

.Research Article

## New Trends Towards Using Social Networks as Teaching Electronic Portfolio

Dr. Amir Mohammed Abloloy

Assistant Professor ,  
College of Science and Arts in Sharurah  
Najran University KSA

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**Abstract:** This paper was basically conducted to explore the potential for Social Network: Facebook use as new trends towards teaching electronic portfolio in teaching English at the university level. The researcher adopted the quantitative and analytical methods using the test and the questionnaire as the main tools for collecting the data. The participants included (50) English language teachers from various Sudanese universities along with (25) students majoring English in different levels at the University of Kassala. They have Facebook accounts and they were taught within an online group. According to the results, it was evident that there were practical and effective use for Facebook to be applied as a teaching electronic portfolio for academic and educational purposes especially at university levels. In these respects, learners' performance can easily be monitored and assessed through social network, teachers and students can collaborate in a secure, closed environment on Facebook group, teachers can maintain a personal content library and share content with students and finally, students can instantly access their files through their e-based 'Library'.

**Keywords:** Online Teaching, Teaching Electronic Portfolio, Social Network, Facebook.

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### 1.0 Introduction:

The word portfolio refers to a purposeful collection of work that provides information about someone's efforts, progress or achievement in a given area. It is a learning as well as an assessment tool. As applied to language learners, its characteristics can be as follows:

- The learner is involved in deciding what to include in the portfolio.
- The learner may revise material in the portfolio after feedback from the teacher or others.
- The learner is required to assess or reflect on the work in the portfolio, thus becoming aware of the personal development.
- There is evidence of mastery of knowledge.
- It may include various forms of work, such as written work, audio recording, video recording, etc. When used in the learning context and teacher education the portfolio is known as Learning and Teaching Portfolio.

### 1.1 Aims And Scope Of The Study:

This paper was set to discover the practical application of the Social Network Facebook as teaching electronic portfolio at the university level. The scope of the study is limited to (50)

different English language university teachers and (25) EFL students at the University of Kassala, Sudan-2017-2018. The paper will examine how Facebook can be applied as an electronic portfolio, and to what extent social networks can be incorporated in the same context with respect to Facebook.

### 1.2 Statement of the Problem:

Monitoring, checking and following up learners' academic progress and performance have been exhausting and very time-consuming task that most teachers are still unable to surmount although new trends towards the up to date discoveries and inventions in the field of teaching and learning such

as computer-assisted language learning (CALL) and web-based teaching and learning have been recently included in this field. The magic of technology especially the social networks bridge the gap between teachers and learners and put the learners' academic performance and progress at the teachers' disposal that can easily be monitored and assessed at any time and this is the article's subject matter and what is going to look for.

### 1.3 Questions And Hypotheses:

As mentioned above, this article was set to apply the social network (Facebook) as teaching electronic portfolio at the university level. For achieving this goal, the researcher formulated the following accordingly:

1. To what extent can Facebook be applied as teaching electronic portfolio?

2. How Learners' performance can be monitored and assessed through the social network?

According to the formulation of the above questions, two hypotheses were worded that can statistically be accepted or rejected:

H<sup>1</sup>: Using Facebook in teaching English language allows its application as teaching electronic portfolio”.

H<sup>2</sup>:Learners' performance can easily be monitored and assessed through the social network.

### 1.4 Literature Review:

Barrett, (1998) remarked that “A portfolio” is a purposeful collection of students work that demonstrates effort, progress, and achievement; a portfolio provides a richer picture of student performance that can be gained from more traditional, objective forms of assessment. Most traditional standards-based portfolios are 3-ring notebooks, organized with dividers and sections for paper-based documents demonstrating each standard. An Electronic Portfolio uses multimedia technology allowing students/teachers to collect and organize portfolio artifacts in many media types (audio, video, graphics, text) with hypermedia links connecting that evidence to the appropriate standards. Students/teachers can publish their Electronic Portfolios on CD-Recordable discs, videotape or the Internet.

#### 1.4.1 Process For Constructing Electronic Portfolios:

At the 1997 SITE Conference, Boulware, Bratina, Holt & Johnson (1997) described a process for developing the Pre-Service Teacher Portfolio Process which based on:

- Distinguish between a working and a presentation portfolio.
- Organize a working portfolio according to standards.
- Identify artifacts that denote accomplishments for each standard.
- Produce a working portfolio.

Boulware, Bratina, Holt & Johnson (1997) in an article outlined a process for developing electronic portfolios in contrast to the process normally used to develop multimedia presentations:

- decide on goals of the portfolio based on learner outcome goals that should be based on national/state/local standards with associated evaluation rubrics.
- decide on and describe the assessment context.
- decide on and describe the audience(s) for the portfolio (student, parent, college, community?)
- decide on the content of portfolio items (determined by context)
- decide which software tools are most appropriate for the portfolio context
- decide which storage and presentation medium is most appropriate for the situation
- gather multimedia materials to include in the portfolio which represent learner's achievement (preferably linked to standards, preferably in a relational database)
- record student self-reflection on work and achievement of goals
- record teacher feedback on student work and achievement of goals
- organize with hypermedia links between goals, student work samples, rubrics, and assessment
- present portfolio to appropriate audience (by the student, in age-appropriate situations)
- evaluate the effectiveness of portfolio related to the purpose and assessment context

#### 1.4.2 Storing The Working Portfolio:

There are many technologies that can be used to store digital portfolio artifacts during the development stages. Some of the most common include:

- Computer diskette
- CD-Recordable (CD-R) & CD-ReWritable (CD-RW)
- Video Tape
- High-density floppy (Zip Disk)
- WWW or Intranet
- Jaz disk

- DVD-RAM (coming soon)

#### 1.4.3 Skills for Developing Electronic Portfolios

The skills necessary to develop an electronic portfolio are the same for developing multimedia presentations. Below is a list of topics for training sessions that are being offered to students at the University of Alaska Anchorage School of Education, to develop Electronic Portfolios, using Adobe Acrobat and either CD-ROM or videotape as the publishing medium:

- Converting files from any application to PDF using PDF Writer or Acrobat Distiller
- Scanning/capturing and editing graphic images
- Digitizing and editing sound files
- Digitizing and editing video files (VCR -> computer)
- Organizing portfolio artifacts with Acrobat Exchange, creating links & buttons
- Organizing multimedia files and pre-mastering CD-ROM using Jaz disks
- Writing CD-Recordable disc using appropriate CD mastering software
- Recording computer images with narration to videotape (computer -> VCR)

#### 1.4.4 The Value of Online Social Network for Academic Purpose:

Dalsgaard, (2008) claimed that online social networking, especially Facebook, has numerous pedagogical advantages for both lecturers and students. Social networking can support students' indirect sharing of resources, thoughts, ideas, productions, writings, notes, etc. This kind of sharing can provide students with insights into the workings of other students.

Minocha (2007) stated that it is extremely important for students to establish a social foundation between them and their peers before they engage in online group work. Facebook clearly provides a social utility that has been identified as having academic potential in the form of internal networks and groups.

Dede (1996) remarked that it is important that the time students spend between and after classes, be utilized for academic purposes via technology. For example, if students are encouraged to take part in group work or online discussions on Facebook, then chances are there that they might utilize Facebook for academic purposes and not only for social purposes. This can benefit their learning and

motivate them to engage in academic work before and after classes. The availability of Facebook via

mobile phones also means increased interaction and support for students outside of the classroom.

#### 1.4.5 Faculty Presence On Facebook:

Aleman, and Wartman (2009) stated that now users over the age of 25 are accepted on Facebook, more and more professors and other higher education staff are finding a place on the site. However, students and faculty are finding some inconveniences with each other's presence on Facebook. Higher education faculty and staff are being asked by students to be friends on the site and vice versa. Some faculties do not want the controversy and hassle of friendships with their students and some students are irritated that university staffs are asking them to be friends. Yet, some faculty and students have found Facebook friendships to be a tool for classroom activities.

#### 1.4.6 Scholars Perception Of Facebook On Colleges:

Hewitt and Forte, (2006) stressed that researchers and scholars have indicated students' feelings about faculty presence on Facebook. Some students prefer access to faculty via Facebook while others feel anxious about it. In fact, some students are unconcerned about this. Professors should not be on Facebook as they are not part of campus social life", demanding that Facebook should exclusively be for college students.

Heiberger and Harper (2008) showed that on the positive side, Facebook and other online social networks may foster learning, enhance classroom communication, and build a sense of community. Some faculty are even using Facebook to design course material and expanding the learning in the classroom.

Martinez Aleman & Wartman (2009) remarked that nevertheless, faculty and student friendships on Facebook might also exceed the context of education. Since university faculty are appearing on Facebook, the concerns about student-teacher relationships and professional ethics have risen. Consequently, faculty must be careful to not cross any ethical or professional lines when using Facebook and other online social network mediums.

#### 1.4.6 Facebook In The College Classroom:

Hurt et al (2012) confirmed that online teaching and learning have been the topic of many pedagogical

discussions. The majority of studies focus on the successes, paradoxes, and challenges of teaching exclusively online courses in which instructors rarely, if ever, have face-to-face contact with their students. Interestingly, of all the social networking sites, Facebook is by far the most popular and most frequently used among college students.

The popularity and availability of Facebook have therefore inspired numerous academic studies focused on its role in higher education and its potential effects on classroom climate. These researchers suggested that there are benefits associated with the use of Facebook for educational purposes as Facebook's emphasis on peer-to-peer interactions can enhance informal learning experiences. Students have used Facebook effectively for academic purposes and activism. Facebook's greatest value might be its capacity to enhance student satisfaction and engagement, but limited researchers investigating these topics have been inconclusive.

De Villiers (2010) used Facebook groups to initiate optional discussions in a post-graduate distance-learning class. She found that voluntary study group members benefited by extending the required material and making personal contributions on Facebook. These studies paint a vivid picture of Facebook's potential to serve as a teaching and learning tool.

Visagie S. & de Villiers C. (2012) stressed that students are using Facebook as an academic tool and that they are involved in a classroom network with the social network as the foundation. Also, lecturers will have to learn how to use the interface of the network. Thus, students and lecturers can be more closely connected, which in return can benefit the lecturer-student relationship. Facebook is a unique social networking site as it creates connections between students and faculty within an online academic community. Facebook increases contact between peers and thus their interactions online are also increased.

Finally, joining Groups is another feature that is extremely popular in this Social Network Community. Any user can create a group which can be open to any users or restricted to the targeted, pre-selected participants. The Group application can be utilized in language classes in a variety of useful and helpful manners.

To sum up, the sense of community is necessary to sustain a dynamic and meaningful educational experience and is a valuable asset to promote higher-level thinking and the construction of

knowledge. This makes Facebook and its Group application deserves to be a learning tool suitable for introduction into the L2 and FL classroom.

### **1.5 Methodology:**

The quantitative and analytical methods were used by the researcher for achieving the main objective of the paper conducted at the University of Kassala. Firstly, students from the Faculty of Arts and Education majoring in English and linguistics who were selected as a purposive sample included (25) students as they have Facebook account inside which they have been taught within an online group for one semester. A second purposive sample which included (50) EFL teachers was selected from different Sudanese universities due to their long experience in dealing with technology in their teaching at the universities.

#### **1.5.1 Tools of Data Collection:**

The researcher used the test and questionnaire as data collection tools of this study. The test was administered to twenty-four (25) students represent a purposive sample, who were tested in the elements of fiction and the literary appreciation of the novel. As for the questionnaire, it was distributed to (50) EFL teachers across different Sudanese universities so as to reflect their attitudes and perceptions towards the application of Facebook as an electronic portfolio. The analytical and quantitative methods were used here in carrying out this study.

#### **1.5.2 Procedures:**

As the test and questionnaire represent the data collection tools, particular procedures and steps were followed before collecting the data. To check the validity of the test, five copies of the test were handed over to one Associate professor and two Assistant professors in the field of EFL. The jurors wrote down their comments, suggestions, at the end of the test as requested by the researchers. Accordingly, their suggestions, notes, and advice, the numbers of the questions were reduced. The test was administered to the students during the academic year (2017-2018), and the results collected and processed computationally. The online experiment required one semester in which there were two hours of online session per week. The treatment lectures were selected from English literature. The students were provided with topics related to elements of fiction and literary appreciation of English novels. Finally, As to the questionnaire, it was distributed to fifty (50) EFL

University teachers teaching English at different Sudanese universities and colleges, to attain their attitudes and perceptions towards the application of social network as teaching electronic portfolio.

### 1.5.3 Reliability And Validity Of The Questionnaire:

Alpha Cronbach formula is used to compute the reliability of the questionnaire. The value of reliability lies between 0 and 1. The reliability increases according to an increase of alpha value up to 1. Generally, if the alpha value is more than or equal 0.4 the reliability is considered and the questionnaire is reliable. For this study; it was found that  $\alpha = 0.92$ , and this means the questionnaire has a high reliability.

Validity is the square root of reliability. In our case,  $\sqrt{0.92} = 0.96$  which means that there is a very high validity of the questionnaire.

The researcher handed the questionnaire to one Associate professor and four Assistant professors of English language teaching, Instructional Technology and specialists to examine the face, the construct and content validity of the designed instructions and statements. They reviewed the phrasing, suitability, thoroughness, and ease of use of the statements. The jurors noted that the questionnaire is convenient for the purpose of the study. Some changes were made in the paraphrasing of some statements; a few statements were deleted and others were added.

### 1.5.4 Data Analysis

The statistical method was used in the analysis of the gathered data. The tables, figures, frequency, percentage, and independent sample T-test below illustrated the verification of the questions and hypotheses as stated above.

### 1.5.5 The Analysis Of The Test:

**H<sub>1</sub>:** Using Facebook in teaching English language allows its application as teaching electronic portfolio”.

Table (1):One-sample T-test for the first hypothesis

Expected Mean	Observed Mean	St.d	t-value	d.f	p-value
12	15.90	3.26	8.45	49	0.00

Table (1) reveals that the p-value is less than the significance level and the observed mean is greater than the expected mean; this leads to the acceptance of this hypothesis. This actually verified and confirmed the hypothesis of the study which is,

“Using Facebook in teaching English language allows its application as teaching electronic portfolio”.

**H<sub>2</sub>:** Learners’ performance can easily be monitored and assessed through the social network.

Table (2):One-sample T-test for the second hypothesis

As shown in the above table, it is clear that the p-

Expected mean	Observed Mean	St.d	t-value	d.f	p-value
12	15.26	3.48	6.62	49	0.00

value (0.00) is less than the significance level, the observed mean (16.86) is bigger than the expected mean (12). These results, in fact, confirmed the second hypothesis which is “Learners’ performance can easily be monitored and assessed through a social network”.

### 1.5.6 The Analysis of the Questionnaire:

**Statement(1):** Teachers and students can collaborate and interact in a secure, closed

Options	Frequency	Percent (%)
Strongly agree	14	28.0
Agree	20	40.0
Neutral	7	14.0
Disagree	7	14.0
Strongly disagree	2	4.0
Total	50	100.0

environment on the online network.

The teachers' opinions are shown in the table (3) explained that 28% of the teachers strongly agree with the statement, 40% agree, 14% are neutral, 14% disagree, and 4% strongly disagree. As such, the above statement seems to be highly controversial, as the teachers expressed different attitudes towards it. However, the teachers who agree with the statement 68% (28% strongly agree, 40% agree) outnumber those who disagree, 32%. These rates support the second hypothesis: “Learners’ performance can easily be monitored and assessed through a social network”.

**Statement (2):** Teachers can post assignments and

Options	Frequency	Percent (%)
Strongly agree	10	20.0
Agree	29	58.0
Neutral	6	12.0
Disagree	4	8.0
Strongly disagree	1	2.0
Total	50	100.0

assessments that are electronically submitted and

automatically graded.

The teachers' replies are displayed in the table (4) above reflected that 20% of the teachers strongly agree with the statement, 58% agree, 12% of the teachers are neutral, 8% disagree, and 1% strongly disagree with the above statement. Despite the controversy, those who agree, 78% (20% strongly agree, 58% agree) outnumber those who disagree, 22%. Thus, these results are also in line with the second hypothesis of the research which reads: "Learners' performance can easily be monitored and assessed through a social network".

**Statement (3):** It is easy to monitor and assess students' academic performance through 'Social network'.

Options	Frequency	Percent (%)
Strongly agree	10	20.0
Agree	27	54.0
Neutral	6	12.0
Disagree	6	12.0
Strongly disagree	1	2.0
Total	50	100.0

The teachers' views are shown in the table (5) above explained that 20% of the teachers strongly agree with the statement, 54% agree, 12% of the teachers are neutral, 12% disagree, and 1% strongly disagree. Despite the teachers here expressed different views about this statement, most of them, 74% (20% strongly agree, 54% agree) support the third hypothesis: Learners' performance can easily be monitored and assessed through a social network".

**Statement (4):** The online chat room allows secure and open communication that can be monitored and controlled by the teacher.

Options	Frequency	Percent (%)
Strongly agree	12	24.0
Agree	20	40.0
Neutral	12	24.0
Disagree	6	12.0
Strongly disagree	0	0.0
Total	50	100.0

The teachers' replies are shown in the table (6) above showed that 24% of the teachers strongly agree with the statement, 40% agree, 24% of the teachers are neutral and 12% disagree. Thus, the results reveal different opinions expressed by the teachers. Nevertheless, the majority of the teachers,

64% (24% strongly agree, 40% agree) support the view conveyed by the statement which is in line with the second hypothesis too.

**Statement (5):** Teachers and students can store and share documents and files in a wide variety of formats in a web-based environment.

Options	Frequency	Percent (%)
Strongly agree	19	38.0
Agree	19	38.0
Neutral	5	10.0
Disagree	5	10.0
Strongly disagree	2	4.0
Total	50	100.0

The teachers' opinions are shown in the table (7) above read that 38% of the teachers strongly agree with the statement, 38% agree, 10% of the teachers are neutral, 10% disagree, and 4% strongly disagree. It is clear that despite the controversy created by this statement, most of the teachers, 76% (38% strongly agree, 38% agree) hold the same view expressed in the statement. These results support the first hypothesis that: "Using Facebook in teaching English language allows its application as teaching electronic portfolio".

**Statement (6):** Teachers and other colleges' personnel can create professional groups, subject area communities, and other networks to extend professional development.

Options	Frequency	Percent (%)
Strongly agree	20	40.0
Agree	18	36.0
Neutral	8	16.0
Disagree	4	8.0
Strongly disagree	0	0.0
Total	50	100.0

The teachers' attitudes are tabulated in the table (8) above manifested that 40% of the teachers strongly agree with the statement, 36% agree, 16% of the teachers are neutral, 4% disagree. Thus, most of the teachers, 76% (40% strongly agree, 36% agree) are in favor of the above-mentioned statement which confirms the first hypothesis that reads: "Using Facebook in teaching English language allows its application as teaching electronic portfolio".

As such the opinions provided by the teachers above came to be in accordance with the literature Review above that the researchers investigated the use of Facebook in academic context which include:

Faculty presence on Facebook, scholars perceptions of Facebook on colleges, The value of online social networking for academic purposes, Using Facebook in education, How to use Facebook in teacher education- levels of course integration, Facebook in the college classroom and Educational use of Facebook.

**Statement (7):** Facebook can facilitate teachers' communication with learners in an interactive manner

Options	Frequency	Percent (%)
Strongly agree	13	26.0
Agree	23	46.0
Neutral	9	18.0
Disagree	5	10.0
Strongly disagree	0	0.0
Total	50	100.0

The teachers' replies are displayed in the table (9) above showed that 26% of the teachers strongly agree with the statement, 46% agree, 18% of the teachers are neutral and 10% disagree with the above statement. These results are in line with the fourth hypothesis of the research which is: "Using Facebook in teaching English language allows its application as teaching electronic portfolio".

**Statement (8):** Teachers and learners can maintain a personal content library and share content with members.

Options	Frequency	Percent (%)
Strongly agree	22	44.0
Agree	15	30.0
Neutral	6	12.0
Disagree	6	12.0
Strongly disagree	1	2.0
Total	50	100.0

The teachers' replies are shown in the table (10) above reflected that 44% of the teachers strongly agree with the statement, 30% agree, 12% are neutral, 12% disagree, and 2% strongly disagree. The results reveal that 74% (44% strongly agree, 30% agree) are in favor of the idea conveyed by the statement. In fact, these results are in line with the second hypothesis of the article which is: Learners' performance can easily be monitored and assessed through a social network".

**Statement (9):** Folder-sharing allows teachers to share all content for particular units of study with select groups or all students.

Options	Frequency	Percent (%)
Strongly agree	13	26.0
Agree	24	48.0
Neutral	9	18.0
Disagree	4	8.0
Strongly disagree	0	0.0
Total	50	100.0

The teachers' replies are tabulated in the table (11) showed that 26% strongly agree with the statement, 48% agree, 18% are neutral, and 8% disagree. Thus, a great number of teachers 74% (26% strongly agree, 48% agree) are in support of the statement that proves the truth of the first hypothesis: "Using Facebook in teaching English language allows its application as teaching electronic portfolio".

**Statement (10):** Students can instantly access their files 24/7 through their web-based 'Library'.

Options	Frequency	Percent (%)
Strongly agree	12	24.0
Agree	25	50.0
Neutral	8	16.0
Disagree	4	8.0
Strongly disagree	1	2.0
Total	50	100.0

The teachers' attitudes as illustrated in table (12) above read that 24% of the teachers strongly agree with the statement, 50% agree, 16% of the teachers are neutral, 8% disagree and 2% strongly disagree. This statement has been another divisive issue, with the teachers' views ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. Despite this controversy, those who agreed with the statement, 74% (24 strongly agree, 50% agree) greatly outnumbered those who disagreed, 26% teachers. These opinions support the possibility of applying the Facebook network as teaching electronic portfolio.

### 1.6 Discussion:

The above-reported statistics showed clear and outstanding merits for Facebook applications in the online group as supported by the photos below. Besides the teachers' attitudes and perceptions obtained by the questionnaire, it can be assumed that social network not only Facebook but also most social network sites have the possibility and the potentials of being applied as teaching electronic portfolio and of benefits for both teachers and learners in their classroom environment. Furthermore, Barrett, Boulware, Bratina, Holt, and

Johnson strongly backed up and strengthened the researcher’s hypotheses verification of applying the social network Facebook as teaching electronic portfolio.

**1.7 Results And Conclusion:**

The last but not the least, after the analysis and the comparison of the results with questions and hypotheses; the results have shown that there are numerous potentials and possibilities offered by Facebook allowed its application as learning and teaching electronic portfolio with the following different respects:

- Teachers and students can collaborate in a secure, closed environment on the Facebook group.
- A chat room board on Facebook allows secure and open communication that can be monitored and controlled by the teacher.
- It is easy to monitor student interaction, assess their progress, and check their academic performance through Facebook.
- Teachers can post assignments that are electronically submitted and automatically graded.
- Teachers and other colleges’ personnel can create professional groups, subject area communities, and other networks to extend professional development.
- Teachers and students can store and share documents and files in a wide variety of formats in a cloud-based environment.
- Teachers can maintain a personal content library and share content with members.
- Students can instantly access their files 24/7 through their cloud-based ‘Library’.
- Folder-sharing allows teachers to share all content for particular units of study with select groups or all students.
- Teachers and students can create an account to connect with their parents via the social network.

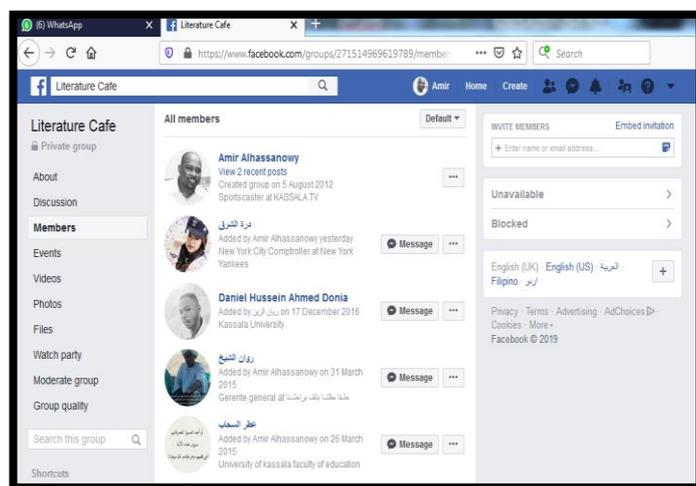
The paper recommended that Facebook and other social networks have the flexibility and the potentials of providing an online academic platform for colleges and institutions. The paper also advised teachers to make maximum use of the social network sites’ applications that can be helpful in the field of EFL teaching and learning. Finally, the study encourages EFL teachers to abandon the negative attitudes and perceptions towards technology and start following the new trends of technology adopted in teaching and learning of EFL.

The paper recommended that Facebook and other social networks have the flexibility and the potentials of providing an online academic platform for colleges and institutions. The paper also advised teachers to make maximum use of the social network sites’ applications that can be helpful in the field of EFL teaching and learning. Finally, the study encourages EFL teachers to abandon the negative attitudes and perceptions towards technology and start following the new trends of technology adopted in teaching and learning of EFL.

**1.8 Appendices Facebook Use As Teaching:**

**Electronic Portfolio:**

**Figure (1) Group membership**



**Figure (2) Designing files as teaching materials**

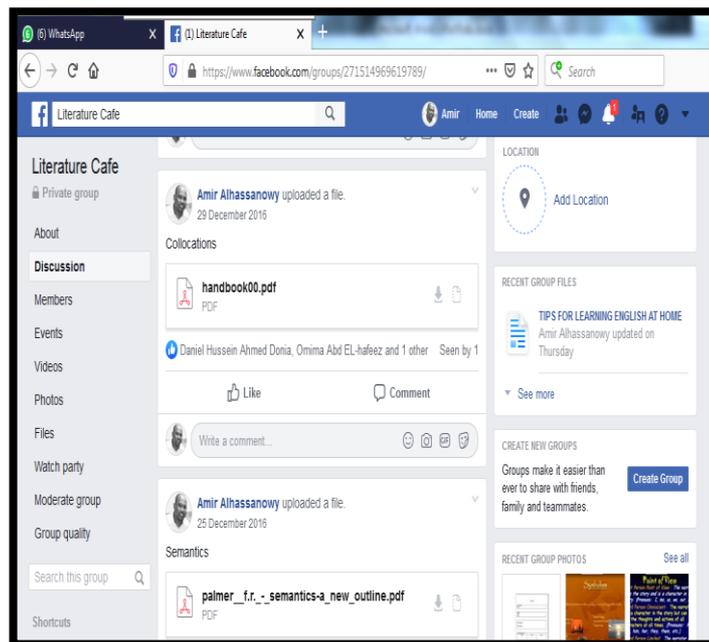


Figure (3) Sample of teaching materials files taught on Facebook

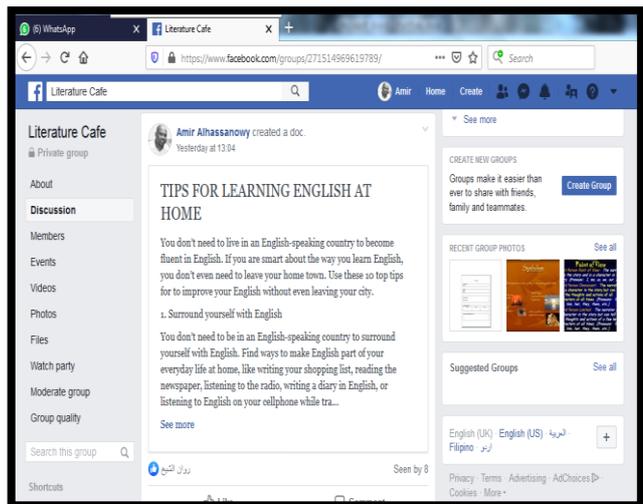


Figure (4) Sample of teaching materials files taught

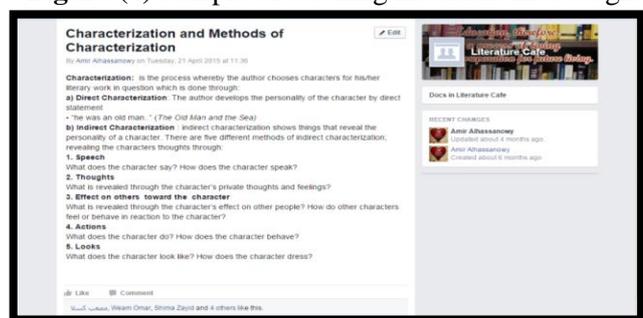
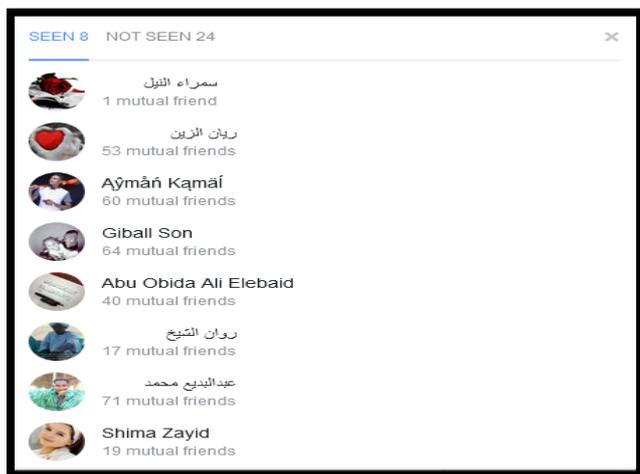


Figure (5) Students' attendance at lectures



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