



The interaction foci of a Facebook community of practice for Vietnamese EFL teachers' professional development

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the interaction foci in a Facebook community of practice (CoP) named “Teachers of TESOL” (a pseudonym) as a platform for professional development for EFL teachers in Vietnam. The qualitative method was applied in this study through the collection of 100 most recent Facebook CoP posts as of July 2024 for the analysis of their interactions. The interactions among teachers in response to the target posts were analyzed for their foci as they emerged from the data. The results indicated that the teachers' interactions had different major foci, including PD opportunities (25.5%), resources (21.9%), research (19.4%), recruitment (14.6%), and techniques (13.7%). Other less frequent foci accounted for the remaining 4.9%. Important implications for modifying institutional PD programs are discussed.

1. INTRODUCTION

In a teaching career, professional development (PD) is an essential consideration for any effective teacher. Professional development ensures that teachers possess the pedagogical and subject knowledge necessary to facilitate successful language acquisition among students (Postholm, 2012). There are various ways in which teachers can develop their knowledge and skills, ranging from traditional activities such as workshops and conferences to non-traditional activities such as mentoring and peer observation (Bayar, 2014). Recently, technology has become an important part of teachers' professional development. The frontiers of technologically-driven teacher development have been charted thanks to a growing community of worldwide computer-assisted language learning (CALL) researchers (Macià & García, 2016). These researchers have found that, when teachers activate their digital relationships, they are able to gain immediate answers, shared knowledge, and emotional support (Mai et al., 2020). Online communities of practice (OCoP) have greatly contributed to this modern form of collaborative professional development. Of the various platforms that host online CoPs, Facebook is one of the most widely used services. Facebook CoPs have allowed teachers, in Vietnam and internationally, to discover knowledge from professionals worldwide (Kirschner & Lai, 2007), to save their time and energy (Le, 2017), to learn about pedagogy and subject matter knowledge (Laiche & Ghaouar, 2021), and to collaborate with other teachers with similar professional development aspirations (Rutherford, 2010).

In Western contexts, the topic of teacher digital learning in online communities has been investigated by a vast amount of literature. However, few researchers have investigated the realities of EFL teachers' online communities in developing countries like Vietnam, where EFL teachers work under financial difficulties and with scarce professional development opportunities (Mai et al., 2020). The present study thus fills this gap by exploring the learning and development of Vietnamese EFL teachers in Facebook groups through the theoretical lens of communities of practice.

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The Facebook CoP named “Teachers of TESOL” is a large, online network in Vietnam where EFL professionals gather to discuss topics related to teaching English as a foreign language and education-related matters. By the time the interaction data were gathered, the group had 22,464 members with an average of 70 posts created per month. Our motivation to study this CoP originates from its potential to serve as a platform for continuing professional development for EFL teachers in Vietnam, where traditional PD models may not always be accessible. The present study explores the learning and development of Vietnamese EFL teachers in this Facebook group through the theoretical lens of communities of practice. It aims to answer the following research question:

What are the foci of Vietnamese EFL teachers’ interaction in the Facebook CoP of “Teachers of TESOL”?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Professional development via Facebook communities of practice (CoPs)

According to Guskey (2016), professional development (PD) is an intentional, ongoing, and systematic process that enables teachers to continually acquire emerging knowledge and refine their skills. This definition is applicable with a wide range of PD program contents and formats. These include not only traditional forms of professional learning but also “new” forms that encompass face-to-face or online professional learning communities. Therefore, Guskey’s PD framework is appropriate to underpin the participation of the Facebook community of practice (Facebook CoP) in the current study.

As regards Facebook CoPs, the term has been defined from different perspectives. Khalid and Strange (2016) stated that Facebook CoPs are Facebook platforms that facilitate collaborative learning and professional development through an exchange of ideas and practices. These platforms are run by moderators who guide the discussions and maintain a productive and educational environment. According to Ekici (2016), a Facebook CoP is a social group that interacts via Facebook and which focuses on sharing knowledge. The technological components involve a virtual space in which people are free to inquire and disseminate information. It differs from traditional CoP in that interaction history can be archived. This study acknowledges Facebook CoPs according to Ekici’s (2016) definition of it being a social group that utilizes technology to facilitate knowledge transference and interaction archiving.

2.2. Foci of interaction in Facebook CoPs

2.2.1. Definition of interaction in Facebook CoPs

Interaction within Facebook CoPs has been defined in various ways across the literature. Intra-group communication takes place through platforms like word walls and discussion forums, where members post messages to the entire group or engage in specific conversation (Rutherford, 2010). This communication, which introduces courses and seminars to group members, forms the core of the group’s interaction (Khalid & Strange, 2016). While formal learning through courses and seminars is important, informal discussions within learning communities are also significant for teacher’s PD. Chung and Chen (2018) add that meaningful interaction in Facebook CoPs also involves deep learning, cognitive and metacognitive skills, and focused discourse. Most relevant to the current study, Ngo and Nguyen (2023) define interaction in Facebook CoPs as the sharing of resources, stories, experiences, and tools through joint activities, discussions, problem-solving opportunities, information sharing, and relationship building. This definition, which aligns with findings from previous research (e.g., Bissessar, 2014; Laiche & Ghaouar, 2021; Nelimarkka et al., 2021; Rutherford, 2010), is adopted in the current study as it reflects the most recent exploration of Facebook CoPs for English teachers in Vietnam.

2.2.2. Previous studies on foci of Facebook CoPs

Over recent years, the use of Facebook groups as online CoPs for teachers in different contexts has generated compelling interest among researchers (e.g., Bissessar, 2014; Nelimarkka et al., 2021; Rutherford, 2010), whose findings show mixed results. Rutherford (2010) examined a Canada-based Facebook group with 8,000 members and indicated findings that teachers directed discussions and sought advice on pedagogical content knowledge, curriculum resources, and behavioral challenges. This highlights the informal and participant-driven nature of online CoP interactions, where participants take charge of their own learning. Building on this foundation, Bissessar (2014) conducted research in Trinidad and Tobago (a South America country), comprising 452 of 4,895 members. This community enabled teachers to not only network, discover innovative teaching methodologies but also celebrate their successes and challenges together. Bissessar’s work further emphasize the importance of social support and collaboration in enhancing PD for teachers. More recently, Nelimarkka et al. (2021) analyzed a self-organized Facebook group in Finland with 19,298 members. Their thematic analysis revealed that discussions were mainly around tools, apps, and infrastructure for

pedagogical purposes. The finding indicates that in addition to pedagogical practices, teachers position online forums as a resource for seeking advice on technological integration.

Facebook teacher groups have recently become a popular tool to supplement traditional teacher PD in African countries like Kenya and Algeria (e.g., Bett & Makewa, 2020; Laiche & Ghaouar, 2021). Both Bett and Makewa (2020) and Laiche and Ghaouar (2021) shared the findings that Facebook groups allowed teachers to exchange teaching resources and materials. Although interacting on such a technology-based platform, those teachers infrequently discussed on edu-tech tools and applications as they considered themselves competent users of technological devices.

Various studies have explored the interaction foci within Facebook teacher communities in Asia (e.g., Chung & Chen, 2018; Kabilan, 2016; Patahuddin & Logan, 2015). Patahuddin and Logan (2015)'s article provides an extensive discussion on the effectiveness of Facebook teacher groups in Indonesia. Despite geographical diversity, the participant interactions are apparent with four inter-related foci, namely "mutual engagement, joint enterprise, shared repertoire, and pedagogical knowledge enhancement" (Patahuddin & Logan, 2015, p. 485). These findings align with Rutherford's (2010) and Bissessar's (2014), which concluded that Facebook teacher groups and similar forms of social media should be seen as an effective supplement to traditional teacher PD. The collaborative nature of Facebook CoPs is reflected in other Asian contexts. Kabilan's (2016) on a pre-service teacher Facebook group in Malaysia found that most participants posted and discussed to develop their teaching skills, organization skills and thinking skills. Similarly, Chung and Chen (2018) investigated a massive Facebook teacher group in Taiwan and found that members exchanged social support, which fostered within-group fellowship.

However, examining foci of Facebook CoPs' interaction is still under-researched in Vietnam, with a couple of studies such as Mai et al. (2020) and Ngo and Nguyen (2023). Ngo and Nguyen (2023) focused on a Vietnamese-generated Facebook group named "Teach and Tech" and found that this virtual platform enriched teachers' knowledge and skills in specific technological tools as well as integrating technology into lesson plans, assessments, or classroom management. In terms of traditional pedagogy enhancement and academic sharing, Mai and others (2020) conducted a multiple-site case study on Vietnamese teacher PD via two Facebook CoPs, namely "VNTEFL" and "Teachers' Hub". As "VNTEFL" refers to teaching English as a foreign language in Vietnam, members in this group found the areas of teacher learning, critical reflection, and academic article sharing the most common and helpful topics. Meanwhile, the "Teachers' Hub" Facebook network preferred posts about teaching, learning, and assessment, particularly teaching young learners and materials for general English communication. Findings of these studies highlight a need for more research into how Facebook CoPs in Vietnam support diverse aspects of teacher PD beyond technology and pedagogy.

There remains a significant gap in exploring interaction foci in Facebook CoPs in the Vietnamese context. While global studies explore pedagogical content knowledge, teaching practices, and social support (e.g., Bissessar, 2014; Patahuddin & Logan, 2015; Rutherford, 2010), research in Vietnam has largely concentrated on technology integration and traditional pedagogy enhancement (e.g., Mai et al., 2020; Ngo & Nguyen, 2023). Therefore, more investigations are needed to know more about social support and collaboration in Vietnam-based Facebook CoPs. Moreover, discussions on PD opportunities like seminars and workshops have been explored in global contexts (see Khalid & Strange, 2016), remain under-researched in Vietnam.

3. METHOD

This study followed a qualitative method research design. The qualitative data was collected from the "Teachers of TESOL" Facebook group (a pseudonym). This method was chosen due to its ability to provide rich data in an unobtrusive manner (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Participants' posts and interactions in the "Teachers of TESOL" Facebook group were the targets of the present study. Furthermore, the data was analyzed according to the purposes and themes identified by Nelimarkka et al. (2021), Ngo and Nguyen (2023), and newly discovered categories from this study. The full list of categories with examples can be viewed in tables 1 and 2.

3.1. Data Collection

100 most recent posts as of July, 2024 in the "Teachers of TESOL" Facebook group were selected for the qualitative analysis of the foci of interactions. As one of the researchers was a full member in the group, data in the group were accessible. The posts were manually downloaded and saved in an Excel file, with relevant columns such as number, author, post, post's reactions, comments, comment's reactions, replies, replies's reactions, and replies of replies. This allowed the researchers to record the data in a way that represented the

links between the messages. To limit the possible loss of data due to the ever-changing nature of social media content (Kelly & Antonio, 2016), the posts' cache links were saved and screenshots of the posts were taken.

3.2. Data Analysis

The data was analyzed thematically according to the five steps suggested by Creswell and Creswell (2018). Firstly, to get familiar with the depth and breadth of the content, data in the abovementioned Excel file were immersed by repeatedly reading and searching for meanings and patterns before coding (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Secondly, a list of codes was generated. This was done by reference to the codes generated by other researchers (e.g., Nelimarkka et al., 2021 and Ngo & Nguyen, 2023) and new codes that emerged from the data. It should be noted that posts of PD opportunities introduced PD workshops and courses, while posts of techniques focused on how to apply specific teaching methods. Two themes of resources and techniques were pre-determined by adapting the English Teacher Competency Framework's (hereby the ETCF) indicators by MOET (2020), which indicated the specific teacher competencies that the resources/techniques brought about (see tables 1 and 2).

Thirdly, the Excel file was inputted into the ATLAS.ti 7th coding software, which was issued by ATLAS.ti Scientific Software Development GmbH and available for download at <https://atlasti.com/atlas-ti-desktop>. The software automatically coded the contents of each post for their foci, with the pre-determined list of codes. The software also sorted out a number of posts without any assigned codes, which were further coded manually to explore foci. The newly explored foci were then added to the codebook and labeled as "Self-assigned" (see the full list of the codes in tables 1 and 2). The software eventually produced output in the form of an Excel file, which contained relevant columns according to each post such as numbers, purpose, theme, reactions, comments, replies, replies to replies, and total engagement. It should be noted that the two columns of purpose and theme were displayed in the form of codes, whereas the rest of the columns were displayed as numerical data.

In the fourth step, members' engagement was analyzed. The quantity of comments, reactions, replies, reactions, replies to replies, and total engagement were calculated according to themes. The contents of comments and replies were further searched for meanings in order to explore interaction patterns to the target posts.

Lastly, the frequencies of purpose and themes were quantified to reveal trends in the participants' interactions.

To ensure the reliability of the analysis, inter-coder reliability was employed. Based on the code list, ten posts were selected and analyzed by the first author and one colleague, while the second author verified the codes. Agreement was reached by resolving any conflicts over discussions. Agreement was also reached in newly discovered themes in these ten posts. The first author then independently coded the rest of the data based on the modified code list.

Table 1. Codes for purposes of posts

Purposes	Definition & example	Source
Initiating conversation CODE: I	Posts that initiate conversation <u>Example:</u> Post #41 "Recently Thanh Nien newspaper reported on the average monthly income of English teachers. ... What do you think about this salary?"	Adopted from Ngo and Nguyen (2023)
Sharing CODE: S	Posts that share pedagogical knowledge, experience or resources <u>Example:</u> Post #44 "Today I want to share with teachers a useful tool for professional development for teachers - the Teaching portfolio."	Adapted from Nelimarkka et al., (2021)
Consulting CODE: C	Posts that seek pedagogical resources, advice or experience <u>Example:</u> Post #17 "I would like to ask what sets of documents should I use when reviewing for students who want to take a specialized high school exam?"	Adapted from Ngo and Nguyen (2023)

Table 2. Codes for themes of posts

Theme & sub-themes	Definition & example	Source
PD opportunities CODE: PD	Posts that are announcements of opportunities for PD <u>Example:</u> Post #44 <i>"Today I want to share with teachers a useful tool for professional development for teachers - the Teaching portfolio."</i>	Adapted from Ngo and Nguyen (2023)
Research CODE: RS	Posts that call for help with research <u>Example:</u> Post #4 <i>"I sincerely ask the teachers to take a few minutes to help me complete a survey so I can complete my research with the teachers."</i>	Self-assigned
Resources CODE: RES	Posts that focus on pedagogical resources <u>Example:</u> Post #6 <i>"I think this website is very good for practicing listening and writing dictation. ... The listening sources are mainly news. http://www.newsinlevels.com/"</i>	Adapted from Ngo and Nguyen (2023) and MOET (2020)
Techniques CODE: TEC	Posts that focus on techniques to teach English skills / language elements, plan lessons, manage classroom, or give feedback <u>Example:</u> Post #2 <i>"Can you give me tips to fix "abusing advanced vocabulary and expressions" in speaking for students at level A1-2?"</i>	Adapted from Nelimarkka et al. (2021) and MOET (2020)
Teacher recruitment CODE: REC	Posts that ask for or share information about teacher recruitment <u>Example:</u> Post #14 <i>"I would like to ask for a little bit of experience and review of the job market in the southern region because I am relocating there."</i>	Self-assigned
Creating a community CODE: COMM	Posts that call for establishing a community for a specific purpose <u>Example:</u> Post #18 <i>"I and some friends who are preparing to go to England to study PhD or MA in TESOL, Education, Applied Linguistics this time are preparing to establish a Zalo group to exchange, communicate, support and "have fun" together to overcome lonely days in England"</i>	Self-assigned
English language proficiency CODE: PROF	Posts that focus on strategies to develop English language proficiency for teachers or learners <u>Example:</u> Post #28 <i>"I would like to ask about the address to improve personal IELTS proficiency. When I first graduated from university, I took the IELTS test with 7.0, but I did not study at any center ..."</i>	Adapted from MOET (2020)
Technology CODE: TECH	Posts that address issues with technological tools <u>Example:</u> Post #100 <i>"Dear teachers, I have a few questions about GG meet ... I can still share audio from YouTube, but I can't share audio in audio files."</i>	Adapted from Ngo and Nguyen (2023) and Nelimarkka et al. (2021)

4. RESULTS

The research question asked about foci of interaction in the Facebook CoP named "Teachers of TESOL". The data was analyzed in terms of the purposes, themes, subthemes, and engagement (e.g., comments, replies, and their respective reactions) of the target posts. To explain more, reactions were calculated by the total number of likes, hearts, and laughter, as no negative reactions (e.g., angers and sadness) were identified.

4.1. Purposes of posts

Table 3 shows total interaction according to purposes of the posts, including the number of reactions, comments, replies and total engagement of posts related to each purpose.

Table 3. Purposes of posting on Teachers of TESOL (N=100)

Purpose	Posts n (%)	Reactions n (%)	Comments n (%)	Replies n (%)	Total engagement n (%)
Initiating conversation	5 (5)	421 (7.4)	63 (14.2)	62 (13.5)	546 (8.3)
Sharing	31 (31)	3277 (58.0)	114 (25.6)	52 (11.4)	3443 (52.6)
Consulting	64 (64)	1953 (34.6)	268 (60.2)	343 (75.1)	2564 (39.1)
Total	100 (100)	5651 (100)	445 (100)	457 (100)	6553 (100)

As seen in table 3, the majority of posts (64%) sought consultation of the education-related matters. Posts that were meant to share information comprised 31% of the sample. Interestingly, even though the quantity of sharing posts were just half that of consulting posts, the total engagement of sharing posts outnumbered that of consulting posts. This was mainly due to the vast quantity of reactions given to the sharing posts. The smallest proportion of posts were for initiating conversation, making up 5% of the sample. This entailed a relatively low level of engagement, which accounted for 8.3% of the total engagement across all posts. However, compared to sharing posts, posts aimed at initiating conversation even received more replies, indicating that this type of posts generated deeper discussions among the members.

4.2. Themes of posts

Table 4 contains data about the posts according to their respective themes. It lists the quantity of posts that belong to each theme, as well as displays the reactions, comments, replies, and total engagement associated with the posts in specific theme groups.

Table 4. Total interaction across themes and purposes (N=100)

Themes	P	Posts n (%)	Reactions n (%)	Comments n (%)	Replies n (%)	Total engagement n (%)
PD opportunities	IC	1 (1.0)	8 (0.1)	2 (0.4)	0 (0)	10 (0.2)
	S	14 (14.0)	1416 (25.1)	56 (12.6)	31 (6.3)	1503 (22.8)
	C	8 (8.0)	131 (2.3)	28 (6.3)	23 (4.7)	182 (2.8)
Research	IC	1 (1.0)	45 (0.8)	0 (0)	0 (0)	45 (0.7)
	S	5 (5.0)	676 (12.0)	36 (8.1)	13 (2.6)	725 (11.0)
	C	13 (13.0)	600 (10.6)	39 (8.8)	46 (9.3)	685 (10.4)
Resources	IC	1 (1.0)	63 (1.1)	1 (0.2)	1 (0.2)	65 (0.9)
	S	7 (7.0)	774 (13.7)	14 (3.1)	36 (7.3)	824 (12.5)
	C	15 (15.0)	328 (5.8)	48 (10.8)	56 (11.3)	432 (6.6)
Techniques	IC	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
	S	4 (4.0)	403 (7.1)	8 (1.8)	0 (0)	411 (6.2)
	C	13 (13.0)	374 (6.6)	49 (11.0)	75 (15.2)	498 (7.6)
Recruitment	IC	2 (2.0)	305 (5.4)	60 (13.5)	61 (12.3)	426 (6.5)
	S	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
	C	11 (11.0)	332 (5.9)	63 (14.2)	88 (17.8)	483 (7.3)
Creating a community	IC	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
	S	1 (1.0)	8 (0.1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	8 (0.1)
	C	1 (1.0)	65 (1.2)	9 (2.0)	27 (5.5)	101 (1.5)
English language proficiency	IC	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
	S	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
	C	2 (2.0)	111 (2.0)	28 (6.3)	30 (6.1)	169 (2.6)
Technology issues	IC	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
	S	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
	C	1 (1.0)	12 (0.2)	4 (0.9)	7 (1.4)	23 (0.3)
Total		100 (100)	5651 (100)	445 (100)	494 (100)	6590 (100)

Note: P = Purposes, IC = Initiating conversation, S = Sharing, C = Consulting.

As can be seen in table 4, posts about professional development opportunities (23), research (19), and teaching resources (23) far outnumbered other types of posts, which entailed a higher quantity of engagement instances across the three purpose groups. A notable quantity of posts was made about teaching techniques (17) and recruitment (13) with slightly fewer instances of engagement. There were far fewer posts about creating a community, developing personal English language proficiency, and technology issues, hence these themes are collectively referred to as marginal themes.

Information can be seen about the posts that focused on professional development opportunities, such as certificates, workshops, courses, and professional development tools. Regarding posts about PD tools, although there was only one post among the entire data set, the engagement (in table 5) was notably high. Commenters appreciated the portfolio guide as well as questioned about practical implementation.

Table 5. Interaction example of PD opportunities: Post #44

Member	No. of reactions	No. of comments	No. of replies	Total engagement
	175	6	8	189
Author 44	Hello dear teachers! 🙌 Today I want to share with teachers a useful tool for professional development for teachers - the Teaching portfolio.			
Author 44 (commented)	Teaching Portfolio Guide - Notion Template: https://surfluent.notion.site/Teaching-Portfolio-Guide...			
Commenter 44.1 (replied)	@Author 44, Thank you very much. I save these things in individual folders. Every time I apply for something, I pull them out even though I update my CV every year.			
Commenter 44.2	Teacher, in your teaching portfolio, each portfolio is a class/course, right? I did it before, but I did it personally.			
Author 44 (replied)	@Commenter 44.2, this teaching portfolio is the final assignment I submitted for the Pedagogical Professional Development module in the Master's program, so that's how it is in the photo. If I teach many classes, I can synthesize them from multiple layers.			

Note: Purpose: Sharing.

Additionally, the analysis revealed another finding related to the members' interactions. In the listening resources posts (e.g., post #92), members commented to thank the post author for the shared information, as well as provide extra relevant sources. Similarly, for those who engaged in the assessment resources post (e.g., post #9), information and sources concerning the author's inquiry were provided, as shown in table 6.

Table 6. Interaction example of resources: Post #9

Member	No. of reactions	No. of comments	No. of replies	Total engagement
	68	6	19	93
Author 9	I sincerely ask for some suggestions from you about some websites to create Quiz for mid-term or post-unit assessment. I'm using Google Form, but the downside is that students look down on it and there are many negative things that happen ...			
Commenter 9.1	Formative, Google form still prevents negativity if you use more proctor plugins but it's a bit confusing.			
Author 9 (replied)	@Commenter 9.1, can you explain more about the proctor plugin? Where can I find out?			
Commenter 9.1	@Author 9, formative.com is more modern. I'll upload the pdf instead of typing each sentence.			
Author 9 (replied)	Thank you very much, sir. I wish you good health.			

Note: Purpose: Consulting.

5. DISCUSSION

This study set out to explore the interaction foci of the Facebook CoP “Teachers of TESOL.” This section provides a discussion on the findings and a comparison to those of previous research.

5.1. Purposes of posts

Through the analysis of 100 posts, with accompanying comments, replies, and reactions, the study found that the majority of posts were consulting posts while nearly a third of the posts were sharing posts. This finding aligns with what was found in the literature (e.g., Chung & Chen, 2018; Kabilan, 2016; Rutherford,

2010) but slightly contrasts with that of Ngo and Nguyen's (2023) study which found that expertise-sharing posts outnumbered help-seeking posts (63.7% and 42.8%, respectively). Although there was a discrepancy between the two studies, the two purposes of posts still took up the majority of the post sample. This suggests that Facebook CoP interaction trends were centered around sharing and consulting. In other words, regardless of what Facebook CoPs that EFL teachers were in, they did show a significant concern about the availability of sharing and consulting pedagogical expertise.

In the current study, the fewest number of posts were for initiating conversations. The finding was in line with prior literature (e.g., Bissessar, 2014; Ngo & Nguyen, 2023; Patahuddin & Logan, 2015). Although these posts were less frequent, they generated substantial discussion, indicating that teachers also view the CoP as a space for broader professional discourse. According to Bett and Makewa (2018), members desired to get acquainted with each other more, especially after their posts were publicly revealed. In return, others explained their working positions and contexts while commenting on the post, which improved the relationships among active members in the group. This aligns with the findings of Bissessar (2014), Chung and Chen (2018), and Kabilan (2016), which suggest that the group fulfills a sense of community and belonging among like-minded teachers on a national scale. This aspect of relationship-building is also reflected in the current study, where teachers engaged in a variety of discussions, thereby contributing to the formation of professional networks and a sense of belonging within the community.

5.2. Themes of posts

The analysis of the themes of the posts revealed that the teachers posted various topics such as PD opportunities, resources, research, techniques, and recruitment. The findings are similar to those of previous research (e.g., Bett & Makewa, 2020; Laiche & Ghaouar, 2021; Mai et al. 2020; Rutherford, 2010), which found that the members of the Facebook CoP interacted with a wide range of topics related to English teaching. The alignment implied that Facebook CoP members consistently showed interest in those key themes regardless of the specific context or platform. These findings suggest that whatever online community teachers were part of, they continued to prioritize discussions contributing to their professional growth and classroom effectiveness.

However, the findings of the current study contrast with those of Nelimarkka et al. (2021) and Ngo and Nguyen (2023) study, which found that teachers' interactions were centered around sharing knowledge and skills related to technology integration in teaching. Nelimarkka et al. (2021) claimed that their target Facebook group was founded to improve technology use for educational purposes in Finland. "Teach and Tech" Facebook group in Ngo and Nguyen's (2023) study, as the name suggested, focused on technology-related issues in Vietnamese education system. In contrast, the Facebook CoP's name in the present research reflected a broader interest in pedagogy-related discussions rather than technology-specific conversations.

Posts about PD opportunities were frequently made and received a large portion of engagement. The majority of these posts were for the purposes of sharing, showing that members mainly shared opportunities for PD with others. This aligns with what was found in the literature (e.g., Mai et al., 2020; Ngo & Nguyen, 2023), where the heart of the Facebook CoPs was sharing information on opportunities for professional learning, with the material including invitations to webinars and in-person events. Of all the PD opportunities posts, the vast majority were about workshops and courses. The engagement with these posts was high, specifically the quantity of likes and hearts. This indicated that although members did not technically discuss a lot with these posts, there was a high level of interest in attending such workshops among them.

For the two themes of resources and techniques, it can be seen that there was a high number of reactions with sharing posts, while numerous comments and replies were made in consulting posts. The high level of engagement was in line with what were found in previous studies (e.g., Bett & Makewa, 2020; Kabilan, 2016; Laiche & Ghaouar, 2021; Mai et al., 2020; Nelimarkka et al., 2021). The alignment further confirmed that regardless of what Facebook CoPs teachers participated in, they did so for the sake of gathering valuable teaching resources. Moreover, more than half of the posts were made with the intention of consulting, which received high number of comments and replies. This revealed that the participants in the target CoP were willing to seek help and assist others. The high level of verbal engagement also suggested that while members were actively engaging and seeking support, they were also capable of self-management and fostering their own professional growth independently.

6. CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND LIMITATIONS

To sum up, the findings showed that the teachers' interactions had different foci. While most posts were consulting posts, there were still numerous sharing posts. The themes of the posts were varied, including PD opportunities, resources, research, techniques, and recruitment. PD opportunities posts about workshops and courses were frequently engaged. Research sharing posts received a high level of reactions, while research posts with the consulting purpose witnessed a high number of comments and replies. Moreover, resource posts received a notably high level of reactions when members shared teaching materials. In terms of techniques, a moderate level of engagement was seen.

The findings implied the following for educational policy makers considering designing professional development programs. Firstly, in terms of purposes of posting, the consulting and sharing posts outnumbered the posts for initiating conversations, which implies EFL teachers desire a valuable place for open discussions and sharing. The highest number of consulting posts indicated that the Facebook CoP went beyond traditional PD programs to include self-directed and inquiry-based-learning (Kirschner & Lai, 2007). Therefore, it was suggested that relevant authorities should consider redesigning available PD programs to be more open-sharing. Secondly, the findings showed that posts about PD opportunities were made frequently and received a high level of engagement. Notably, the posts were about introducing workshops and courses for higher education. This implied that the availability of extracurricular workshops and courses should be further considered. Thirdly, the interaction data indicated that a lot of comments and replies were made in consulting posts of teaching resources and techniques. This finding revealed that teachers showed a significant interest in these aspects, suggesting the need to supplement applicable pedagogical resources and methods when designing PD programs.

This study was limited by its duration and sample size. Firstly, the analysis was performed on 100 recent posts during the month of July, 2024. Therefore, the findings could not be generalized to other educational settings and online CoPs. Future studies could expand on the number of posts being analyzed, possibly analyzing posts at various time periods during the year to get a more comprehensive view of the purposes and themes of the posts. Secondly, the interaction discourse revealed that the Facebook CoP members were at mixed levels in terms of both qualifications and teaching positions. Future studies are therefore recommended to explore the relationships between members' expertise, experiences or proficiency and their engagement. Lastly, the study only employed posts and interactions' analysis as the main instrumentation, which had not revealed participants' demographics such as gender and age. It is recommended that future research integrate other data collection methods such as surveys or interviews to gather more information about participants. The demographic data are useful to supplement the exploration of participants' levels of engagement.

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Trọng tâm tương tác của cộng đồng thực hành trên Facebook dành cho hoạt động phát triển chuyên môn của giáo viên Tiếng Anh tại Việt Nam

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THÔNG TIN BÀI BÁO

Quá trình xử lý:

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Ngày nhận bản chỉnh sửa: 12/01/2025

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Ngày xuất bản: 20/10/2025

Từ khóa:

Giáo viên tiếng Anh

Phát triển chuyên môn

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TÓM TẮT

Nghiên cứu này tìm hiểu các trọng tâm tương tác trong một cộng đồng thực hành trên Facebook có tên là “Teachers of TESOL” (bút danh) như một nền tảng phát triển chuyên môn (PTCM) cho giáo viên tiếng Anh tại Việt Nam. Phương pháp định tính được áp dụng trong nghiên cứu này thông qua việc thu thập 100 bài đăng Facebook gần đây nhất (tính đến tháng 7 năm 2024). Sự tương tác của các giáo viên đối với các bài đăng được phân tích nhằm tìm ra trọng tâm xuất hiện từ khối dữ liệu. Kết quả chỉ ra rằng các giáo viên trong cộng đồng này có nhiều trọng tâm tương tác chính, bao gồm cơ hội PTCM (25,5%), nguồn PTCM (21,9%), nghiên cứu (19,4%), tuyển dụng giáo viên (14,6%), và kỹ thuật giảng dạy (13,7%). Ngoài ra còn một số trọng tâm thứ yếu khác, chiếm 4,9% khối dữ liệu. Một số đề xuất quan trọng đối với việc điều chỉnh các chương trình PTCM cũng được thảo luận trong nghiên cứu này.