
Social media a Novel Platform for ELT: Connect, Collaborate, and Share is a Good Idea in the Teaching & Learning Process of the English Language

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Abstract:

In India, English language teaching and learning have been taken into different means of advancement, including the dawn of technology and digitalization. The growing popularity of many social media applications has transformed teaching language learning and induced many teachers to employ them in their classrooms, too. Social media tools have quite interesting and easily accessible features that attract the masses. The SM attributes like collaboration, sharing textual and audio-visual information, giving or receiving feedback or comments, making friends, chatting, telecommunication, etc., are really remarkable and cause everyone to become a subscriber. If social media tools are used correctly in the current teaching and learning environments, adequate outcomes will be anticipated. This paper examines the use of social media applications in language teaching learning classrooms and how they suit the present technically smart environment. The use of social media can definitely be the latest teaching method for language teachers.

Keywords: Social media (SM) – Face book - YouTube – Blog- networking tools – English Language Learning (ELL)

Introduction

English is the West Germanic language, originally spoken in early medieval England, and later became the world's lingua franca (Crystal 2003). Social media has played a very important role in the lives of ordinary people, especially learners. The use of smartphones, computers, and other devices has become an indispensable tool for communication, business, and information exchange. In today's world, everyone carries a smartphone in their pocket. Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, and other social media applications, blogs, and various websites have played a significant and effective role in the rapid sharing, exchange, and dissemination of opinions. The use of social media as an effective tool for language teaching has always been the research field of most scholars and researchers from various fields, and it has seen an impact on practitioners and educators. Recent studies show that the initiation of social media in teaching language has shown highly satisfactory outcomes among learners in terms of motivation, learning, and engagement during language acquisition compared to the learners who have their face-to-face learning (Wamba & Carter, 2016).

Social Media

According to Masterman, one of the greatest challenges for teachers is to "build an adequate degree of self-confidence and analytical maturity for pupils to be able to apply critical decisions to the texts of the media that they will encounter in the future" (Watson, 2012). Social media are the technologies that provide a platform to create, share, and communicate information, data, ideas, or opinions through computer-based technical tools or networks (Kietzmann & Kristopher 2011). Social media is primarily used to communicate user-generated substance in the form of text, pictures, and videos through some online applications like Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, blogs, etc., operated on media tools such as Smartphones, tablets, laptops, and computers etc. These are the primary technical devices through which the users connect together and create an interactive platform online. Since the users are connected in groups on this platform, the individuals can freely communicate, share, discuss, alter, and organize the content posted or uploaded by the other users (Ober & Wildman 2015). Language educators in the 21st century face a number of challenges in the language teaching process, one of which is addressing the needs of digitally equipped students (Prensky, 2001) who have a few things in their minds apart from focusing on language learning.

Popular Social Networks

Social networks are effective and rapidly growing media tools not only for communication but also for marketing now. There are a large number of active users

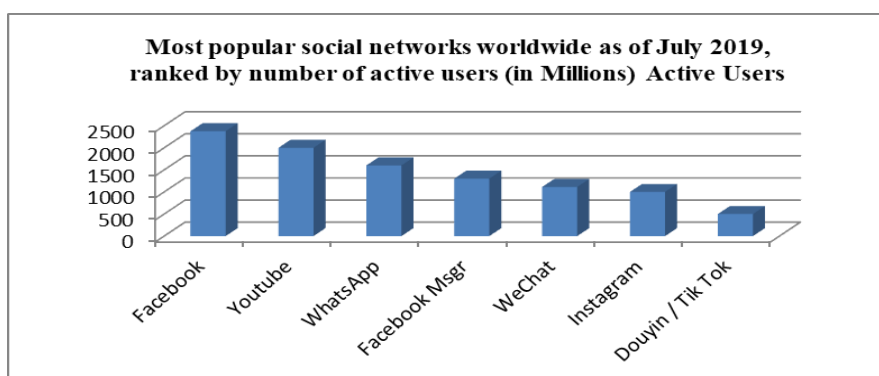
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readily available on this platform, and this paved the way for online business and online marketing to be a big push. The wide range of use of social networks brought a revolution in trade and commerce. Most popular social networks, especially Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, WeChat, and Instagram, have been ranked among the other social networks. Currently, Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, WeChat, Instagram, and Douyin / TikTok have 2375, 2000, 1600, 1300, 1112, 1000, and 500 million users, respectively (Most famous social networks... 2019). The statistics are clearly shown in Table 1 and Graph 1.

Popular Social Media Networks up to July 2019 (Pre- Covid 19)		By Oct 2021 (Post –Covid-19)
Social networks	Active Users in Millions	Active Users in Billions
face book	2375	2.74
YouTube	2000	2.291
WhatsApp	1600	2.0
Facebook Messenger	1300	1.3
WeChat	1112	1.123
Instagram	1000	1.221
Douyin / Tik Tok	500	689

Table 1. Active Users of popular social networks Worldwide



Graph 1. Active Users of popular Social networks Worldwide

SM Influence on Communication

English, being a lingua franca, has been taught in almost all sections of education from KG to PG across the world (Baird & Baird, 2018; Deniz et al., 2016; Nunan, 2003). Social media has a wide range of influence on youth today; it has unlocked the scope of intercultural communication at one's fingertips; it also made people nearer though very far; the mass cultural exchange among individuals has opened diverse ways of communication and initiated the individuals to be creative in the formation of vocabulary as well as usage of inventive language expressions. For instance, the commonly known social media expression "LOL" has received global recognition; this language expression is the abbreviation for "Laugh out Loud." Another creative trend that has a wide range of influence on youth is the use of hashtags. Using hashtags helps an individual reach and engage his audience or followers and boost his brand. It is an effective way to advocate a movement, influence people, and receive a wide range of acknowledgment from people worldwide (Saxton & Niyirira 2015).

These fascinating and communication-related facets of social media motivate and influence individuals to choose it as the right platform for sharing and organizing content through social media tools over the internet. Social media benefits the youth by increasing contacts and making friends from all corners of the world; on the other hand, it also provides a dynamic platform to participate in community activities and services and to expand ideas through countless interesting and attractive tasks (Keeffe & Clarke 2011).

Social Media Tools

Blogs, Facebook, WhatsApp, and YouTube are highly effective tools in a language-learning class. Blogs are created to present ideas; Facebook and WhatsApp are fine for sharing textual, audio, and visual information besides collaboration and discussion; YouTube is to generate interest and keep learners active. For instance, publishing a class blog.

The blog is considered an external web application that is helpful in designing, sharing, and inviting feedback from others on the experiences or the content created by the learners (George & Dellasega 2011). There are many online services that help create blogs in easy steps. For instance, Blogger.com, Tumblr.com, Wordpress.com, and Kidblog. orgis, etc. When a teacher decides to have an intellectual as well as informative platform for all his learners, he can create a class blog in which all the students are given access to post, comment, and share their views, opinions, and answers. The blog is used as a management tool to post any class circulars, notifications, information, homework or project work details, and feedback. The other social networking tools are also utilized in

a similar fashion to keep learners active and enthusiastic in sharing through projecting their language skills.

Social Media Use in The Classroom

Since social media is associated with connecting people for sharing their ideas opinions through a language, there is a wide scope to enhance one's communication skills, especially, written and spoken. Thus, the initiation of social media in academics can bring potential outcomes in the knowledge and communication skills of the learners.

The initiation of SM in classrooms had been a debatable topic in the early stage of the instigation and growth of social media among young learners (Kist 2012). But as per today's context, SM changed the perceptions and representations about the use of it in academics to a positive level. Researchers today are trying to come up with a variety of ways to incorporate social media into the academic environment in general and ELL classrooms in particular. The integration of SM applications in the classroom will have profitable effects. Applications such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, WhatsApp, etc., can open new gates to getting in touch with the world, which is advancing rapidly day by day. SM provides opportunities to collaborate with others, write up or author a blog, share, comment, and like the content through which learners can get motivation for English Language Learning. The learners represent language through books, watching movies, listening to music, and using applications on their Smartphones. The use of digital devices can help learners balance and enhance classroom instructions. It also facilitates the learners' access at any time and at any place in an easy and voluntary mode. If the SM is initiated in the right manner, it works well and produces expected outcomes (Vipin 2019). The learners may get a number of opportunities to use cyberspace to share their feelings and opinions on varied language topics through social media networks: Facebook, blogs, YouTube, WhatsApp, etc. This online initiation has already proven credible, especially for English Language Learning settings. Social media has the potential to improve grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and language awareness (Wu & Wu, 2011). The EL learners can be given the liberty to use social media applications in the classroom through which they can share their textual, pictorial, and audio-visual concepts or ideas for discussions and feedback. For instance, a learner creates a blog that is filled with essays, news, articles, and other experiences of the learner, and he shares the link or intimates about the blog to his associates or the other learners through Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Youtube, and or other social media applications, eventually, the other participants read the information on the blog and comment, like or give their feedback on the information that they read on the blog, sometimes they may have discussions on the

topic too; in another case, a learner creates a video on a particular topic and uploads it in his Youtube channel and shares the link for views, opinions, comments, and feedback. All the social media tools are loaded with features such as connect, collaborate, create, share, comment, like, discuss, and rate or review.

This kind of self-exposure of thoughts will not only drive the learners to explore language and augment skills but also encourage them to be creative; this eventually increases the confidence among the learners to stand alone and cope with the constantly changing technically smart environment.

Educational Benefits

The SM Platform has various advantages that perk up education and plan teaching materials, as well as involve students with a variety of multimedia magnetizers to engage them in the activities held in the classroom (Smith 2007). The initiation of social media in language learning classrooms will offer lucrative benefits to the learners in terms of fluency and expression of ideas. The students become authors, critics, and representatives of their presentations. The writing skills can be improved; it also allows the learners to show their creativity in a flow of ideas. The integration of perspectives and opinions individually and in collaboration leads to one's analytical and reflective observations. Collaboration benefits cultural transformation among learners, as well as group thinking and a variety of attitudes. Since there is an opportunity to have global exposure, SM creates a platform to know how and update or upgrade knowledge in language; SM stimulates the learners to be active and involved due to its audio-visual characteristics and graphical outlook. Thus, the learner connects to share ideas and information with ease. **Limitations**

Though the use of social media in ELL classroom has fine benefits, yet it has some limitations that are to be taken into consideration by the initiators for its complete and accurate effect. Since SM offers the learners to communicate with no any boundaries, it opens the gates to the people to offend or to be mistuous towards other learners. This will direct to dissolve the interest among some sensitive learners. Social networking lacks humanitarian facets due to boundless independence.

Conclusion

Since social media applications have been widely used among young learners, they have become unavoidable and have been effective in influencing the present technically advanced environment. If these SM applications are used in teaching learning language, they will give profitable outcomes. The characteristics such as collaboration, language exchange, audio-visual presentation of ideas, driving the learners to connect,

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flexibility in time and place, and independence are remarkable, and they suit the novel learners of the digital world. The initiation of SM should be subjected to collaboration to enhance communication skills and share and discuss ideas to develop vocabulary and fluency. The use of social media applications in language teaching learning can enrich dynamic dexterities and craft the learners' stay connected.

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