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**SOCIAL NETWORKING. USING FACEBOOK
IN TEACHING ENGLISH IDIOMS
СОЦИАЛЬНЫЕ СЕТИ. ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЕ FACEBOOK
ПРИ ОБУЧЕНИИ АНГЛИЙСКИМ ИДИОМАМ**

Ключевые слова: технологии на основе сети, социальные сети, Facebook, идиомы, английский язык

Keywords: web-based technologies, social networking, Facebook, idioms, English

1. Introduction

Today, our life is really immersed in web-based technologies. The latest innovation in web-based technologies is web 2.0 technologies such as podcasts, wikis, blogs, social networks, etc. Teachers and educators use this kind of technology in their classrooms to enhance their teaching and students' learning. Language-related field of studies such as Teaching English as Foreign Language (TEFL), Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) and Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) are really connected to this technology-based platform. Although there are some empirical research on the value of Web 2.0 technologies have been done in education in all around the world, but the role of social networks in pedagogy is still need more investigation.

There are so many social networks around the world, but Facebook, MySpace, Friendster, Twitter, etc. are the most popular ones (Stelter, 2008). At first, in 2004, Facebook was just a social networking site for Harvard University, but until March 2011, more than 500 million users actively engaged in this social networking website (Facebook Press Room, 2011). Although there are some disagreement on the use of social networks by teenagers and young students – meeting strangers in a virtual environment (Boyd, Ellison, 2008), but this paper is aiming to defend social networks as a vehicle for better learning of English idioms.

To meet the end of this study, researcher is trying to find suitable answers for the following question: The question of this study is: *What is the effect of social networking on learning English idioms?*

The hypotheses of this study are:

- H0: Social networking has no effect on learning English idioms.
- H1: Social networking has positive effect on learning English idioms.
- H2: Social networking has negative effect on learning English idioms.

2. Review of Literature

In its history, from the middle of nineteen centuries to date, Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) is influenced by the most of the learning

theories, from the rise of Behaviorism, inspired by the ideas of Skinner (1957), to the post-method era (Tafazoli, 2012a).

The positive and negative applications of technology in education are under the investigations of so many scholars. On the positive side, Kargozari and Tafazoli (2011) found vodcast as a kind of useful web 2.0 technologies in writing. According to some psycholinguistics researches on the role of technology, Dwyer (1994) in his article mentioned that “the use of technology in the classroom improves students’ motivation and attitudes about themselves and about learning. Technology-rich schools report higher attendance and lower dropout rates than in the past.” In other words, students who use technology, they benefit more from pride, confidence and self-esteem in their works.

Integrating technology into classroom instruction had so many advantages for classrooms as well as students. Other papers show the positive applications of technology in education, language teaching and learning (Kulik, Kulic and Bangert-Downs, 1991; Kulik and Kulik, 1991; Baron and Goldman, 1994; Zorfass, Corley and Remz, 1994; Tafazoli, 2011; Tinzman, 1998; Tafazoli, 2012 b).

Bartlett-Bragg (2006) defined social networks as “range of applications that arguments group interactions and shared spaces for collaboration, social connections and aggregates”. According to the one of the latest studies at universities and colleges, 85% of college students have a college network within Facebook (Arrington, 2005). This study shows the vast popularity of this social network site among students. Based on another study, 2007 Pew Internet and American Life, “48% of teen visits social network websites daily or more often; 26% visits once a day and 22% visits several times a day” (Lenhart, Madden, 2007).

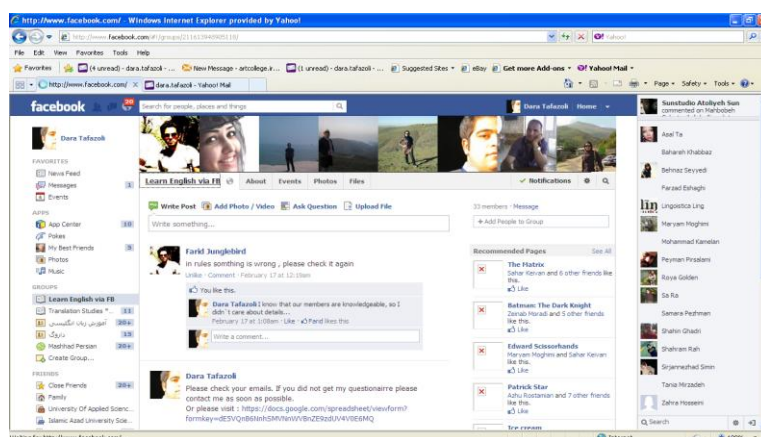


Fig. 1. “Learn English via FB” on Facebook

Some studies are dealing with the application and role of social networks in pedagogy (Charnigo, Barnett-Ellis, 2007; Hewitt, Forte, 2006; Mathews, 2006; Mazer, Murphy, Simonds, 2007; Selwyn, 2007; Towner, VanHorn, 2007; Munoz, Towner, 2009; Baker, 1999). Muñoz, Towner (2009) in their presentations at a conference in South Carolina provided some guidelines for “How to Use Facebook in Teacher Education”.

3. Methodology

The platform of this study was limited to the use of Facebook social networking website among other social networking websites. The phenomenon of using Facebook is widespread in Iran especially for university students. The researcher was decided to use this website, as it is assumed to be the most popular social networking website among students in Iran. To meet the purpose of this study, a group called “Learn English via FB” was made. Every Facebook users can use this feature of this website to create a group which allows for an unlimited number of members to communicate, participate and interact in a special space for specific purpose.

This study was carried out by announcing call for research at Islamic Azad University in Iran in autumn 2011, and on “the wall page” of the researcher on his Facebook account. A quantitative study exploring the effectiveness of social networking on learning English idioms. For this end, 12 students of IAU who are doing their Bachelor’s degree in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) and Facebook users were selected as the participants of this study. The participants were requested to be added in the created group named “Learn English via FB” which is designed for this study. The respondents were required to actively participate and do their assignments prepared by the researcher. For data gathering, at the first step, a pre-test emailed to all the participants by Google Spreadsheet. This pre-test contains 25 items (5 about their personal information and 20 idioms). At the next step, researcher posted five idioms every week on the mentioned Facebook group and asked participants to post synonyms, definitions and translations about the idioms on the group and discuss them. The whole process takes 10 weeks, and in the last week 50 idioms were presented to the participants. Finally, the same test, pre-test, was emailed as a post-test to all the participants.

Choosing the best suitable idioms for teaching and learning is a difficult task. This decision can be made in a random manner or even choosing the unreliable text on the Internet. For the purpose of this study, 50 idioms were chosen from the most frequent idioms in English in a collection of material that is called MIS-CASE corpus. The Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MISCASE) corpus is a collection of recorded speech from the University of Michigan in the United States. This corpora includes different materials form lectures, conversations, novels, news, reports or scientific papers. The MICASE corpus is easily available to anyone with Internet access and it is the corpus which was used to produce this list of the *100 Most Frequently Used English Idioms*. The idioms that occur in this list of frequently used idioms are the most frequent idioms that are found in an academic setting in the United States.

4. Data Analysis

The study investigates the effect of social networking on learning English idioms. The researcher hypothesizes that social networking has positive effect on learning English idioms. The data were collected through a pre-test and post-test design and analyzed via the statistical package SPSS. An independent t test was carried out to determine whether there is any statistically significance difference between the achievements of Facebook users.

The results of the pre-test and post-test, ($T=2.58$, $p<.01$), showed that:

| Group | N | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|----------|----|-------|--------------------|
| PRETEST | 12 | 69.47 | 12.71 |
| POSTTEST | 12 | 81.65 | 10.6 |

Table 1. Results of the pre-test and post-test

Table 1 shows that the difference between the pre-test and post-test is statistically significant. Thus, since there is statistically significant difference between the pre and post-test, we can conclude that social networking has a positive effect on learning English idioms. The mean score for the post-test was 81.65 while for the pre-test was 69.47. The researcher believes that the differences in the achievement of students were attributed to using social networks in English language teaching.

According to above data, the null hypothesis and the second hypothesis of this study were rejected. Moreover, the study confirmed that social networking has positive effect on learning English idioms (First hypothesis).

5. Conclusion

Using web 2.0 technologies such as social networks, wikis, podcast and vodcast has lots of benefits to students, classroom and teachers. The effect of social networks in compare with other web 2.0 technologies has some psychological benefits beside than educational ones to students. On social networks we can contact and interact with other people easier, talk and negotiate on the specific purpose, and comment on others' beliefs and ideas as easily as possible. Peripheral language learning is something usually happened especially for vocabulary.

On the implications of this study, the most obvious one is that social networks such as *Facebook* can be adapted for use in second / foreign language learning and teaching. Studies have shown that students increase their interactions when using social networks. The result of this study showed that, using social networks has positive effect on learning language components such as vocabulary and idioms, and thus we can generalize this finding to other language skills and components such as reading, writing, listening, speaking, pronunciation and grammar. *The researcher insists on integrating social networks in EFL/ESL classrooms, but he believes that* more research about the effect and the use of social networks in EFL/ ESL classrooms is needed. Scholars should continue their investigations into alternative teaching and learning tools.

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