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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Integrating Social Networking Sites into Foreign Language Teaching: Facebook and Telegram

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Abstract

The world in the twenty-first century has witnessed a scientific and intellectual revolution in the field of the educational process for foreign languages, characterized by electronic and technological development embodied in social media, which in turn contributed to enhancing educational institutions at all levels to improve the learner's productive efficiency, develop their skills, and achieve scientific objectives represented in speaking English, French, and even other world languages, as well as interacting in them inside and outside the institution. This is evident in their academic and social outcomes. The main objective of this study is to shed light on the importance of social networking sites such as Facebook and Telegram in learning foreign languages, and to discuss how to use them as an important resource for information and an effective communication technology, opening up to curricula and outputs of value that focus on the quality of teaching and achieving a level based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, enabling progression from simple communication to complete fluency and the ability to handle academically complex topics.

Introduction

Modern technological advancements, particularly those related to social networking sites, have given birth to innovative methods that have led to an increase in linguistic competence in learning foreign languages, the development of vocabulary, and the acquisition of linguistic and grammatical skills. Through these, learners have been able to improve their communicative competence, driven by their motivation for group communication with others. Platforms such as

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Facebook and Telegram have facilitated learning opportunities and integrated them into effective, lively, and interactive activities with others, enabling the provision of an educational environment through which learners can raise their linguistic, communicative, and cooperative levels. Therefore, it has become an urgent necessity to adopt social networking sites and employ them in the process of teaching foreign languages.

Through this discussion, the importance of social networking sites as a technology and electronic support becomes clear, through which anyone possessing smartphones can benefit, providing a wide space for communication with native speakers of foreign languages and those proficient in using them through text conversations in a correct and accurate manner via Messenger and Telegram. These help facilitate learning letters and pronouncing them from their original articulation points, as well as using linguistic vocabulary in its appropriate context.

Facebook and Telegram are considered among the most important social networking sites, as they are not merely tools for meeting friends and forming friendships, but rather educational means that enable the learner to raise their linguistic level in an innovative and simplified way to learn a foreign language in a short time.

In this context, this study seeks to investigate the issue of using social networking sites in teaching foreign languages, with Facebook and Telegram as examples in the educational process, by answering the core question: How have social networking sites (Facebook and Telegram) contributed to the success of the process of learning foreign languages?

To answer the problem question, it is necessary to break it down into a set of sub-questions to address the study's topic scientifically and appropriately, as follows:
- What is the concept of social communication?
- How did social networking sites originate?
- How have social networking sites contributed to learning foreign languages?
- What are the advantages of using social networking sites in mastering foreign languages?

The sources of knowledge and science available to learners these days are diverse and abundant, accessible in simple and attractive ways, far from the boredom caused by studying specialized educational books on language teaching. After our current era has become known as the era of the technological revolution, the last decade of the twentieth century and the beginnings of the twenty-first century witnessed tremendous progress in the field of information technology. However, the field that benefited greatly is education, particularly what has become known as e-learning, which provides educational content using the internet or modern communication mechanisms such as computers and networks. It is a modern technological technique that enables the management of the educational process with a new and simplified character, with the aim of meeting all needs, especially in the field of teaching foreign languages.

Technology has contributed to the spread of communication channels that were previously unknown, represented in social networks and sites.

1. Social Networking Sites

Social networking sites take several names, including social websites, social media networks, social communication platforms, social networking sites... which are classified within Web 2.0. They consist of websites or applications that begin with the user creating an account on one of the social networking sites: Facebook, Twitter... within the scope of the global Internet network (Web). This enables the user to build a personal database, a launching platform, an electronic presence, and a virtual personality.

Palas defines them as: "a program used to build communities on the Internet where individuals can connect with each other for many diverse reasons." (Mazid, 2012)

In another definition: they are a network that includes a group of individuals who share the same interests, inclinations, and desire to form friendships through the use of the World Wide Web.

Others have defined them as: a social café where some individuals gather to exchange information among themselves, with a difference between a real café and a technological one being that you can carry this technological café wherever you go. (Rahouma, 2007, p. 75)

Social networking sites have also been defined as social gatherings through the Internet in which participants can hold discussions over an open period of time, united by a kind human feeling, within a specific framework.

They are also defined as: social networks that allow users to create their personal profiles through the data they provide, display photos, connect with friends they have met on the Internet or in real life away from the Internet, view others' personal data, display lists of friends and connections, and exchange them with others in a general and public manner.

This forms the basic foundation for interaction on modern social media, and thus these sites support varied patterns of interaction even if the sites differ and vary. (El-Labban, 2011)

2. Main Characteristics of Social Networking Sites

Social networks are distinguished by a number of characteristics that set them apart from other applications and social sites on the Internet, which has contributed to raising the status of these sites among users. Despite the variation in these characteristics from one site to another, they share several common features, which we list as follows:

• **Self-presentation:** The first step to entering social networks is creating a personal information page, which the user creates and develops, and through which he introduces himself via text, photos, music, videos, and other functions. Social networking sites also allow individuals to fill in and organize their social relationships with people and their personal pages in the way their friends like to see them.

• **New ways to form communities:** Social networks allow individuals to create friendships with those who share the same interests and content, thus effectively contributing to embodying the concept of the virtual community that has existed since the beginning of Internet applications. However, social networks have supported new ways of communication among people. Users of these sites choose among various digital methods such as hashtags and integrated applications on network sites, and individuals can join reading groups for books they loved... and other services. (Nomar, 2012, pp. 52–53)

• **Ease of use:** One of the factors that greatly helped in the spread of social networks is their simplicity. Therefore, anyone with basic Internet skills can create and manage a social network site. Previously, people could obtain personal pages, but the problem was the difficulty of creating and developing these pages and hosting the site, which often incurred costs. In contrast, social networks are free and open to everyone; most of them allow people to register at any time, unlike other sites where registration often requires an invitation from existing members.

• **Interactivity:** Since their emergence, social networking sites have sought to embody interactivity among their members to ensure continuity and development.

3. The Importance of Social Media

They emerged thanks to information and communication technology on the Internet and spread remarkably during the first decade of the third millennium, attracting the attention of millions of users. Several elements provided by social networking sites and platforms helped in this, the most important of which are:

• The user can talk to people similar to him in terms of interests, affiliation, and demographic characteristics.

• The user can talk to many people at the same time.

• Social networking sites provide freedom of self-expression regarding interests and opinions. (Fendouchi, 2015, p. 115)

The reason that gave social networking sites their unique advantages is, above all, that they enable users to clarify and highlight their social networks, which can lead to connections between individuals that would not have been possible otherwise. Social media carries a "club-like or forum-like" character, helping participants to form solidarity groups, homogeneous or mixed communities, diverse friendships, and new language uses through them. This makes the user feel belonging to a group that has its own specific definitions of terms and concepts, and what is acceptable and unacceptable.

Peoples have also benefited from the services of social media, which witness dynamic development and spread, making them:

• Tools for unifying visions and orientations and mobilizing public opinion behind major political issues that have brought about radical change in their political landscape.

• They played an effective role in fueling protests of peoples demanding democracy and change, to the point that they became the Gutenberg printing presses of the new generation.

• They are considered a different media from traditional media in terms of presentation, interaction, speed of news transmission, and support with live and expressive images. They transmit the event first-hand and from the place of occurrence at tremendous speed, something traditional media cannot match.(Fendouchi, 2015, p. 116)

• Among their most prominent features is their high effectiveness in live transmission of events and facts, which media and communication analysts and experts could not have imagined, including images and video clips captured by participants from the new electronic generation in a media race with satellite channels.

4. Integration of Information and Communication Technology in Foreign Language Teaching

Learning languages has long been one of the most significant issues that have preoccupied researchers, both in ancient and modern times, as the need to learn them has never diminished. In our present era, language learning has become an essential requirement for accessing knowledge that ensures human development and excellence, and guarantees effective control over aspects that serve one's life—particularly amid the rapid technological advancement in communication tools. These tools, in turn, enrich the learning process in general and contribute specifically to teaching foreign languages. Learning foreign languages in the light of communication technology represents an important entry point to understanding the educational process and linking it to informational progress.

Among modern technologies, we find digital conferences and voice conferences—for example, digital and audio conferences. From this perspective, we point to the issue of integrating information and communication technology (ICT) into education through various methods and diverse ideas. This is why we encounter different terms such as e-learning, computer-assisted instruction, digital content, electronic content, digital curriculum, and electronic curriculum.

The term "integration of information and communication technology into education" is considered the most comprehensive among educators, because it encompasses both sides: information, computers, networks, digital content, the Internet and its sites, and multimedia, among others. The integration of information and communication technology into education has two important dimensions: the first at the school level, and the second at the classroom level.

At the school level, information technology helps improve the quality of educational services, enhance the performance of school administration, activate the role of parents in monitoring their children's academic achievement, and energize school management applications.(Qamqam & Kroum, 2020, p. 5)

As for the classroom level, information technology is invested to improve students' academic level, develop their skills, and enhance their linguistic abilities. Through its diverse inputs, information technology helps place the student at the center of the educational process.(Qamqam & Kroum, 2020, p. 6)

5. The Most Important Social Networking Sites in Learning Foreign Languages

5.1. Facebook
• **Definition:**
 It is a social network that has gained widespread acceptance and response from a large number of people, especially young people around the world. At its inception in 2004, it did not exceed the limits of a simple blog.(Khalifa, 2016, p. 114)

In another definition: It is one of the social networking sites that allows subscribers to communicate with each other using the site's tools and to form links and friendships through it. It also enables natural persons in their real capacity, or legal entities such as companies, bodies, and organizations, to pass through it and open new horizons to introduce society to their identity.

• **Origin of the Facebook Site:**
Facebook was created in February 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg at Harvard University. Initially, the site was available only to Harvard University students, then opened to students of other universities, later to high school students and a limited number of companies, and finally made available to anyone wishing to create an account.

The founder of the site views Facebook as a social movement rather than merely a tool or means of communication. The site is described as "the directory of the world's inhabitants," allowing ordinary individuals to create a public entity for themselves by sharing whatever information they wish about their interests, feelings, personal photos, and private video clips.

Zuckerberg resorted to hacking protected areas of Harvard University's computer network and copied photos of dormitory students to place them on the site, then directed the site to various campus service units. As a result of this breach, the university administration shut down the site a few days after its launch and accused Zuckerberg of violating protection laws, copyright infringement, and invasion of individuals' privacy. These charges were sufficient to expel him from the university, but all accusations were ultimately dropped.

On November 4, 2004, Zuckerberg established the site on the Harvard domain under the name thefacebook.com, with membership initially restricted to Harvard students. Within the first month of availability, more than half of the non-graduating students registered for the service. Shortly afterward, Edward Saverin (executive officer), Dustin Moskovitz (programmer), Andrew McCollum (graphic artist), and Chris Hughes joined Zuckerberg to assist in developing the site.

In March 2004, Facebook opened its doors to all colleges in the Boston area and Ivy League universities. Gradually, it became available to many universities in Canada and the United States. In June 2004, the company headquarters was moved to Palo Alto, California. After purchasing the domain facebook.com in 2005 for $200,000, the word "the" was dropped from the name. In September 2005, Facebook launched a version for high schools, then allowed subscriptions for employees of companies such as Apple and Microsoft.

On September 26, 2006, the site opened to all individuals aged 13 and older with a valid email address. This date later became one of the most important turning points in the development of social networking sites and the Internet. (Jarrar, 2012, pp. 52–53)

- **Advantages of Using Facebook in Learning Foreign Languages:**

With the emergence of modern technological techniques in the educational process, access to linguistic knowledge has become easier. Social media platforms, foremost among them Facebook, have emerged as a source and effective means of learning foreign languages. This is reflected in the following advantages:

➢ **Providing large communities and direct communication** with native speakers through chats to exchange information and authentic, diverse content (music, films, podcasts, educational applications such as Duolingo and Memrise), with a focus on daily conversations using learning cards and basic vocabulary with native speakers to acquire fluency and understand peoples' cultures.

➢ **Customized educational channels:** Facebook dedicates educational channels through which the learner studies the foreign language and helps improve correct pronunciation (of the language or dialect), such as the BBC Learning English page. These applications aim to make studying enjoyable and learning more pleasurable.

➢ **Technical and technological capabilities for the teacher:** The teacher relies on Facebook's capabilities in the educational process and should not neglect them, by publishing appropriate educational images and video clips for the target language, sharing them with students and interested parties for comments and discussion of content, providing electronic books for language learning, sharing other pages as models, and publishing useful links and media to enhance knowledge about the target language.

➢ **Offering free courses:** Facebook provides free language learning courses through platforms such as Coursera, which offer interactive lessons that help build vocabulary and present basic grammar for any language one wishes to learn.

➢ **Live streaming (Live):** Some teachers provide live broadcasts to explain the language, solve exercises, and present grammar rules with the aim of improving linguistic skills. A text can be posted for students to read in order to assess each learner's level. Through this initiative, students benefit from correcting linguistic errors in pronunciation, practicing listening, conversation, and writing skills in the target language.

➢ **Reducing fear and anxiety:** Facebook's environment is informal, which helps learners practice the language, speak, and write with greater confidence and reduces the anxiety associated with traditional classrooms.

➢ **The most important magazine and newspaper pages on Facebook:** Among the most prominent pages for language learning are, for example:
o ABC News
o CNN International
o The Guardian
o The Wall Street Journal

Constant browsing of these pages keeps the learner informed of the latest developments and helps them become familiar with the cultures of native speakers, thereby acquiring many daily vocabulary items and using them in their correct context. It is best to follow them regularly, as the ability to understand the content will gradually increase with improvement in the linguistic level of the target language.

- **Supporting Platforms and Applications via Facebook:**

− **iTalki platform:** It also contributes to training linguistic skills and practicing conversation in particular. Through this platform, one can find native teachers for English or more than 20 other languages.

− **Hallo application:** A free social application for language learning that gives the learner the opportunity to speak with native speakers, watch live streams, and interact with them to improve linguistic skills.

− **Language Lovers page:** General groups for multiple languages (English, French, German, Spanish, etc.) that allow interaction and exchange of experiences.

- **International House of Languages (Languages Home)**: Focuses on teaching various languages.

5.2.Telegram
• **Concept:**
Telegram is an instant messaging application created by the brothers Nikolai and Pavel Durov. Each has different responsibilities in managing Telegram. Pavel is responsible for Telegram's ideology as well as its operational continuity. It is known that Pavel invests his personal funds in managing Telegram. Meanwhile, his brother Nikolai was responsible for the technological aspect. To build Telegram, Nikolai developed a unique, open, secure, and optimized proprietary data protocol designed to work with multiple data centers.

Currently, Telegram developers are based in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. The application was first launched for iOS on August 14, 2013. Just two months later, the first version for Android was released, precisely on October 20, 2013.(Riyanto, 2021)

Telegram is a cross-platform application that provides messaging services usable across various operating systems such as Android, iOS, Windows Phone, Ubuntu (for mobile phones), and Windows/Mac/Linux (for desktop versions). Telegram can be used to share photos, video clips, audio, and various other types of files. Currently, Telegram is used almost worldwide. As reported by TechCrunch in 2016, Telegram had 100 million monthly active users and 350,000 new daily users.(Tompo, 2018, p. 1)

Telegram is a messaging application similar to WhatsApp, Line, and BBM. It uses the standard MTProto protocol, chosen for its high level of security due to end-to-end encryption. Like similar applications, Telegram allows users to share messages, photos, videos, and location tags among themselves. (Kurniawan, 2018, p. 4)

• **Features of the Telegram Program:**
The Telegram program is distinguished by several features and characteristics, including the following:
➢ It is a free and open-source program.
➢ It can be used on various operating systems (Android, Windows Phone, iOS).
➢ It can be accessed through mobile devices, desktop computers, or opened via different web browsers.
➢ It enables sending all types of media to various parts of the world.

• **Interactive Learning via Telegram:**
Interactive learning via Telegram involves using messaging channels and groups to exchange educational content, conduct discussions, quizzes, and activities. Teachers enable students to interact with content and digital resources, hold discussion sessions, and provide visual and audio explanations to personalize the learning experience and make it more vibrant and effective. This transforms Telegram from a mere messaging application into an educational platform.

• **Learning Foreign Languages through the Use of Telegram:**
Foreign languages can be learned via Telegram by joining specialized channels and groups that provide lessons and resources (such as the "Shaghaf Al-Lughat" channels) and participating in group conversations to improve skills. Users can utilize messaging features to exchange notes and benefit from YouTube channels or external resources sent via Telegram for pronunciation and vocabulary exercises.

• **Ways to Use Telegram for Learning Foreign Languages:**
➢ **Joining specialized channels:** Search for educational channels that offer daily lessons and teaching materials for the target language (texts, vocabulary, grammar). Some channels provide audio files or video clips for pronunciation and listening exercises.

➢ **Participating in groups (Groups):**
o Joining groups to exchange experiences with other learners.
o Participating in group discussions to improve writing and speaking skills in the target language.
o Interacting with teachers or native speakers (Native Speakers) to receive corrections.
➢ **Integrating external resources:** Channels and groups can send links to YouTube videos (such as English learning channels) or other applications (Duolingo) to support learning.

➢ **Book and novel channels:** There are many distinguished Telegram channels for books and novels, offering treasures of knowledge and culture in PDF and Pub formats. These include general channels such as maktabatbaghdad, bookjuice, and specialized libraries like romanticnovel for romantic novels, in addition to channels offering audiobooks such as GedLibrary, which includes a bot for searching books. Some provide group readings and challenges, making them an ideal destination for reading enthusiasts to download and share.

Examples of diverse channels:

o General channels: mybook, ktabrawaya, Readne, mashro3.

o Audiobooks: Channels that appear in searches such as "Iqra'li Sout" and the group "Isma'li," which offer thousands of audiobooks.

o Novels: such as novelsonly – exclusive books.

➢ **Using bots:** There are bots like TelereadsBot for searching "audiobooks" and finding new channels. Chatbots: Using programmed robots to provide automated quizzes, instant feedback, and personalized learning, especially for programming skills and other subjects.

➢ **Free courses:** Telegram contains channels that offer free courses for learning foreign languages through online study, providing lessons, grammar, and conversation aimed at improving learners' linguistic skills.

➢ **Flipped learning:** Sending educational content via Telegram for students to review at home, while using actual class sessions for practical and interactive activities.

Conclusion

In conclusion to this article, it is clear that social networking sites are no longer merely digital spaces for entertainment or news exchange; they have become effective educational tools with significant potential in the field of teaching foreign languages, especially when employed systematically and purposefully. Both Facebook and Telegram serve as prominent examples of this transformation, offering diverse interactive features that create a flexible educational environment transcending time and place boundaries, bringing the learner closer to the target language in its natural and communicative context.

These platforms have contributed to enhancing various language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—through multimedia content, group discussions, and direct communication between learners and teachers. They have also helped increase learners' motivation and engagement in the learning process, due to their ease of use, wide accessibility, and familiarity among a large segment of learners, particularly youth. Furthermore, these networks have provided opportunities for self-directed and collaborative learning, encouraging the exchange of linguistic and cultural experiences among learners from diverse backgrounds.

However, employing social networking sites in teaching foreign languages is not without challenges, the most prominent of which include occasional lack of educational control, learner distraction, and the potential for non-educational use of the platforms. This necessitates the establishment of clear regulatory frameworks, training teachers on how to effectively utilize these tools, and guiding learners toward conscious and purposeful use to achieve the desired educational objectives.

Accordingly, it can be stated that Facebook and Telegram represent supportive and complementary tools to traditional education, rather than replacements for it. They open new horizons for teaching foreign languages through modern methods aligned with the requirements of the digital era. From this perspective, the importance of integrating these networks into contemporary educational strategies emerges, along with the need for further studies and research to explore the best ways to employ them, thereby contributing to the development of foreign language teaching and elevating learners' linguistic and communicative levels in a world witnessing accelerating technological advancement.

Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted in accordance with generally accepted ethical standards for educational research. The research did not involve any medical procedures, experiments on humans or animals, or the collection of sensitive personal data. Participation, where applicable, was voluntary, and confidentiality and anonymity were respected. The study relied on publicly accessible digital platforms and educational practices, ensuring that no harm or ethical risk was posed to participants.

Author Contributions

• **Amira Ladjal:** Conceptualization of the study, literature review, data interpretation, and drafting of the manuscript.

• **Dr. Linda Zeghlache:** Methodological guidance, critical revision of the manuscript, and academic supervision.

• **Nora Bouzidi:** Data collection, analysis support, and contribution to the discussion section.

All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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