THE ROLE PLAYED BY FACEBOOK IN DEVELOPING STUDENTS' ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS

Imran Ullah
Research Scholar, Department of English, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University Sheringal Dir Upper, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan
Dr. Mian Shah Bacha
Assistent Professor, Department of English, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University, Sheringal Dir Upper, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

Abstract

This study investigates students' perception about the use of Facebook as a popular forum of social media in relation to learning English as a foreign language. Their approaches while using Facebook and the nature of Facebook have also been examined. Data were collected from sixty-five undergraduate students through the tool of questionnaire. Findings suggest that Facebook use is highly effective in developing students' different skills and areas of English language. Some of the possible threats to students' proficiency have also been pointed out. The study concludes that students on the whole are positive about the advantages in English language learning while using Facebook. Facebook is not only use for messages, and talking but get something new for learning.

Key words: Facebook, EFL learning and the role of Facebook

Introduction

The use of 'Social media' has become increasingly entrenched in everyday life. Among various social media, Facebook is a highly interactive virtual social communication tool and it has become increasingly popular in students' communities. This platform can equally be used for formal and informal learning. Though Facebook is frequently used by students and adults these days as a source of communication and entertainment, it can play a pivotal role in improving basic skills. Facebook is one of the social media sources through which people are connected with one another. People share their thoughts and emotions through Facebook all over the world. It is one of the online social networking websites. It provides a platform for building a social relationship among people. Through this way, it can act as a bridging source to socially link people with one another. Similarly, by linking them together, they get deep into the minds and hearts of one another and sort out the internal feelings and emotions of one another. Even illiterate people in modern society are using Facebook for different purposes like giving comments, sharing images, etc. Due to such use of Facebook them, they have started using English words in their daily conversation in their native language. Facebook is becoming increasingly popular among young people and especially in the students'

community. They use it for group chats where they make different academic discussions, along with many others, and share a variety of useful propositions and topics with one another. As this communication is carried out in the English language, so ultimately it is influencing the English language proficiency of the students. Many parents in our society are worried about their children about the frequent use of Facebook. They regard it as a futile activity and never think about its positive impacts upon their children. Therefore, the present research study ascertains the relationship between social media and students' study efficiency. Vocabulary, the core of any language, is probably the most challenging and time-consuming part of learning a foreign language, and such social media interaction can play a key role in it. It takes time and flows like a continuous process, once the fundamentals of a language get settled such as pronunciation, vocabulary, and basic grammar. Throughout this process, learners become familiarized with the words they come across, and such words can play a key role in their language learning. The use of social networking is very popular among English language learners. Social networking is a tool that can assist teachers and learners to access information and facilitate the learning of English (Scinivas, 2010). The main focus of this research work is to study the relationship between social media especially Facebook and the academic and English language growth of the students, particularly at the college (intermediate) level. This research will also try to highlight the impacts of Facebook on the growth and development of the English language of the students.

Methodology

A group of 65 Undergraduate students, who were studying at three intermediate colleges, were selected for this study. Their participation was voluntary. The group of students belonged to various disciplines and with varying proficiency levels in English.

Sample

For the present study, the researcher choose the stratified sampling technique. The number of 25 students from each of the first two colleges was chosen by selecting each of the twelfth students by marking them from their attendance list from intermediate classes. The same procedure was followed in the third colleges and fifteen students were selected. Thus sixty-five students selected from three different colleges comprised the population of the present research study.

Date Collection

Data were collected through the questionnaire. It consists of five questions; they were a combination of including dichotomous (yes/no) and rating scales of a three-point, five-points, and a seven-point. Questions were developed to investigate students' perception, approaches, and nature of Facebook use in connection to learning English as a foreign language.

Data Analysis

Data collected from the students through the tool of the questionnaire was in tabulated. Each response of the participants was presented with the number of participants. Findings were presented in percentages and ratios and results were interpreted and analyzed. Conclusions were drawn and recommendations were offered.

Data Presentation

The current chapter of the study consists of the major findings obtained from students' responses gathered through the tool of the questionnaire. The analyses of the results in this chapter are discussed in one smallest and two major sections. The first section briefly describes students' academic year and the number of students studying in the various academic years of their schooling. Section (2) contains an analysis of the various aspects of Facebook use by the students. The final (3rd) section discusses the use of Facebook in relation to students' English as foreign language learning. Before discussing students' responses regarding their perception and approach to the use of Facebook, classification of students based upon their academic year is presented. It is to highlight and emphasize the fact that the use of Facebook was equally popular among students from different academic disciplines and educational backgrounds.

#	Academic year	Number of Students	%
1	1st	06	09
2	2nd	28	43
3	3rd	02	03
4	4th	03	04
5	BS Honors	26	40

Table 1: Students' Classification on Academic Basis

Students' Academic Background
Section 1:

The academic classification of the students given in the above table shows that they were from three separate academic disciplines. It is vital to explain at this juncture to define each of the three academic levels and sub-levels of the students being the participants of this study. The first two categories, namely, first year and second year are the junior and senior classes of the intermediate level. It includes students who were having their eleventh and twelfth year of their schooling. Similarly, the next two categories of third and fourth year refer to students who were having their thirteen and fourteen year of their schooling respectively. These two classes come under the pre-graduation level. The last category contains students who were from the academic discipline of B.S honors. It includes students who were studying in four-year graduation programs that start after the intermediate level. The language of instruction for all the students

belonging to these three academic disciplines was English. Moreover, English was also included as a compulsory subject in their curriculums.

The majority of the students who were enquired in this study were the students studying at an intermediate level. They include six students having their first year and twenty-eight students who were having their second year of schooling. They make fifty-three % of all the students: 09% of students were from the first year and 43% of the second year. The next category consists of students who were studying at the bachelor level. In this category, two students were from 3rd year i.e. those who were having the thirteenth year of their schooling, and three students from 4th year i.e. a year senior to the previous group. The remaining twenty-six students were those students who were studying at B.S level. They were students from different semesters. Students from B.S make 40% of the total students who participated in the present study. The total number of students was sixty-five.

Section 2:

The Use of Facebook: Various Aspects Students' use of Facebook on a Daily Basis

All the students were regular users of Facebook. They were using Facebook on their smartphones, laptops/computers, and other devices. In order to ensure their usage of Facebook and determine the average time they spent on using it, they were given different options to mark according to their routine. Following is the summary of the number of students divided into groups on the basis of their average time they spent using Facebook on daily basis.

Table 2: Students' duration of Facebook use on Daily Basis

#	Duration Spent	Number of Students	%
1	Less than one hour	25	38.46
2	One and a half hours to two hours	20	30.76
3	Up to three hours	10	15.38
4	Up to four hours	07	10.76
5	More than five hours	05	7.69
6	None of these	00	00

Table 2: Students' duration of Facebook use on Daily Basis

The displayed table shows us the students' responses stating the average time they spent using Facebook on daily basis. It confirms the fact that all the students were using Facebook daily and there was no exception-though the duration of time spent by them using Facebook was different. Among them, there was no student who was not using Facebook on daily basis. They were instructed by the researchers to mention that time only they spent using Facebook exclusively and not to count that time they spent using other applications.

The majority of the students (25) were those who were using Facebook for less than one hour daily. They form 38% of the total participants. The next greater number of students comprised of that group who were using Facebook for one and a half hours to two hours daily. They were twenty-five in number and form 30.76% of the total number of students. Next, 15.38% of the students (10) were using Facebook for up to three hours daily. Seven of them (10/76%) were using Facebook for up to four hours. Lastly, the least number of students were using Facebook for the greatest time. They were seven number (1067%) and they used to spend more than four hours using Facebook on daily basis. As aforementioned, none of the students neglected the use of Facebook on daily basis.

The motive behind Using Facebook

One of the research objectives is to find out the motives that influence students to use the Facebook site. The researchers identified five major motives for Facebook use given as under:

1. Social Interaction;
2. Passing time;
3. Entertainment;
4. Companionship;
5. Communication;

All of the above five motives were stated in the questionnaire and students were asked to choose the one which they consider the most appropriate for their Facebook use. Their replies are presented below.

#	Motive	Number of Students	%
1	Social Interaction	32	49.23
2	Passing time	15	23.07
3	Entertainment	32	49.23
4	Companionship	10	15.38
5	Communication	36	55.38

Table 3: Students' Motives or Facebook Use

A finding of the study shows that out of 65 students, 32 numbers of them use Facebook to keep in touch with friends for social interaction. Next, 15 students primarily use Facebook to pass time when they feel bored, and this relates to the idea of being socialized with friends online. Talking about entertainment, the findings show that 32 numbers of students consider that Facebook is the source of entertainment. Facebook has also the function to facilitate companionship. Owing to this function, 10 respondents used Facebook to find long-lost friends. Moreover, Facebook operates primarily as a tool for communication among students. Therefore, 36 respondents use Facebook to send a message and share information with their friends. The use of 'message on Facebook can save time and money and it is one of the fastest way to share information with one another.

Nature of Usage of Apps in Facebook

The next finding is related to another aspect of Facebook use by the students. It was to examine the nature of the usage of application on Facebook. Students were presented with ten major applications that are used in Facebook. These apps include:

1. Update Videos;
2. Play Games;
3. Poke Friends for Fun;
4. Update Status;
5. Upload photos;
6. Take survey/Quiz on Friends;
7. To post an opinion/ a thought/ a statement;
8. Comments on Friend's Post;
9. Chatting with Friends;
10. Studying various materials in English.

Students were asked to select by marking any of the options given which they find appropriate to their Facebook use. Results related to these questions are presented in the following table followed by its analysis.

Table 4: Nature of the Usage of Different Apps

#	Usage of App	Number of Students	%
1	Update Videos	22	33.84
2	Play Games	10	15.38
3	Poke Friends for Fun	19	46.15
4	Upload Photos	38	58.46
5	Update Status	30	46.15
6	Take survey/Quiz on Friends	17	26.15
7	To post an opinion/ a thought/ a statement	21	32.30
8	Comments on Friend's Post	38	58.46
9	Chatting with Friends	37	56.92
10	Studying various materials in English	36	55.38

Results displayed in the above table show that out of sixty-five students, 33.84% of students like to update videos mostly along with using some of the other applications on Facebook. Next, 15.38% of students like to play games and they had this entertainment mostly on Facebook. Nineteen of the students (46.15%) use Facebook to poke friends for fun along with some other applications on Facebook. The majority of them (58.45%) students like to upload photos on

Facebook. The next 6.15% of students like to update their status and have friends' opinions on it. Besides them, the next 36.15% of students like to take the survey/ quiz of an informative kind on Facebook. Moreover, 32.30% of students like to post some opinion, thoughts, and statements. A considerable number of them, (58.46%) students like to comments on friends' posts. Apart from it, 56.92% of students like to chat with friends while using Facebook. Lastly, 5.38% of students responded that they like to study various materials in English that are shared on Facebook.

Section 3

Students' Opinions about Facebook Use with Regard to English Language Learning

Language Areas Focused on Using Facebook

The next finding presented here is directly related to Facebook use and students' English language proficiency. To find out how students benefit from the use of Facebook in terms of focusing, improving, and developing various language skills, they were given six statements; each statement explains an aspect of language proficiency. Following are the skills that were presented to the students in a questionnaire:

1. Reading habit;
2. Communication skill;
3. Enhancing vocabulary;
4. Developing Writing skill;
5. Correcting and improving spellings;
6. Focusing and enhancing grammar;

Students were asked to mark English language skills they mainly focus on while using Facebook. They had to select by marking any of the six options given to them. They were also given an option in case of no skill focused. Their responses are presented in the table given below, followed by its analysis.

Table 5: Language Area Mainly Focused on Students

#	Skill Focused	Number of Students	%
1	To develop my reading habit	24	36.92
2	To improve my communication skill	33	50.76
3	To enhance English vocabulary	30	46.15
4	To improve my writing skill	27	41.53
5	To correct and improve my spelling	25	38.46
6	To focus and enhance my knowledge of grammar	35	53.48
7	None of the above	05	7.69

Results of the above table show the purpose of developing the skilled mainly focused on the students during their Facebook use. The majority of the students (53.48%) replied that they mainly focus on the area of grammar. students who mainly focus on grammar while using

Facebook were thirty-five in number; it means that more than half of the students mainly focus on grammar in their Facebook use. The second-largest number (33) of the students mainly focuses on English vocabulary. They benefit from Facebook use to enrich their English vocabulary. They form 46.14 of the total participants. The third-largest number of the student's group consists of twenty-seven participants who replied that they focus their writing skills while using Facebook. They were of the view that Facebook helps them improve their written expression and their writing is polished and refined when they practice expressing their views, comments, and write status updates. They were 41.53% of the total students who participated in this study. The fourth group contains twenty-five students which is 38.46% of the total students. They replied that they focus their spellings while writing in performing different tasks on Facebook. The next category includes twenty-four students who use Facebook to develop their reading Facebook. In their view, their skill of reading is improved and developed when they read the status updates, articles, comments of other people, and other reading stuff written in English on Facebook. Lastly, five students (7.69%) denied all the options resented to them.

Approaches to Facebook Related to English Language Leering

The next set of questions further examines students' approaches and tendencies of various kinds regarding their English language proficiency while using Facebook. This list of questions contains nine questions that were designed to be answered in 'yes/no' by the students. The table given below presents the students' replies to these questions.

#	Question	Response in yes	Yes %	Response in no	No %
1	Do you become less careful of grammar and spelling when you chat or write on Facebook	38	58.46	27	41.53
2	Do you use abbreviated words phrases and sentences and other shortcuts?	50	76.92	15	23.07
3	Do your Facebook friends understand these abbreviated words, phrases and sentences, and other shortcuts?	54	83.07	12	18.46
4	Do you use abbreviated language because it's save time?	48	73.84	17	26.15
5	Do you sometime use shortcuts used in Facebook in your academic writing?	26	40.00	39	60.00
6	When you write on wall, send messages or chat with your friends, do you try to convey as much information	48	73.84	17	26.15

	as possible in each word or phrase?				
7	Are you always willing to learn new words, expressions or symbols used by other Facebook users?	44	67.69	21	32.30
8	Do you think that Facebook	48	73.84	17	26.15
9	Do you think that Facebook influences you to use words and expressions which are not grammatically correct?	35	53.84	30	46.155

Table 6: Students' Opinions about Facebook use and English Language

Results of the set of all nine questions are discussed below:

In answer to the first question in the table that was asked from the students examines whether they become less careful of grammar and spelling when they chat or write on Facebook, thirty-eight (58.46%) of the students asserted that they do become less careful—though not completely—while chatting or writing on Facebook. The remaining twenty-seven (42.53%) students replied that they don't become less careful of grammar and spellings while writing or chatting in English on Facebook.

The next question in the list is about the use of abbreviated words, phrases and sentences, and other shortcuts while using Facebook. In reply to this, the majority of the students (76.92%) admitted that they do use abbreviated words, phrases, and other shortcuts in their writing on Facebook. The smaller section of students who were fifteen in number (23.07%) denied the use of abbreviations and other shortcut forms in their writing.

The thirty questions is auxiliary to the previous question asked (2). It was asked to enquire whether the abbreviations and other shortcut forms in writing of the students are understood by the other Facebook users. The majority of the students, eighty-three in number (83.07%) replied that the abbreviations and other shortcut forms in their writing are understood by the other Facebook users i.e. their friends, relatives and other associated people. The remaining twelve (18.46%) replied that abbreviations and shortcuts are not easily understood by other Facebook users. They have to explain these shortcut forms.

The fourth question was also related to the previous two questions. It was asked to know the reason for using abbreviated language. Students were asked whether they use abbreviated language to save time. Majority of them (73.84%) assigned the use of abbreviated language to the reason of saving time. the seventeen students (36.15%) rejected this stance of using the abbreviated language for the sake of saving time. The next question raises the serious issue of the effects of Facebook to use upon the academic writing of students. They were asked whether they use the abbreviated language and other shortcut forms used in writing on Facebook in their academic writing also. Though the larger number of students (60%) denied the use of abbreviated language in their academic writing as the effect of Facebook use, twenty-six (40%) acknowledged the fact that their academic writing is affected by the use of Facebook and they do

make the use of abbreviated language in their academic writing. The sixth question refers to 'in formativeness' they conveyed in the wording during writing on the wall of a Facebook page, or during chat or giving comments on status updates. Most of the students (73.84%) stated that they try to communicate much information during their writing of Facebook. The rest of the students (26.15%) which were seventeen in number replied that they don't bother about in formativeness in their writing. The next question (No. 7) examines students' interest in learning new words, useful expressions and different types of symbols used in the writing of other Facebook users. Among the participants, forty-four (67.69%) showed their interest in learning new words, expressions, and understanding the meaning an significance of symbols and emotions used by other Facebook users in their writing on Facebook. The rest of twenty-one (32.30%) students were found not to be interested in learning new words, expressions and symbols used by other Facebook users.

Questions No. 8 is concerned with students' general perception of Facebook. They were asked whether they find Facebook helpful in learning the English language being EFL learners. The majority of the students were of the view that Facebook influences them in learning English less a foreign language. Results show that (73.84%) of the students considered Facebook helpful in this regard. While seventeen of them (26.15%) believed that Facebook does not influence them in any respect in learning English as a foreign language.

The last question (9) is about the possible disadvantage of Facebook in learning the English language as a foreign language. Students were asked whether Facebook causes the use of grammatically incorrect words and expressions and spellings. Results in the table show that the majority of the students (53.84%) of the students were of the opinion that Facebook influences them to use grammatically incorrect words and expressions and spellings. The remaining thirty students (46.15%) denied the fact that Facebook causes them to make the use of ungrammatical expressions, incorrect words, and spellings.

CONCLUSION

All the participants of this study were found to be Facebook users; the tendency of using Facebook was recorded that confirms the use of Facebook as a part of their daily routine. Though not recommended, some of them were using Facebook for the duration equal to their school hours. In that case, the over-use of Facebook may overshadow the focus given to other subjects and activities. The main motive behind students' use of Facebook in this study was 'communication'. It can be assigned to the fact that text messaging, sending photos, audio, and files, and making calls on Facebook are cheaper as compared to other network services. Yet the nature and purposes of communication require further research to ensure the fact whether it contributes to students' expressiveness and proficiency or it damages it. The other major two motives identified behind their use of Facebook were 'social interaction' and 'entertainment'. Some students, however, marked the motives of 'passing time and 'companionship'. Measuring the relative effects of each motive of Facebook use by students is a broad area subject to further

research. Probing further into the nature of apps used by students on Facebook, it was found that the majority of the students were using the apps of uploading photos and commenting upon the status updated of other Facebook users, from this study perspective the latter is significant in learning English as a foreign language. The third most used app for chatting with friends is also directly concerned tot his field. Similarly, a sizable portion of students asserted that they access and read different sorts of materials written in English. It directly contributes to to the development of their habit. The trend of posting opinions and updating status is beneficial in enhancing their creative use of the English language and writing skills. Talking particularly about the area/skills that were focused on by students while using Facebook, developing communication skills, and improving grammar were given more emphases by them. Enriching English vocabulary, enhancing writing skills and improving spellings, and developing reading habits were given priority likewise. Neglecting all the six areas of English language by fewer students however questions the utility of Facebook use with regard to English language learning. Carelessness about grammar and spellings and using shortcuts and abbreviations were the major concerns identified in this study. These practices lead directly to destroying their English language skills and proficiency. On the other hand, a greater section of students substantiated the assumption that they focus upon new vocabulary items, emoticon, and symbols they come across using Facebook. On the whole, the majority of the students believed that Facebook facilitates them in learning English as a foreign language.

Recommendations

The researcher offers a number of recommendations for facilitating learning English as a foreign language via Facebook use in light of the present study. They are as under:

> ➢ Measures should be adopted by students' guardians and other custodians to prevent students from excessive Facebook use so it may not harm the overall academic performance of students.
> ➢ An awareness campaign should be launched to highlight the effectiveness of Facebook to students in learning the English language by policy-making and teachers.
> ➢ Students should be encouraged to like and follow Facebook pages created to improve the English language.
> ➢ Holding discussions and language learning tasks and activities on Facebook should be made part of the co-curricular activities by teachers to enhance the communication skills of the students.
> ➢ The practice of selecting different sorts of assignments and giving proper feedback on those assignments should be adopted to encourage Facebook to use for educational purposes and English language learning.
> ➢ Students' writing should be thoroughly checked for using shortcuts as caused by Facebook and this practice should be strictly discouraged by teachers.

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