Reflection is an important aspect of learning as individuals are able to internalize and reconstruct what they have acquired (Lavoue et al. 2015). Reflections refer to the cognitive and affective processes that take place when a task is completed. Yang (2010) revealed that in reflection-in-action, students were able to learn from each other. Reflection-in-action focuses more on the students' improvement regarding their grammar as peer review helps them to scrutinize their texts in detail for more accuracy. In this study, the context of the learners' reflection in Facebook, the writing dynamics that are related to their self-directed practices are generally different from classroom practices. Thorne & Smith (2003) argue that collaborative and communicative practices with social networking sites are tightly interwoven with the medium and the situation. However, they are not controlled by the medium itself. Instead, they are put into situations through negotiation which is, in turn, developed in their daily practices and may differ across cultural, geographical, social and institutional groups. Therefore, there is a need to be more informed about the potential and constraints based on a particular context and setting. The entire ecology of learning includes the students' willingness to learn, understand new ideas and engage with web materials in completing their overall task (Wichmann & Rummel, 2013). More studies are needed to take into account the value of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action within different social and cultural environments when they are engaged in Facebook to complete their narrative writing. In this study, *reflection-in-action* refers to the micro level (language, vocabulary, mechanics) and macro aspects (organization and content). *Reflection-on-action* refers to the students' reflective journal.

To date limited studies have been conducted to investigate students' reflections after engaging in Facebook to complete narrative writing tasks in the Malaysian context. This study took place in an urban Chinese school in Malaysia, a context where traditional face to face interaction dominates instruction. It is found that Malaysian students are not interested in writing due to insufficient writing skills (Darus & Ching, 2009). In the context of this study, the Chinese students who participated in the research lacked the required writing skills due to time constraints and mother tongue interferences (David & Su, 2009; Darus & Ching, 2009), which continually affect their academic performance in their English language classes. Moreover, the researchers' interaction with the Head of the Panel additionally revealed that the students' inability to write well is mainly connected with time constraints and the large number of students per class. As noted earlier, studies have indicated the strengths of Facebook as a language learning platform. Therefore, the idea of teaching and conducting learning activities through Facebook is a possible novelty that has not yet been greatly explored and should therefore be investigated. Drawing on the online archives and the reflective journal produced by each student, two research questions were posed:

- How do self-correction and feedback foster students' reflection-in-action in Facebook?
- What is the students' reflection-on-action after their engagement in Facebook for learning purposes?

The next section discusses the theoretical perspectives of this study.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Reflection

Studies have addressed the significant role of reflection upon students' writing to improve its quality (Chen, Wei, Wu & Uden, 2009). With the advent of online tools, studies have also indicated the significant role of online reflection. For example, Saito and Miwa (2007) demonstrated that students performed better in an environment that is innovatively designed and has supportive reflective activities and educational use. Also, the students perceived reflection and feedback positively as there was significant positive influence on the students' self-regulated learning outcomes. Another study by Andrusyszyn (1997), reported that the process of reflection encourages student dialogue with their instructor.

There are also a number of challenges associated with reflection as highlighted by Yang (2010). "First, although many studies have developed systems that provide students with reflective activities, the effects of reflection facilitators such as the teacher, the

writing activity, or the automatic mechanism in the system have not been explicitly identified. The influence of reflection on writing is unclear if only quantitative data is shown since the criteria for counting students' reflection is vague. Second, neither the process of how students reflect on their actions, nor how students verify and modify strategies in writing, has been presented in previous studies" (Yang, 2010, p. 1203). Such limitations hinder the teachers' ability to identify students' weaknesses and to provide immediate assistance. Likewise, when peer review takes place, then the emphasis will be placed "on the product of writing rather than the process of writing" (Storch, 2005, p.154). These limitations call for more research to be conducted with a focus on the actual event that is taking place when reflection is aroused. In the context of reflections, Yang (2010) discusses two types of reflection as suggested by Schön (1987); reflection-in-action and on-action, i.e. "reflections taking place during and after actions to improve learning" (Yang, 2010, p 1202). This study adapted Yang's (2010) definition of reflection in-action and reflection-on action as defined in Table 1.

Table 1. Operational definition of *reflection-in-action* and *reflection-on-action*.

<b>Reflection-in-action</b>	<b>Reflection-on-action</b>
In the final essays 1st-9th week in the final draft of the essays	In the reflective journal 10th week
Changes in micro and macro aspects such as content, vocabulary, mechanics, vocabulary and content	Advantages and disadvantages of the Facebook platform

Many researchers have also used Facebook to construct meaningful teaching and learning activities. Past research on Facebook typically focused on the opinion of the use of Facebook for teaching. For example, Reyes (2015) conducted a survey with 191 university students to investigate their opinions about the use of Facebook in teaching. The study found that the strengths of Facebook related to communication, self-correction, feedback, motivation and performance, whilst its weaknesses in teaching related to privacy, technological deficit and time consumption. The nature of the affordances of Facebook is also in line with the constructivist theory suggested by Vygotsky (1978), who emphasized collaboration, social interaction and feedback in effective teaching and learning activities. A study by Kabilan and Tuti (2016) investigated the effectiveness of Facebook to acquire knowledge among Community College students. Students were given a pre- and post-test to identify their performance. It was found that Facebook can be a supplementary learning tool with appropriate pedagogical practices such as collaboration where students can work as a community. Further, a qualitative study by Yasemin et al. (2014) in Turkey gathered the pre-service reflections of 25 prospective teachers after they had completed their online teaching project via Facebook. The study found that learners' engagement and interactions can be enhanced through the use of Facebook. However, the study also importantly pointed out that sustaining learners' involvement and interactions are some of the problems that need to be addressed with appropriate pedagogical practices. Thus, more studies examining reflections on using Facebook are needed.

### 3. Methodology and participants

The research design of this study was a qualitative case study to explore students' reflections seeking to improve narrative writing. Students were encouraged to reflect upon their actions during (reflection-in-action) and after (reflection-on-action) writing their final essays and after interacting with their teacher and peers.

The study was conducted in an urban Chinese school in the northern region of Malaysia. There were six participants and they were 16 years of age. The teacher participant in the school was invited to implement the study on a voluntary basis. The major role of the teacher was to co-ordinate and lead the learning activities that were designed by the researchers according to the previously mentioned pedagogical model. The teacher was trained and monitored closely by the researchers in aspects relating to teaching

methods and materials. The participants were given pseudonyms and were labelled as S1, S2, S3... to ensure anonymity.

Although the sample size was very small, it is in accordance with the interpretive case study methodology. The participants had a common language background in two aspects:

1. all of them had passed their standardised public examination (PMR)
2. they were from a primary school which used Chinese as the medium of instruction.

Purposive sampling was employed in this study. Students were selected based on three criteria:

1. being able to access the internet and Facebook either at home or at school
2. securing parental consent
3. volunteering to participate in this study

The study took place during ten weeks. Students were given three tasks. They were instructed to complete each task in two weeks. The students were asked to:

1. Write the first draft of their essay individually in Facebook after receiving the instructions and guidance from the teacher on how to write a narrative essay via the teacher's Facebook page.
2. Students needed to write feedback on their peers' essays regarding grammar, sentence structure, organization and content.
3. Students were requested to revise their own essays based on their peers and teacher's comments.
4. Students were required to write their reflection in the 10th week after completing their essays.

A closed group account was created to filter and control interactions by only inviting registered participants. The interactions on the online platform were collected during the 3rd, 6th and 9th week. Two coders were trained to categorize the online archives based on Garrison, Anderson & Archer's (2000) CoI model. As this paper is part of a larger study, the researchers had no intention of discussing cognitive, teaching and social presences. Only interactions relating to reflection-in-action, which is part of the cognitive presence as suggested by the CoI model, is considered in this study.

The interactions relating to cognitive presences relate to reflection-in-action. Table 2 indicates how the online archives are categorized. The coders were guided on the definitions of the codes in order to apply the definitions consistently (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This increased their confidence and encouraged rapid coding as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994). One of the researchers was also one of the coders for the online interactions. Additionally, inter-rater reliability was obtained by using Cohen kappa procedures. The value for cognitive presence was 0.7. The reflective journal was interpreted based on Creswell's (2009) data analysis and interpretation procedures.

Table 2. Cognitive presence.

Codes	
<b>CPA</b>	<b>Triggering Events</b>
<b>CPA1</b>	Recognizing the Problem
<b>CPA2</b>	Sense of Puzzlement
<b>CPB</b>	<b>Exploration</b>
<b>CPB1</b>	Divergence within the online community
<b>CPB2</b>	Divergence within a single message

<b>CPB3</b>	Information exchange
<b>CPB4</b>	Suggestion for consideration
<b>CPB5</b>	Brainstorming
<b>CPB6</b>	Leap to conclusion
<b>CPC</b>	<b>Integration</b>
<b>CPC1</b>	Convergence among group members
<b>CPC2</b>	Convergence within a single message
<b>CPC3</b>	Connecting ideas, synthesis
<b>CPC4</b>	Creating Solutions
<b>CPCD</b>	<b>Resolution</b>
	Vicarious or real world application of solutions/ideas
	Defending Solutions



#### 4. Data Analysis

This section presents the feedback given by the teacher and students which were categorized according to the descriptors related to cognitive presence suggested by Garrison et al. (2000). The discussion is centered on issues and events of language use.

##### 4.1. Reflection in-action

The interactions in Table 3 belong to the descriptor 'creating solutions' as suggested by the cognitive presence in the CoI model. Feedback related to grammatical aspects and sentence structures. Some of the comments were "that had happened" (S1), "without long thinking = without thinking long" (S1) and "as I had experienced = I expected or as what I had expected" (S6). Feedback was taken into account and corrections made accordingly. Students basically made changes as suggested by their peers. There were comments that indicated problems as in "it is a past participle verb form" (S1) and "makes me feel embarrassing = made, past tense" (S6). Obviously, there were not many challenges in the comments. However, the students realised their errors and reflected on the various comments made and decided to accept and work on the comments to improve the quality of the essay. The students also evaluated and responded to their peers' comments. For example, students commented "Next time i will be more careful of what I am doing", "Thx for your suggestion" and "Ya... i think so" (S5). It was found that peers' feedback helped students to scrutinize and consider the comments positively. These were only didactic instructions that encouraged the students to make changes in their essays without much deep thinking. However, the students' total scores were much higher after they introduced the self-corrections. The scores increased as the students made changes in the grammatical aspects (Tables 10-12).

Table 3. Online interaction pattern related to sentence structures and grammatical errors.

	<b>Integration</b>
<b>Creating solutions</b>	
	
	
	
	
	
	

In Table 4, feedback was coded under the integration phase based on cognitive presence as suggested by the CoI model. In these feedback instances, the teacher was directing the students to correct their errors. The students made the changes according to the feedback. There were no further interactions. Such feedback shut down interaction and knowledge construction. Students obediently changed the errors highlighted in the feedback. The scores for the final draft were subsequently much higher.



Table 4. Online interaction pattern of cognitive presence for the event of 'Errors'.

**CPC Integration**

**Example**

C4 Creating solutions

 **Nanthini Maniam Peony Moon...** Interesting story girl but I feel you have the potential to write even better than this. This narration lack of creativity. Try to improvise in your improved draft later. **HERE ARE SOME ERRORS MADE:** After head counting at the school gate, we were (set) off to go!

We sat (on) our school bus and I think (thought) there was (were) around four buses on (for) that trip.

So (never begin a sentence with 'so' because it is a conjunction. Conjunctions are used connect ideas of two sentences and it wont function as a sentence connectors).

We have (had) our breakfast in a coffee shop of (in) Ipoh.

My tummy was bloated after I (had) finished my meal as the food was too delicious.

After 2 hours and a half (two and a half hours), we had finally reached the top of Cameron highlands.

The bus made its first stop in (at) a strawberry shop.

The strawberries were made into fine cakes, (and) tarts with appealing decorations which were very appetizing desserts.

The corn vendor was there too, my friends and I bought one each, (use fullstop here). (They) they were juicy and sweet, the warmth (heat) of the (steamed) corn added its deliciousness (taste) in contrast of (to) the cold weather.

The next stop [we were heading to] (omit this phrase) was the (omit 'the') Boh tea plantation.

Our bus seemed shaky and unstable, the cliff is (was) right beside us to welcome our arrival.

All of us stay (stayed) silent and stationary in our seats on the way up.

No one dare (dared to) made (make) a sound (noise).

Finally, we have (had) arrived.

It feels (felt) like we were in heaven.

The plantation had greenish (lush green) scenery like those in the movies.

The weather was nice, we were lucky that day, (the) fog covered our path and the icy wind kept on blowing our faces added the mysteriousness of the hill.

Of course, we could not miss a nice cup of boh(Boh) tea on the plantation while enjoying the scenery of heaven.

I felt like I am (was) in the [lake of Innisfree(Lake of Innesfree) that is to be] free from hustle and bustle (of city life).

Just (be) relax (relaxed)(and) u (you will) know like in those places with water and mountains.

I will definitely organize a trip like this in the (omit 'the') future to such a nice place in Malaysia- Cameron highlands.(Highlands)  
July 14 at 4:19pm · Like

 **Joyce Chee** We sat our school bus and I think there was around four buses on ( for ) that trip.  
July 21 at 12:04am · Unlike · x1 1

 **Joyce Chee** he weather was nice, we were lucky that day, fog covered our path and the icy wind kept on blowing our faces added the mysteriousness of the hill. blowing can write as caressing...  
July 21 at 12:20am · Like · x1 1

 **Joyce Chee** perform their best show - put their best feet forward  
July 21 at 12:24am · Unlike · x2 2

 **Joyce Chee** specific hall- grand hall  
July 21 at 12:24am · Unlike · x1 1

 **Joyce Chee** after practice a lot, " Practice makes perfect ! "  
July 21 at 6:57pm · Unlike · x1 1

 **Joyce Chee** The students met at the school compound ( met is for some informal gathering in friends. it's better to use gather. is this correct ? Premani Supremaniam )  
July 21 at 6:58pm · Unlike · x1 1

 **Joyce Chee** worker- should be announced by the Master of Ceremony  
July 21 at 7:01pm · Unlike · x1 1

In Tables 5 and 6, at the triggering event phase, students presented and highlighted the problems. For example, “we should spell meters or metres” (S6). The teacher’s feedback immediately cleared their doubts by giving the solutions to their queries. In this particular case, she responded that “it should be spelt as metres ... meter is *Bahasa Melayu* spelling”. Another example is the event “stayed back at school”. The teacher explained briefly “stayed at school means *tinggal di sekolah*, it is better to write “stayed back at school”.

Table 5. Online interaction pattern of cognitive presence for the event of “meters or metres”.

CPA	Triggering Event	Example
A1	Problem solving	
CPC	Integration	
C4	Creating solutions	

Table 6. Online interaction pattern of cognitive presence for the event “stayed at school”.

CPA	Triggering event	Example
A1	Recognizing the problem	
CPC	Integration	
C4	Creating solutions	

Other illustrations are depicted in Table 7 below whereby the teacher integrated information from various web resources for students to clarify queries. Students were encouraged to read the web resources.

Table 7. Interaction related to the event of “dime a dozen”.

CPA	Triggering Event	Example
A1	Recognizing the problem	
CPB	Exploration	
B3	Information exchange	
CPC	Integration	
C3	Connecting ideas, synthesis	



There was also feedback from the students and the teacher to encourage the students to respond and make self-corrections. The feedback did not encourage every student, however, to make corrections (e.g. S4). Some students did not reply even though the teacher asked for explanations from the students. This is evident in Table 8 where the teacher requested the student to “please explain to us” and in Table 9 the teacher asked “the word *Caarrihadarric*... is it an English word?” The students did not make the changes to the essay although feedback was available from fellow classmates and the teacher.

Table 8. Online interactions for the event of “Whirlpool”.

**Example**

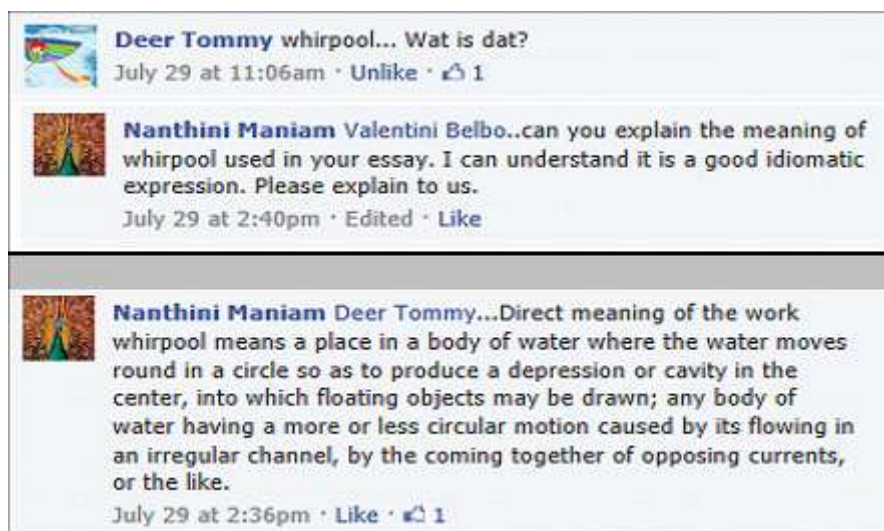


Table 9. Online interaction pattern of cognitive presence for the event “Caarrihadarric”.

CPA	Triggering event	Example
A1	Recognizing problems	<p><b>Monster KBlue</b> what is Caarrihadarric August 1 at 8:40pm · Like</p>
CPB	Exploration	<p><b>Nanthini Maniam</b> Caarrihadarric.....is it an English word?...Joyce Chee August 3 at 4:11pm · Edited · Like</p>

In this study, however, some students were not involved in reflection-in-action for Task 3 (S1, S4, S5 and S6). The students did not make changes to the essays although feedback was provided from both classmates and the teacher. When students were asked in a brief interview why they were not able to make the changes in their essays, they revealed that it was exam week and they were busy preparing for their examinations.

**4.2. Reflection-on-action**

In an effort to provide an overall picture of students’ involvement in the online writing platform, the students were required to write reflections based on the question “how did the online participation improve your online narrative writing essay?”

The most frequently mentioned perspective was the opportunity for students to improve the narrative writing thanks to the comments and ideas suggested by their teacher and peers. For example, one participant wrote:

*it is kind of amazing to read others storyline, getting to know how people express their thoughts through narrative writing, So i get to improve myself by keep on thinking about new and interesting storyline so that others will like the story I write... (S5).*

Another student wrote that:

*I can improve my writing skill by sharing my thoughts with all my peers in the group. They gave me good ideas and pointed out my mistakes after reading my essay. (S4)*

The teacher's continuous compliments and guidance throughout the online tasks gave greater confidence to the students. One participant reflected:

*it is always be a motivation and satisfying for me when I saw my teacher and my friends' compliments for my essay. It would encourage me to keep up my work (S3)*

Well-structured essays written by their friends were used as references. One participant stated:

*I will also take their essays as a reference to express my ideas in a beautiful way when writing essay. I will try to describe my essays by using some graceful word especially when describing the natural phenomenon. (S5)*

The students emphasized the usage of web resources as a source when they were composing essays. The websites relating to idioms and grammar were constant sources of information which was used to improve the quality of their essays. Some of the views given were "I have added some idioms that I've learnt in our narrative essay writing" (S2), "I will make good use of the thesaurus dictionary that shared by teacher to learn nice and special words" (S3) and "sometimes link posted by them are very good and it might be helpful in improving my essay writing ability" (S1).

All the students agreed that they improved grammatical structures. They also pointed out that they realised the importance of using idioms and phrasal verbs in narrative writing. This is exemplified in the following comments by the student #5: "my adverbs, vocabularies and idioms improved", "...idioms are important ingredient to add marks to our essay, so i tried my best to put in idioms in my every essay" and "i got to improve my tenses and grammar mistakes" and "I have made a lot of mistakes in my tenses, past tense and present tense. I have corrected them" (S5). In fact, some students appreciated the recommended English grammar games websites and engaged in these after their participation in the study. Another student made it clear in the reflection that "my spelling improved gradually, I started to check my spelling every time I typed in Microsoft word" (S6). The reflective journal indicates that students are able to monitor and modify their writing to improve the quality of their essays. It is obvious that they are able to notice their weaknesses in writing and able to take appropriate actions to revise their essays.

Overall, students were able to add quality to their narrative essays after engaging in Facebook. Essay writing scores improved considerably after the final task. There was a significant difference in scores relating to vocabulary (V) and language (L) in general. However, there were no significant changes in aspects such as content (C), organization (O) and mechanics (M). The scores for their tasks are highlighted in Tables 10, 11 and 12.

Table 10. Students' average scores for narrative writing task 1.

STUDENT	AVERAGE SCORES											
	BEFORE FEEDBACK						AFTER FEEDBACK					
	O	C	L	V	M	T	O	C	L	V	M	T
S1	15	16	18	11	6	<b>66</b>	15	16	19	12	6	<b>68</b>
S2	14	15	17	13	6	<b>65</b>	14	15	18	15	6	<b>68</b>
S3	15	15	22	15	6	<b>74</b>	15	16	23	16	6	<b>76</b>
S4	14	14	18	13	6	<b>65</b>	14	14	20	15	6	<b>69</b>
S5	14	14	16	14	6	<b>64</b>	14	13	17	16	6	<b>65</b>
S6	17	18	23	16	6	<b>80</b>	17	18	24	17	6	<b>82</b>

Table 11. Students' average scores for narrative writing task 2.

STUDENT	AVERAGE SCORES											
	BEFORE FEEDBACK						AFTER FEEDBACK					
	O	C	L	V	M	T	O	C	L	V	M	T
S1	15	16	15	15	6	<b>67</b>	15	16	17	16	6	<b>70</b>
S2	14	15	15	14	6	<b>64</b>	14	15	16	14	6	<b>65</b>
S3	15	15	17	14	6	<b>67</b>	15	15	18	15	6	<b>69</b>
S4	15	16	18	14	6	<b>69</b>	15	16	19	15	6	<b>71</b>
S5	15	16	19	15	6	<b>71</b>	15	15	20	16	7	<b>73</b>
S6	17	18	24	18	6	<b>83</b>	17	18	25	18	6	<b>84</b>

Table 12. Students' average scores for narrative writing task 3.

STUDENT	AVERAGE SCORES											
	BEFORE FEEDBACK						AFTER FEEDBACK					
	O	C	L	V	M	T	O	C	L	V	M	T
S1	15	15	20	16	7	<b>73</b>	15	15	20	16	7	<b>73</b>
S2	15	15	17	15	7	<b>69</b>	15	15	18	16	7	<b>71</b>
S3	15	14	17	15	7	<b>68</b>	15	15	18	16	7	<b>71</b>
S4	15	15	16	16	7	<b>69</b>	15	15	16	16	7	<b>69</b>
S5	14	15	15	14	7	<b>65</b>	14	15	15	14	7	<b>65</b>
S6	16	18	21	19	7	<b>81</b>	16	18	21	19	7	<b>81</b>

## 5. Discussion

Reflection-in-action occurred when peers and teacher provided feedback and students were able to reread, evaluate and revise their own and their peers' texts. The reflective process helped the teacher to gauge the students' capabilities to evaluate their potential to improve the quality of their essays. The online writing platform, too, motivated the students to help each other and enabled the teacher to facilitate the teaching and learning activities more effectively. These findings concur with Hyland & Hyland (2006), Liu & Carless (2006), and Berg's (1999) studies that depict peer review as enhancing students' writing abilities. Corrections made by the students were very much related to micro aspects such as grammar, vocabulary and sentence structure. However, the content and organization of the essays remained almost in their original form. In other words, students did not revamp the whole essay but only fine-tuned the essay for accuracy. This finding is consistent with the view of Tuzi (2004) that feedback usually focuses on a low level, which includes clause, sentence and paragraph.

The reflective writing journal added a significant contribution to this study. Most of the participants saw Facebook as a platform to improve their writing skills. Students' reflections revealed that they improved their grammar after engaging in the platform as they were able to exchange ideas and opinions relating to language, particularly vocabulary, tenses, and idioms. The literature suggests that web-based environments such as the one analysed in this study provide various opportunities for creating a constructivist learning environment by encouraging student-centred and interactive activities where students become active learners (El-Soud, Al-Khasawneh & Awajan, 2007; Zhang, Zhao, Zhou & Nunamaker, 2004). In short, students' reflections indicated that they experienced the online writing environment positively. It is for this reason that a number of researchers (Ross, 2014; Yang, 2012 & Boud, 2001) have indicated the importance of reflection in educational contexts.

The reflections allow teachers to understand students' responses to the pedagogical practices that would otherwise remain hidden. The key pedagogical practices are:

1. Teachers can redirect students' comments toward a more critical discussion. Analytical negotiations on grammatical aspects such as verb tenses or subject verb agreement facilitate knowledge building and critical thinking.
2. For reflection-in-action to be more effective, students are recommended to use a checklist for the micro and macro aspects of the essay.
3. Step by step training for students should be provided in order for them to evaluate the essays from various perspectives. With the checklist students will

be able to collaborate effectively instead of merely editing and to improve content organization, vocabulary use and language accuracy.

4. It is equally important that students reconstruct the content of the essays, offer new materials, ideas and insights for their friends to incorporate in their essays with prior guidance on feedback provision.

There is no doubt that reflection-in-action improved the quality of the students' writing. However, more could be done when students are engaged in online writing environments. Students can be trained to become critical readers and writers and eventually become competent. Students would have a better understanding if teachers helped learners to reflect on content by weaving relevant discussions and drawing students' attention to the relevance of the task to provide appropriate knowledge. It is convenient for teachers to provide adaptive teaching strategies in line with the students' thinking styles. With such guidance, students can eventually become self-critical to edit and revise their own writing. This may be an effective objective to achieve when they are engaged in online writing activities. However, only when students are given a checklist and trained can the benefits of the reflection-in-action be achieved.

## 6. Conclusion

The study indicates that it is possible to use Facebook as an effective writing platform. Facebook's features allow students to interact, collaborate, share web resources, support each other and learn from their peers. Findings indicated, however, that more effort needs to be put into fully utilizing the environment's potential for educational purposes. It needs to be noted that Facebook is merely a social networking site without meaningful and effective pedagogical intentions.

Due to the small-sized group of participants in this study and the specific context, conclusions cannot be generalised. Nevertheless, such sampling is in line with the case study approach. More robust studies are needed in order to represent different demographic characteristics, digital literacy and online working experience in school. Furthermore, the participants of this study were secondary school students therefore it would be useful to have studies at different school levels and pre-university students. Research should also extend its scope to other forms of writing such as factual, exploratory and argumentative essays. Additionally, this study needs to be extended longitudinally and with a larger number of participants. Future research can also be more comprehensive by tape-recording students' oral feedback on their reflection activities for self-correction.

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