EFFECT OF USING FACEBOOK TO ASSIST ENGLISH FOR BUSINESS COMMUNICATION COURSE INSTRUCTION

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ABSTRACT
This paper aimed to explore the effect of incorporating blended learning with Facebook and peer assessment for English for Business Communication course for college students. A total of 111 students from a public technological university participated in this study. The participants were divided into three Facebook site groups. A mixed method consisting qualitative and quantitative approaches was employed to analyze the collected data, including the pre- and post-tests, qualitative data of peer assessment on Facebook sites, interview, a student self-efficacy scale, and a self-developed satisfaction survey questionnaire. The findings of this study indicate that incorporating Facebook in the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course can effectively assist college students in learning business communication English. Students can improve their professional knowledge not only from the in-class instruction but also through peer assessing on Facebook. Additionally, the blended learning approach can significantly enhance the students' learning motivation and interest. Finally, some useful instructional strategies are provided to educators and practitioners in the English education field.
Keywords: blended learning, English for specific purposes (ESP), Facebook, peer assessment,

INTRODUCTION
The advent and growth of Web 2.0 technology (e.g. YouTube, Flickr, blog, and Facebook) enable knowledge exchange in ways such as online meeting and discussion that were not possible before. Through these applications, users are able to exchange, interact, collaborate, and socialize with others in virtual communities (VCs). Hsu, et al (2007) pointed out that a VC is supported by information technology and centered upon the communication and interactions of participants for interacting, contributing and sharing knowledge collectively. According to the constructivism paradigm, a learner acquires new knowledge through a process of initial self-motivated attempts and exploration of using existing knowledge (Lou, et al., 2011). Bruner (1990) also pointed out that students are encouraged to participate in active dialogues with other students and instructors as well as to collaborate with others in activities in order to construct knowledge and discover principles for themselves. Meanwhile, the rapid growth of Web 2.0 technology applications, in particular Facebook, has made users and learners interact and collaborate with each other actively in a virtual community.

Tifarlioglu (2011) pointed out the emergence of web 2.0 technologies have changed the way people use web in the field of education and in foreign language learning since 2004. Many learners and educators have regarded web 2.0 as a language learning or teaching tool. Up to July, 2011, more than 500 million people are using Facebook to communicate, interact, and socialize with others synchronously and asynchronously (Facebook, 2011). Up-to-date, not many studies investigated the effect of integrating Facebook into teaching and learning in the tertiary education. Therefore, the purpose of this study aimed to investigate the effect of incorporating Facebook with blended learning approach for improving the quality of learning and teaching for college students in Taiwan.

LITERATURE REVIEW
The emergence and rapid growth of Web 2.0 technology and Internet have become more flexible and accessible for language teaching and learning (Lou, et al, 2010; Shih, 2010). Additionally, the learning process can be transformed from in-class teaching into learning outside the classroom (Liu, Shih, & Tsai, 2011). Particularly, the advantages of using blogs in education have been suggested by some scholars. Blogs enable individuals to communicate, interact, and exchange ideas and opinions with each other (Richardson, 2007; Shih, 2010). Also, customized blogs or online interactive sites can facilitate learners' team-building and provide spaces for learners to comment and give feedback for others. Incorporating online learning platforms into teaching can ease the limitations of classroom walls and provide students more opportunities to connect with each other, which will result in better learning effectiveness (Chen, et al, 2011; Lou, et al, 2010; Richardson, 2006). As a result, Web 2.0 technology can be used as a collaborative tool for students and teacher to deliver such tasks (Lou, et al, 2010; Shih, 2010; Weller, Pegler, & Mason, 2005).

Past studies revealed that online learning through web technologies has become increasingly important and crucial for education (Jou, Chuang, & Wu, 2010; Shih, 2010). According to Smyth (2011), technology enhanced learning using video communications can provide learners opportunities for more authentic online collaborative

learning, both formally and informally. Hsu and Lin (2008) stated that blogs can be regarded as a major way of knowledge sharing. Expected benefits, reputation, altruism, trust, and other determinants affecting knowledge sharing are considered as the incentives for knowledge sharing. In addition, knowledge sharing requires collaboration and cooperation between the interaction of the learners and contributors of knowledge. Chang, Chen, and Li (2008) concluded that knowledge constructed by the learners cannot be efficiently shared by the leaners in the traditional classroom settings. Instead, a web-based coursework journal can effectively promote students' knowledge sharing, improve the quality of coursework, and advance their learning performance. Additionally, Li and Chen (2009) pointed out, online asynchronous discussion forums enables students collaborate, share and negotiate knowledge without the need to meet physically in person, or to work simultaneously. Therefore, students will be able to sustain the inter-relationship among the group members through effective group communications and discussions in such a cooperative learning environment (Yang & Chen, 2008). Furthermore, the learning capacity will be developed at the level of individual, group members of a community or organization, or a network (Cornelissen, et al 2011).

As mentioned before, Facebook has approximately 500 million active users nowadays (Facebook, 2011). It can be considered as a more advanced online interactive site than a blog. But basically both of these online Facebook sites share the major features: online discussion or message board and bulletin board for uploading pictures and videos, and so on. Individuals can access online freely to share information and knowledge, interact, and communicate with others synchronously and asynchronously. Some studies also concluded that team-based and project activities can merit active learning (Liang, 2010; Lou, et al, 2010a; Neo, Neo, & Kwok, 2009). Online team interaction can also help shy students or team members who rarely speak up in the class or discussion activities (Chang, Chen, & Hsu, 2011). Additionally, functions such as emails, bulletin boards, chat rooms, forums, and online discussions can also promote learner-instructor and learner-learner interactions in Internet instruction and thus enable learners to learn and exchange ideas and opinions freely as well as to participate in discussion activities to deepen the understanding of the topics (Chang, Chen, & Hsu, 2011; Liu, Ho, & Song, 2011).

Regarding incorporating peer assessment into instructions, particularly online assessment, studies suggested that peer assessment can significantly enhance learning outcome and productivities (Yang & Tsai, 2010). According to Chang and Chen (2009), peer assessment plays an important role in the teaching and learning process by allowing students to examine and evaluate peers' work in a group. Also, Barak, and Rafaeli (2004) examined peer assessment and knowledge sharing in a postgraduate MBA course and found that online peer assessment can promote active learning, constructive criticism, and knowledge sharing as well as enhance communities of learners. Liang and Tsai (2010) pointed out that students' writing was significantly improved through peer assessment. Similarly, Xiao and Lucking (2008) also revealed that the majority of students were able to actively engage in peer assessment and benefited from being an assessor and an assessee's role in the academic writing by using Wiki interactive software. Additionally, researchers also suggested that peer assessment can be used as an alternative form of evaluation, which has changed the role of assessment itself (Wen & Tsai, 2006).

With respect to blended learning, it combines online learning with traditional face-to-face instruction to create a positive experience for both instructor and students as well as facilitate online collaborative learning (So & Brush, 2008; Shih, 2010). Many research findings support the positive effects of blended instruction on learner's learning. Lim and Morris (2009) and Osguthorpe and Graham (2003) found that blended instruction can enhance pedagogy, knowledge acquisition, social interaction, cost effectiveness, and ease of revision. Similarly, Shih (2010) also found that blended instruction using video-based blogs could be an effective approach for second language (L2) learners to learn English public speaking productively and efficiently.

As a result, the purpose of this study was aimed to explore the effect of college students' business communication course learning through a blended approach combining the traditional face-to-face instructional method, online Facebook assisted learning, and peer assessment and feedback.

RESEARCH METHOD
The mixed method was used in this study, consisting of qualitative and quantitative approaches. Factor analysis and descriptive statistics were performed to analyze the collected quantitative data.

Research participants
The participants in this study were 111 students (48 males and 63 females) enrolled in an ESP course: English for Business Communication in a technological university in Taiwan. The participants were divided into three groups (English majored undergraduate students, postgraduates of Industrial Management, and postgraduates of Business Administration). Each group operated one Facebook site for giving peer assessment and feedback on

their four assignments as well as sharing their English professional knowledge and exchanging ideas and opinions.

Research Instruments
The research instruments were the pre-test and post-test, the three group Facebook sites, a student's self-efficacy scale, the learning satisfaction survey questionnaire (LSSQ), and interview.

Pretest and post test
Both pre-test and post-test were developed by the instructor. On the 8th week before the implementation of the Facebook activities, the pre-test was employed. The post-test was administered on the 18th week after the Facebook activities completed. Meanwhile, the students of three departments were asked to divide into three groups and to elect one group leader for registering and operating the Facebook site.

Facebook sites and materials
All students were required to register and join their own group Facebook site. Thus, three group Facebook sites for each group of students were registered and operated by the three groups of students (one is for English-majored undergraduate students, anther is for Master program students of Industrial Management, and the other is for Master program students of Business Management). During Weeks 9-17, there were four writing assignments posted on each group's Facebook site for students complete, make comments, and give feedback on other's works. The materials of the four writing assignments were the most important vocabulary, or professional terminologies and phrases related to business communication taught in class sessions. For each assignment, the instructor posted five to ten terminologies or phrases for group students to complete the designated writing tasks. After completing each writing task, every student also had to comment and give feedback on other's writings. Also, the students had to revise their writings based on the comments and feedback. The role of the instructor was as a facilitator to guide and check the group members' comments. Figure 1 shows an entry page of a Facebook site for English majored students in the study.

Fig. 1: The Facebook site for English-majored undergraduate students

The learning satisfaction survey questionnaire
In order to explore the students' learning satisfaction toward the Facebook integrated blended learning course, a 5-point Likert satisfaction survey questionnaire (5=strongly agree; 4=agree; 3=neutral; 2=disagree; 1=strongly disagree), consisting of demographical information and 32 questions and 3 open-ended questions was developed by the researcher according to related literature review. The three open-ended questions used are as follows: (1) what do you think of the course arrangement and implementation of this course? (2) What are the advantages and disadvantages of using Facebook to assist in learning English for Business Communication?, and (3) what are the advantages and disadvantages of using peer assessment to learn English for Business Communication?

The formal satisfaction survey questionnaire obtained .963 of Cronbach Alpha Coefficient, indicating the survey questionnaire has obtained a high level of consistent reliability. In order to further investigate the factors that influenced the students' Facebook integrated blended learning, the exploratory factor analysis was employed. The initial factor analysis resulted in 5 extracted factors, which explained 69 % of the variance (Table 1). Based on the results of factor analysis, literature review, and the types of questions, the extracted factors are categorized into (1) course arrangement and implementation, (2) use of digital learning site (Facebook), (3) interpersonal relationship, (4) English for Business Communication learning, and (5) the fulfillment of learning.

Table 1: Total variance explained in factor analysis

Factor	Initial Eigenvalues Total	% of variance	Cumulative %
1	13.56	46.78	46.78
2	2.38	8.22	55.00
3	1.70	5.87	60.88
4	1.31	4.53	65.42
5	1.05	3.65	69.07

The collected quantitative data were analyzed by SPSS descriptive analysis and factor analysis. Content analysis was used to analyze the peer comments on the three Facebook sites. The content validity and reliability of the survey questionnaire were established through two professors in the related field. Also, the pilot study of the survey questionnaire obtained a .952 of Cronbach Alpha, indicating the questionnaire obtained a high level of internal consistency and reliability in the pilot study.

Student interview
In order to obtain more in-depth information and to know what students' opinions and attitudes toward this blended learning business communication course, the researcher interviewed five volunteer students. The interview data were carefully analyzed and coded.

The student self-efficacy scale
The researcher also constructed a students' self-efficacy scale for assessing students. A 5-point Likert self-efficacy scale (5=strongly confident; 4=very confident; 3=confident; 2=a little bit confident; 1=not confident at all) containing 17 questions concerning students' confidence levels of using Facebook was developed by the researcher. The students' self-efficacy scale obtained a Cronabch Alpha of .905, indicating the scale has reached a high level internal consistent of reliability.

Research Procedure
The study lasted for 18 weeks (one semester) in 2010, containing 16 instructional weeks and two examination weeks. The first seven weeks of the semester were the traditional face-to-face instruction. From Weeks 9 to 17, a blended learning with Facebook was implemented. The post test, the self-efficacy scale, the satisfaction survey, and interview were conducted in the last week. The research procedures are illustrated in Figure 2.
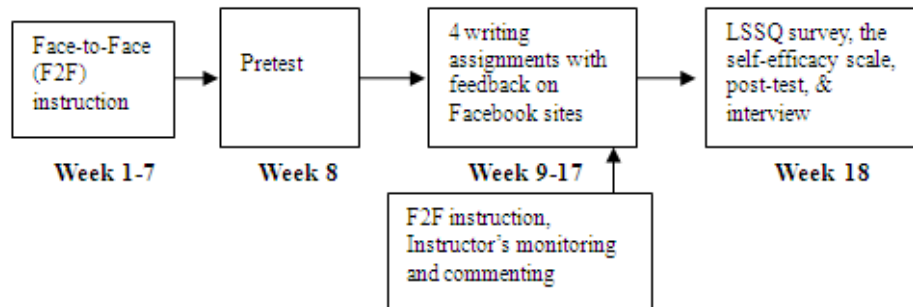

Fig. 2: The research procedures

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS
Results of the pre-test and post-test
According to the statistical results, the total average scores of the pre-test and post-test were 48.04 and 85.73 respectively, indicating the students made significant progress on the English for Business Communication course.

Table 2: Results of Pre- and Post-tests for the Three Groups

Department	Sex	test	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
English Majored N=54	Male	Pretest	13	16.00	66.00	41.4615	17.30422
		Posttest	13	56.00	96.00	78.0000	12.11060
	Female	Pretest	41	20.00	82.00	53.7317	15.19543

		Posttest	41	60.00	100.00	88.7317	17.34218
Industrial Management N=35	Male	Pretest	27	20.00	68.00	45.6296	12.36978
		Posttest	27	58.00	100.00	85.4815	11.07447
	Female	Pretest	8	31.00	78.00	58.0000	17.72811
		Posttest	8	82.00	100.00	92.2500	5.89794
Business Admin. N=22	Male	Pretest	8	10.00	52.00	33.8750	13.37842
		Posttest	8	46.00	100.00	80.0000	18.14229
	Female	Pretest	14	18.00	72.00	44.5000	17.06887
		Posttest	14	56.00	100.00	84.1429	16.99709

Results of peer assessments on the Facebook sites

All group members were required to do four writing assignments and then post them on the Facebook site. Afterwards, group members had to review and comment on others' works within groups. The frequencies of reviewing and commenting on others' works were not limited by the instructor. Participants were encouraged to review and comment as many as possible. Content analysis was employed to analyze the three group students' comments and feedback on the Facebook sites. According to Table 3, the students of Master program of Business Administration made the most comments and feedback on their peers' postings. The English-majored undergraduate students made the least comments and feedback comparing with the other two groups.

Table 3: Statistical Information of content analysis on the three Facebook sites

Group	Number of Students made comments	Number of comments made	Number of "like" being sent
English-majored undergraduates	26	44	1
Master of Business Admin.	22	98	12
Master of Industrial Management	32	53	32

The results of content analysis on the three Facebook sites show that the comments on peers' work were mainly about grammatical errors, such as tense, spelling, and structure. One example of the students' comments on the Facebook site is presented in Figure 3.

Fig. 3: An example of the students' comments on the Facebook site

Results of the learning survey questionnaire

The statistical results of descriptive analysis on the responses to the survey questionnaire show that the 32 questions obtained mean scores ranging from 3.84 to 4.33 and only five items obtained mean score below 4.00,

indicating the students highly agreed on that statements of the questionnaire. Item 5 "Group cooperative learning makes me put more efforts to English writing" obtained the lowest mean of 3.84, indicating some students did not agree that cooperative learning could make them like English writing more. Item 18 "Group members' assessing standards are close to mine" obtained a mean of 3.97 in the peer assessment category, revealing some students questioned about group members' assessment skills and English competency. Item 26 "Using Facebook site makes me like English writing more" obtained the second lowest mean of 3.86. Item 31 "I got the sense of achievement through peer assessment" obtained a mean of 3.94, indicating some students did not agree that they could gain the sense of achievement through peer assessment on the Facebook site.

Although those five items obtained mean scores slightly below 4.0, they are still higher than the midpoint. Therefore, we can conclude that all the students agreed that this integrated blended learning for English for Business Communication course was effective, interesting, and satisfying. Furthermore, the blended learning activity with peer assessment and Facebook could also enhance their professional English learning and improve their English competency. The students also liked the cooperative learning in this course.

Summary of the three open-ended questions in the survey questionnaire
Although not many students responded to the opened-ended questions, the results of the three opened-ended questions in the survey questionnaire are summarized as follows. For Question 1: what do you think of the course arrangement and implementation of this course? Most of students wrote that they liked this blended learning approach and it was a new and interesting learning experience for them. They hoped that they could have this type of learning in the future. For Question 2: what are the advantages and disadvantages of using Facebook to assist in learning English for Business Communication? Some students responded that using Facebook can help us view others' works, bring more group discussions, enhance Business English learning effectively, increase group members' interactions, and learn English and surf the net simultaneously. For Question 3: what are the advantages and disadvantages of using peer assessment to learn English for Business Communication? Some students pointed out that different students may possess different levels of English proficiencies, thus the comments from the peers need to be very carefully examined. In contrast, some students think that they can learn from others' comments or writings, which are very beneficial to them. Additionally, some students mentioned that they were able to learn some new vocabulary and professional terminologies or their usages.

Results of student interview
After the end of the semester, the researcher interviewed some volunteer students in order to obtain more in-depth information or thoughts of the students' toward this blended instruction for Business Communication course. The interview comments are excerpted and summarized as follows:

> If the teacher could upload more audio scripts of the business conversations in addition to the texts, we would be able to study more and get more practice, and then become familiar with the British accent or different accents of other languages (S1).

> It's very convenient to watch other classes' video and understand how well they do in terms of oral presentations. (S2)

> Teacher can easily give us some business related vocabulary but sometimes it's not joyful when Facebook site is down or we cannot get connected. (S3)

> Facebook is now the hottest online site and it's very suitable to incorporate into our course. Also most of people I know use Facebook a lot, it's good to convey or communicate with the others. (S4)

> The internet speed and connection need to be stable when incorporating Facebook into formal classes. We can also learn other's strengths and weaknesses. (S5)

From the interview excerpts above, we can conclude that the students possess positive attitude toward incorporating Facebook and blended learning approach into Business Communication course. Meanwhile, both audio and video learning materials are important and necessary for the students to learn business communication skills effectively. Finally, the students also pointed out an important issue, that is, the stability of internet connection. Thus, incorporating Facebook as a part of the course can be very helpful but not as a whole.

Results of the student self-efficacy scale

The 17 items of the student self-efficacy scale obtained mean scores ranging from 3.17 to 4.67, reflecting that most of the students felt moderate to high confident of using Facebook. Particularly, the top three questions of the scale are Q 1 "Log on to Facebook", Q16 "Leave or write message to classmates", and Q17 "Leave message or directly invite classmates to join Facebook", obtaining mean scores of .67, .43, and .46 respectively. The results suggest that the students feel very confident when they invite friends to join Facebook or leave messages to friends. In contrast, the 3 questions with the lowest mean scores are Q 5 "I will tag and share with friends when I read articles", Q6 "I will share my pictures with friends within community groups", and Q7 "I will post pictures on the community groups", obtaining mean scores of 3.17, 3.41, and 3.46 respectively. These results reflect that the students moderately like to post, show, tag, or share pictures with others within community groups. Additionally, students would do assignments online or on Facebook more effectively when they possess sufficient computer skills confidently.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This study was aimed to explore the effect of incorporating Facebook with blended learning for students with different majors and levels in an English for Business Communication course. The findings of the study show that the graduate students of MBA program made the most comments comparing with the English-majored undergraduate students and graduate students of Industrial Management program. The reason could be because the course was directly related to their major and future career, although this course was a required course and primarily provided to English-majored undergraduate students. With this regard, the future study may focus on investigating the factors that influence the students' learning motivation and desire. Additionally, integrating Facebook and peer assessment can enhance students' learning motivation, interest, and interactions in order to exchange information and share knowledge. These results are supported by Hsu, et al (2007), which stated that learners can interact, exchange, and share knowledge with each other in a virtual community.

Furthermore, the findings of the study reveal that students can learn English for Business Communication effectively through the cooperative learning, which is in agreement with the team-based activities can merit active learning by scholars such as Lang, 2010; Lou, et al, 2010; Neo, Neo, & Kwok, 2009. Moreover, the results also suggest that the students feel very confident when they invite friends to join Facebook or leave messages to friends and to post, show, tag, or share pictures with others within community groups. Finally, using peer assessment on Facebook to assist students in learning English for Business Communication can be an effective way to improve their grammar skills such as tense and sentence structure as well as to enhance their learning desire of such a difficult professional subject. However, employing this type of blended learning with Facebook and peer assessment can be very time-consuming and the instructor needs to put extra efforts in grading, correcting, and guiding students' activities and assignments. The limitations of the study are the small size of sampling and a qualitative study should be conducted to further investigate more in-depth information on students' learning of the course.

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