PROSPECTS OF SOCIAL NETWORKS IN ONLINE TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE AT A HIGHER EDUCATION ESTABLISHMENT

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Abstract

Today it is easy to have the Internet connection everywhere: in different educational and social settings, coffee shops, public transport, shops, classrooms etc. This article attempts to investigate the usage of the Internet and computer technologies, especially social networks which are applied in students' everyday lives, in the process of teaching English as a foreign language, as at present to go with the times it is impossible for a teacher to neglect the interests and requirements of the students. It shows new opportunities for a teacher at English classes: modern platforms and web sites, social networks, blogs help not only share the information, make a lesson mobile-friendly, but motivate students in studying a foreign language. The article also shows the problem of the obsessive use of computer technologies which does not provide human-to-human contact, which may limit teacher's opportunities for communicative activities which are extremely necessary while studying a foreign language. The combination of IT and traditional modes are the elements of blended learning which is underlined to be the most effective method in teaching English as a foreign language. The information helps us to determine several characteristics for a successful foreign language teacher which among others (communicative, sociolinguistic, sociocultural and pragmatic) include methodical competence. That prove the urge necessity if using IT in general and blended and online learning in particular in the work of English as a foreign language teacher.

Keywords: Internet resources, online learning, online teaching, social networks, Facebook, higher education establishment, English as a foreign language teaching (EFL teaching), communication, competences.

Today a social network is an interactive multi-component and multi-user website that works as an automated community-based hub to allow stay in touch with other participants. The latter may have similar interests, enrich the space with diverse content independently and to check thee material of other users [4].

It is obvious that in the second part of the 21st century they are the social networks which have rooted in our everyday lives. There have appeared new opportunities to apply them not only for entertaining purposes but for education, work or business as well. In addition to implementing a specific chance of getting the information directly from the mass media source, social networks help practise one's communicative skills while conversing with the speakers of other culture. It improves both the language to study and its linguistic aspects, and deepen the knowledge of the traditions, customs and history – the culture that is extremely significant while forming a foreign communicative competence.

With the time of developing social networks, there have appeared their subgroups as educational social networks. Thus, it is Facebook which is certainly considered to be one of the most popular tools for learning and self-development. As of May 1st, 2023, it comprised 2.98 billion active users every month [2] that is equal to 37.2% of all the people on Earth today. In Ukraine the total number of Facebook users was 13.7 million (the beginning of 2023) to compare with Instagram users of 11.6 million. Since, the figures are lower by 2 and 4 million correspondingly to collect with the same period of 2022 [5]. It is reasoned in the opportunity for teachers of both secondary schools and higher education establishments to organize the educational courses for students, as well as providing a private corporate network for co-workers and students on the Facebook platform.

It is outlined that those who study English are especially interested in using the tools of the Internet to study by reason of saving time and financial expenses on travelling to a language school or a tutor, providing the learning process be adopted in a comfortable atmosphere and an appropriate time.

We state, the formation of socially active position of a higher education applicant is realized while both participating in a social life of a community and in every moment of his personal life and studying. It is also explained by the principals of the applied relationships and the communication character.

During the English lesson an applicant forms and provides his active thinking process, focus on solving speech and thought-provoking tasks, desire for logical organization and systematization, for searching general principals. Understanding the essence of the student's performed actions is more important than the specific details acquisition. Thus, the forms of work in class which reflect the trend, may appear the most attractive and productive for a student [1].

Proceeding from the above facts, at present it is the Internet in general and social network specifically, which have become an important part of students every day lives, a natural communicative environment. Thus, it is important to learn a didactic and methodological potential of social networks for its perfect implementation in an English lesson.

Today the Internet applies several specific linguistic social networks, e. g., Italiki, GoSpeaky, Mylanguageexchange, etc. To register on the site, one indicates the language / languages he wishes to learn, the

language / languages one speaks and the language / languages he may help the participant to study. So, the user masters a foreign language while cooperating with the other user-native-speaker of this definite language.

As Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, My Space, Italiki, a participant may find an interlocutor according to the definite criteria. The disclosure may be prolonged within online video chats. This live communication promotes student to see a rapid clear result that accordingly motivates him studying.

Here we determine a list of linguistic and didactic benefits when use social networks during an English lesson at a higher education establishment:

- the opportunity to be in touch with many people including a native speaker;
- a multimedia tool – implementation of audio, video and text material in English in the same environment (the same resource) [3].
- a ready communicative program including a ready thoroughly designed interface;
- the opportunity for an immediate exchange of urgent information and a moment feedback with a student;
- a high level of cooperation which help interfere in an educational process at minimum going beyond the lesson time limit;
- the development of self-wok skills;
- the opportunity to be an active participant of an educational process;
- the sense of freedom and comfort, a space for studying English, ready for a mistake; these facts provide the communication conditions to be maximum close to a real life, promoting the formation of the skills and abilities to implement the English language as a basic communicative tool in a poly cultural online community.

Though the use of the Internet in general and social networks specifically brings more benefits for educating students, simultaneously, it comes with a number of disadvantages.

A user is obvious to post the material personally in social networks. Today, when within the development of the Internet search services including Google, Yahoo, a practically any piece of information is free available; since, it makes difficult and sometimes impossible to determine the author and the origin of the data. Unfortunately, there are no guarantees of reliability and relevance of the information posted in social networks. This fact proves the necessity to organize the list of recommendations for the materials selection and application to be applied on social networks.

Another aspect for a teacher to take into account while using social network for online English as a foreign language teaching, is a quality of the material adopted. It is impossible to neglect a careful information selection owing to avoid fake data, news and facts described on a lesson. To perform a thorough material, a teacher is to work on as many Internet sources as possible. It will definitely help him feel confident and easy to respond any students' questions and remarks.

To conclude, we focus on a didactical purpose of a teacher's activity on an English as a foreign language lesson which lies in organizing the atmosphere of less formal and natural communication and the forms of work which certainly may provide more activity and independence; out of class – in continuity of an educating process and an immediate feedback between a teacher and students while learning the language. Since, the modern ICT and Internet resources, including social networks firstly, are of a high didactic value and prospects. Their implementation on a lesson at a higher education establishment provides all the opportunities of modern tools, methodologies, applications and devices which may easily capture students' attention, bring diversity on a lesson and thus, motivate them to learn English.

The social networks may become a significant instrument for the students to be involved in foreign language communities and online groups which unite them while solving an educational task, provide a self-analysis and self-study being supported by the peers.

We consider it is impossible to rely only on computer assisted language learning technologies only while teaching English as a foreign language. Educating has to supplement it with in-person classroom-style training on as-needed basis that proves of the emerge use of blended and online learning in EFL teaching. Thus, the study proves more research needs to be conducted, examining different modern modes, methods and forms in teaching English, including fully online and blended learning environments.

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