# A Development of Students English Writing Skills by Using Social Network Services

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*Abstract: This study investigated 1) a development of students' English writing skills by using social network services and 2) students' satisfaction of writing English by using social network services. The participants of the study were the second year students studying in an English major at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Pibulsongkram Rajabhat University. This study was mixed methods; quantitative and qualitative. There were thirty students selected by random sampling who were the sample group. The research instrument was pre-test and post-test investigating of students' improvement in the skill of writing English. Also, there was a questionnaire designed to find out the students' satisfaction after participation in the activity of writing English by using social network services. The data in the study were analyzed by mean score ($\overline{X}$), standard deviation (S.D.) and t-test. The results of the study found that the students could significantly improve their skills of English writing particularly in basic sentences. This can indicate that students had more basic knowledge of writing English. Additionally, most students in the study were satisfied with learning English to a greater level after participation in the activity. Most students felt appreciation in their participation with writing English by e-mail or any other social network services because it is not as stressful as learning in class and surfing the internet or using e-mail and social network services in their daily lives.*

Keywords: English writing skills, studying English by e-mail, students' satisfaction, social network services

## 1. Introduction

English is regarded as the international language. It is used for communication, studying, business, and professional communication. All Thai students also study English as a Foreign Language (EFL) because as it is compulsory in Thai schools. However, most Thai students are still inefficient in English, especially writing skill for students in my class. An inefficiency of English writing may depend on various factors, for example, most English teaching in Thailand still uses the traditional way of teaching which always depends on only textbook, blackboard, and the teacher is the center of class. It makes students bored and it does not motivate them to learn English. At present, technology has been well developed. The distance between people from different countries and cultural backgrounds is becoming less. They can communicate to other people in many parts of the world more easily. E-mail and other social network services can help student contact with their foreign friends who have English skills or English native speakers. This may motivate students to achieve greater fluency in English reading and writing, particularly if they can be guided with skilled instruction (Chen 2008). Additionally, many students have email accounts and experience on the internet and other social network services. They can write both their native language and possibly other languages through the social network anywhere and at anytime to communicate with their friends providing that both parties have a common language. However, learning to write in English is a difficult job for the learners. Because of continual and swift changes in modern technology, information transmission can be successful quickly. Consequently, written English messages by using

e-mail and social network service is necessary for those who have the required English language skills. In order to help students to motivate their development in writing English, the research design intends to develop learners through using e-mail or social network services. Also, the researcher will edit their writing during contact and investigate the learner's development and satisfaction after writing. Hopefully, the students will be able to improve their writing skills not only in class but also in their future work in which English written is a requirement.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 English Writing Skills for EFL Class

"Writing plays an important role in our personal and professional lives, thus, it has become one of the essential components in university English for General Purposes (EGP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) curricula" (Massi, 2001). The students in EFL class need to be familiar with specific writing to others. We also follow genre approaches which consider writing as principally linguistic. Meanwhile, product approaches emphasize writing based on the social context, such as writing letters, writing research papers, or writing journals related with each situations (Flowerdew, 1993). For this reason, the students should be aware of the plan that is developed to determine both the contents and the forms of the texts which they will be asked to produce. By generating and encouraging interactive writing, not only texts are are read and graded by the teacher but also the students gain self-confidence, fluency and autonomy, and they will be stimulated to express themselves in their own writing.

### 2.2 Developing Writing Skills: Better Writing

In the development of writing skills especially in English writing, the Oxford Dictionary online (2012) shows six related points. They consist of grammar, spelling, punctuation, practical writing, improving your English and abbreviations. All of the points presented should be in the English writing and they may make writing better. In this study, the participants practice basic English writing, for the reason that the researcher will present the relevant points of writing better; grammar, spelling, punctuation, and practical writing respectively.

• Grammar is the way where the writer puts the words together to form proper and complete sentences. It is important to write well-formed grammatical sentences if a writer wants to create a good impression and readers get his/her meaning accurately.

• Spelling is vital for writing. If the writer wants to create a good impression in writing and makes sure the reader can get her/his meaning clearly, it is important to spell accurately too.

• Punctuation marks are necessary when you are writing English. They will advise the reader where sentences start and finish. If the punctuation marks are used precisely and properly, they can make the writing understood more easily.

• Practical writing is needed in writing in everyday situations. For example, essays, e-mails, invitation cards, and application letters etc.

### 2.3 Using Internet or social network services to develop writing skills

The internet is a computer-based worldwide information network. These internets may link several computers, and allow them to share information through cables. Despite the usefulness and convenience of the internet, the teacher needs to provide the appropriate learning environment, resources and experiences for his or her students for the reason that the Internet can make a significant and unique contribution. Similarly, Gray (cited in Sperling, 1998) states that the internet is a collection of recourses that users can access to all information. Teachers can be more creative and up-to-date. The internet supports students of English to correspond in English by e-mail with other people in other parts of the world, to develop individual-pen-pals to write out- of -class time, communicate in real-

time chat rooms, share opinions and ideas across cultures on sports, music, food, hobbies, etc., and conduct international surveys for class work.

If the teacher can create the teaching methodology appropriately, it can make students satisfied in learning English. Therefore, the satisfaction of students is the important component for the successful completion of the course (Chang & Fisher, 2003). Furthermore, satisfaction contributes to motivation, which is essential for student success (Bollinger & Martindale, 2004). Student satisfaction is also likely to determine whether the students take subsequent courses in this format or with the same education provider (Arbaugh, 2000).

## 3. Purposes of Study

3.1 To study the development of students' English writing skills by using e-mail or social network services.

3.2 To study students' satisfaction toward writing English by using e-mail or social network services.

## 4. Hypotheses of Study

4.1 Students improve their English writing skill by using e-mail or social network services.

## 5. Conceptual Framework of Study

The conceptual framework of the study in Figure 1 described a set of concepts that make it easy to understand. It consisted of the process of doing research and the variables of study which were independent and dependent.
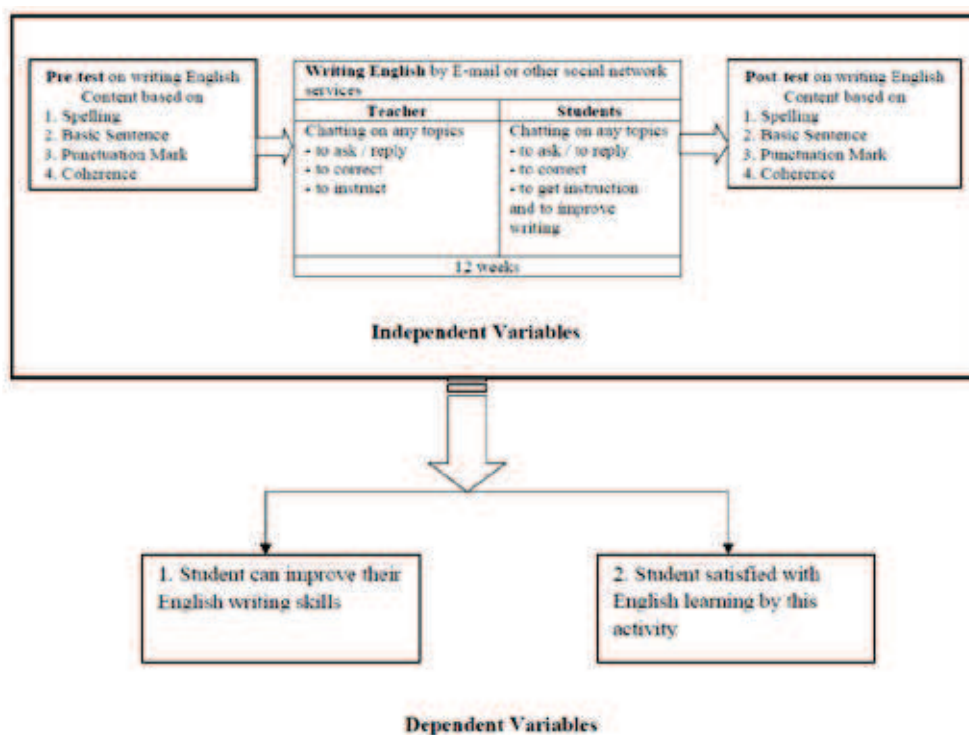
# 6. Methodology

This study was the mixed methods between quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative part was used to test the hypotheses and to survey satisfaction of participants by using questionnaire. Also, the qualitative is for investigating the satisfaction of students and their opinion or some suggestion about the activity.

### 6.1 Participants

The participants of the study were 30 sophomores English major at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science, Pibulsongkram Rajabhat University. Also, the selected students were studying in the subject of English Syntax I. All participants were selected by random sampling. They were studying English writing at the same time during the research period.

### 6.2 Instruments

6.2.1 Pre-test and Post-test

Pre-test and Post-test used in this study are the exam which indicates the background knowledge of the participants (pre-test) about basic English grammar writing at the beginning of studying English Syntax 1 in the second semester of 2012. The post-test used for assuring the results of development in English grammar and writing after they participated in the study at the end of the same semester. Pre and post-test exams consisted of the multiple choices test items about basic English grammar, the completed sentence and writing their own basic sentence correctly. Pre-test and post-test exams were also used for finding about the students' spelling, accuracy in basic sentence construction, punctuation, and coherence. The total score of pre-test is equal to post-test, which is 30 percent. The researcher can see whether the students improved their English grammar and writing effectively or not from the score of the post-test exam.

6.2.2 The satisfaction questionnaire of participants

The satisfaction questionnaire is composed of 10 questions divided into three categories; confirmation, perceived usefulness and perceived competence. Most items in the questionnaire surveyed the satisfaction of students after participating in the activity which is writing English by using emails or social network services. This questionnaire was based on a Five- Point Likert scale which consists of 5 levels of satisfaction as the following this; "4.51-5.00" means most satisfied, "3.51-4.50" as more satisfied, "2.51-3.50" as moderately satisfied, "1.51-2.50" as less satisfied, and "1.00-1.50" as least satisfied. At the end of questionnaire, participants were encouraged to write their opinion or suggestion about participating in the study.

### 6.2.3 Data Collection

Data collection was divided into 4 stages. Firstly, all participants had to taked pre-test, the content in the test covered spelling vocabulary, accurately basic sentence, punctuation marks, and coherence in writing short paragraph. In this first stage, it lasted for 2 weeks. In addition, the first four weeks of data collecting the teacher reviewed a basic grammar for the students before practicing writing English. Secon stage of the study, the researcher contacted or chatted to the 30 participants with any interest English topics of the participants by using an email or other social network services for 3 weeks. This stage intended to make the participants feel more familiar with writing English through network services. Next, (eighth to twelfth week of data collection) the participants were assigned to write the topic by the researcher once a week. Every week after assigning writing topics the researcher gave the participants feedback of writing to the students. The feedback related to correcting grammatically, spelling, using punctuation marks, writing basic sentences and coherence of the writing. All students were expected to write short paragraph or easy essay writing. Finally, the last week, all participants had to take the post-test exam and answer the questionnaires on satisfaction of writing English by using e-mail or social network services. After the data in questionnaire completed, all of the data were

analyzed and explained by descriptive statistics, such as frequency, percentage, mean ($\overline{X}$), standard deviation (S.D.) and t-test.

### 6.2.4 Data Analysis

Quantitative analyses based on descriptive statistics which presented the student demographic information and students' satisfaction of participation in writing English by using the e-mail. Most of the quantitative data were analyzed by the statistic of average score or mean score ($\overline{X}$), standard deviation (S.D.) and t-test which can find the difference of pre-test and post-test score. The score of post-test showed the student's development in English writing. In this study, level of significance of the test is set at .05. In addition, the questionnaire of satisfaction in the study is adopted from the survey questionnaire of Huang (2012) which ensured the reliability of the survey questionnaire at 0.7 (the required value) by Cronbach's measure. Three domains in the questionnaire indicated the participants' appreciation in writing English by using e-mails. Additionally, qualitative analyses based on the student's opinion or suggestion exposed in the last section of questionnaire.

## 7. Results

### 7.1 Quantitative Analyses

The participants in the study were male and female undergraduates in the English major at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Pibulsongkram Rajabhat University. The total number of participants was 30. Figure 2 presents the percentage of frequency of using other types of social network services by participants. There were four kinds of social network services in the study. They consisted of facebook, email, twitter and others. The difference of using social network services between facebook and email was 23%'. Additionally, the information indicated that frequency of using twitter and other kinds of social network service was slightly different. 7 percent of students using twitter and 6 percent of other kinds of social network services respectively. The percentage of using twitter and the other kinds of social network services was merely different by 1%.
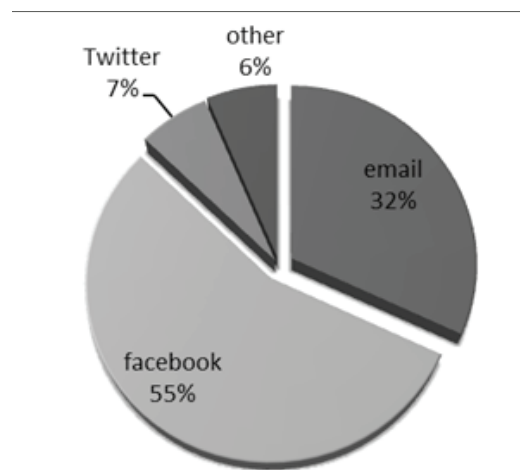


**Figure 1:** Showing the percentage of frequency of using other types of social network service

For the pre-test and post-test examination, there were four topics that consisted of spelling, basic sentences, punctuation and coherence displayed in Figure 3. All topics on the test focused on accuracy of writing English, for example, spelling accurately and writing English in basic sentences precisely. The overall scores both in pre-test and post-test was thirty. Each topic was scored at 7.5. Also, the bar

chart shows differences between pre-test and post-test and compares the scores on four topics. Overall, there are slightly differences of average scores on topics of pre and post-test. On post-test, students got higher scores on basic sentences if compared to pre-test. They got scores of 7 on post-test but on pre-test of 6. However, students could get a highest score on the topic of basic sentences both on pre and post-tests. On the other topics in the exam, particularly spelling and coherence, the score leveled off. Before and after participating in the activity of writing English by using email and other kinds of social network services, the score remained steady at an average of 5. The topic of punctuation was the only one whose average score on the post-test which fell slightly to 4. .In total, the average score of pre and post-test in writing English was no different. It was an average of 21 (20.86 for pre-test and post-test was 20.87).
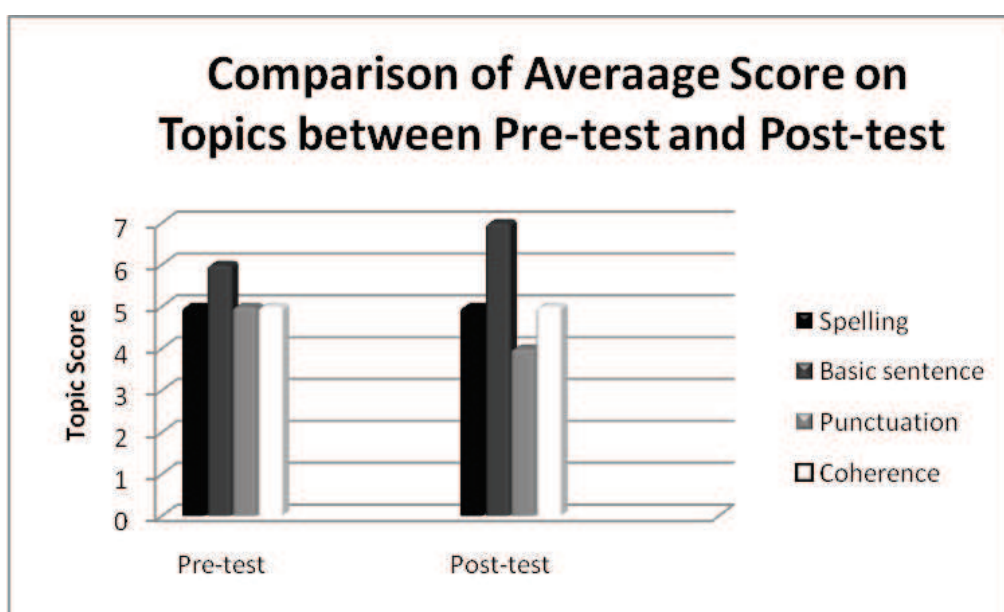


**Figure 2:** Comparison of an average score on topics between pre-test and post-test

In Table 1, shows the number of students in this study. There were thirty students. Mean ($\overline{X}$) score of pre-test was 20.86 and post-test was 20.87. Std. Deviation (S.D) of pre-test was equal to 3.099 and 4.423 for post-test. Also, it presented Std. Error Mean before learning or pre-test was 0.566 and post-test, 0.808.

Table 1: Showing paired sample statistics

|  |  | N | Mean ($\overline{X}$) | Std. Deviation (S.D) | Std. Error Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pair 1 | Pre-test | 30 | 20.86 | 3.099 | 0.566 |
|  | Post-test | 30 | 20.87 | 4.423 | 0.808 |

Table 2, shows that mean score of pre-test was 20.86 and post-test was 20.87. When they are compared, it indicated that the score on the post-test did not differ from the pre-test set at a significance level of .05. This result can indicate that after participating in writing English by using e-mail or other social network services, students have no improvement in English writing skill. As the result the hypothesis is rejected.

Table 2: Showing Mean ($\overline{X}$), Standard Deviation (SD.), t-value and significance 1 tailed test on pre-test and post-test

|  | Mean | SD. | Mean of Difference | SD. | t | Sig |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pre-test | 20.86 | 3.099 | 0.01 | 1.650 | 0.035 | 0.486 |
| Post-test | 20.87 | 4.423 | | | | |

    Table 3 presents mean ($\overline{X}$) and standard deviation (S.D) of student satisfaction. There were 10 questions which questioned students about their appreciation of learning written English by using e-mail or other kinds of social network services. In the ten questions, they consisted of three categories of satisfaction. They were confirmation, perceived usefulness and perceived competence. It showed that the students felt very satisfied with the activity. It was confirmed by mean score ($\overline{X}$) at 3.82. The two last statement of confirmation was mean score at 2.73 and 3.27 respectively. For the perceived usefulness, there were 4 questions of satisfaction. These questions based on productive skill of writing. Most students thought writing English by using e-mail or other types of social network services helped them more productive in learning English at average score 4.73. It indicated that the students were extremely satisfied. Also, they were very satisfied that writing English by using e-mail makes them being more productive student and it was useful in performing student's learning. They were at 3.64 and 4.00 mean score. However, 3.45 of mean score pointed out the students were moderately satisfied with writing English by using e-mail. It was able to help them to increase the quality of their learning English.

    In perceived competence, there were 3 questions of satisfaction towards the writing activity. All of the questions expressed students' ability in writing English. All information in perceived competence was slightly different. 4.73 mean score of student's appreciation showed they were extremely satisfied. They acquired new and interesting writing English by e-mail competence through their learning. Additionally, the participants felt moderately satisfied with the activity at mean score 2.82. In contrast, the statement "I do not feel that I am particular competent in using e-mail" was at 1.91. It indicated that students disagreed with the statement and slightly satisfied with it. Overall, mean score questions was at 3.51. It showed that the participants were very satisfied.

Table 3: Showing the students' satisfaction towards the process of writing activity

| Questions | Mean ($\bar{X}$) | SD. | Level Satisfaction |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Confirmation** | | | |
| 1. My experience with writing English by using e-mail was better than what I expected. | 3.82 | 0.79 | More Satisfied |
| 2. E-learning helps me more in my educational work than what I expected. | 2.73 | 0.18 | Moderately Satisfied |
| 3. Overall, most of my expectations from writing English by using the e-mail were confirmed. | 3.27 | 0.18 | Moderately Satisfied |
| **Perceived usefulness** | | | |
| 4. Writing English by using e-mail increases the quality of my learning. | 3.45 | 0.30 | Moderately Satisfied |
| 5. Writing English by using e-mail helps me in being more productive in my learning. | 4.73 | 0.18 | Most Satisfied |
| 6. Writing English by using e-mail makes me a more productive student. | 3.64 | 0.43 | Very Satisfied |
| 7. Overall, writing English by using e-mail is useful in performing my learning. | 4.00 | 0.00 | More Satisfied |
| **Perceived competence** | | | |
| 8. I have acquired new and interesting writing English by e-mail competence through my learning. | 4.73 | 0.18 | Most Satisfied |
| 9. I do not feel that I am particular competent in using e-mail. | 1.91 | 0.61 | Less Satisfied |
| 10. After most of the days I participated in the activity, I have a feeling of achievement through my writing English by e-mail. | 2.82 | 0.12 | Moderately Satisfied |
| **Mean** | **3.51** | **0.03** | **More Satisfied** |

According to the data in Table 3, it can indicate that students participating in writing English by e-mail or social network services were satisfied with the activity of writing. The average of satisfaction towards the English writing was 3.51 and -0.03 for S.D. This meant that students were very satisfied with writing English by using e-mail or other social network services. As a result, the hypothesis, "Students have satisfied with writing English after participating in writing English by using e-mail or social network services" can be accepted.

### 7.2 Qualitative Analyses

1. An English class requires students to participate in the activity of writing English by e-mail and social network services which was a part of a course; Syntax I. In the beginning, most students felt uncomfortable to do it. Most of the students were worried to express their idea or opinion in English on-line. For the reason that they were afraid of ungrammatical writing, after two or three weeks they were more familiar with writing English through e-mail.

2. After four weeks, the teacher tried to correct the students' grammar The students were more confident to write or post their ideas or opinions with others. Significantly, their writing English improved slightly in basic English grammar and punctuations.

3. Most students self-reported that they felt appreciated in their participation in writing English by using e-mail or other social network services because it was not as stressful as learning in class.

4. The majority of students reported that they felt nervous to take the pre-test and do the activity at first. After the activity, they thought it was useful to them for learning English. When they took post-test, they seemed more comfortable to do it.

## 8. Conclusion and Discussion

1) To study a development of students English writing skills by using e-mail or social network service.

In accordance with the first purpose of the study, it found that students in English major had no development in writing English. The average score of pre-test and post-test in writing English was little different. Both before and after participation in the writing activity by using e-mail or other social network services, the score was an average of 21 from a total score of 30. However, there was one topic of post-test where the score was higher than in post-test. It was the topic of the basic sentence. This finding indicated that the activity of writing English by e-mail cannot help students to improve their skill of writing completely especially in the topic of using punctuations where the score in the post-test, 4 is lower than the pre-test, 5. However, there were a few topics where average scores were not different both before and after participating in the writing activity. They were the topics of spelling and coherence in writing. This can indicate that spelling English words or using vocabulary of students was fairly good but they were not good at coherence. They cannot write any idea to fit together well. The students can improve the basic sentence after taking part in the activity, although the overall results did not. The results of this study can be concluded that the students had not develop their English writing skills by using e-mail or social network services such as facebook and twitter etc completely. However, the result mostly agreed with Lopex-Mayhew (1998) said that vocabulary and sentence structure with a correct use of grammar is very basic to writing. A teacher usually needs to encourage students to write directed sentences and paragraphs using set phrases and vocabulary that refer to topics and situations. Also, it can conclude the hypothesis of the study, "Students improve their English writing skills by using e-mail or social network services" cannot be accepted. They can develop writing English only in basic sentences and punctuations. Therefore, the teacher needs to plan a written piece, the writer must consider his/her audience and adopt a reader-oriented approach for achievement of the writer's purpose.

2) Students are more satisfied towards English after writing English by using e-mail or social network service.

The result which investigates students' satisfaction towards English after writing English was divided into two parts; quantitative and qualitative analysis. The quantitative analysis comprised three categories of satisfaction; confirmation, perceived usefulness and perceived competence. There were 10 questions in the process of investigating what students thought about their appreciation to learning writing English by using e-mail or other kinds of social network services. At first, the questions of confirmation in the activity of writing English by using e-mail or social network services found that the students felt very satisfied with the activity by mean score ($\overline{X}$) at 3.82. In addition to this confirmation, the students were moderately with the statement "E-learning helps me more in my educational work than what I had expected." And "Overall, most of my expectations from writing English by using the e-mail were confirmed." Secondly, on the perceived usefulness of the questions based on productive skill of writing, most students thought writing English by using e-mail or other types of social network services can help them to be more productive in learning English at an average score 4.73. The last category of question was the perceived competence. Its mean score of all questions of three categories was at 3.51. It is concluded that the students were very satisfied with the

activity of writing English by using e-mail or other types of social network services. However, despite these feelings of greater satisfaction, their actual writing performance did not improve except to a very marginal extent. Possibly, this may due to insufficient time for the students continuing to use the social network to practice their English writing skills.

From the qualitative analysis it can be summarized that the English class required students to participate in the activity of writing English by e-mail and using social network services which was a requirement of the subject. Although the participants felt stressful at the beginning of writing English by using e-mail or other social network services, their anxiety about writing English decreased eventually. Additionally, most students felt appreciation of their participation with writing English by e-mail or any other social network service because it was not as stressful as learning in class and surfing the internet and social network services was already part of their daily lives. The result corresponded to Galy E., Downey C., and Johnson J., (2011) showed that the results of their study revealed marked differences in student perceptions of e-learning tools between students who chose to take an online course and students who preferred to take the campus-based section. Additionally, it can be summarized that the hypothesis of study, "Students are satisfied towards English after participating in writing English by e-mail and other social network services." can be accepted. Most students felt pleased with learning English after participating in writing English through using e-mail and social network services. This result conformed with Huang (2012) who concluded in his research that students' satisfaction toward a combination of a class designed with practice exams, teaching, and a learning environment also reaches statistical significance respectively.

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