



The Impact of Social Networks on Undergraduate Students Learning Foreign Language

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to identify under which circumstances undergraduate students use social networking sites in order to learn foreign language. The study was conducted with students studying at the Near East University, Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Department of Computer Education and Educational Technology, Department of Teaching for the Mentally Retarded, Department of Music Education and Department of Mathematics teaching. In total 85 students agreed to take part in this study. Research was conducted during the fall semester 2013-2014. Students were asked to express the extent of their feeling while learning foreign language through social networking sites for each of the 16 positive items on a 5-point Likert scale. The reliability of the questionnaire was measured through Cronbach Alpha, yielding a score of 0.89. The findings of the study indicate that even though students learn foreign language through social networks, they are still apprehensive in communicating with one another.

Keywords: Foreign Language, Social Networking, Learning

1. Introduction

Nowadays, usage of information technology causes changes in a learning environment (Uzunboylu, Bicen & Cavus, 2011). With the increasing popularity of web 2.0 in our lives, the use of various educational tools and also widespread use of information technology provide students with extended opportunities and advantages. These advantages are spread over a wide range, so that e-learning has managed to become one of the hallmarks of our lives (Cavus, Uzunboylu, & Ibrahim, 2008).

The increase in popularity of social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter and increase in a number of social users allow the access to more resources in terms of learning and sharing.

Through social networking tools, individuals can establish their social networks, share latest news, videos, educational subjects, interesting stories as well as having the opportunity to be followed by other users (Maloney, 2007; Schaal, Grübmeier, & Matt, 2012). A number of studies indicate that through the use of social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter, individuals are able to follow pages according to their needs and interests. Also, they are able to develop and use effective communication tools which in result shows that social networking sites support education in a range of ways. Research studies show that social networks can be used for educational purposes and have a positive impact on students (Bicen & Uzunboylu, 2013; Kamenetz, 2011; Kabilan et. al., 2010; Locker & Patterson, 2008; McLoughlin & Lee, 2007). By taking into consideration the applications on social

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networks that are used via smart phones, the study was based to examine how today undergraduate students use social networks as a language tool.

2. The aim of the research

The aim of this study is to determine how much undergraduate students benefit from social networking sites while learning a foreign language. The population for the study consists of university students studying at the Near East University.

2.1. Participants

In total 85 undergraduate students agreed to take part in this study. Research was implemented during the fall semester 2013-2014 at Near East University. In this research students come from the Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Department of Computer Education and Instructional Technologies, Department of Gifted Education, Department of Music Education and Department of Mathematic Teaching.

2.1.1 Gender

Table 1. Gender distribution

Gender	f	%
Male	58	68.2
Female	27	31.8
Total	85	100

Table 1 indicates a graphical representation of students by gender. It is evident that the majority of the population consists of male students. The male students comprised 68.2% (n=58) of the population, while female students comprised 31.8% (n=27).

2.1.2 Age

Table 2. Age distribution

Age	f	%
18	6	7.1
19	12	14.1
20	23	27.1
21	44	51.8
Total	85	100

Table 2 indicates that most of the students were at the age of 18 (7.1%), 14.1% were at the age of 19. This is followed by the age of 20 (27.1%), whereas 51.87% were at the age of 21.

2.1.3 Department

Table 3. Department distribution

Department	f	%
Tourism and Hospitality Management	11	12.9
Computer Education and Instructional Technologies	29	34.1
Department of Gifted Education	10	11.8
Department of Music Education	25	29.4
Department of Mathematic Teaching	10	11.8
Total	85	100.0

Table 3 illustrates the departmental distribution of the students who agreed to take part in this study. According to this distribution, 12.9% (n=11) of the students were studying at the Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management, 34.1% (n=29) at the Computer Education and Instructional Technologies, 11.8% (n=10) at the

Department of Teaching for the Mentally Retarded, 29.4% (n=25) at the Department of Music Education where 11.8% (n=10) of the students were at the Department of Mathematics Teaching.

2.2. Instruments

In order to gather information a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire was used in this study. The reliability of the questionnaire was measured through Cronbach Alpha, yielding the score of 0.89.

2.3. Data Analysis

Data was collected through the questionnaire by using SPSS software. The findings from the study were presented by using percentage, frequency and descriptive statistics.

3. Results & Discussion

3.1 Using social networking sites for learning purposes.

Table 4. indicates that undergraduate students determine how much undergraduate students benefit from social networking sites while learning a foreign language.

Table 4. Using social networking sites for learning purposes.

Items	Std.	
	Mean	Deviation
Social networks play a useful impact in improving foreign language.	4.45	1.04
I follow foreign language teachers through social networks to improve the target language	4.41	1.10
I follow online pages on social networking sites to learn foreign language.	4.34	1.04
I try to enhance the language ability by communicating with foreign people via social networks.	4.17	1.20
I try to answer tests in foreign language to evaluate my level in the target language.	2.41	1.10
I force myself to learn language by writing sentences on social networking groups.	2.45	1.04
I use chat tools via social networking sites to improve foreign language.	4.27	1.22
Audiovisuals are used via social networks to practice foreign language.	2.10	0.93
I try to understand news in the foreign language while reading them on social networks.	4.22	1.15
I pay attention to the sentence patterns and accent while watching videos through social networking sites	3.89	1.49
I feel confident about making posts in foreign language on social networks.	2.15	1.35
I accept applications through social networks related to language learning.	4.21	1.40
I use translation features via social networks	4.38	1.02
I get help from translations tools before making any posts on social networks	4.31	1.13
Images posted on social networks related to language learning are very memorable.	3.80	1.66
Online pages related to language learning are very helpful for learning foreign language.	3.91	1.59

Table 4 presents the ways students use social networks for language learning. Out of 16 items for “Social networks play the useful impact in improving foreign language” (M= 4.45, SD=1.04), “I follow foreign language teachers on social networks to improve the target language” (M=4.41, SD=1.10), “I follow online pages on social networking sites to learn foreign language” (M=4.34, SD=1.04), “I use chat tools via social networking sites to improve foreign language” (M=4.27, SD=1.22) , “I accept applications through social networks related to language learning” (M=4.21, SD=1.40), “I use translation features via social networks” (M=4.38, SD=1.02) and “I get help

from translations tools before making any posts through social networks” (M= 4.31, SD=1.13) students stated that they were “strongly agree” with all these 7 items.

The items which were scored as “Agree” were “I try to enhance the language ability by communicating with foreign people via social networks” (M=4.17, SD=1.20), “I pay attention to the sentence patterns and accent while watching videos on social networking sites” (M=3.89, SD=1.49) and “Images posted on social networks related to language learning are very memorable” (M=3.80, SD=1.66) .

Finally, according to collected data, students chose “Disagree” with “I try to answer tests in the foreign language to evaluate my level in the target language” (M= 2.41, SD=1.10), “I force myself to learn the language by writing sentences on social networking groups” (M= 2.45, SD=1.04), “Audiovisuals are used via social networks to practice foreign language ” (M= 2.10, SD=0.93) and “I feel confident about making posts in foreign language on social networks.” (M= 2.15, SD=1.35).

4. Conclusion

Considering the findings of this study students have stated that there is a positive effect of social networking sites on learning foreign languages. Students mentioned that they follow professional foreign language teachers and various facilities used for speaking in order to improve their speaking skills. It was also stated that students prefer to use automatic translations in order to decrease the problem of understanding the news that they read on social networking sites. Videos and flash cards also play a great role on understanding and learning foreign language and as a result students are more likely to recollect the information easily. However, despite all these positive statements students feel anxious about communicating in the target language.

It is recommended for teachers to use various Web 2.00 tools on social networking sites in order to develop new teaching tools, which will help students to improve and practice their language skills.

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