

ISSN: 0976-3031

***International Journal of Recent Scientific
Research***

Impact factor: 5.114

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Volume: 6

Issue: 9

**THE PUBLICATION OF
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RECENT SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH
(IJRSR)**

<http://www.recentscientific.com>

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ISSN: 0976-3031

Available Online at <http://www.recentscientific.com>

International Journal of Recent Scientific Research
Vol. 6, Issue, 9, pp.6016-6021, September, 2015

**International Journal
of Recent Scientific
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RESEARCH ARTICLE

USING FACEBOOK AS A WEB-BASED TEACHING TOOL IN COLLEGES

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 06th June, 2015

Received in revised form 14th
July, 2015

Accepted 23rd August, 2015

Published online 21st
September, 2015

ABSTRACT

This paper aims at investigating the potential of using Facebook as a web-based teaching tool at University level. The researcher has adopted the experimental, the descriptive and the analytical method via the questionnaire and the pre and posttest as tools for gathering the data concerning this study. The sample of this study composed of (24) students studied English in the second year at University of Kassala who they have Facebook accounts whereby were taught online inside Facebook group; and (50) teachers who responded to the questionnaire selected purposively from different Sudanese universities and colleges due to their experience and use of technology in teaching. The data obtained from the test and the questionnaire have been processed computationally with SPSS program to examine the correctness of the hypothesis of this study. The results from both tools have shown that there are salient potentials for using Facebook as a web-based teaching.

Key words:

Facebook, teaching, tool,
Web-based, colleges

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INTRODUCTION

People nowadays more than ever before commence a new system of pedagogy with the emergence of electronic and online teaching, whereby methods of teaching have shifted away from traditional classes that have long been in use into more sophisticated approaches to maintaining the efficiency of teaching English and foreign languages.

Teachers and students of English experience various hindrances in learning English and teaching in particular as teaching and learning English is one the most important and challenging area since it requires soaking up the skills of the target and culture, method and techniques of teaching mastery and so on. Hence, the experience of teaching and learning within online context is of importance in communicating views, ideas and facilitating language mastery as to both teachers and students. If students took part in what they thoroughly experienced online, they would develop confidence and sense of power over the language that none of the other skills is likely to achieve.

Aims and Scope of the Study

This study aims to investigate the potential of using Facebook as a web-based teaching tool. The scope of the study is limited to students of the second year in University of Kassala at

Kassala state, Sudan-2014-2015 whose number is composed of (24) students. This paper will examine the use of Facebook, as an educational instrument in the context of being used as web-based teaching tool.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Development of facebook

Moon (2011) shows that Mark Zuckerberg created Facebook from his Harvard University dorm in February 2004. At that point in time, Facebook was called *the facebook.com* and only connected college students. In 2005, Facebook expanded to include high schools and schools outside the U.S.

In 2006, Facebook found its way into the workplace and allowed anyone over 13 to join. Facebook recorded 12 million users in December 2006. Now, at the end of the 2010 year, Facebook has recorded its 550 millionth member (1 out of 12 people on the planet now have a Facebook account). Facebook's membership rate is now growing at a rate of 700,000 members per day.

Couillard (2012) as cited by Moon (2011) remarked that when a user first registers with Facebook, they need to set up and create a profile page. The page is based on a basic template where users fill in various personal identifiers. The users can

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include as much or as little information as they want. After they set up their profile they can begin adding friends, join groups and become fans of pages. Facebook offers a search tool that allows users to search for specific information like people and groups. Users can join networks (based on city, workplace, school and region) and allow others in that network to view their profile. Facebook security settings allow users to make their page as accessible or inaccessible as they desire.

Fletcher (2010) stated that today, Facebook is comprised of all types of people, but college students still make up the largest percentage of active Facebook users, which is approximately 30% of all users (insidefacebook.com, 2009). Until now, Facebook serves nearly 500 million people enabling them to share extremely large number of information and connect with others. More than 1 in 4 people who browse the Internet not only have a Facebook account but also returned to the site within the past 30 days.

Faculty Presence on Facebook

Aleman, M & Wartman (2009) stated that now users over the age of 25 are accepted on Facebook, more and more professors and other higher education staff are finding a place on the site. However, students and faculty are finding some inconveniences with each other's presence on Facebook. Higher education faculty and staff are being asked by students to be friends on the site and vice versa. Some faculties do not want the controversy and hassle of friendships with their students and some students are irritated that university staffs are asking them to be friends. Yet, some faculty and students have found Facebook friendships to be a tool for classroom activities.

Scholars Perceptions Of Facebook On Colleges

Hewitt & Forte, (2006) stressed that researchers and scholars have indicated students' feelings about faculty presence on Facebook. Some students prefer access to faculty via Facebook while others feel anxious about it. In fact, some students are unconcerned about this. Some students in Martinez Aleman and Wartman's (2009) study explain, "Professors should not be on Facebook as they are not part of campus social life", demanding that Facebook should exclusively be for college students.

Heiberger and Harper (2008) showed that on the positive side, Facebook and other online social networks may foster learning, enhance classroom communication, and build a sense of community. Some faculty are even using Facebook to design course material and expanding the learning in the classroom.

Martinez Aleman & Wartman (2009) remarked that nevertheless, faculty and student friendships on Facebook might also exceed the context of education. Since university faculty are appearing on Facebook, the concerns about student-teacher relationships and professional ethics has risen. Consequently, faculty must be careful to not cross any ethical or professional lines when using Facebook and other online social network mediums.

The Value Of Online Social Networking For Academic Purpose

Dalsgaard (2008) confirmed that online social networking, especially Facebook, has numerous pedagogical advantages for both lecturers and students. "Social networking can support students' indirect sharing of resources, thoughts, ideas, productions, writings, notes, etc. This kind of sharing can provide students with insights into the workings of other students".

Minocha (2007) stated that it is extremely important for students to establish a social foundation between them and their peers before they engage in online group work. Facebook clearly provides a social utility that has been identified as having academic potential in the form of internal networks and groups.

Dede (1996) remarked that it is important that the time students spend between and after classes, be utilized for academic purposes via technology. For example, if students are encouraged to take part in group work or online discussions on Facebook, the chances are there that they might utilize Facebook for academic purposes and not only for social purposes. This can benefit their learning and motivate them to engage in academic work before and after classes. The availability of Facebook via mobile phones also means increased interaction and support for students outside of the classroom.

Facebook In The College Classroom

Hurt *et al* (2012) state that online teaching and learning has been the topic of much pedagogical discussions. Majority of studies focus on the successes, paradoxes, and challenges of teaching exclusively online courses in which instructors rarely, if ever, have face-to-face contact with their students interestingly, of all the social networking sites, Facebook is by far the most popular and most frequently used among college students.

The popularity and availability of Facebook has therefore inspired numerous academic studies focused on its role in higher education and its potential effects on classroom climate. These researches suggested that there are benefits associated with the use of Facebook for educational purposes as Facebook's emphasis on peer-to-peer interactions can enhance informal learning experiences (Goodwin, Kennedy, & Vetere, 2010; Madge *et al.*, 2009; Selwyn, 2009).

Other researchers have also demonstrated that students have used Facebook effectively for academic purposes and activism (Bosch, 2009; Grosseck *et al.*, 2011). Facebook's greatest value might be its capacity to enhance student satisfaction and engagement, but limited researches investigating these topics have been inconclusive.

De Villiers (2010) used Facebook groups to initiate optional discussions in a post-graduate distance-learning class. She found that voluntary study group members benefited by extending required material and making personal contributions

on Facebook. These studies paint a vivid picture of Facebook's potential to serve as a teaching and learning tool.

Visagie S. & de Villiers C. (2012) state that students are using Facebook as an academic tool and that they are involved in a classroom network with the social network as the foundation. Also lecturers will have to learn how to use the interface of the network. Thus, students and lecturers can be more closely connected, which in return can benefit the lecturer-student relationship. Facebook is a unique social networking site as it creates connections between students and faculty within an online academic community. Facebook increases contact between peers and thus their interactions online are also increased.

Finally, joining Groups is another feature that is extremely popular on this Social Network Community. Any user can create a group which can be open to any users or restricted to the targeted, pre-selected participants. The *Group* application can be utilized in language classes in a variety of useful and helpful manners.

To sum up the sense of community is necessary to sustain a dynamic and meaningful educational experience and is a valuable asset to promote higher level thinking and the construction of knowledge. This makes Facebook and its *Group* application deserves to be a learning tool suitable for introduction into the L2 and FL classroom.

Using Facebook In Education

Mazman & Usluel, (2010) remarked that the rapid development of information and communication technologies has brought changes in various pedagogical and technological applications and processes.

Lenhart & Madden, (2007) and Selwyn, (2007), stated that currently, social networks are being adopted rapidly by millions of users most of whom are students with a great number of purposes in mind.

Ajjan & Hartshorne, (2008) and Mason, (2006) claimed that studies showed that social network tools support educational activities by making interaction, collaboration, active participation, information and resource sharing, and critical thinking possible. McLoughlin & Lee, (2007) showed that students today demand more autonomy, connectivity, interaction and socio-experiential learning opportunities in their learning contexts.

Bartlett-Bragg, (2006) stated that because students complain about lacking opportunities for authentic communication due to non-personalized course content even when alternative delivery methods are employed, providing informal learning contexts by integrating emerging social networks into existing learning practices becomes significantly important to attain more robust learning and teaching opportunities.

Selwyn, (2009) stressed 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. The

proliferation of social technologies has created a culture in which youth participate more in creating and sharing content, profoundly changing the way students communicate, interact, and learn.

Arrington, (2005) and Thompson, (2007) in previous papers indicated that the adoption rates of Facebook in universities and colleges are remarkable - 85% of college students that have a college network within Facebook have adopted it.

Also Fogg Phillips *et al.*, (2011) remarked that in many cases students spend as much or more time online in an informal learning environment - interacting with peers and receiving feedback - than they do with their teachers in the traditional classroom. Furthermore Lipsman, (2007) Lenhart & Madden, (2007) stressed that Facebook also has a growing audience in perspective high school and middle school students.

West *et al.*, (2009) pointed out that characteristics noted in the literature which recommends Facebook as a tool that can contribute significantly to the quality of education are: fostering positive relationships among students and encompassing students' motivation and engagement. Involving students in achieving the learning tasks and successful transfer of knowledge develop a positive attitude towards learning and improving the quality of learning.

Selwyn, (2009) showed that some sort of interpersonal intelligence, as well as critical thought are developed inside the class; communications and interactions on the relationship between students and teacher outside the classes are developed too.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was conducted at the University of Kassala with students in the second year from Faculty of Education in the Department of English Linguistics. A purposive sample used for this study includes (24) students who have Facebook account whereby they have been taught online through Facebook for a semester from 14/3/2015 until 15/6/2015, as well as (50) university teachers selected purposively from different Sudanese Universities as their experience and knowledge about using technology and multimedia in teaching English.

Tools Of The Study

The researcher used test and questionnaire as tools to gather the data of this study. The test was administered to twenty four (24) students as a purposive sample, who were tested in the elements of fiction. As for the questionnaire, it was delivered to (50) teachers in different Sudanese Universities. The researcher used the descriptive, the analytical and the experimental methods as well in carrying out this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher used the test and the questionnaire as tools for collecting the data related to this study. The researcher has designed test to measure the impact that Facebook can make in

the students' performance when they are taught online. As to the questionnaire, it was designed to obtain teachers' views and attitudes towards the use of Facebook in online teaching and its influence in the students' performance and its potentials of being used as web-based teaching tool.

The tables and percentages below illustrate what has been stated above.

The Analysis of the Test in Relation to the Hypothesis

*The hypothesis of this study are being tested at significance level 0.05

H₁: Using Facebook in teaching novels encourages Facebook application as a web-based teaching tool at the academic institutes.

Table 1 One sample T-test for the Hypothesis

Expected Mean	Observed Mean	St.d	t-value	d.f	p-value
12	15.90	3.26	8.45	49	0.00

Table (4) reveals that, p-value is less than significance level and observed mean is greater than expected mean; this leads to the acceptance of this hypothesis. This actually verified and confirmed the hypothesis of the study which is, **“Using Facebook in teaching novels encourages Facebook application as a web-based teaching tool at the academic institutes”**.

Table 2 paired Sample T-test for the Hypothesis.

Sample	Mean	St.d	t-value	d.f	p-value
Treated Sample					
Pre	18.25	8.05	-4.95	19	0.00
Post	59.4	6.65			

The above table indicates that, the p-value for each sample is 0.00 and this means that the performance of the group was different, where a prominent improvement in the treated group between pretest and posttest. Accordingly, this supports the potential of using Facebook as web-based teaching tool.

Table 3 Independent Sample T-test for the Hypothesis

Sample	mean	St.d	t-value	d.f	p-value
Pre test					
Treated sample	18.25	8.05			0.73
Post test					
Treated sample	59.4	6.65			0.00

From the above table, it is noticed that the p-value for the pretest is bigger than 0.05 and this signifies that there is no significant difference in the performance of the treated groups in the pretest. In the posttest, the p-value is 0.00 which denotes that there is a significant difference in the performance of the treated group in the test. In conclusion, this proves the hypothesis which hypothesizes that: **“Using Facebook in teaching novels encourages Facebook application as a web-based teaching tool at the academic institutes”**. Accordingly, these results are in line with the possibility of using Facebook as a web-based teaching tool.

The Analysis of the Questionnaire in relation to the hypothesis

The first part of the questionnaire is an introductory section seeking information about the teachers. In fact, the items in this

division elicit information about the targeted teachers in terms of their gender, qualifications, and years of teaching experience through technology and multimedia. The teachers were requested to indicate their answers by ticking () one of the five options: “Strongly agree”, “Agree”, “Neutral”, “Disagree”, “Strongly disagree”.

Table 4 Gender This table classifies the teachers questioned in terms of gender.

Gender	Frequency	Percent (%)
Male	33	66.0
Female	17	34.0
Total	50	100.0

Table (5) Qualifications: The table below classifies the targeted teachers in terms of qualifications.

Qualification	Frequency	Percent (%)
BA	10	20.0
MA	30	60.0
PhD	10	20.0
Total	50	100.0

Table 6 This table illustrates the targeted teachers according to their years of experience of using technology in teaching.

Experience (years)	Frequency	Percent (%)
1-5	26	52.0
6-10	12	24.0
More than 10	12	24.0
Total	50	100.0

Statement (1): Using Facebook in teaching novels encourages Facebook application as a web-based teaching tool at the academic institutes.

Table 15

Options	Frequency	Percent (%)
Strongly agree	20	40.0
Agree	18	36.0
Neutral	8	16.0
Disagree	4	8.0
Strongly disagree	0	0.0
Total	50	100.0

The teachers' attitudes are tabulated in table (15) above. The table shows that 40% of the teachers strongly agree with the statement, 36% agree, 16% of the teachers are neutral, 4% disagree. Thus, most of the teachers, 76% (40% strongly agree, 36% agree) are in favor of the above mentioned statement which confirms the fourth hypothesis that reads: **“Using Facebook in teaching novels encourages Facebook application as a web-based teaching tool at the academic institutes”**.

Statement (2): Facebook could promote teachers' teaching performance of tackling topics in pedagogical contexts.

Table 16

Options	Frequency	Percent (%)
Strongly agree	13	26.0
Agree	23	46.0
Neutral	9	18.0
Disagree	5	10.0
Strongly disagree	0	0.0
Total	50	100.0

The teachers' replies are displayed in table (18) above. The table shows that 26% of the teachers strongly agree with the statement, 46% agree, 18% of the teachers are neutral and 10% disagree with the above statement. These results are in line with the hypothesis of the research which is: *“Using Facebook in teaching novels encourages Facebook application as a web-based teaching tool at the academic institutes”*. Accordingly, these views support the potential of using Facebook as web-based teaching tool.

Statement (3): Facebook can be a helpful tool in teaching different subjects other than literature.

Table 17

Options	Frequency	Percent (%)
Strongly agree	22	44.0
Agree	15	30.0
Neutral	6	12.0
Disagree	6	12.0
Strongly disagree	1	2.0
Total	50	100.0

The teachers' replies are shown in table (19) above. The table shows that 44% of the teachers strongly agree with the statement, 30% agree, 12% are neutral, 12% disagree, and 2% strongly disagree. The results reveal that 74% (44% strongly agree, 30% agree) are in favor of the idea conveyed by the statement. In fact, these results are in line with the hypothesis of the study which reads: *“Using Facebook in teaching novels encourages Facebook application as a web-based teaching tool at the academic institutes”*. Thus, these responses enforce the potential of using Facebook as web-based teaching tool.

Statement (4): Facebook provides excess of website teaching materials for academic use.

Table 18

Options	Frequency	Percent (%)
Strongly agree	13	26.0
Agree	24	48.0
Neutral	9	18.0
Disagree	4	8.0
Strongly disagree	0	0.0
Total	50	100.0

The teachers' replies are tabulated in table (20) above. The table shows that 26% strongly agree with the statement, 48% agree, 18% are neutral, and 8% disagree. Thus, a great number of teachers 74% (26% strongly agree, 48% agree) are in support of the statement that proves the hypothesis: *“Using Facebook in teaching novels encourages Facebook application as a web-based teaching tool at the academic institutes”*. Consequently, these views support the use of Facebook as web-based teaching tool.

REPORT DISCUSSION

The data collected was analyzed in relation to the hypothesis study. The data was collected by virtue of test which had been administered to students of English in second year at University of Kassala, and questionnaire that had been administered to different teachers of English in different Sudanese Universities.

Having analyzed and compared and the results with the main hypothesis; the results have shown that there are salient potentials and possibilities of using Facebook as web-based teaching tool.

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How to cite this article:

Amir Mohammed Albloly *et al.* 2015, Using Facebook As A Web-Based Teaching Tool In Colleges. *International Journal of Recent Scientific Research*,6,(9) pp.6016-6021.

*International Journal of Recent Scientific
Research*

ISSN 0976-3031



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