

Social media use for teaching English in Higher Educational Institutions

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Complete society informatization results in wide popularization of social media, which in turn makes the online communication of young people easier and more elaborated. All of this prompts the teacher to revise their own teaching methods. This research focuses on the possibility to use social media in teaching the English language to youth. Social media enables free, cheap, simplified and direct contact with the learning audience; promotes discussions, the studying of new topics, acquiring and strengthening of new knowledge and skills, the evaluation of own and colleagues' work, and critical thinking. This study aims to analyse identify the ways of using social media in education, and in teaching English in particular, revealing both the benefits and drawbacks. The study proves the importance of using social networks in general and Facebook in particular while working with students, since young people are the target audience of these websites.

Key words: *Facebook, students, media education, teaching English, e-learning, higher education.*

Introduction

Changes in various aspects of modern life are closely related to the development of information technologies. With the spread of the global Internet, there is a sharp increase in the role of knowledge, which in turn leads to the need for educated personnel and quality education.

Nowadays it is impossible to imagine a person who would not use the Internet at least once a day. Young people spend hours with computers, tablets, and phones in search of various

information: educational, scientific, entertaining and so forth. Students spend most of their time on social media. As stated in the work of Lahuerta-Otero and colleagues (2019), the new generation of students have modified the relationship they have with the world around them and with their learning. Authors noted that students now use information and communication technology in formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts, which requires teachers to change their strategies. For this reason, in order to stay up-to-date, the teacher of the new generation of students must implement modern and engaging sources of quality educational knowledge, by involving modern information and communication technologies in their teaching methods.

The use of Internet as learning tools as a whole, and the use of social networks in particular, to attract a larger audience for training makes it possible to create a wide illustrative and informative material presented in various forms: text, graphics, animation, video, etc. A variety of computer programs that students can find both on the Internet and on social media, can activate all types of human activity: mental, speech, and physical, which all improves and accelerates the process of the consolidation of new material.

This study aims to look at the analysis and identification of the ways of using social media in education as a whole, and in teaching English in particular, revealing the benefits and drawbacks, and prospects for the use of social media in educational processes in higher educational institutions.

The following objectives are set according to the study aim:

- To define the principle of the concepts of “media education,” “social media”;
- Having studied the best practices of leading Ukrainian and foreign researchers, to identify patterns and features of the use of social media in the educational process of higher educational institutions;
- To justify the urgency of social media use in teaching English.

Literature Review

Many modern foreign and Ukrainian researchers are focused on the use of the instruments of media education in the educational process. Thus, American researchers study the formation of social media to examine the basic aspects and principles of its use (Moroz, 2012). The emphasis on the use of social media in the educational process also attracts the attention of Ukrainian educators: social networks are considered as a means of organizing the educational process (Arkhipova, Osipova & Lvov, 2015), so the use of social services in the process of higher education was studied (Shcherbakov & Shcherbyna, 2012). Attention was also paid to both the psychological and pedagogical features of the use of social media in education,

media education and its relationship with the educational process was also studied (Bykov, 2008).

As was suggested by Carpenter and Krutka (2015), a social media platforms' collaborative nature can encourage the types of discussion, reflection, peer feedback, mentoring, and support that are often regarded as highly valuable in educational settings. Al-Rahmi and Othman (2013) noted that social networking activities have the possibility of enhancing student contact, and can be used to improve students participation in class, especially in the cases where introverted students are involved. Dron and Anderson (2014), highlighted that social networks can provide opportunities for mentoring, making recommendations, and posting queries about the learning material, so requests for help are heard beyond the protected environs of group-based learning.

Ukrainian researchers also place great emphasis on the study of the phenomenon of social media and its educational role. It is worthwhile to highlight the works aimed at determining the role of virtual networks in the formation of information and communication competence of students (Svietlorusova, 2011), a detailed study of the integration of network learning tools in the educational process (Ivashnova, 2012).

Modern education seeks to use modern information and communication technologies to achieve educational goals. Thus, there is an interpretation of the social media service as the virtual platform, connecting people in network communities through software and Internet-connected computers (Social Networks Services, n.d.). This raises the question of the best possible methods to adapt social media to be used in the educational process in higher educational institutions.

Another term that is used in relation to social media is Web 2.0., as it refers to websites and applications based on user interactivity and collaboration. Web 2.0 has potential advantages for higher education as follows: subsume the facilitation of collaboration, peer participation, promotion of an independent and autonomous manner of learning and teaching, and the internet serves as a connection between both formal and informal methods of education delivery (Ovelar, 2009; Miranda et al., 2013).

Laba in her work (2017), noted that social media promotes the development of e-learning and education, providing students and teachers with new technological and methodological instruments to be utilized in the education system. Students from all over the world are able to enroll in online classes for free and progress along the course at a pace they find more convenient for themselves.

Tabanova and Zbritska (2018), believe that the most advantageous educational model is that based on the integration of in-class activities (lectures, seminars, practical sessions, etc.), and



online interactive studies (webinars, video content, video conferencing, forums, discussions, etc.). It provides for the individualization and yet wide spread interactivity of learning, and is the most promising in the context of the modern educational process.

Prokopchuk devoted her study (2018) to the potential of using social media in the higher educational process and noted that, among the factors preventing teachers from using social media, the leading one is the cultural and social factors, such as: the transformation of teachers' traditional roles, teacher-student relationship management or a privacy threat that could all together restrict the use of social media for educational purposes, with the certain differences all depending on different academic disciplines.

Zachos and colleagues (2018) assessed the prospect of social media integration into educational processes from both a students' and teachers' perspective. The research also revealed that Facebook dominates in social networks, and showed some exploitation trends of social networking in educational events.

Manca and Ranieri (2015) believe that the attention that social network tools are progressively gaining in schools and higher education practices and pedagogies requires adjustments in learning and teaching that should be constantly considered by educators and policy makers.

In the study by Moran, Seaman and Tinti-Kane (2011), the authors aimed to discover how higher education faculties use social media sites, in the framework of this survey participants were asked to designate their usage as personal, in class, or professional (on the job but not while teaching). The survey included Facebook, Twitter, Myspace, LinkedIn, SlideShare, and Flickr, as well as wikis, video, and podcasts.

Rahman and colleagues (2016) investigated the use of social media, the results showed that the use of social media positively and significantly relates to active learning, which in turn affect teaching and learning practices.

The study by Aydin (2012) was aimed to present a review of Facebook as an educational environment. The study was categorized into six sections: Facebook users; reasons people use Facebook; harmful effects of Facebook; Facebook as an educational environment; Facebook's effects on culture, language, and education; and the relationship between Facebook and subject variables.

Anders' study (2018) reports on an intervention in which networked learning was used to promote student self-efficacy for social networking and professional development. The

author indicated a need for a study to examine the applications of networked learning that integrate professional contexts into academic learning experiences.

The study conducted by Manca and Ranieri (2016) examined the use of social networking sites in Italian learning practices. The results showed that social media use was still rather limited and restricted in learning, and that academics were not inclined to integrate social networks into their learning practices for several reasons, such as cultural resistance, pedagogical issues or institutional constraints.

The research by Cooke (2015), aimed to provide insight into students' perspectives on the inclusion of social media in higher education, whether they believe motivation and goals to have been affected by it, and the broader reaching consequences of its inclusions with regard to departmental interaction.

Karvounidis et al. (2014) evaluated the Web 2.0 tools as stand-alone entities, as well in terms of their cross-operability and integration (confluence) to synergistic contributions towards the enhancement of student learning.

The study by Shevchuk (2018) proved that the daily applying use of cell phones and other devices serves as a major incentive for the mass distribution of teaching foreign languages by the means of social networks worldwide. The study analyzed the specifics and opportunities of social networks in the process of foreign language learning as an effective technology.

Taking into account the literature review and the urgency of changing the educational methodology and means in higher education, the use of social media during the work with students in higher educational institutions should be further studied.

Improvement of teaching English language in higher educational institutions by means of media education

In order to clearly define the features of the use of social media in the educational process, it is necessary to refer to the concept of “media education”, where social media is an integral part.

Media education as a separate academic field has appeared relatively recently, being developed by UNESCO and leading scholars and publicists (Duschenko, 2015). In 1973, the first attempt was made to clarify the content, forms and methods of “teaching by means of mass communication” for the introduction of new methods in higher and secondary educational institutions, as proposed by the International Council for Film Television and

Audiovisual Communication. At the same time, the term “media education” was applied for the first time.

Many foreign and Ukrainian scholars have tried to clearly outline this concept. Here are some of the definitions:

- Media education is an “area in pedagogy, which representatives advocate for students to study the patterns of mass communication (press, television, radio, film, etc.)” (Goncharenko, 1997);
- Media education is “education aimed at preparing a person for the choice of media instruments and their use” (Clement, 2019);
- Media education is aimed at the formation of information culture in a person, which determines the level of personal development in terms of considering a person’s ability to understand, analyze and evaluate the media text, engage in media creation, learn new knowledge through the media, etc. (Moroz, 2012; Siemieniecki, 2007).

In this study, authors tend to define the concept of “media education” as a separate area of education that is aimed at the formation of a culture of communication and human behavior using the media, the development of creative skills, critical thinking, the ability to analyze and evaluate media texts, learn through the use of information, and communication technologies.

Social media is an integral, if not the key component of media education, in view of today’s tendencies of social media use by virtually everyone. As the use of social media started to emerge, it was used only for communication and entertainment, but now the situation is changing drastically. More and more often social media platforms become a full-fledged instrument of the intensification of various areas of human activity: business, education, development of personal qualities. The reason for this is the presence of a target audience who are interested in achieving a narrow specific goal (business, education, entertainment, etc.), and the ability to communicate directly with real people. This explains why the emergence, development and functioning of social media is becoming the modern avenue of research.

Taking into account the above-mentioned illustration of the need to use social services in everyday life and study, it is worth paying attention to the fact that with the help of Internet resources, network users not only exchange files and information on a global scale, but also become members of a new network society, as they are able to create social communities for various interests: educational, professional, etc. (Kravchenko, 2010).

Nowadays, social media is closely linked to mass communication media. The latter traditionally accumulate, then sort and distribute information. According to Aleksandr

Leshchenko (2011), social media contains a myriad of these centers of accumulation and distribution of various information that defines not only their global nature, but also uncontrollability. These characteristics are certainly the driving forces of a modern communicative society.

In this aspect, it is necessary to emphasize the ambiguity and breadth of the concept of a “social network”. The main broad interpretation is comprised in its definition as a holistic structure that consists of key elements (nodes) and connections between them, the social web. But with the advent of a wide network of social services, social networks gained a narrower explanation as “a web service that provides the possibility of communication of large groups of people and their uniting in virtual interest-oriented communities” (Lobovikova, 2011). In the same vein, it is necessary to designate their peculiarity, which is the ability to make the content by users themselves and conduct business, political or educational activities.

The existing variety of social media types – public (with open access) or closed (only for employees of a certain organization or students of a certain educational institution, faculty, group) – contributes to the improvement of educational functions. When using social media students are able not only exchange information with their peers, but perform the tasks assigned by a teacher on a specific subject, in particular, tasks regarding the English language.

Another feature of the use of social media in the educational process is sociability, a sense of ease during communication activities, which is based on a sense of trust, and the ability to ask questions anonymously. Now, the definition of this concept by leading scholars should be presented. Sociability is defined as, “the ability of a subject to maintain a certain number of contacts, where some total compatibility with those subjects with whom contacts are established shows the optimal use of these contacts, the exchange of information and resources, or confrontation” (Danko, 2012; Leshchenko, 2011).

Here authors should highlight that in times of global communication and computer technologies, higher educational institutions should harness their educational potential, not only for the students’ acquisition of a certain clear set of knowledge and practical skills, but also for the promotion of their comprehensive development, ensuring competitiveness in the labor market. All this is impossible without the introduction of the latest teaching techniques in the educational process, therefore, the use of technological means of studying on the Internet and social media is highly regarded now. This provides the student with the opportunity to receive primary information, and to have a constant consultation from various sources of information while performing independent tasks. The consultants, in this case, can be presented by teachers and advanced students, which increases the percentage of trust and ease of communication. Moreover, providing bonuses to students, experts will stimulate

them to a deeper study of the material, consolidation of knowledge and its dissemination among students (Chernenko & Romenets, 2011).

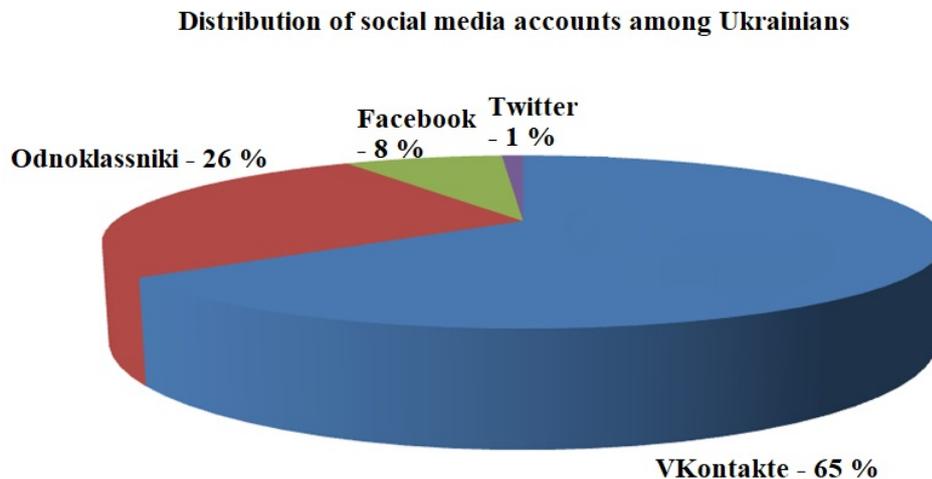
A number of foreign and Ukrainian scholars and statistical centers were engaged in statistical studies of the education quality with the help of social networks. It is meaningful to highlight a recent study conducted by American scholars from the University of Illinois, which found that social media plays a significant role in the adaptation of first-year students, as it helps these students to feel involved in university life (Duschenko, 2015). Another study by American statisticians proved that first-year extramural students who actively used information and communication technologies and social media are more successful in achieving their education goals in comparison with their intramural counterparts (Qualman, 2009).

Statistical research emphasizes that in 2019 the number of users of social media sites has grown to 2.77 billion people, compared with 2.46 billion in 2017. In 2017, 71 % of all global Internet users were registered on at least one social network. It was found that the United States is the leading country among users. Thus, according to statistics from the second half of 2016, every week on average, Americans spend 215 minutes on social networks via a smartphone, 61 minutes via a computer and 47 minutes via a tablet (Clement, 2019).

One of the most popular and most visited social networks in the world with 1.8 billion active users per month is Facebook, which is also considered the most popular tool for studying abroad. Today, a large number of accounts of not only European but also world universities are registered on Facebook, where teachers and students come together to create educational content for learning, independent work, training and creative activities, and entertainment. Ukrainian scholars also paid attention to Facebook. In particular, this website is considered as an auxiliary tool for strengthening the interests and learning activity of the academic community (Arkhipova, Osipova & Lvov, 2015).

In this vein, it is worth noting the fact that such a situation among Ukrainian Internet users has been radically different in past years. Thus, according to a study conducted by Yandex in 2012, the direct leader among the number of accounts in Ukraine was the website VKontakte (Fig. 1) (Social Networks Services, n.d.).

Fig. 1. Distribution of social media accounts among Ukrainians.



As Fig. 1 shows, Facebook ranks second to last among domestic users (8 % of Ukrainians). In recent years, the situation has improved significantly, which indicates an increase in the activity of users, the growth of their consciousness and orientation towards the Western labor market and education. Thus, according to the analytical Ukrainian website, in 2018, the number of Ukrainian Facebook users increased to 25.6 million, which indicates an accelerated growth rate of users in Ukraine, which in annual terms is now 35-40 %, compared with 30 % in 2015. For the period from April 2009 to 2016, the Facebook audience in Ukraine has grown by 85 times (from 63 thousand to 25.4 million), which is 12.8 % of the total number of users of social networks, which is 12 % more according to preliminary data (for 2012) (Minchenko, 2016; 2014).

In view of all the above facts, it is necessary to emphasize the importance of using social networks in general, and Facebook in particular, while working with students, since young people are the target audience of these websites. The use of the Internet helps teachers and students to carry out distance learning, create closed target groups to solve specific educational problems. There are groups of different pedagogical and academic areas: “Biology”, “Geology Rocks”, “Information technologies and learning tools”, “Teachers in social networks”, “Educational opportunities abroad”, “Postgraduate student UA”, “Everything for a teacher”, “Education and science”, etc. (Oleksiuk & Lebedenko, 2015).

It should be emphasized that different social medias can also act as a strong platform for students learning English, as it helps to improve the foreign language reading and writing skills of students, and contributes to the narrowing of socio-cultural gaps. It was revealed that students who used social media when learning English are able to analyze information faster and have better communication skills.

Results and Discussion

Media education, the introduction of information and communication technologies, the use of Internet resources and popular social media during the work with students is an integral part of the work of modern teachers of higher educational institutions, and has the following advantages:

- Personal communication between the teacher and student, interaction between the students of different groups and courses;
- Convenient and successful use of audio and video recordings;
- Possibility to promptly and timely receive the main news from the webpages, online communities;
- The ability to get acquainted with new material, consolidate existing knowledge through various applications and settings;
- Possibility of round-the-clock contact between the teacher and student, and between students, regardless of the availability of the subject in the schedule;
- Possibility to conduct surveys to improve the learning process;
- Long-term access to the database of audio and video files;
- Accessible and intuitive social network interface helps students to adapt to the subject faster;
- Possibility to combine individual and group forms of training;
- Collective assessment of learning results;
- Familiar environment and atmosphere for students;
- Cheap or even free material resources owing to the fact that young people use social media all the time;
- Implementation of information search analysis;
- Improvement of communicative relations between students, their cohesion (Kuchakovska, 2014);
- Acquisition of skills of an independent work organization.

In this context, an English teacher plays the role of organizer and mentor, consultant and researcher, which helps to implement an interactive approach to learning. The use of social media in teaching English in higher educational institutions aims to form a trusting and less formal relationship between the student and teacher.

It is also necessary to identify some of the problems that can be encountered by both teachers and students who are using social media for educational purposes. First of all, when using the Internet, young people are tempted to browse websites, applications, and information of an inappropriate nature. It is also necessary to pay attention to the possibility of running into new addictions: information addiction (dependence on the computer and the Internet), game



addition (dependence on computer games), as well as social pathologies on the Internet (cyberbullying), Internet pedophilia, suicide, etc. (Moroz, 2012).

The faculty staff of higher educational institutions may also face a number of problems:

- Their incompetence in using the latest technical means of training;
- Low level of motivation;
- A high degree of labor costs for the organization and support of the educational process for teachers;
- Frequent lack of open access to social media from classrooms;
- Lack of censorship in social media (Ivashnova, 2012).

Conclusion

Media education in the structure of educational sciences is becoming an area focused on the formation of a culture of person-media communication, the formation of creative, communicative abilities, and critical thinking. The concept of “social media” is widely-used and multifaceted, its key feature is users’ ability to join together into the communities and communicate with ease. The use of social media in educational activities and teaching the English language, by higher educational institutions in particular, is peculiar by the involvement of youth in their participation in various communities and groups. Such communities serve as an instrument for students-teachers-colleagues interaction, since they enable joining together to address a certain task, which can emerge during the learning process, enabling self-examination, and self-education through support of peers. This is the reason why it is important to use social media when teaching the English language.



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