

EFL Writers' Attitudes and Perceptions toward F-Portfolio Use

By Selami Aydin, Balikesir University

Abstract

Attitudes toward and perceptions of using Facebook as a portfolio-keeping tool in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) writing. In general, existing research reveals primarily positive effects of Facebook on educational activities, and research on portfolio keeping in EFL writing shows both benefits and problem areas. Thus, the current study aims to investigate EFL writers' attitudes toward using Facebook as a portfolio (F-Portfolio) tool and their perceptions regarding its benefits and problems. The sample group consisted of 101 EFL learners. A portfolio attitude scale, portfolio contribution questionnaire and a portfolio problem questionnaire were used to collect data. Four results were obtained from the study: (1) EFL writers have positive attitudes toward the use of F-Portfolios in EFL writing; (2) F-Portfolios improve EFL learners' knowledge of vocabulary and grammar, as well as their research, reading and writing skills; (3) EFL learners perceive some problems during the F-Portfolio process; and (4) some independent variables are significantly correlated with a limited number of items in the scales.

Keywords: English as a foreign language; Writing; Portfolio; Facebook; Attitudes; Perceptions

Introduction

Research shows keeping a portfolio can significantly contribute to the acquisition of foreign language writing skills. For example, keeping a portfolio makes a significant contribution to foreign language writing (Cohen, 1994) when used as an alternative assessment tool, offering the student an opportunity to absorb foreign language authentically and actively (Delett, Barnhardt, & Kevorkian, 2001). In other words, portfolio-keeping increases the use of reading materials in context and increases writing quality (Kaminsky, 1993); student involvement (Newman, Smolen & Lee, 1995); organization, exemplification, and questioning of texts (Pally, 1998); analysis of texts; production in a variety of styles; and awareness of the target language culture (Mathew & Hansen, 2004). Research also shows portfolio keeping in foreign language writing improves proficiency skills, content knowledge, and grammatical competence (Aydin, 2010a & 2010b; Paesani, 2006). Moreover, it helps to improve productive and receptive language skills, satisfaction and motivation levels, and autonomous learning (Burksaitiene & Tereseviciene, 2008).

Portfolios also bring some potential problems in EFL context. To examine whether EFL learners at higher and lower levels of English

proficiency differed in the process of learning reading strategies, Ikeda & Takeuchi (2006) analyzed the portfolios kept by ten Japanese EFL learners. The authors found differences in the amount of written description, the understanding of the purpose and merit of each strategy use, as well as in the timing and the method for evaluating the efficacy of strategy use. In another study, Dan (2010) reported learners' responses to the integration of computer-based self-access language learning into an EFL course. Learners were asked to submit an individual portfolio about their computer-based self-access language learning activities; a questionnaire was then used to solicit their feedback on the effectiveness of computer-based self-access language learning. The findings revealed that although participants had positive comments about their assignment, they showed no gain from the project. The feedback indicated that if computer-based self-access language learning were treated as a compulsory learning task, it would not be successful. Moreover, Baturay and Daloglu (2010) examined the differences between the use of e-portfolios and portfolios and found no significant differences, noting additionally that students benefited from and enjoyed keeping a portfolio. Research has also found portfolio keeping decreases anxiety about writing (Ozturk & Cecen, 2007). Corda and Jager (2004), who introduced the Electronic Language Learning Interactive Practicing System (ELLIPS), presented overall considerations and a pedagogical approach with respect to ELLIPS. They noted one of the important features of ELLIPS was the possibility of recording student input and storing it in a portfolio. In conclusion, previous research suggests a portfolio presents a clear picture of a learner's development (Baturay & Daloglu, 2010). However, there is no scientific evidence as to whether Facebook can be used effectively as a portfolio-keeping tool in EFL writing.

Many studies show technology has a profound effect on developing writing skills. For instance, Lewis (1997) found the use of computers was enjoyable to students and helped them to convey meaning even when the students were completing an unfamiliar and difficult task such as writing paragraphs. In another paper that reported three case studies (Trench, 1996), it was noted that supplementing the classroom program with e-mail, an activity in which learners use meaningful language and authentic text, was effective and motivating. According to Ybarra and Green (2003), technology can be an effective teaching and learning tool for EFL writers.

In a narrower scope, Web 2.0 helps learners engage in meaningful and comprehensible output. Moreover, Web 2.0 fosters learners' cognitive and linguistic growth through reflective and collaborative learning (Thomas, 2008). Thus, as a Web 2.0 application, Facebook needs to be examined to see whether such a writing environment helps learners to improve reflective and collaborative learning.

A specific example of how technology is used in EFL writing is the use of electronic portfolios (e-portfolios). Baturay and Daloglu (2010) emphasize the use of e-portfolios is practical and useful. Specifically, an e-portfolio allows teachers and learners to collect and organize products in different formats, without time constraints, and e-portfolios provide a stimulating environment regarding prewriting activities as well as peer and teacher feedback. As Baturay and Daloglu (2010) conclude, an e-portfolio provides more advantages than a regular portfolio (Hung, 2008; Cited by Baturay and Daloglu, 2010). It should be emphasized the advantageous aspects and principles of e-portfolios are based on learning outcomes, digital environments, virtual identities, authentic audiences, reflective artifacts, integration, responsibility and longitudinal learning. Technically speaking, an e-portfolio provides a personal space on the computer that can be used to brainstorm, write drafts, give and receive feedback, store material and access sources immediately. However, some practical and logistical problems related to e-portfolios can arise. For example, software development is a type of specialized instruction that is not given to most EFL teachers. Moreover, it is not always possible to purchase e-portfolio software due to economic conditions. Lastly, both learners and teachers need to be instructed on how to use an e-portfolio. Facebook is a social network that, for many, is commonly used in daily life. Facebook may therefore present ways for teachers and learners to bypass the above-mentioned problems, as there is no need for special instruction or purchase to use Facebook. It is also clear that Facebook may meet teachers' and learners' pedagogical expectations for e-portfolios. In this sense, as an alternative to e-portfolios, F-Portfolio may present a new and fresh environment for portfolio keeping in the writing process. However, the efficacy of F-Portfolio must be tested and evaluated.

Though some research demonstrates portfolio keeping has positive effects on autonomous learning and levels of satisfaction and motivation, other research findings are con-

tradictory, suggesting some limitations in the use of portfolio keeping for foreign language writing. For instance, some research has found the use of portfolios in EFL writing is boring and time-consuming (Aydin, 2010a & 2010b; Cohen, 1994; Pollari, 2000). Furthermore, with the use of portfolios, it can be difficult to understand corrections (Boyden-Knudsen, 2001), and students may feel intimidated (Chang, Wu & Ku, 2005). Finally, portfolio keeping presents difficulties in terms of grading (Cohen, 1994), prewriting, feedback and rewriting (Aydin, 2010a & 2010b).

Although there has been a lack of research on the effects of using Facebook in education, many papers on this topic have appeared (Aydin, 2012). To begin with, several papers focused on the characteristics of Facebook users and their reasons for using Facebook. The results of those limited studies showed Facebook, one of the most popular networking sites, is used by students all over the world for communication and interaction (Charlton, Devlin & Drummond, Decarie, 2010; Huang, Yang, Huang & Hsiao, 2010). According to the research, other reasons for using Facebook include adapting to new school programs and cultures (Ryan, Magro & Sharp, 2011), learning about social activities (Quan-Haase & Young, 2010), finding and maintaining relationships (Brown, Keller & Stern, 2009), seeking knowledge about a variety of subjects (Davis, 2010), sharing knowledge (Davis, 2010), self-representation, self-promotion (Decarie, 2010), recruitment, academic purposes and following specific agendas (Mazman & Usluel, 2011). Research has also focused on problems related to Facebook; some studies have found Facebook includes inappropriate behaviors, abuse, cyberbullying, problems related to both privacy and friendship (Catanzaro, 2011; Siegle, 2010; Walker, Sockman & Koehn, 2011). According to the research, Facebook can be used as an educational tool in various teaching and learning contexts at various levels (Boon & Sinclair, 2009; Roblyer, McDaniel, Webb, Herman & Witty, 2010). However, these studies were confined to specific fields such as social learning (Greenhow, 2009), e-learning (Durkee, Brant, Nevin, Odell, Williams, Melomey, Roberts, Imafidon, Perryman & Lopes, 2009), environmental learning (Robelia, Greenhow & Burton, 2011), business (Ramirez, Hine, Ji, Ulbrich & Riordan, 2009), art (Shin, 2010), and chemistry education (Schroeder & Greenbowe, 2009). A number of studies focused on learners' affective states and found Facebook increases learners' self-efficacy (Bowers-Campbell, 2008), moti-

vation (Robelia, Greenhow & Burton, 2011; Siegle, 2011), and self-esteem (Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2007) and also reduces anxiety (West, Lewis & Currie, 2009). According to the related literature presented below, Facebook is a valuable tool for learning about different cultures and languages. The use of Facebook improves foreign and second language learning and teaching in terms of reading and writing skills. As Dippold (2009) concludes, Facebook enhances learners' writing about their daily lives and enables them to establish themselves as an authority on a particular subject.

Before reviewing the studies of Facebook's effect on EFL learning, some terms and concepts need to be clarified. First, *EFL learning* refers to formal learning of English as a foreign language in a school environment rather than a natural context. When mentioned in this paper, *writing* refers to the textual aspects of EFL. A portfolio can be defined as a collection of written products completed during a formal writing instruction process. The term *attitude* is limited to the participants' positive or negative evaluation of portfolio keeping on Facebook, whereas *perception* refers to the process of attaining understanding and awareness of portfolio keeping via Facebook. Lastly, the term *F-Portfolio* means the collections of learners' written works produced on Facebook as a portfolio.

Review of Literature

A limited number of studies show Facebook has a positive effect on the processes of foreign and second language learning and teaching. Romano (2009) described the type of enjoyment that teachers and students should experience in English classes. For example, they had fun at parks and hanging out with friends where as this fun could be time consuming, rigorous and fulfilling. Kabilan, Ahmad and Abidin (2010) investigated whether university students considered Facebook as a useful and meaningful learning tool that could support and enhance their learning of the English language. They found students thought Facebook could be used to facilitate learning English, although for the learning experience to be meaningful, teachers needed to include Facebook as an educational project with pre-determined learning objectives and outcomes. After examining students' interactions, shared postings, and profiles, Mills (2011) suggested Facebook could be used as a tool to learn about French language and culture. Moreover, several studies have found positive effects of the use of Facebook on reading skills. Stewart (2009) described an experiment

in which a high school librarian created a virtual literature circle using Facebook. The results suggested the Facebook virtual literature circle could be an excellent teaching tool for social and group work. Similarly, Hamilton (2009) stated social networks offered authors and publishers a powerful and positive medium for connecting with readers in a personal manner that was energizing and engaging for both authors and teen readers. Walker (2010) described how social networks and other information and communication technologies could support and enhance literature circles. In another study, Skerrett (2010) explored a learning task in which groups of pre-service teachers created multigenre projects to represent key themes from self-selected books that they had read in class. In the study, the choice of text and the expressions of the themes were derived from collaboration via a Facebook group. It was concluded the project deepened the teachers' understanding of pedagogical practices in relation to the teaching of literacy. Moreover, Drouin (2011) examined the frequency of text messaging, use of textese that refers to communication via SMS and literacy skills such as reading accuracy, spelling and reading fluency in a sample of college students. The author found a positive correlation between text messaging frequency and spelling and reading fluency, as well as a negative correlation between reading accuracy and textese usage in certain contexts on social network sites.

Although limited studies have indicated Facebook has positive effects on second and foreign language writing, no data can be found on Facebook usage as a portfolio tool. Among the studies, Pascopella and Richardson (2009) discussed the new shift in writing instruction and pedagogy toward using social networking tools to keep pace with changing student interests. In addition, Kathleen (2009) presented research-based practices and a sample writing assignment to illustrate a new model of composing with an online tool that was encouraging to students. In another paper, Denny (2010) underlined that one should be equipped with strategies of mentoring and learning about communication in a variety of modes and media including Facebook, adding that writing centers and their staff should not be confined to conventional genres and texts. Kitsis (2008) shared how she used her students' zeal for online discussion to create engaging electronic homework assignments. In addition, DePew (2011), who focused on the writing strategies that second language students use to compose on social media sites, found students who wrote compositions using social media had the potential to respond to commu-

nicative situations in rhetorically complex ways. Finally, in an opinion paper, Waters (2009) mentioned electronic portfolios and noted they were taking on new capabilities by integrating with a range of other e-learning technologies. The author noted social networking technology is the e-portfolio enhancement of the moment.

Overview of the study

In conclusion, as emphasized above, a portfolio is a significant tool that contributes to foreign language writing whereas prior research indicates technology has considerable effects on developing writing skills. The specific example of technology used in foreign language is e-portfolios. However, there are some potential problems related to e-portfolios in terms of software development, purchasing software and the need of instruction. Alternatively, Facebook as a social network may bypass the problems related to e-portfolios, and meet teachers' and learners' pedagogical expectations. In this sense, it is necessary to test and evaluate the efficacy of F-Portfolio due to a specific rationale. First, there have not been data on Facebook usage as a portfolio tool in EFL writing, and studies have been limited with regard to the efficacy of Facebook in language learning and teaching in general. Second, the results of prior research indicate EFL writers encounter some problems during the portfolio keeping process; however, no negative effects of Facebook usage on language learning and teaching have been found. Thus, the present study focuses on using qualitative and quantitative techniques to analyze EFL writers' attitudes towards F-Portfolios, contributions of F-Portfolios to the EFL learning process, and problems in the F-Portfolio process. For this purpose, four research questions were asked:

1. What are EFL learners' attitudes towards F-Portfolios?
2. What are EFL learners' perceptions of an F-Portfolio regarding its contributions to the EFL learning process?
3. What problems do EFL writers encounter during the F-Portfolio process?
4. Do independent variables, such as gender, age, computer ownership, Facebook familiarity, frequency of Facebook visits, and amount of time spent on F-Portfolios, affect EFL writers' attitudes and perceptions?

Method

The research consisted of two main procedures. The first part included the F-Portfolio application, whereas the second procedure included gathering and analyzing descriptive and

correlational data on EFL writers' attitudes towards F-Portfolios, their perceptions of F-Portfolios regarding its contributions to the EFL learning process and problems EFL students encountered. The details of these procedures are presented below in two subsections.

Participants and F-Portfolio Application

The sampling group for the F-Portfolio application consisted of 101 EFL students in the English Language Teaching (ELT) Department at Necatibey Education Faculty of Balikesir University, Turkey. F-Portfolio applications were administered in the same academic period. The sample group in the descriptive part of the study consisted of the 101 students mentioned above. They were all freshmen in the ELT department, as writing classes were taught only during the first year of the teaching program. These students were chosen as the sample group because they had used F-Portfolios in their writing classes. Of the participants, 81 (80.2%) were female students, whereas 20 students (19.8%) were male. The gender distribution in the sample group was representative of the overall population taking the writing class. Their mean age was 20.58 years, with an age range of 18 to 27 years. Among the participants, 78 (77.2%) had their own personal computers, whereas 23 students (22.8%) did not. The mean duration of Facebook familiarity was 2.53 years. Of the participants, 54 (53.5%) stated they used Facebook almost every day, whereas 30 of the students (29.7%) had visited Facebook once or twice a week before they started to work on their F-Portfolio. In addition, ten participants (10.9%) stated they visited Facebook once or twice a month, whereas only six of the students (5.9%) did not have Facebook accounts. The mean number of hours they spent on their F-Portfolio was 3.82 hours a week. Twenty students (19.8%) visited Facebook every day, whereas 70 participants (69.3%) worked once or twice a week on their F-Portfolios. Nine students (8.9%) visited Facebook once or twice a month, and two of them (2.0%) worked on their F-Portfolios once or twice a semester.

The F-Portfolio application included a writing instruction procedure. The content of the writing instruction, which lasted 24 weeks over two semesters of the academic year of 2010-2011, consisted of three periods. In the first period, sentence structure, capitalization and punctuation, unity and coherence, conjunctions, and paragraph structure were introduced. The second period covered paragraph development methods and techniques such as listing specific details, classification, using examples, definition, cause and effect, comparison and contrast, and

problem solutions. In the third period, parts of composition and methods such as exposition, narration, argumentation, and description were taught. During the second and third periods, the participants kept their portfolios on Facebook. For this purpose, the author created a Facebook group, called F-Portfolio, as seen in Figure 1.

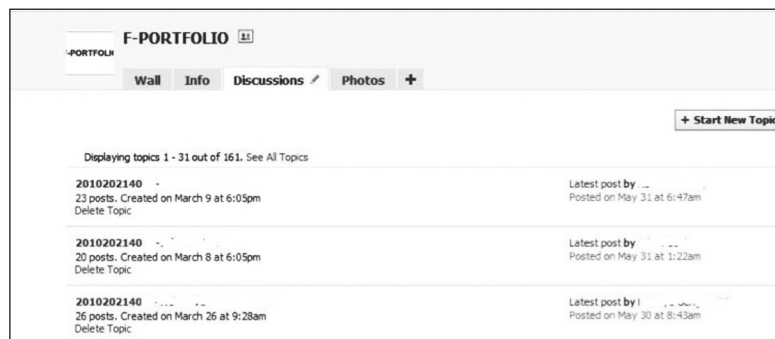


Figure 1. F-Portfolio group on Facebook

Each student started a topic on the discussion wall to create their F-Portfolios. Using F-Portfolio pages, they produced their first drafts including brainstorming and outlining, as seen in the following figure.

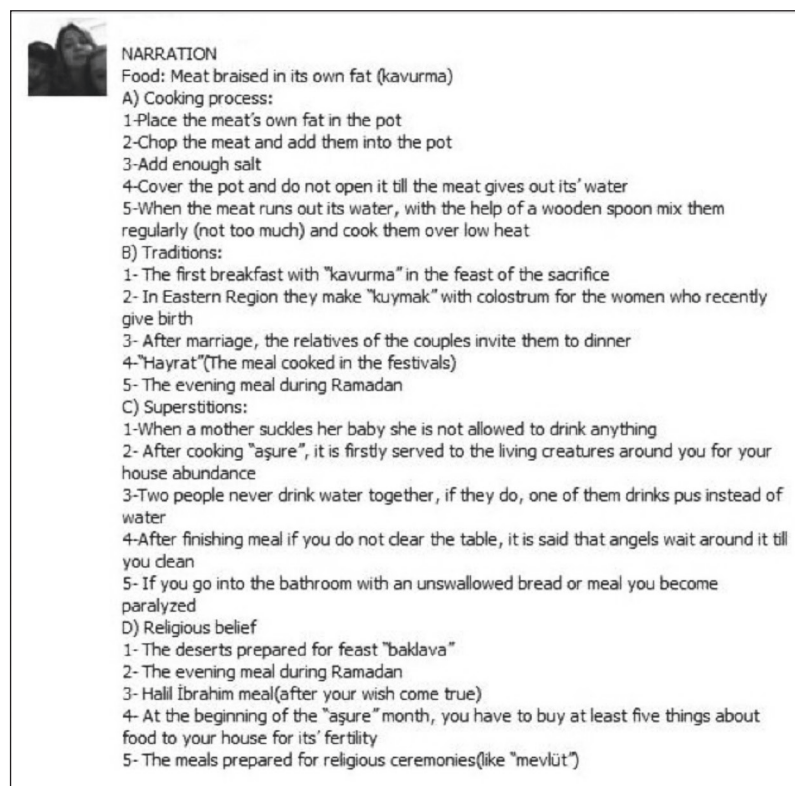


Figure 2. An example of brainstorming in F-Portfolio



PEER FEEDBACK

1-Does the essay have an introduction, two or three body paragraphs, and a conclusion?

Yes there are an introduction part, seven body paragraphs, and a conclusion part.

2- Does the introduction give background information about the writer and the change in the writer's life? Does it include a thesis statement that introduces the type of organization used in essay?

The introduction part gives the background information about the writer and the changes in writer's life. It is used both block organization and point-by-point organization.

3- Is the essay organized according to block or point-by-point organization?

The essay organized according to point-by-point. In the first, second and thirth bodies, it is mentioned from Elaziğ. In the fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, it is mentioned from Balikesir.

4- Does each body paragraph have a topic sentence? Do all the topic sentence support the thesis statement?

Yes, there is a topic sentence each body paragraph. But, some of them should be revised. For example; in the thirth body, you said that some people are talking "zazaca". Where are these people? Since this is your first sentence , it should be more clear. In addition, in the sixth body, there is an uncertainty. Which city do you mention?

5- Do the body paragraphs compare and contrast the writer's life before and after the change? Are there specific details and examples to illustrate the change?

Yes, the body paragraphs compare and contrast the her life before and after the change. There are specific details and examples to illustrate the change. There are changes in her family and school life.

6- Does the conclusion summarize the main points of the essay and give the writer's final thoughts about the experience?

Yes, the conclusion summarize the main points of the essay and give the writer's final thoughts about the experince.

Figure 3. An example of peer feedback in F-Portfolio

In the second step, the students gave and received peer feedback using scales to evaluate the first drafts, as seen above.



REVISION

- Environmental problem should be described in introduction paragraph.
- Solutions should be given in the conclusion paragraph.
- There is a topic sentence should be in each paragraph.
- There is a concluding sentence should be in each paragraph.
- The results of the problem should be stated in a body paragraph.

SECOND DRAFT

Today, humankind is face to face with lots of environmental problems. Without argument, the biggest is "AIR POLLUTION". There are too many causes of air pollution but the clear example is Exhaust gases. They have got some causes and effects on people and environment.

Beginning with its causes the first one is, exhaust gases are joining atmosphere day by day and affect it badly. Also level of atmosphere is decreasing and living is becoming difficult. Following cause is global warming, no matter how people try to overcome it, neither their inventions nor technologies can succeed to stop it. Besides, using transportation vehicles, people do not know how they can give harm to their life and nature. Unfortunately more we have vehicles more we cause global warming and pollute the nature. On the other hand greenhouse is the worst cause for habitat. They supply carbon dioxide and monoxide and spoil the nature's balance. Besides in exhaust gases include harmful chemicals too. These are enough to make people ill. And lastly acid rain has negative sides on people and nature too. Finally, all these causes include in exhaust. It can be understood that more polluted air means more polluted nature.

Above all the causes it has some effects and results too. First of all when it joins the atmosphere, the climate is changing inevitably. Looking today it can be seen this changing clearly. When the winter comes the weather like summer and when the

Figure 4. An example of revision in F-Portfolio

After necessary revisions and corrections depending on the revision plans, students produced their second drafts, as seen in Figure 4.



Teacher Feedback

1. You should note at least five-item revision list.
2. Give the idea about the negative effects of media on celebrities. You can delete first and second sentences.
3. Use a case letter (m) after the word "eventually".
4. Use comma (,) before "and".
5. Work is a non-count noun. Do not make it plural.
6. Your paragraph was the best among others I have checked. Thanks much. Hope you try to write professionally in your future life. :)

about 3 months ago · Delete Post



9. Revision

- I must attach more importance my revision.
- I must remove my first and next sentences.
- I must correct all the letters in the words of my sentences.
- I must conform punctuation marks.
- I must care about logical thinking literally.
- I must learn literary language.
- I must keep on writing in my life story.

10. Final Draft

The public knows more about Teoman, and how many bars he going in a night than about many political issues. Broadcasts harming to the well-being of Teoman is watched for entertainment. But he and his family can suffer from those that are maybe the mere unreal and baseless news or that are known him wrongly. Thus his behaviours and psyches are affected negatively. Also, competition on media may result in more efforts to investigate, and cover the latest, boldest, most intimate information relating to Teoman. Therefore, there are more counts of exaggeration and potential falsity. The untrue publication may become detrimental not only to the health but also to handwork of Teoman. It can prevent all the work such as the album, film or concert he prepared working hard. When the public watch Teoman with diverted information, everybody having or not having information about him can judge him mercilessly, and can leave

Figure 5. An example of teacher feedback, revision and final draft in F-Portfolio

Next, after receiving oral and written feedback from their teacher, students wrote their final drafts, as seen in Figure 5. In the last step, students printed their portfolios after completing their cover letters, tables of contents, entries, dates, drafts, reflections, and revision plans.

Tools

The data collection instruments consisted of a background questionnaire, the F-Portfolio Attitude Scale (FAS), the Portfolio Contribution Questionnaire (PCQ), and the Portfolio Problem Questionnaire (PPQ). The background questionnaire probed the students about their age, gender, computer ownership, Facebook familiarity, frequency of Facebook visits, and amount of time spent on F-Portfolio. The FAS was adapted from the Computer Attitude Scale developed by Papanastasiou and Angeli (2008) and was composed of 15 items that examined the EFL students' attitudes towards F-Portfolio. The items in the FAS were scored on a scale ranging from 1 to 5 (completely disagree = 1, disagree = 2, neutral = 3, agree = 4, completely agree = 5). The PCQ, developed by Aydin (2010a), consisted of statements examining the contributions of F-Portfolio to EFL learning. Finally, the PPQ, designed by Aydin (2010a), aimed to investigate problems experienced during the F-Portfolio process. The statements in both the PCQ and PPQ were scored on a scale ranging from one to five (never = 1, rarely = 2, sometimes = 3, usually = 4, always = 5).

Procedure

After obtaining written permission from the abovementioned authors and the faculty administration, the background questionnaire and scales were administered once to the participants at the end of the 2010-2011 academic year, following the completion of the F-Portfolio process. The data collected were analyzed using SPSS software. Reliability coefficients were computed as Cronbach's Alpha and used as a measure of internal consistency (Allen & Yen, 2002). The reliability coefficients were 0.77 for the FAS, 0.94 for the PCQ, and 0.87 for the PPQ. The reliability coefficients were 0.76 for the Computer Attitude Scale (Papanastasiou & Angeli, 2008), .90 for the PCQ, and 0.87 for the PPQ (Aydin, 2010a). The values show that the PCQ and PPQ have high levels of reliability, whereas the reliability of the FAS is at a moderate level; these coefficients are similar to the findings reported in previous studies mentioned above. The descriptive statistics were then computed for the FAS, PCQ, and PPQ. For this purpose, mean scores and standard deviations of the reported frequencies were computed. Finally, a T-test, a test to assess whether two independent populations have different mean values on the measurement, and ANOVA, in which the observed variance in a particular variable is partitioned into components attributable to different sources

of variation, were computed to identify the relationships between independent variables and the items and statements in the FAS, PCQ, and PPQ. T-tests were used to assess for differences between the different genders and between computer owners and non-owners on the items and statements in the FAS, PCQ and PPQ. Moreover, ANOVA was used to determine the relationships between the items and statements in the FAS, PCQ, and PPQ and the variables of age, Facebook familiarity, frequency of Facebook visits, and amount of time spent on F-Portfolio.

Results

The results obtained from the study can be divided into four subsections: descriptive data regarding the attitudes toward F-Portfolios, contributions of F-Portfolio to the EFL learning process, problems in the F-Portfolio process, and effects of independent variables on attitudes and perceptions.

Attitudes towards F-Portfolios

According to the values presented in Appendix A, EFL writers have positive attitudes toward F-Portfolios. EFL writers state they feel comfortable and excited with the idea of using Facebook as a tool for writing in English. Although they do not experience stress and fear during the process, they are nevertheless skeptical about F-Portfolios and seem confused about its benefits in promoting good writing, primarily because of its technical problems. However, they believe they can cope with the technical problems. Overall, they agree Facebook is a valuable tool for writing in English and it has a considerable effect on the way that they write in English. EFL writers also partly believe they can do what they do on Facebook equally as well writing with pen and paper. EFL writers find F-Portfolios useful in better understanding concepts, better expressing their thoughts in writing, and learning in ways that are more effective.

Contributions of F-Portfolios to the EFL learning process

According to the findings presented in Appendix 2, EFL learners perceive F-Portfolios have beneficial effects on expanding their writing vocabulary, grammar knowledge, research, reading and writing skills. As an example, students believe F-Portfolios improve their knowledge of vocabulary. They learn new vocabulary, how to use their dictionaries to find appropriate words, and how to use a variety of words in context. Second, they believe F-Portfolios improve their knowledge of grammar. Specifically, they find F-Portfolios benefit their production of

Table 1. Relationship between gender and statements (T-test).

Statements / Items	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig.
I feel comfortable with the idea of Facebook as a tool in writing in English.	Female	81	3.36	1.13	8.58	.001
	Male	20	4.00	0.86		
I learned to use a variety of words.	Female	79	3.90	0.97	3.95	.05
	Male	20	4.05	0.76		
I improved my grammar knowledge.	Female	80	3.58	1.05	5.83	.02
	Male	20	3.85	0.67		
I learned how to give feedback.	Female	81	2.75	1.37	4.60	.04
	Male	20	2.40	0.94		
The most difficult part of portfolio keeping is studying with a teacher.	Female	81	2.40	1.36	5.01	.03
	Male	20	1.70	1.08		
I hate negative comments from my teacher.	Female	81	1.75	1.09	16.15	.001
	Male	20	1.25	0.55		

fluent, complex and compound sentences, use of signal words in sentence combinations and grammatical knowledge in context. Third, students think they can improve their reading skills through the F-Portfolio process. That is, they gain information about the topics they wrote about, find main ideas in the passages, and transfer ideas from the texts to their pieces; they also believe F-Portfolios improve their research skills. Finally, for EFL learners, F-portfolios have a considerable positive benefit on students' writing skills. For instance, they found F-Portfolios beneficial for correcting usage of punctuation and capitalization, organization of paragraphs and essays in brainstorming, and clustering and outlining processes. Furthermore, they strongly believe they learned how to give feedback, to analyze and classify mistakes in products, and to use a checklist for examination of paragraphs and essays during the F-Portfolio process. They also find teacher and peer feedback useful for noticing and correcting their mistakes and revising their pieces. In addition, EFL writers emphasize that they acquire information about paragraph and essay development methods and techniques. In other words, they learned the characteristics and parts of paragraphs and essays; how to produce unified, coherent and original paragraphs and essays; and how to communicate their ideas, feelings and thoughts. Lastly, they strongly believe F-Portfolios contribute to creative writing, helping them avoid translation from their native language and decreasing fear of negative evaluation from teachers and peers.

Problems in the F-Portfolio process

The findings in Appendix 3 demonstrate EFL learners' perceptions of some problems

regarding F-Portfolios. For example, EFL students find F-Portfolios boring, time-consuming and tiring. They also state F-Portfolios are sometimes difficult in terms of giving feedback, pre-writing activities, revisions, production of second and final drafts and studying with peers. They experience difficulties finding mistakes in paragraphs and essays and using checklists for feedback, brainstorming and outlining.

The effects of independent variables on the attitudes and perceptions

The T-test and ANOVA results show the independent variables of gender, computer ownership, Facebook familiarity, the frequency of Facebook visits and the amount of time spent on F-Portfolios are significantly correlated with a limited number of items and statements in the FAS, PCQ and PPQ. However, age is not a significant variable that affects EFL writers' attitudes and perceptions. As seen in Table 1, male students feel more comfortable with the idea of F-Portfolios (p=0.001), have more positive perceptions of the use of a variety of words (p=0.05), and improve their grammar knowledge (p=0.02) when compared to female learners. However, female writers have more positive perceptions of giving feedback (p=0.04) and teacher feedback (p=0.03), although they seem more sensitive to the fear of negative evaluation from teachers (p=0.001) than males.

As shown in Table 2, the students who have computers have more positive perceptions of finding mistakes in paragraphs and essays (p=0.02), producing original papers (p=0.001), and studying with peers (p=0.05) than the ones who do not have computers. Interestingly enough, students who have more familiarity

Table 2. Relationship between computer ownership and statements and items (T-test).

Statements / Items	Computer ownership	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig.
I learned to find the mistakes in a paper.	Yes	78	4.22	0.77	6.02	.02
	No	23	3.78	1.09		
I learned how to produce original papers.	Yes	78	3.87	0.79	9.44	.001
	No	23	3.48	1.16		
The most difficult part of portfolio keeping is studying with a peer.	Yes	78	3.01	1.59	4.05	.05
	No	23	2.65	1.34		

Table 3. Relationship between Facebook familiarity and statements and items (ANOVA).

Statements / Items	Years	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig.
I learned how to use punctuation and capitalization.	1	20	3.70	0.86	3.20	.02
	2	30	4.07	0.87		
	3	33	4.21	0.82		
	4	13	3.85	1.14		
	5	5	2.80	1.30		
I hate negative comments from my partner.	1	20	1.85	1.22	3.30	.01
	2	29	1.69	1.07		
	3	33	1.70	0.92		
	4	13	2.31	1.18		
	5	5	3.40	1.67		

Table 4. Relationship between frequency of Facebook use and statements and items (ANOVA).

Statements / Items	Frequency	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig.
The use of Facebook for writing in English helps me learn in ways that are more effective.	Once or twice a semester	2	1.50	0.71	3.12	.03
	Once or twice a month	9	3.22	0.83		
	Once or twice a week	70	3.67	1.05		
	Almost every day	20	3.50	1.19		

with Facebook experience more problems in terms of punctuation and capitalization ($p=0.02$) and suffer more fear of negative evaluation from their peers ($p=0.01$) than the ones who have less familiarity (See Table 3).

Table 4 demonstrates that the more frequently EFL writers visit Facebook to work on their F-Portfolios, the more effectively they learn to write in English ($p=0.03$). As shown in Appendix D, students who spend more time on their F-Portfolio believe more strongly F-Portfolios change the way they write in English ($p=0.01$). They also believe F-Portfolio use helps them in the following ways: to learn how to write more effectively ($p=0.01$), to see the details in texts ($p=0.04$), to find ($p=0.001$) and classify mistakes

($p=0.04$) and to produce more creative ($p=0.04$) and better pieces in terms of unity ($p=0.05$) and coherence ($p=0.05$).

Conclusions and Discussion

Four main results were drawn from the study. First, the descriptive data indicate EFL writers have positive attitudes toward the use of Facebook as a portfolio tool. Second, students perceive that F-Portfolio improves EFL learners' reading and writing skills. They also believe it enhances vocabulary and grammar knowledge. In addition, for EFL students, F-portfolios improve their research skills. Third, EFL learners perceive some problems during the F-Portfolio process. For example, they believe the process

is boring, time-consuming and tiring. Furthermore, they have trouble with some steps of F-portfolio use such as pre-writing activities, feedback, and revision, including the production of second and final drafts. Fourth and last, some variables are significantly correlated with a limited number of items in the scales. The correlational data demonstrate that male students feel more comfortable with F-Portfolio and have more positive perceptions as to gaining vocabulary and learning grammar, whereas females have more fear of negative evaluation by their peers. In addition, computer owners believe they are better at finding mistakes, producing original pieces and studying with peers. Additionally, students who spend more time on their F-Portfolios believe they learn to write in English more effectively, find and classify mistakes more easily, and produce more creative and better products. An example of a negative correlation was that learners who have more Facebook familiarity experience more problems with punctuation and capitalization and feel more fear of negative evaluation by their peers.

Below is a comparison of the current study's results with findings from previous research. First, this study contributes to the related literature because it is the first study focused on EFL learners' attitudes toward and perceptions of F-Portfolios, and the study presents a new model for portfolio keeping in EFL writing. Namely, the study shows F-Portfolios provide an opportunity for keeping portfolios to students who like to spend time on social networking sites. The second contribution is that the study examines attitudes and perceptions from the perspective of learners instead of teachers, making the former a dominant factor in terms of decisions in the portfolio process. In other words, teachers may decide to use portfolios as a way to increase students' involvement in the learning process, and the outcomes then depend on the teachers' instructional focus (Delett *et al.*, 2010). The current study, however, evaluates attitudes and perceptions from the perspective of learners and presents findings about the portfolio process itself. Third, the study presents results similar to those found in previous research regarding the contributions of portfolios in EFL learning (Aydin, 2010a & 2010b; Burksaitiene & Tereseviciene, 2008; Kaminsky, 1993; Pally, 1998; Paesani, 2006). The findings in the study also indicate that the problems regarding portfolio-keeping are similar to the ones found in previous research (Aydin, 2010a & 2010b; Boyden-Knudsen, 2001; Cohen, 1994; Baturay & Daloglu, 2010; Hirvela & Sweetland,

2005; Pollari, 2000). However, some findings in the study contradict the results found in prior research. For example, the results in the study show EFL writers have a low level of anxiety, in contrast to the findings obtained by Ozturk and Cecen (2007). Moreover, the study results show the use of Facebook may include some problems in the foreign and second language learning processes, whereas previous research examining Facebook as an educational tool found mainly positive results (Kabilan, Ahmad & Abidin, 2010; Mills, 2011). As an important note, when comparing the findings in the current study to the results of a study (Aydin, 2010a) that used the same perception scales, it should be highlighted that the current study showed a considerable increase in the mean scores regarding the contributions of F-Portfolios as well as a decrease in the scores regarding problems with Facebook. The facilitating effects of F-Portfolios on EFL writing may be explained in several ways. Similar to the findings on computer use in writing by Lewis (1997), the findings suggest Facebook as a social environment and learning tool is more enjoyable in the portfolio process because it offers learners real communication opportunities, meaningful and comprehensible output and authentic texts to read and produce. Moreover, Facebook as a Web 2.0 application allows students to develop cognitive and linguistic skills reflectively and collaboratively, as found previously by Thomas (2008). When compared to e-portfolios, Facebook as a portfolio tool has similar advantages regarding prewriting activities and peer and teacher feedback, and it also provides a personal space on the Internet. Furthermore, the advantages of e-portfolios listed by Baturay and Daloglu (2010) already exist in F-Portfolios with respect to learning outcomes, authentic audiences, reflective artifacts, integration, responsibility and longitudinal learning.

Given that EFL learners perceive F-Portfolios can make considerable contributions to EFL learning despite some problems, several practical recommendations can be made. First of all, EFL teachers can use F-Portfolios as a tool to improve their students' vocabulary and grammar knowledge, reading, research and writing skills. Teachers can guide their students, most of whom have Facebook accounts, to use F-Portfolios as a writing tool. EFL teachers should help their students to convert Facebook, which is an entertainment and recreation environment for them, into an instructional tool. However, it should be understood that F-Portfolio use is not a tool that presents solutions

to all problems encountered during the portfolio keeping process in teaching EFL writing. Thus, teachers should remember some learners perceive F-Portfolio as boring, tiring, time-consuming, and F-Portfolios include some difficulties with pre-writing activities, feedback, and rewriting processes. Teachers should also present corrective feedback and motivational support to their students regarding the problems in the process. Moreover, EFL teachers should know F-Portfolios do not present more problems than pen-and-paper portfolios, and it is to be expected that using Facebook as an entertainment and recreation environment will be more attractive for learners. Second, during the process, teachers should also have a high level of awareness of factors such as gender, computer ownership, Facebook familiarity and time spent on F-Portfolios. Specifically, they should seek ways of motivating female learners who fear negative evaluation, feel less comfortable with the idea of F-portfolios, and have fewer positive perceptions with regard to gaining vocabulary and learning grammar. Teachers should also enhance feedback and revision strategies for their students who do not have computers. As the findings of the study show learners who spend more time on their F-Portfolios have more positive perceptions, teachers should encourage their students to spend more time working on their portfolios. In addition, because longer previous Facebook use causes punctuation and capitalization mistakes in EFL writing and negative reactions to peer feedback, teachers should seek ways of improving punctuation and capitalization and develop strategies to enhance communication among learners, thereby decreasing the fear of negative appraisal among students who have longer Facebook familiarity.

As a note on the limitations of the study, the participants were restricted to 101 students in the ELT Department at Balikesir University, and to the descriptive and correlational data obtained the FAS, PCQ, and PPQ. In this way, the findings of the study are limited to data collected in a Turkish EFL context, measuring Turkish EFL students' attitudes and perceptions of F-Portfolio activities. Further research should focus on the factors that may affect the F-Portfolio process in different EFL contexts, with descriptive and experimental examination of both teachers' and learners' reactions to F-Portfolio. Apart from these, research should focus on various educational fields and target groups regarding the use of Facebook in educational settings to specifically address Facebook's role within pedagogy.

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Selami Aydin is an associate professor in the Department of English Language Teaching at Balikesir University. His research has mainly been in language testing, EFL writing, individual differences, and technology in EFL learning. His articles have appeared in some national and international journals. Aydin teaches ELT courses for pre-service English teachers. Correspondences can be addressed to: Phone: + 90 533 626 17 41; E-mail: saydin@balikesir.edu.tr.

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Appendix A. Descriptives of the Items in F-Portfolio Attitude Scale

Items	Frequencies (%)					Descriptives		
	Number	Completely disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Completely agree	Mean	Standard Deviation
I feel comfortable with the idea of Facebook as an environment for writing in English.	101	5.9	14.9	19.8	43.6	15.8	3.49	1.11
The use of Facebook for writing in English stresses me out.	100	9.0	31.0	25.0	23.0	12.0	2.98	1.18
If something goes wrong when I study on Facebook, I will not know how to fix it.	101	21.8	42.6	10.9	18.8	5.9	2.45	1.20
The idea of using Facebook for writing in English makes me skeptical.	96	10.4	22.9	29.2	33.3	4.2	2.99	1.08
Facebook as a writing environment excites me.	99	7.1	20.2	33.3	31.3	8.1	3.13	1.06
The use of Facebook for writing in English scares me.	99	20.2	37.4	16.2	22.2	4.0	2.53	1.16
Facebook is a valuable environment for writing in English.	99	4.0	10.1	31.3	41.4	13.1	3.50	0.98
Facebook changes the way I write in English.	100	5.0	19.0	29.0	37.0	10.0	3.28	1.05
I can write equally as well by using pen and paper as using Facebook.	100	15.0	28.0	15.0	30.0	12.0	2.96	1.29
Facebook is not conducive to writing in English because it is not easy to use.	101	19.8	38.6	19.8	15.8	5.9	2.49	1.15
The use of Facebook for writing in English helps me understand concepts in more effective ways.	101	3.0	17.8	24.8	41.6	12.9	3.44	1.02
The use of Facebook for writing in English helps me write because it allows me to express my thinking in better and different ways.	100	1.0	23.0	29.0	30.0	17.0	3.39	1.05
The use of Facebook for writing in English helps me learn in more effective ways.	101	4.0	15.8	19.8	41.6	18.8	3.56	1.09
The use of Facebook for writing in English is not conducive to good writing in English because it creates technical problems.	100	8.0	34.0	20.0	28.0	10.0	2.98	1.16

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Appendix B. Descriptives of the Items in F-Portfolio Contribution Questionnaire								
Statements	Frequencies (%)						Descriptives	
	Number	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always	Mean	Standard Deviation
I improved my vocabulary knowledge.	100	1.0	7.0	28.0	38.0	26.0	3.81	0.94
I learned new vocabulary.	98	1.0	7.1	21.4	40.9	29.6	3.91	0.94
I learned to use words in context.	97	2.1	4.1	23.7	36.1	34.0	3.96	0.97
I learned how to use a dictionary to find appropriate words.	101	4.0	5.9	31.7	30.7	27.7	3.72	1.06
I learned to use a variety of words.	99	2.0	3.0	25.3	39.4	30.3	3.93	0.93
I improved my grammar knowledge.	100	4.0	9.0	23.0	48.0	16.0	3.63	0.99
I learned to produce complex and compound sentences.	101	1.0	8.9	30.7	40.6	18.8	3.67	0.92
I learned to use signal words when I combine sentences.	101		5.0	30.6	41.6	22.8	3.82	0.84
I learned to write more fluent sentences.	101		4.0	24.7	42.6	28.7	3.96	0.84
I learned to use grammatical subjects in context.	101	1.0	8.9	27.8	36.6	25.7	3.77	0.97
I improved my reading skills.	99	3.0	6.1	31.3	29.3	30.3	3.78	1.05
I gained information about the topics I wrote about.	101		4.0	9.9	27.7	58.4	4.41	0.83
I learned to find the main ideas in the texts.	99		3.0	17.2	43.4	36.4	4.13	0.80
I learned to see the details in the passages.	100		5.0	17.0	45.0	33.0	4.06	0.84
I learned to transfer the ideas in the texts to my paragraphs and essays.	101		4.0	18.8	44.6	32.6	4.06	0.82
I improved my research skills.	100		2.0	19.0	28.0	51.0	4.28	0.84
I learned how to organize a paragraph and composition.	101		3.0	16.8	35.6	44.6	4.22	0.83
I learned brainstorming before starting to write.	100		2.0	11.0	41.0	46.0	4.31	0.75
I learned clustering before starting to write.	100		4.0	26.0	36.0	34.0	4.0	0.87
I learned to prepare an outline before starting to write.	101		2.0	7.9	46.5	43.6	4.32	0.71

	Frequencies (%)						Descriptives	
	Number	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always	Mean	Standard Deviation
I learned how to use punctuation and capitalization.	101	2.0	6.9	14.9	46.6	29.6	3.95	0.96
I learned how to give feedback.	100	2.0	1.0	11.0	31.0	55.0	3.36	0.87
I learned to find the mistakes in paragraphs and essays.	101	1.0	4.0	13.9	44.6	36.6	4.11	.086
I learned to classify the mistakes in paragraphs and essays.	100	1.0	4.0	27.0	37.0	31.0	3.93	0.81
I learned to use a checklist when I examine paragraphs and essays.	99		7.1	21.2	46.4	25.3	3.90	0.86
Peer and teacher feedback helped me.	99	4.0	7.1	17.2	22.2	49.5	4.06	1.15
To notice and correct my mistakes.	101	3.0	3.0	14.9	44.6	34.5	4.05	0.94
To revise my paragraphs and essays.	101	2.0	5.0	12.9	37.6	42.5	4.14	0.96
I acquired information about paragraph and essay development methods and techniques.	101		4.0	19.8	44.6	31.6	4.04	0.82
I learned the characteristics of a paragraph and essay.	101	1.0	1.0	22.8	42.6	31.6	4.02	0.85
I learned the parts of a paragraph and essay.	101		2.0	15.8	46.6	35.6	4.16	0.76
I learned to produce coherent paragraphs and essays.	101		1.0	20.8	45.5	32.7	4.10	0.76
I learned how to write a unified paragraph and essay.	101			12.9	50.5	36.6	4.24	0.67
I learned how to produce original paragraphs and essays.	101	1.0	5.9	28.7	42.6	21.8	3.78	0.89
I began to write creatively.	101		2.0	26.7	38.6	32.7	4.02	0.82
I began to write in English without translating from Turkish.	101	1.0	7.9	18.8	29.7	42.6	4.05	1.01
I learned to reflect my ideas, feelings and thoughts.	101	1.0	3.0	8.9	45.5	41.6	4.24	0.81

Appendix C. Descriptives of the Items in F-Portfolio Problem Questionnaire

Statements		Number	Frequencies (%)					Descriptives		
			Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always	Mean	Standard Deviation	
	It is boring to write every week.	100	5.0	6.0	43.0	16.0	30.0	3.60	1.13	
	Portfolio keeping takes too much time.	101	3.0	4.0	26.6	31.7	34.7	3.91	1.02	
	Portfolio keeping is tiring.	101	3.0	8.9	22.9	32.7	32.7	3.83	1.08	
	Portfolio keeping prevents creative writing.	98	38.8	18.4	21.4	16.3	5.1	2.31	1.28	
	The most difficult part of portfolio keeping is									
	To give feedback.	101	26.7	14.9	31.7	16.8	9.9	3.11	1.09	
	To find all the mistakes in paragraphs and essays.	101	8.9	18.8	32.7	31.7	7.9	3.11	1.09	
	To check the paper using a checklist.	101	6.9	17.9	38.6	29.7	6.9	3.12	1.01	
	Pre-writing activities.		93	6.5	11.8	39.8	25.8	16.1	3.33	1.09
	To brainstorm.	101	11.9	25.7	24.8	26.7	10.9	2.99	1.20	
	To prepare an outline.	100	7.0	23.0	31.0	28.0	11.0	3.13	1.11	
	To prepare a revision list.	101	28.7	20.8	22.8	15.8	11.9	2.61	1.36	
	To write the second and third drafts.	101	10.9	10.9	24.8	27.7	25.7	3.47	1.29	
	To find the appropriate words.	100	4.0	17.0	27.0	33.0	9.0	3.26	.98	
	To combine the sentences.	101	10.9	19.8	42.6	22.7	4.0	2.89	1.00	
	To study with a peer.	101	27.7	14.9	16.8	17.8	22.8	2.93	1.54	
	To study with a teacher.	101	42.6	16.8	20.8	11.9	7.9	2.26	1.33	
	I hate negative comments from my partner.	100	54.0	17.0	19.0	6.0	4.0	1.89	1.15	
	I hate negative comments from my teacher.	101	65.3	12.9	13.9	6.9	1.0	1.65	1.02	

Appendix D. Relationship between the amounts of time spent on Facebook and statements and items (ANOVA).

Statements / Items	Hours	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig.
Facebook changes the way I write in English.	Less than one hour	6	2.17	0.42	3.63	.01
	Nearly one hour	10	3.60	1.07		
	Nearly two hours	28	3.18	0.77		
	Nearly three hours	21	3.24	1.18		
	Nearly four hours	21	3.86	0.73		
The use of Facebook for writing in English helps me learn in more effective ways.	Less than one hour	6	2.17	0.98	3.48	.01
	Nearly one hour	10	4.00	0.94		
	Nearly two hours	29	3.52	0.91		
	Nearly three hours	21	3.38	1.16		
	Nearly four hours	21	4.00	0.84		
I learned to see the details in the passages.	Less than one hour	5	3.40	0.55	2.51	.04
	Nearly one hour	10	4.20	0.79		
	Nearly two hours	29	3.72	0.88		
	Nearly three hours	21	4.24	0.62		
	Nearly four hours	21	4.24	1.00		
I learned to find the mistakes in a paper.	Less than one hour	6	3.67	1.21	4.48	.00
	Nearly one hour	10	4.00	0.67		
	Nearly two hours	29	3.66	0.94		
	Nearly three hours	21	4.29	0.85		
	Nearly four hours	21	4.62	0.50		
I learned to classify the mistakes in a paper.	Less than one hour	5	4.00	1.00	2.40	.04
	Nearly one hour	10	4.10	0.57		
	Nearly two hours	29	3.48	0.87		
	Nearly three hours	21	4.10	0.83		
	Nearly four hours	21	4.29	0.85		
I began to write creatively.	Less than one hour	6	3.50	0.84	2.47	.04
	Nearly one hour	10	3.90	0.88		
	Nearly two hours	29	3.83	0.85		
	Nearly three hours	21	3.90	0.77		
	Nearly four hours	21	4.29	0.78		
I learned to produce coherent paragraphs and essays.	Less than one hour	6	3.83	0.41	2.31	.05
	Nearly one hour	10	3.90	0.88		
	Nearly two hours	29	3.83	0.71		
	Nearly three hours	21	4.14	0.85		
	Nearly four hours	21	4.38	0.67		
I learned how to write a unified paragraph and essay.	Less than one hour	6	3.67	0.52	2.31	.05
	Nearly one hour	10	4.10	0.74		
	Nearly two hours	29	4.07	0.59		
	Nearly three hours	21	4.38	0.59		
	Nearly four hours	21	4.38	0.67		
More than five hours	14	4.50	0.76			