

Advantages & Disadvantages of Social Networks in English Language Teaching

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Abstract: *The Industrial Revolution 4.0 affects not only the science and economic but also education, especially English language learning. With the popularity of the Internet and the advent of social networks, language learning has changed dramatically. Although, educators and learners are pushing learning beyond the limits of the classroom through social networking yet, also brings some obstacles. This article tries to present the role of social networking and to know the advantages and disadvantages of it in English language learning.*

Keywords: *English Language Learning, Advantages, Social Networks, Disadvantages, Internet, ELT*

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I. Introduction

People are living in a global world and every day they are adopting new technology, information, lifestyle, language and so on. Technology has influenced almost all aspects of our lives and education is not an exception. Nowadays, social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Zalo, etc are very popular among teachers and students. Instead of traditional teaching methodologies which known as teacher-centred methods, modern and innovative methodologies have been integrated to change to more student-centred approach. With the growing of social networking sites, many EFL teachers are considering the potential of using social networking sites for educational purposes as they understand that social networks have the ability to encourage active learning and collaboration among students (Maloney, 2007). Zheng, Yim and Warshauser (2018) also stated that social networks provide wider opportunities for second language learners to participate in daily learning activities. Facebook or other social networks are growing rapidly in Vietnam; however, the application of social networks for educational purposes, is still limited in Vietnam. Most of Vietnamese researchers have focused on the integration of E-learning in teaching languages without considering the impact of social networks in education. The integration of social networks is the latest medium that is used as an innovative way to delegate educational purposes. In fact, people tend to prefer Social Network sites to communicate with each other. Students use languages to communicate with foreign languages such as English to practise it with native or not native speakers in order to improve their language skills. Besides that, the speaking skill of any language is crucially important because via a language, speakers can transmit the purposes of communication, especially, English language speech which is the most useful one in the world. EFL learners in Vietnam are one of those users of English as a foreign language. In addition, language teaching has always been facing various difficulties in the process of seeking successfulness. One of the main issues that EFL teachers come across is how to make learners use the language competently and accurately in real context. Similarly, students are proved to have low performance when they are asked to fulfill tasks that require speaking in class.

II. Definition of Social Networks

The meaning of the term ‘Social media’ can be derived from two words that are ‘social’ and ‘Networks’. The first term is ‘Social’ which means connected with society and the way it is organized, in which they meet and spend time with other people. The second one is Networks which means: a group of two or more computer systems linked together (Eren, 2012; Beal, 2015; Namaziandost, Sabzevari, & Hashemifardnia, 2018).

According to (Oxford Dictionary, 2011), social Networks is defined as ‘the use of dedicated websites and applications to communicate with other users or to find people with similar interests to one’s own’ Also, Social Networks is: internet-based tools for sharing and discussing information among human beings. According to Boyd and Ellison (2008), “‘SN’ can be defined as web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system”. Social media provides the learner with the possibility of participating in actual, real-time, relevant conversations taking place online, and practicing the target language with or without the help of an experienced teacher by his or her side. (Wikipedia.com).

Social Networks are an important tool for learners. Social networks sites engage students and need to be studied as distributors of information. The internet has evolved with growth in its applications. The interactive nature of online environments has developed with social networks. Social Networks connection started as a simple activity, but with time it turns to a phenomenon. The Social Networks sites are using in various ways like exchanging information, chatting, and blogging. Thus, the importance of Social Networks turned to be more than chatting or just creating new relationships to a way of expression and sharing all kinds of ideas.

III. Advantages and Disadvantages of Social Networks in English Language Learning

3.1. Advantages of Social Networks in English Language Learning

Social Networks have gained a status in nowadays people's life because of the huge benefits it serves to the society in general and to each individual. This has encouraged the new generation to adapt quickly, collaboratively to this complicated 'New Digital World' which is based on the intercontact between the different users of Social Networks.

The social networking sites focus heavily on building online communities link together with shared interests or activities. In the field of education, social networking sites encourage students to engage with each other and to express and share their creativity. Social media is also one good way for students to gain knowledge which can be from outside their classroom activities. With, so many social media they can share and discuss many things related to their need of particular knowledge with others practically. Social networking can create a better English communicative environment for students. They just need to connect to the internet and interact with people from English speaking countries through social sites. Many social networking sites offers the users many applications that make them easy to get any benefits including in English language learning. The most important feature of the social networking site is the ability to give and receive feedbacks. Any content that we post instantly starts receiving comments, likes, reviews, opinions, and additional information on that topic (Mudit Singh, 2012). By doing this, it can create discussions, sharing ideas and other communicative skills which use English as the language in the discussion. Furthermore, Social networking can encourage students to upload images or videos related to the courses. They can upload their essays and assignments on the net, analyze the feedback, and write a better one for the final class essay. It is very good activity and the process or learning and teaching will run smoothly without any difficulties.

Social Networks give a chance for learners to get rid of the tension of classroom activities due to the fear of making mistakes or any negative behaviour. Traditional language assessment that still uses pen and paper does not suit the ways through which present day generation gain knowledge. Language learning and acquisition needs to use new technologies and a lot of practice. Traditional ways of education in most of cases may be boring and useless for learners and will put them in isolation and deprive them from discoveries, innovations and technology applications of the rich and healthy environment of the technology. Collaboration is a dynamic strategy in language learning because individual work cannot help learning language. Traditional direct instruction has no effect on language skills because it lacks interactivity. The traditional classroom nowadays is no longer a practical context to master the language skills. Online learning is learner-centered, and achievement directed for the sake of better performance. Social Networks and Language Teaching Due to the continuous increase of using new technologies in everyday life, the implementation of these technologies in learning activities becomes a necessity. Although the e-learning methods are incorporated in universities all around the world, the educational methods, techniques and educational software tools do not always keep up with the new information technologies. An example is the social networking sites which are very popular, being visited regularly by many students and teachers, but not yet considered a real method for learning and teaching (cited in Lee and McLoughlin, 2008). However, they consider social networking sites as educational tools because students can use them for sharing knowledge, as well as communication and social support. Social Networks and English Learning English language today may face some learning and teaching problems among non-native English language learners. The learners' standard in English is declining in the 21st century in spite of facilities and the multi-channels of learning. So, we need to know or discover if Social Networks can be exploited to solve the learners' problems in mastering English language. Traditional methods of language teaching are no longer suitable for the learners of today. The alternative could be more free materials and activities beyond classrooms provided by Social Networks. Learning via Social Networks is continuous processes of learning and assessment that never ends and give a real chance to practice the language beyond the walls of classrooms. (Dudeney& Hockly,2007)

3.2. Disadvantages of Using Social Networks in English Language Learning

Beside advantages of social networking in education, there are also some advantages of social networking in language learning. Because social networking offers the users to communicate each other without any boundaries that will be used by the bad people to do crime to the others. Ashraf, 2012 said that social networking is lack of humanitarian aspect described it as a teaching lack of spirit.

We can see that by using social networking people around us. We are too busy with online internet because of this social networking. It means that, though the students are sitting close to each other but they are busy with their electrical devices. As a result, it is lack of social interactivity in the real life. Networking sites can make people or especially students become very addictive. People spend more and more time at computer which makes them isolated from real life. Using social networks leads to decrease face to face communication skills. They are wasting time at checking news as well as updating information or status. In the term of language proficiency, the youth often use abbreviation or slangs to communicate each other. Because mostly social networking using written context message, so sometimes students face many problems when they are told to speak correct and professional English. Some of them are not able to form correct grammar on the spot.

Social networking sites, “can be a potential hazard for teachers as some applications allows users to communicate” and “the content can lead to discrediting or defamatory messages”. (Jose Picardo, 2011). Furthermore, through social sites such as Facebook, Zalo or Viber students become obsessed in finding their teachers on and intrude in teachers ‘private lives. Social networking can also distract students from the study. Social media platforms like Facebook can turn away students’ attention from what is happening in the class and it affects the learning process. One more thing is that students can posting unsuitable content on social media. This is one of the major reasons social media is not permitted in schools because it is very challenging to keep eye on students how they use social media. A student can post inapt content which would be distracting and harmful to students.

IV. Conclusion

As a conclusion, the use of social media has given impacted on one particular aspect which is the performance of student’s language learning There are some advantages and disadvantages of using social networking in English language learning. Social media tools make the learning environment more dynamic by supporting new features and characteristics. These features and tools facilitate the learning environment for both learners and educators and encourage them to take an effective role in creating and sharing the information rather than just access the content. However due to some education-related risks social media should be used thoughtfully

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