

TEACHING OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM - INTEGRATING SOCIAL MEDIA INTO INNOVATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING: THE CASE OF FACEBOOK

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SUMMARY

Since its first step into Vietnam in 2009, social media system has undergone stormy development and become the most popular social network for sharing information in all fields. While language teachers have always struggled to find the most innovative learning method for their students, the social network such as Facebook can be used to formally support the process of teaching and learning outside the classroom. The benefit that social network brings to language learners is not limited to the access to specialized pages. More importantly, via social network, teaching foreign languages may reach out beyond traditional teaching methods, and become a way to teach students in the way they prefer to learn. The author conducted a quantitative study to examine the current situation and propose some approaches to optimize the utility of social network to facilitate innovative English learning outside the classroom.

Keywords: *Language Teaching; Outside Classroom; Social Media; innovative learning; Facebook*

INTRODUCTION

As the Internet is evolving at a rapid pace, the impact of the net, especially social networks, on education has recently become a controversial topic. From the educational perspective, social networks can actively support students by creating an interactive environment to gain and share their knowledge. There have been many studies into the influence of virtual world on language teaching and learning. Although these studies address the utility of social networking and how it influences students' academic performance, they have not delved directly into how teachers can apply social networks to support teaching activities. The purpose of this study is to investigate the use of social sites as teaching and learning aids.

Social network is a service that connects members and their interests on the Internet together for a variety of purposes regardless of space and time [5]. Social media are highly efficient because they are one of many methods of communication that allow users to quickly and widely disseminate information. In schools, social media sites are increasing student engagement outside the classroom

and they are creating new and innovative ways to learn.

According to VietnamNetcitizens Report (2016), the most common social sites in Vietnam are as follows [4]:

Youtube

Although ranked behind Facebook as the world's most popular social networking site, Youtube dominates in Vietnam. Youtube is a video sharing website which is owned by Google. Unregistered users can watch videos and registered users can upload videos.

Facebook

The most popular social networking site to date in the world is Facebook. This site allows users to set up a profile and post updates, links, photos, conversations, and the like. Users can update and share information quickly using a simple and interface. Accessing Facebook through mobile devices at leisure time is a common habit of Vietnamese people today.

Instagram

Instagram is an application that allows users to take pictures and videos and share them on a variety of social networking platforms. It is owned by Facebook.

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Pinterest

Pinterest is a personalized media platform which allows registered users to "pin" and organize media content into collections called pinboards. Users can also browse the content of others in their feed.

ZingMe

ZingMe is a social network provided by a Vietnamese developer. As a result, the site is much closer and friendlier than other social networking sites. Association with many other popular sites in the Zing system such as Zing News, Zing MP3 makes the site popular among teenagers.

However, the most popular networking site in teaching and learning foreign languages in Vietnam is Facebook. In the framework of this article, the author will discuss how to optimize this social network in teaching and learning English.

METHODOLOGY

Data for the study included a survey of 250 students in Vietnam University of Commerce. The students are from Faculty of English, International Business, Marketing, Finance and Banking. The participants of the study took English courses at high school and at Vietnam University of Commerce, English is a compulsory major subject and they have to study longer periods of English than other faculties.

The researcher used surveys in the study. A 10-item survey was developed, which required approximately 20 minutes to complete. Surveys were distributed on campus ($n=150$) in classrooms and common areas, and online via English speaking Facebook groups ($n=100$). Most of the respondents (58%) were female and most were 19-23 years old. Freshmen comprised 22% of the sample, 26% were sophomores, 18% juniors, and 34% seniors. The survey consisted of ten questions which asked about students' personal social media experiences.

Respondents were asked to choose their most preferred social media platform first. The next four questions were demographic questions – gender, age, race and year in school. The sixth and seventh questions asked the average amount of hours spent on any social media network per day and whether or not they used social media networks more during the weekend. Then their purposes of using social networks were surveyed in the following questions. The results were statistically analyzed in order to reach conclusion and suggest implications and possible recommendations.

RESULTS

Some general information is gathered in the tables below.

Table 1. Summary information

<i>Gender</i>	
Male	42
Female	58
<i>Year in School</i>	
Freshman	22
Sophomore	26
Junior	18
Senior	34

All numbers are percents.

Table 2. Habit of using Facebook

<i>Frequency of Access</i>	
Not everyday	4.8
Once per day	8.8
2-3 times/day	29.2
4-5 times/day	32
6-10 times/day	8
Many times	14
Always online	3.2
<i>Time of Access</i>	
Less than 30m/day	16
From 0.5 to 3 hours	52
From 3 to 6 hours	25.2
More than 6 hours	6.8

All numbers are percents.

Not surprisingly, almost all participants choose Facebook as the most favourite social network. The survey results also show that

students of Vietnam University of Commerce mainly use Facebook to maintain relationships and entertainment (54%). 65 respondents (26%) said that they regularly use Facebook to discuss with their friends about lessons, exercises, work or other learning purposes. However, only 20% of respondents regularly use Facebook for English learning activities such as searching for materials or joining study groups.

DISCUSSION

Social networks are both pervasive and powerful. From all the information collected in this paper, the author has some recommendations for teachers.

Recommendations

Starting a Facebook account

Through Facebook teachers can easily share knowledge for learners through writing articles, or encourage students to practice English by sharing state streams, commenting in English. Facebook allows teachers to interact with learners in English easily. For example, teachers can choose a topic to post on their Facebook to students to discuss and exchange in English. Thus, every learner has the opportunity to practice and participate in this topic, something that traditional classes with large numbers of students and limited time cannot do.

Using Facebook as an assessment tool

Teachers take initiative in offering students a familiar and non-pressure environment where everyone can express what he/she knows without feeling judged. Based on the exchange of learners in the comment section, teachers can evaluate the ability of students, as well as help students correct grammar, vocabulary. However, they should try to manage by putting clear limits on what students area allowed to do and not allowed to (not using slangs, obeying grammar rules and respecting classmates.)

Diversifying learning patterns

To support teaching and learning foreign languages in the school effectively and overcome difficulties, the teachers can organize a number of learning models such as Fan-page, Group, Discussion Board . Through Facebook, teachers and students can exchange the content knowledge. Teachers provide additional knowledge and practice exercises for students. Weekly teachers create Google Forms for students to participate in reward questions. Results are announced and rewarded regularly.

The Net Based Curriculum

Today's students are connected, digital, and highly social. Internet and social media sites like Facebook play a critical role in the lives of these students. Therefore it is essential that educators design a curriculum that ables them to receive updates and interviews, read comments, and participate in discussions in the foreign language [1]. Utilized as a communicative tool in the language classroom, Facebook can also serve to promote collaboration through target language discussions, status updates, comments, and questions. Students can discuss a photograph or video or can facilitate an activity in which they describe in the foreign language a certain place, person, activity, etc., and other students try to guess what it is. Instructors can also create hypothetical events in the target language country and design a discussion around the students' anticipation before, experiences during, and thoughts after attending the event. These types of collaborations can promote a sense of connection and community between the students allowing for a richer and more engaging learning experience. In this manner, Facebook allows for multi-dimensional conversation, both among students and between students and the instructor.

Disadvantages

Despite the positive impacts that social media has had on education, there are also growing concerns.

Privacy Issues

The biggest downfall of social media being incorporated into education is the security and privacy issues that come along with it. Confidentiality and privacy are very big issues within social media because of posting personal information online [3]. Teachers should take responsibility to educate their students about the security and privacy issues of posting person information online.

Social Media can be a Distraction

Another complaint among educators is that social media is distracting in the classroom. Tools like Facebook and Twitter, if encouraged, can divert students' attention away from what's happening in class and are ultimately disruptive to the learning process. Therefore, instructors should make sure social media won't be abused.

Discouraging Face-to-Face Communication

Some teachers are concerned that when paying too much attention online, students are missing valuable lessons in real-life social skills [2]. At social gatherings and in personal relationships, they need to be able to effectively express themselves and connect with others.

CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that social networks promote student autonomy and support among learners. However, using social networks in general and Facebook in particular must go hand in hand with innovative teaching methods and student-centered approach. Moreover, a balance between social media use and academic effort is imperative to improve student grade. To use Facebook effectively, learners must also establish some certain habits of using this network and profound awareness of social networking culture.

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TÓM TẮT**DAY HỌC NGOẠI NGỮ BÊN NGOÀI LỚP HỌC - ỨNG DỤNG MẠNG XÃ HỘI FACEBOOK TRONG DẠY VÀ HỌC TIẾNG ANH****Hán Thị Bích Ngọc****Khoa Tiếng Anh - Đại học Thương mại*

Kể từ bắt đầu phát triển tại Việt Nam từ năm 2009, các trang mạng xã hội đã có bước phát triển mạnh mẽ và trở thành kênh phổ biến để chia sẻ thông tin trong mọi lĩnh vực. Trong khi đó, theo tinh thần đổi mới toàn diện của Đề án Ngoại ngữ Quốc gia 2020, các giáo viên luôn phải cố gắng tìm ra phương pháp học tập thân thiện và sáng tạo nhất với học viên của mình. Đặc biệt với thực trạng số giờ lên lớp không còn nhiều, việc thúc đẩy học tập bên ngoài lớp học là vô cùng cần thiết. Hiện tại, nhiều người sử dụng các tính năng của các trang mạng xã hội bằng cách tham gia các nhóm và trang giáo dục. Tuy nhiên, lợi ích mà mạng xã hội mang lại cho người học ngôn ngữ không giới hạn ở việc truy cập các trang chuyên biệt. Quan trọng hơn, qua mạng xã hội, dạy ngoại ngữ có thể vượt ra ngoài các phương pháp giảng dạy truyền thống, và trở thành một cách học tập linh hoạt trong đó người học có thể học theo cách họ muốn học. Để minh họa, tác giả thực hiện một nghiên cứu định lượng nhằm khảo sát tình hình hiện tại và đề xuất một số cách tiếp cận để tối ưu hoá tiện ích của mạng xã hội để thúc đẩy hoạt động dạy - học ngoại ngữ bên ngoài lớp học.

Từ khóa: *Học ngoại ngữ, ngoài lớp học, mạng xã hội, đổi mới, Facebook*

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