

# Student Perceptions toward the Use of Facebook in English Writing Classes

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Social networking sites are often the primary places where writing occurs, in contrast to the more paper-based writing of the past. Facebook is one of the most popular social networks, and offers users the chance to engage in communication with people around the world. This potentially creates good opportunities for language learners to develop their English language skills and to engage in authentic cultural exchange.

In this small-scale study, the use of Facebook in undergraduate writing classes is described. Each of four university classes totaling 81 first-year students in Japan was matched up with one of four classes totaling 79 students in Taiwan, the United States, Indonesia, and Vietnam. The students engaged in “cross-culture discussions” for about 10 weeks. Student participation in Facebook is analyzed through the number and length of posts on the social network. In addition, feedback from students on their enjoyment of using Facebook for English writing, and their self-perceptions of their improvement in English writing are tabulated and discussed. Among the many interesting discoveries, it was found that English majors outside of Japan especially liked using Facebook, but many non-English majors in Japan rarely or never engaged in it.

## BACKGROUND

Facebook, where people can share information and photos at no cost, seems to be a motivating tool for English writing classes. One reason is that it is such a famous site; amazingly, there are about 2.5 billion active users worldwide, and 28% of these users are aged 18 to 24 (Statista, 2019). The tool also seems to be motivating and appropriate for classes because students can collaborate with friends in project-based activities. It has good privacy settings, allowing for “closed groups,” meaning that only the teacher and classmates can have access to the page. As homework for classes, students can go at their own pace in a quiet environment.

Theoretically, Facebook seems to be an effective tool to use in English writing classes. Social constructivist theory states that learning is a social process (Wertsch & Tulviste, 2005; Bruner, 1999; Von Glasersfeld, 1990), and the very nature of Facebook is social interaction with many people. This theory says that students can learn more if they receive assistance from people who are more skilled in the task at hand. The central concepts in social constructivist theory include meaning negotiation, working together for a goal, and learning from each other. Collaborative writing online, likewise, is thought to lead to high-quality writing (Hmelo-Silver, 2006; Oxford, 1997); students on Facebook can easily work together, exchanging ideas with the aim of producing better writings. The fact that Facebook is public means the students probably spend more time trying to produce high-quality posts.

Many studies around the world have found that students, on the whole, enjoy using Facebook in

English writing classes (e.g., Bani-Hani et al., 2014; Omar et al., 2012; Suthiwartnarueput & Wasanasomsithi, 2012; Jee, 2011; Simpson, 2011; Shih, 2011). For instance, Suthiwartnarueput & Wasanasomsithi had 83 freshmen in Thailand use Facebook. The 13 students who were interviewed all had positive views toward the project. The learners claimed that utilizing Facebook was especially good for communication with the teacher and peers.

Two noteworthy studies at universities in Japan have tried to measure the popularity of using Facebook in English classes, and both studies found that students have “moderately favorable views” toward the project. Dizon (2015) used Facebook for all written tasks in four courses, totaling 41 students, and gave them questionnaires at the ends of the courses. The students were in a foreign studies program, but had a wide range of English abilities. Two key findings were that a majority of students said they enjoyed using Facebook in class and that it was a low-stress way to learn English. However, 71% of the students said they accessed the page only once per week or when they were required to do so in class; this indicates that most students did not put much effort into the project.

In the other key study in Japan, Lauer (2018) counted the number of entries and words which 48 non-English-majors wrote during a 10-week period. The students were asked to do a “cross-cultural discussion” with students in Spain, writing about topics such as food, sports, and holidays. It was found that most of the Japanese students posted at an average pace of about one relatively long entry every two weeks, and they posted a lot of photos, but 25% of the students never made any entries at all. Like in the Dizon study, Lauer concluded that some liked the project, but a lot of them did not write very much.

In a smaller yet still important study in Japan, White (2009) had nine volunteer students answer various questions on Facebook over a five-week period. In interviews, students said that they could easily and effectively interact with the teacher and their peers. Due to constructive feedback concerning grammar, there was a remarkable reduction in specific types of errors during the project.

However, some studies have found negative attitudes toward using Facebook in English classes. Rifai (2010) in Indonesia stated that some university students did not really like using the site in class, because their enjoyable hobby was turned into an obligation, and because they preferred working individually rather than as a team. Ekoc (2014) in Turkey found that five students were very active on Facebook, but the other 17 did little. Similarly, Bani-Hani et al. (2014) in Jordan found that almost half of the students preferred traditional writing tasks over Facebook. Selwyn (2009) in Britain stated that Facebook writings may be too superficial, some students may not want to use the site at school, and bullying or privacy issues may arise. In the White study in Japan mentioned above, it was found that students were reluctant to be the first to post a comment, because they were shy and afraid their opinion would be different from that of peers. Some students were afraid of making grammar mistakes in public. Also, students did not want to give negative comments on other students’ writings.

Another key question involves how teachers around the world use Facebook in “English as a second or foreign language” classes. Lauer (2018) identified five basic pedagogical approaches: 1) Teachers post questions or weekly topics on Facebook, and then students respond; 2) Students write essays, and then classmates make comments; 3) After reading something, students answer questions or summarize; 4) Learners post photos or videos, describing them; and 5) Students try to improve their grammar and vocabulary skills using Facebook.

Employing various methods, numerous longitudinal studies conducted in universities have found that Facebook helps improve students' writing abilities and grammar skills (El Fatah & Ahmed 2016; Al-Haj, 2015; Faggosa, 2015; Hussain et al. 2015; Shukor & Noordin 2014; Sim & Pop, 2014; Shih, 2013; Yunus & Salehi, 2012; Melor & Hadi, 2012; Suthiwartnarueput & Wasanasomsithi 2012). For example, in both the Yunus and Salehi study and in the Melor and Hadi study, it was found that, by utilizing Facebook, learners were better able to brainstorm before actual writing, and the students learned new vocabulary by reading the comments of others in the group. Finally, almost all of the studies mentioned above stated that the more active a teacher is in making Facebook posts, the more successful the project is.

Having said all this, to conclude the above discussion and to improve students' writing skills, the old adage still seems valid: The more a person writes, the better he or she becomes at it. The types of writings which can be done on Facebook seem to be very conducive to writing appropriate amounts. In contrast to online tools such as Line and Twitter, students using Facebook can comfortably and appropriately make posts ranging from just a few words to a few hundred words. In contrast to blogs or homepages, Facebook writings tend to be shorter, more topic-specific, and thus it is easier for learners to accomplish tasks. And finally, Facebook writings seem to match the desires of young adults today in that, almost instantly, people can communicate with friends.

## **GOALS AND METHODS**

A major goal of this study was to investigate the degree to which Facebook motivates students to write a lot, and several approaches are utilized. In addition to clarifying what other studies have found, the current researcher applied two measures: giving the students and teachers questionnaires, and counting the numbers of words and entries which students wrote. The assumption behind the final measure is that if students write a lot, they probably like the activity, and if they do not write much, they do not like the activity.

Facebook activities basically entail one person writing a "long entry", expressing an opinion or stating a fact, and then other people making "short comments", reacting to that long entry. The long-entry writer can also react to the short comments by posting his or her own short comments. This give-and-take dialog may go on for several turn-takings. Thus, "a long entry" is defined as the first entry made by a particular person on a particular topic, and "short comments" are all the reactions to that entry which immediately follow. To measure the quantities of writings, three approaches were utilized: the numbers of long entries which each student wrote were counted, "the number of words in those long entries" were counted, and "the number of short comments" after the long entries were counted. In addition, posted photos and videos were grouped together and tabulated, because it is thought that they reflect the enthusiasm of students for the project.

A minor goal of this project was to promote good relations between peoples in the Pacific region, and this was measured by counting the number of times students in one country-region commented on students in another country-region, compared to commenting on their own compatriots' writings.

As Table 1 shows, a total of 160 students located in five countries-regions engaged in the major part of the project; about half of all the students lived in Japan, and half lived outside of Japan. Females represented about one-third of all the students in Japan and a little over two-thirds of the students outside Japan.

Importantly, all of the students in Japan were non-English majors, and all of the students abroad either majored in English or were in an English as a Second Language program in a predominantly English-

speaking country. The students in Japan were all second-semester freshmen, while the students in other countries-regions represented various undergraduate levels. The average Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) score for each class in Japan is listed in the table, but standardized scores for the students abroad were not known. In summary, the students outside of Japan were probably quite motivated to learn English, while the students in Japan were probably less motivated because they preferred to specialize in other disciplines.

**TABLE 1: Numbers and Types of Students in Each Facebook Group**

	Location	Specialty	Males	Females	Ave. TOEIC
Matched	Japan	Education	11	9	623.68 (SD = 46.93)
	The USA	Various	9	5	---
Matched	Japan	Engineering	21	1	499.76 (SD = 46.60)
	Vietnam	English	0	26	---
Matched	Japan	Education	10	9	479.21 (SD = 37.61)
	Indonesia	English	3	15	---
Matched	Japan	Law	13	7	552.89 (SD = 54.19)
	Taiwan	English	10	11	---

The classes outside Japan were set up by posting an announcement on the TESOL International Association homepage. About 20 teachers from around the world responded, expressing interest in doing a Facebook cross-cultural discussion. After email exchanges, besides the current researcher’s Hiroshima University classes, it was decided to do the project with instructors from the following schools: The University of Washington, a renowned public university in Seattle, USA, with about 50,000 students; Thai Nguyen University’s School of Foreign Languages, a leading regional public university north of Hanoi, with about 50,000 students; Muhammadiyah University of Tangerang, a leading private institution located east of Jakarta, with about 17,000 students; and National Chengchi University, possibly Taiwan’s most prestigious school, located in Taipei, having about 50,000 students.

Each class in Japan was matched with one class outside of Japan—see Table 1—in closed groups. To the best of the researcher’s knowledge, the students in Japan, Indonesia, and Vietnam had all grown up in those countries. But as for the students in America, seven had grown up in Middle East countries, five had grown up in Japan, and one each had come from China and South Korea. Also, several of the students in Taiwan had grown up in southeast Asia.

During about 2.5 months, in each class the students were encouraged weekly to write as much as they could for homework. Each week a main topic was posted on the Facebook pages, involving a cultural phenomenon, but students were also told that they could freely write about whatever they wanted. Those main topics were: A) Introduce yourself, B) Tourist places in each country, C) Sports, D) Food and family, E) Movies and music, F) Your best trip or holiday, G) Good books, H) Student life and work, I) Male-female

relations, and J) The best ways to learn English. The five teachers were all relatively active too, making comments on the pages each week.

Also, it is important to note that the students in Japan were told that the Facebook project encompassed only about 15% of their course grades. The four writing courses in Japan involved many activities such as making resumes in English, grammar practice, utilizing Quizlet (an online vocabulary activity/game), writing blogs, and composing short research papers and fiction stories. Thus, with the Facebook project involving only a small part of each course, students were relatively free to avoid doing it, if they so wished. Similarly, none of the students outside of Japan were greatly evaluated for their Facebook writings; those teachers each week encouraged the students to do the activity for personal enjoyment and to improve their English writing abilities.

Near the end of each course, which took place at the end of 2018, questionnaires were administered to the above students and teachers. Most of the students in Japan answered the questionnaire (77 of 81 students), but only about half of the students abroad did so (37 of 79; 8 in Taiwan, 16 in Indonesia, and 13 in Vietnam). Besides gender, the questionnaire for students asked how much they enjoyed the project, how much they thought their English abilities improved during the project, and why they thought so. The questionnaire for teachers asked how beneficial for students they thought the Facebook activities were, why they thought so, and how they handled the activities and evaluations.

In addition to the above questionnaires, an updated questionnaire was administered in late 2019 to 82 freshmen at Hiroshima University who were doing almost exactly the same type of Facebook project with the same non-Japanese schools (except for the Taiwan school). One purpose of this questionnaire, which was administered in the middle of the semester, was to find out how much these students in Japan liked the Facebook project. Also, the students in these classes (like those in 2018) were engaged in writing blogs, using Google's Blogger. Blogs are similar to Facebook writings in that students can make comments on other students' writings and post photos; but blog writings tend to be longer than Facebook writings, and blog writings tend to be more private because, in reality, students rarely see the other students' writings unless they go to an online list of all of the students' blogs in the closed group. Students were very free to write about whatever they wanted on the blogs. Thus, the researcher polled the students on their attitudes toward using the blogs in class compared to the Facebook project. Forty-five of these students majored in education (27 females), 19 majored in law (6 females), and 18 majored in engineering (2 females), and their TOEIC scores were similar to those in the 2018 group.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

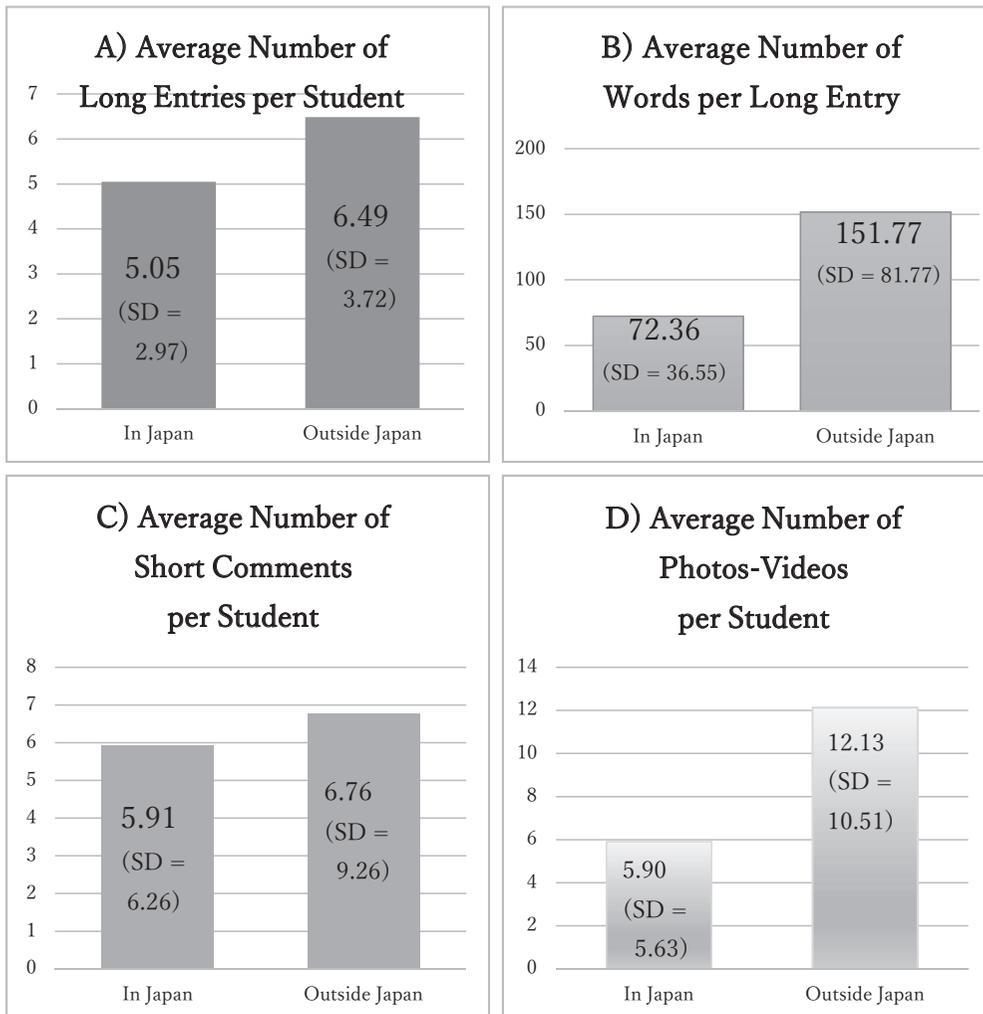
### **Counting the Numbers of Entries and Words**

Table 2 shows the quantities of writings and photos posted by students in Japan compared to those posted by students outside Japan, and there are two ways to look at the results: that the Japanese students did well, or they did not do well. In a positive interpretation, during the 2.5 months the Japanese students posted, on average, almost as many long entries and short comments as the students abroad did. (See Parts A and C of the table.) These findings are interesting because the Japanese students were non-English majors, while the students in other countries were either English majors or in an ESL program in a country where English is the main language. In other words, the Japanese students were as active as the students abroad even

though English was not their major.

Also in a positive interpretation, the students in Japan had long entries averaging about 72 words per entry. (See Part B of the table.) This is about seven decent-sized sentences per entry. For non-English majors, it takes time and effort to make such a long entry, so their English abilities probably improved as a result.

**TABLE 2: Differentiating Students in Japan from those Outside Japan**



In a negative interpretation of Table 2, each Japanese student made, on average, only about five long entries and six short comments during the 10-week period. (See Parts A and C of the table.) Also importantly, only 16% of the Japanese students (13 of 81) had nine long entries or more during the period. Even though every week the current researcher in class encouraged the students to write in Facebook, and even though the topics each week were those which students typically like—such as music, sports, and movies—most of the Japanese students did not make very many entries.

Table 3 looks at the above results, differentiating by gender, and it was found that Japanese females made, on average, 5.96 long entries during the project while Japanese males made only 4.62 long entries during the same time, a difference which is statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). The females, on average, also made more short comments, but this difference is not significant. This indicates that Japanese females might like the Facebook project more than Japanese males do.

**TABLE 3: Comparing Writing Quantities with Respect to Gender & Location**

		Average Number of Long Entries per Student	Average Number of Words per Long Entry	Average Number of Short Comments per Student	Average Number of Photos-Videos per Student
In Japan	MALES	4.62* (SD = 3.04)	67.77 (SD = 33.75)	6.04 (SD = 6.51)	4.78 (SD = 5.16)
	FEMALES	5.96* (SD = 2.64)	84.77 (SD = 38.33)	8.38 (SD = 6.22)	8.31 (SD = 5.98)
Outside Japan	MALES	7.82 (SD = 3.78)	162.38 (SD = 85.72)	7.41 (SD = 8.82)	14.18 (SD = 38.33)
	FEMALES	6.05 (SD = 3.59)	147.59 (SD = 81.55)	6.51 (SD = 9.49)	11.33 (SD = 10.19)

Note: \* indicates a statistically significant difference between these two numbers ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Outside Japan, there were no significant differences in the quantities of writings based on gender. One reason why the foreign males wrote a lot is that several of the male students in Taiwan posted some very long writings. As stated above, the quality of the school in Taipei was quite high.

Table 4 looks at each Facebook closed group in more detail, and there are several interesting findings. In the Japan-America group, the students in the US made relatively long entries, but they made very few short comments; the reasons for this warrant further study. In the Japan-Vietnam group, the Japanese Engineering students had the shortest average number of words per long entry. In the Japan-Indonesia group, the Indonesian students did not post very often, but when they did they were long entries. In the Japan-Taiwan group, the students in Taiwan made over twice as many long entries, and the lengths of the entries were over two times longer than the lengths of the entries by students in Japan.

The numbers of comments by teachers during the 10 weeks were also tabulated, and it was found that the current researcher made an average of 81.0 (SD = 4.08) comments (long and short) per course. The teachers in other countries made only short comments, averaging 46.75 (SD = 37.17) comments per course. Specifically, the teacher in America was particularly active with 101 entries, but the other three teachers had between 18 and 39 entries per class during the 10 weeks. These statistics indicate that the teachers, overall, were relatively active in supporting the students.

It should also be mentioned that a few students in the classes in Japan had problems setting up Facebook accounts, or had their accounts blocked by the company shortly after setting up. The main reasons for these problems were not clear, but two or three attempts to set up new accounts failed. Also, a couple of students told the teacher that they preferred not to participate in the project for personal reasons. For the above few students, their requests to not do the project were accepted, but they were told that other parts of the course

**TABLE 4: Comparing the Dynamics of Each Facebook Closed Group**

	Location /Specialty	Average Number of Long Entries per Student	Average Number of Words per Long Entry	Average Number of Short Comments per Student	Average Number of Photos-Videos per Student
Matched	Japan Education	5.45 (SD = 3.59)	88.75 (SD = 30.21)	7.55 (SD = 6.5)	6.77 (SD = 6.62)
	The USA ESL	6.36 (SD = 1.28)	107.18 (SD= 48.90)	2.36 (SD = 2.53)	15.93 (SD = 11.93)
Matched	Japan Engineering	5.91 (SD = 3.19)	57.05 (SD = 23.80)	9.0 (SD = 7.64)	7.82 (SD = 3.90)
	Vietnam English	5.35 (SD = 2.61)	140.71 (SD = 76.25)	4.96 (SD = 4.55)	14.0 (SD = 12.83)
Matched	Japan Education	4.32 (SD = 2.58)	60.83 (SD = 16.77)	5.26 (SD = 5.43)	7.37 (SD = 6.18)
	Indonesia English	3.33 (SD = 3.06)	134.23 (SD = 83.16)	8.33 (SD= 11.49)	6.50 (SD = 5.88)
Matched	Japan Law	4.4 (SD = 2.16)	87.89 (SD = 25.91)	5.6 (SD = 5.9)	4.9 (SD = 5.62)
	Taiwan English	10.71 (SD = 2.63)	182.29 (SD = 84.42)	10.57 (SD= 12.54)	12.10 (SD = 7.71)

would be even more important for them.

Finally, a minor goal of this project, as stated above, was to promote good relations between peoples in the Pacific region, and one way to measure the success of this was to count how many times students interacted with students from the other country-region. It was found that students everywhere generally preferred responding to their compatriots' writings. Only 24% of the short comments made in Japan and 27% of the short comments made outside Japan were addressed to people beyond their own homelands. These statistics are probably lower than what the teachers desired, but are quite natural in human relations; students probably generally prefer responding to their own classmates' writings.

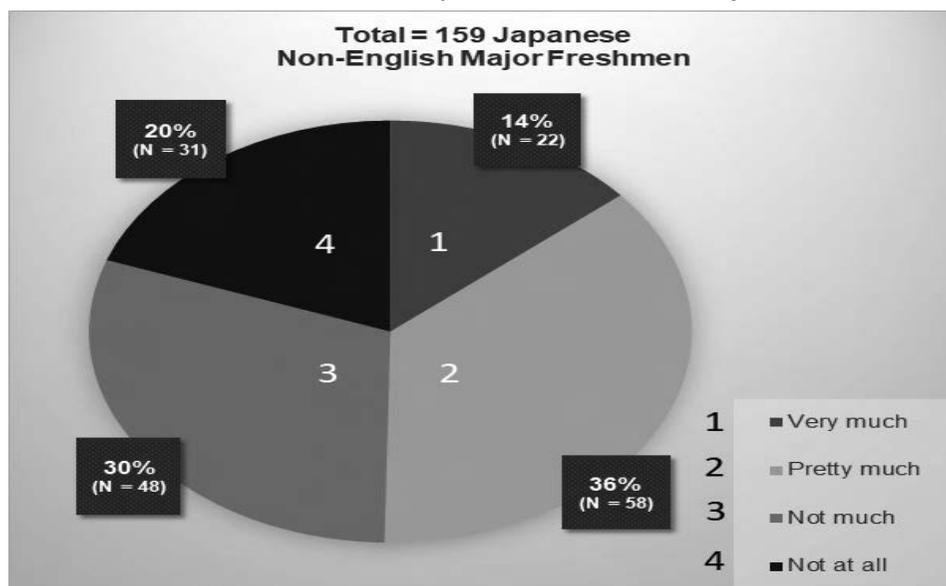
### **The Questionnaires for Students and Teachers**

As delineated in the Goals and Methods section, two sets of questionnaires were administered to students: one set to those inside and outside Japan in 2018 whose writings are described above, and the other set to students in Japan in 2019 who were doing a very similar project. These surveys asked one identical question: "How much did you ENJOY the Facebook project?" (Capital letters were in the original survey to clarify the question for students.) The results are shown in Tables 5 and 6.

It was found that 50% of all the non-English majors in Japan wrote that they liked the project, while 82% of all the students abroad stated that they liked the project. No significant differences were found with respect to gender within these two populations; for example, in Japan 49% of females said they enjoyed the project either "very much" or "pretty much", while 51% of the males answered so.

The students in 2018 were asked why they answered so. Students everywhere wrote many reasons for enjoying the project, their most frequent reasons involving "learning about other cultures" and "making

**TABLE 5: How much did you ENJOY the Facebook Project?**



**TABLE 6: How much did you ENJOY the Facebook project?**

Answered by 37 Students Outside Japan

A) Very much = 14% (N = 5)	C) Not much = 16% (N = 6)
B) Pretty much = 68% (N = 25)	D) Not at all = 3% (N = 1)

friends.” There were more than a dozen reasons given by students in Japan for disliking the project, the most common being there was too much homework (N = 7), they “forgot” to do the homework (N = 7), and they didn’t like to write in English (N = 7).

To further clarify the students’ enthusiasm for the Facebook project in Japan and abroad, two final questions were asked: First, the 2018 students (N = 114) were asked how much they thought their English writing abilities improved because of the project: see Table 7. It was found that the Japanese students were evenly split in their feelings toward the efficacy of the Facebook project, while the students in other countries overwhelmingly stated that their abilities improved somewhat. Second, the 2019 students in Japan (N = 82) were asked which activity they liked doing better in English writing class—Facebook or Blogger—and it was found that 48% chose blogs, while 52% chose Facebook. This nearly even split again indicates that some students prefer the relative privacy of blogs, while others like the real-time excitement of Facebook. These results all reinforce the word-and-entry-count findings that students in Japan had mixed attitudes toward the Facebook project, while students abroad basically liked it.

**TABLE 7: How much do you think your English IMPROVED because of the Facebook activity?**

(N = 77 in Japan, and N = 37 Abroad)

	In Japan	Outside Japan
A) Very much	13% (N = 10)	14% (N = 5)
B) Pretty much	39% (N = 30)	59% (N = 22)
C) Not much	39% (N = 30)	24% (N = 9)
D) Not at all	9% (N = 7)	3% (N = 1)

After the 2018 project, the teachers also answered a questionnaire, and three of the five teachers (including the current researcher) wrote that the activity was “very beneficial” for the students, and a fourth teacher said it was “rather beneficial.” For example, the American teacher wrote that in his class they sometimes analyzed grammar errors in the writings, and “the students got much more writing practice than they would have otherwise, and they got to have their writing read by a larger audience than just the class.” The teacher in Indonesia, who also rated the project as “very beneficial,” wrote that “it helped the students to know the cultures of the other country and to develop their English skills.” The teacher in Vietnam, who rated the project as “rather beneficial”, wrote that she “asked students to write passages according to the given weekly topics, and to post them on the Facebook group every week. Some did, and some did not.”

Only the teacher in Taiwan wrote that the project was “not very beneficial.” She stated that “as the weeks went by, there was not much interaction at all even after I said that it was required for them to at least comment on someone’s post once every week.” As mentioned in the previous sections of this paper, the students in Taiwan seemed to have much higher English abilities than those in Japan.

Having delineated all of these statistics above, it can be inferred that a large percentage of students probably improved their English writing abilities and cross-cultural knowledge as a result of the project. The more a person writes, the better he or she becomes at writing. A lot of students put their hearts into posting writings and photos which were important to them. The following is just one of the many heartwarming exchanges which was posted on Facebook (with only their real names changed here):

Yang: I want to introduce a famous holiday in Taiwan for you. It’s Moon Festival, which is also known as Mid-Autumn Festival, is celebrated on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the 8<sup>th</sup> month of the lunar calendar. It is a time for mainly members and loved ones to congregate and enjoy the full moon.

(continue 65 more words)

Yamada: There is also an event (not holiday) to enjoy the full moon on August 15<sup>th</sup> in Japan! In that day, Japanese offer sweet dumplings or rice cakes. Love of moon must be worldwide!

Yang: Oh~👍, maybe next time you can try to have barbecues with your family on 8/15.♡

Yamada: It must be enjoyable 😊!! I’ll have a try~



## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This research found that some students in each of the five countries-regions liked using the Facebook site in English writing classes, but some students did not. It can be interpreted that the project was successful

because about half of the non-English majors in Japan said that they liked the project, and the students in Japan, on average, posted almost as many long entries and as many short comments as English major students outside of Japan. Furthermore, the project was quite successful because 82% of the students outside Japan said they liked the project. Finally, although grammatical accuracy was not measured in this study, a casual glance at all of the writings in all of the groups showed that errors were rare and did not impede understanding; thus, it can be said that students everywhere put efforts into creating high-quality sentences.

The project had a negative side in that half of the non-English majors in Japan said that they did not really like the project, and only 16% of the students in Japan had nine long entries or more during the 10 weeks. According to their open-ended comments on the questionnaires, the main reasons for this can be summarized as being that these students did not really like English, and that they preferred to do other activities with their time. Also, the teacher in Taiwan said that her students were not very active in the project, perhaps because the students in Taiwan had much higher English abilities, or because the project was not an integral part of English studies there.

An interesting finding was that Japanese females wrote significantly more long entries than Japanese males did, and their entries tended to be longer than those of the males. This indicated that the Japanese females may have liked the project more than the Japanese males. However, when asked directly if they liked the project, the Japanese females and males had approximately the same degree of enthusiasm for the project. Another interesting finding was that about 25% of short comments involved commenting on students' writings abroad, and the remaining 75% of short comments involved commenting on classmates' writings; but it is difficult to interpret this in a good way or a bad way. Also noteworthy was the fact that a fairly large number of students in each class seemed to enjoy posting photos and videos.

In the future, researchers should look at which social media platforms are the most appropriate for English writing classes. For instance, Instagram and Line are extremely popular among young people in Japan these days; might these be more effective tools? If Facebook is utilized, should it be a voluntary aspect of the course, used only by those students who are interested? Furthermore, the syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic problems which students face when using social media must be clarified. The potentials and questions involving utilizing online social media sites in English classes are only beginning to be answered.

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## ABSTRACT

### Student Perceptions toward the Use of Facebook in English Writing Classes

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The purpose of this study was to determine how popular utilizing Facebook is in English writing classes. Each of four university classes, totaling 81 first-year students in Japan, was matched up with one of four classes totaling 79 students in Taiwan, the US, Indonesia, and Vietnam. The students engaged in a “cross-culture discussion” for 10 weeks. The popularity of using Facebook was measured by A) A review of the literature, B) Counting the number of words students wrote, and C) Student-teacher questionnaires. It was found that some students—especially English majors—liked using Facebook, while about half of all the non-English majors rarely or never engaged in it. Yet, overall, it is thought that a lot of students improved both their English writing abilities and cross-cultural knowledge by using Facebook.

## 要 約

### 英語ライティング授業における Facebook 使用に対する受け止め

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本稿の目的は英語のライティング授業での Facebook 使用がどの程度好まれるかを計ることである。合計で 81 人の 1 年生からなる日本の 4 つの大学のクラスと、合計で 79 人の学生からなる台湾、米国、インドネシア、ベトナムの 4 つの大学のクラスがそれぞれマッチングされ、学生たちは 10 週間にわたって Facebook 上で異文化ディスカッションを行った。本研究においては、Facebook 使用の好まれる度合いは次の方法で計られた。A. 選考文献の調査、B. 学生たちが書いた単語数のカウント、C. 学生および教師へのアンケート。その結果、一部の学生（特に英語専攻の学生）は Facebook の使用を好むことが判明した。しかし、英語を専攻しない学生の約半数は、ほとんどあるいは全く Facebook を使っていなかった。しかしながら、全体としてみると、多くの学生が、Facebook を利用することで英語のライティング能力を向上させ異文化知識も増進させたと考えられる。