

5 ICLEI 2016-77 Noraien Mansor

Exploring The Impact of Facebook Interaction on Language Learning

Noraien Mansor
Universiti Malaysia Terengganu
Terengganu, Malaysia
aien@umt.edu.my

ABSTRACT

Education is a vital catalyst in developing and generating skilful students who can confidently gain a competitive edge in the age of Information Communication Technology (ICT). The education system of a country plays a crucial role in shaping the future of the nation, specifically inculcating critical thinking skills, effective communication skills as well as competence in English language communication skills. The Malaysian government's aspiration is to increase the use of information communication and technology (ICT) in the educational system. Therefore, Malaysia focuses on this for the future with careful and strategic planning for the educational system in order to enable students to face global challenges. Apparently, the use of social media in the field of language teaching and learning is gaining tremendous favour with the government of Malaysia. Despite the benefits of implementing social media in ESL classroom, critics argue that "there are serious risks to using social media in the classroom" (Karen Lederer, 2012). In fact, there are critics which call for regulation and for removing social media from classrooms. Nevertheless, this study intends to explore the usage of facebook in ESL classroom and the impact in language learning, specifically in secondary schools. Further, it also attempts to elicit students' perceptions on the implementation of the social media in language learning. This study involved 13 secondary schools in Terengganu, in the East Coast of Peninsular Malaysia. This study features 260 participants from the ESL classroom. The data for this study consists of students' transcripts from the facebook interactions as well as interviews. The findings revealed that facebook is an effective tool for students' interactions especially in the discussion of their task-related activity as well as non-task-related activity. To conclude, this study is desired to provide valuable insights for the future research in computer-mediated communication, predominantly focusing on the use of new media which is crucial in the age of information and communication technology.

Keywords: facebook, interactions, social media, language learning.

Introduction

Education is always the main programme for economic growth, knowledge and harmonious society. The education system of a country plays a crucial role in shaping the future of the nation as education is a vital catalyst in developing and generating skilful students who can confidently gain a competitive edge in the age of Information Communication Technology. The main aim is to inculcate students' critical thinking skills, effective communication skills as well as competence in English language communication skills. The most challenging task for the Malaysian educational system in the 21st century is in producing a workforce that is educated and skilled in new technologies. The Malaysian government aims to increase the use of information communication and technology in the educational system. Thus they need to enhance the

infrastructure to ensure the integration of the facilities and methodologies of teaching, learning, research, management and administration of schools, colleges and higher education with an emphasis on the concept of e-learning, e-governance and e-community in all aspects of teaching and learning. Therefore, Malaysia plans strategically for the future of the educational system to enable students to face global challenges.

The swift growth in ICT provides various approaches of language teaching and learning. The use of social media as an educational tool in the field of language teaching and learning is gaining immense favour with the government of Malaysia. Social media enriches the learning experience by allowing students and teachers to connect and interact in new, exciting ways. For example, Facebook provides a platform where users can dialogue, exchange ideas, and find answers to questions, thus further are able to foster collaboration and discussion. This paper intends to reveal the impact of facebook interaction in ESL language learning classroom. Facebook which started out in early 2004 is currently the leading social networking site and is being recognized as a respectable e-learning platform (Bosch, 2009).

Literature Review

Multimedia technology, information technology (IT) and information communication technology (ICT) had encroached the Malaysian universities and enhanced the field of teaching and learning. The infusion of IT and ICT into teaching and learning has modified and enhanced the traditional teacher-centred method of teaching that has been used for decades in Malaysia. The incorporation of multimedia technology seems to boost students' motivation, which leads to increased usage and proficiency. This shift has provided Malaysian educators with severe challenges, as well as opportunities, in restructuring their curriculum to meet the rising demand of the knowledge-based society (Noraïen Mansor et al., 2014). This portrays the positive move and progress of ICT implementation among higher learning institution students in Malaysia. Malaysian students are familiar with e-learning materials such as email, chat groups, bulletin boards and facebook to discuss issues pertaining to their studies with friends in the cyber world.

To date the Facebook phenomenon is happening all over the world including Malaysia with the young generation including students at the university level, spending more and more time on Facebook. Madge (2009) who conducted a research at a British university generally saw that Facebook is a means for communication and is used for informal learning purposes, but it is not a tool for formal teaching. The respondents involved conceded that they used Facebook for discussing academic work on a daily as well as weekly basis. Selwyn (2007) reveals that while Facebook holds personal and social significance, it also plays a strong role in students language learning. Selwyn claims that Facebook reflects a good model of learning by its collaborative and active participatory roles of its users. Thus, Facebook can be seen as a platform in which students are able to appreciate and value the benefits of collaborative learning, which are not available to them if they are to work individually.

Kabilan et al. (2010) conducted a research investigating if Facebook can be a useful and meaningful learning environment that could support or enhance language learning in English. Their findings reveal that students' confidence, motivation and attitudes improved significantly. Students claim that using Facebook has boosted their confidence level as well as made them more brave to use the language especially in terms of writing. Furthermore, they agreed that Facebook motivated them to read and write in English, since everything is in English. They also stated that participation in Facebook has inculcated a more positive attitude towards learning English. Pempek (2009) reveals that Facebook enables teachers to provide constructive

educational outcomes in a variety of fields. Hew (2011) added that Facebook allows teachers to practice a differential pedagogy, in the best interests of the students.

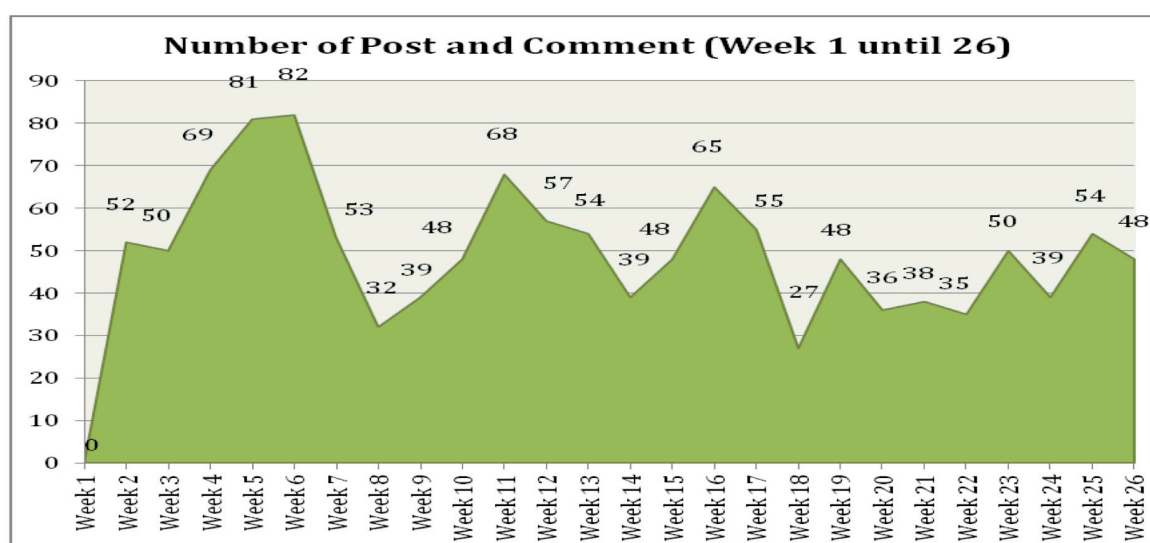
According to Roblyer (2010), Facebook enables the teachers to achieve a change in strategy, mentality, attitude and behaviors as well as analyse and compare ways of learning and the knowledge achieved by students. Selwyn (2007) stated that facebook has quickly become the social network site of choice by college students and an integral part of the “behind the scenes” college experience. Thompson (2007) added that the adoption rates of Facebook in universities and colleges are remarkable, that is 85% of college students that have a college network within Facebook have adopted it. Students spend more time online in an informal learning environment, interacting with peers and receiving feedback than they do with their teachers in the traditional classroom (Fogg Phillips et al., 2011).

Methodology

The study was conducted at Universiti Malaysia Terengganu involving 260 students from the secondary schools in Terengganu. Facebook Group was created to provide a platform for students to interact via post and chat style. The instructors involved merely act as observers for the group as well as facilitators. The students’ were given a time frame of six months to interact among themselves and they were encouraged to interact everyday focusing on the task-related activity as well as non-task related activity. This study attempts to provide a description and analysis, of the usage of social media focusing on Facebook in ESL language learning classroom. Further, it also attempts to elicit students’ perceptions on the implementation of facebook in language learning. The data for this study consists of students’ interactions transcripts, interviews as well as the observations made by the instructors.

Research Findings

The data gathered from the students’ interactions demonstrate a positive impact whereby students participated actively amongst themselves. 90% of the students involved in the study participated actively and the graph below shows the frequency of the posts and comments retrieved from the group facebook within the duration of six months. The most active interactions were during the fifth and the sixth week and in average the number of posts and comments in a week is 40 messages. 46% of the posts involved task-related activity and 54% on non-task related activity. The students were very active communicating with each other on the task given right after having classes with their teachers specifically focusing on their homework. This shows that the students are more prompt for staying involved to complete their task. As for non-task related activity, the students focused on sharing of information and social wishes among them with positive feedbacks.



Based on the questions asked during the interview sessions, the students admitted that they really love to interact with their friends and informed that facebook has motivated them to talk and participate actively. Furthermore, they communicate using English language as the task given is for their English language subject. Apparently, interaction through facebook had inspired their interest towards learning English language as during the interaction they read and write to give their posts and comments. They are able to improve their vocabulary and construct simple sentences. More importantly, they dare or brave enough to voice out their comments or responses based on the posts given by their friends. Thus, facebook is able to instill students braveness to communicate in English language.

Conclusion

Facebook is no doubt an effective tool for language learning and an effective tool for students' interactions especially in the discussion of their task-related activity as well as non-task-related activity. The students are able to enhance their reading and writing skills apart from communication skills. They would use the facebook as a medium for communication as well as for a wider engagement in the process of learning namely focusing on the reading and writing skills. To conclude, this study is desired to provide valuable insights for the future research in language learning as well as computer-mediated communication which are crucial in the age of information and communication technology.

References

- Bosch, T. W. (2009). Using Online Social Networking for Teaching and Learning: Facebook Use at the University of Cape Town. *Communication: South African Journal of Communication Theory and Research*, 35(2): 185-200. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0250016093250648>
- Fogg Philips, L., Baird, D., Fogg, M.A., & BJ. (2011). Facebook for Educators. Retrieved on October 10th, 2011, from <http://Facebookforeducators.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/Facebook-for-Educators.May-15.pdf>.
- Hew, K.F. (2011). Students' and teachers' use of Facebook. *Computers in Human Behaviour*. Article available at doi:10.1016/j.chb.2010.11.020.

- Kabilan M.K. *et al.*, Facebook: An Online Environment for Learning of English in Institutions of Higher Education? *Internet and Higher Education* 13: 179-187. 2010.
- Madge, C., Meek, J., Wellens, J., & Hooley, T. (2009). Facebook, Social Integration and Informal Learning at University: 'It is More For Socializing and Talking to Friends about Work Than Actually Doing Work'. *Learning, Media & Technology*, 34(2): 141-155.
- Noraïen, M. *et al.*, (2014). Social Media in ESL Classroom: Exploring the Impact on Language Learning. *Journal of Business and Social Development*, vol. 2 no. 1, pp.14-18 (ISSN: 2289-2915).
- Pempek, T.A. *et al.*, College Students' Social Networking Experiences on Facebook. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 30: 227-238. 2009.
- Roblyer, M.D., McDaniel, M. Webb, M., Herman, J. & Witty, J.V. (2010). Findings on Facebook in Higher Education: A Comparison of College Faculty and Student Uses and Perceptions of Social Networking Sites. *Internet and Higher Education*, 13: 134-140.
- Selwyn, N. (2007) Web 2.0 Applications as Alternative Environments for Informal Learning – A Critical Review. *OCEDEKERIS International Expert Meeting on ICT and Educational Performance*. Cheju Island, South Korea: Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development. 2007.
- Thompson, J. (2007). Is Education 1.0 Ready for Web 2.0 students? *Innovate* 3(4). <http://www.innovateonline.info/index.php?view=article&id=393&action=article>. Retrieved on January 30th, 2012 from <http://webcitation.org/5aG19ykVH>.