

**Exploring Students' Perceptions towards Integrating
Facebook in EFL Literature Classroom: the Case of the
Second Year LMD at Dr Tahar Mouley Saida University**
استكشاف تصورات الطلاب تجاه استخدام فيسبوك لتدريس الأدب لطلبة اللغة

الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية بجامعة الدكتور الطاهر مولاي سعيدة بالجزائر

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Rec. Day : 20/04/2020

Acc. day: 22/10/2020

Pub. day: 25/12/2020

Abstract:

The importance of teaching literature in the department of English has always been a challenge for teachers. Hence, they are seeking innovative strategies to use the new technologies in the classroom settings to obtain better learning outcomes. Therefore, the present study offers concrete insights about the usage of Facebook in teaching literature. It attempts to explore the use of Facebook as an accompanying resource for Second year licence students to learn English Literature at the Department of Literature and English, Dr Tahar Mouley University, Saida. Two research tools were used: classroom observation and questionnaire in order to examine students' perceptions towards the use of Facebook in learning literature. The results showed that via Facebook students can widen their knowledge about the target language as it can increase their interest in literature class.

Keywords: Facebook , Innovation, Approach , Literature, Teaching, Algeria.

ملخص البحث

نصدا ذات اهمية تدريس الأدب في أقسام اللغة الإنجليزية تحدياً للأساتذة، وبالتالي فإنهم يبحثون عن استراتيجيات حديثة في إعداد وتقديم الدروس للحصول على نتائج تعليمية أفضل. لذلك، يهدف هذا المقال إلى تسليط الضوء على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي من خلال تأثير استخدام

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فيسبوك كمورد مرافق في تدريس الأدب الإنجليزي لطلاب السنة الثانية في قسم الأدب واللغة الإنجليزية، بجامعة الدكتور طاهر مولاي- سعيدة . تم قياس وجهات نظر وتصورات الطلاب تجاه استخدام فيسبوك من خلال استبيان يضم 20 سؤالاً، أظهرت النتائج أنه عبر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، وبخاصة فيسبوك يمكن للطلاب توسيع معرفتهم باللغة الهدف إلى جانب زيادة اهتمامهم بفصول الأدب.

الكلمات المفتاحية: فيسبوك، الابتكار، المنهج، الأدب، التدريس، الجزائر



1. Introduction

In a rapidly changing world and with the hasty advance of information and communication, fundamental changes to the traditional education paradigm are required. Technology continues to offer possibilities that most teachers can only barely grasp that is why a need for new and/or improved methods/approaches/techniques compels teachers to 'think outside the box'. Nevertheless, since education is a 'future-oriented' enterprise; contemporary teachers should avoid 'past-ucating' in their teaching practices to meet the challenges of the future. (M. Prinsky, 2013. P2)

In view of that, the idea of constructive change is a useful way to uphold the different facets of teaching and learning where innovation is a key factor of the educational change's process. According to Rogers (2003) , innovation is ' an idea, practice, or object perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption' (K. Hyland and L. Wong. 2013, p2). For others like Kennedy (1996) perceives innovation, as a process which 'implies some deliberation and consciousness' (K. Hyland and L. Wong. 2013, p2). Hence, adopting and adapting innovation to local educational contexts takes time and effort, particularly where inherent cultural differences and uncertainty may lead to resistance to, if not rejection of change. Ergo, raising awareness of both learner and teacher beliefs can be essential for challenging taken-for-granted assumptions. Along the same line, Rogers talks of 'diffusion of innovation' to denote the process through which is communicated and made real. According to him, the four key components of innovations'

diffusion (innovation, communication channels, time, and social system) are necessary elements to reap the fruits of novelty which can be seen just where innovation becomes change. (Ismail SAHIN, 2006).

Amid this array of multiple voices of perspectives, teachers and researchers in the twenty-first century are witnessing many changes and challenges especially about social media influence on students' engagement and attainment. Thus, a new look at integrating technologies with EFL learners is needed more than ever just to reach John Dewey's view of educational system as summarized by Scheffler (1974), who writes that:

[the school's] task is not to indoctrinate a particular point of view, but rather to help generate those powers of assessment and criticism by which diverse points of view may themselves be responsibly judged...Conceive [of] the school's task as enabling society to cope with its problems more intelligently, more effectively, more imaginatively, and more responsibly than it has so far done (pgs. 244-250).

Modern theories in teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) favor more independent methods such as the learner-based approach that fosters learners' autonomy and reduces the power of the teacher as the only transmitter of knowledge. (S. Baghzou, 2020. P676). Accordingly, Algerian universities – especially in the field of teaching foreign languages- were also engaged in numerous reforms recently in which a renewal of the curriculum content, assessment criteria, homework assignment and teacher training were the major pillars that the new reforms were laid on. The New Common Core was introduced and implemented in 2013 to gain a licence in English. This Degree is made up of a broad range of modules that enable the student to map out his/her own path through the history, theory, literature

and practice of the English language. Its aim is to make students acquire the critical thinking and writing skills that will enhance their English language proficiency, instill and inculcate the reading habit and promote cultural understanding.

As far as literature is concerned, The Common Core Curriculum has reviewed the number of hours/sessions of literature courses where there is just one session per week devoted for literature; Initiation to literary texts during the first year (L1), English literature in (L2) and the study of literary texts in L3. Though literature enjoys a welter of merits from an increase in motivation, cultural awareness, linguistic development, and even an agent of change, it was not enthusiastically embraced by many Algerian policy makers and teachers simply because they are still skeptic of its paramount priority in the classes.

2. The Rationale of the Study

The value of literature in EFL classes was and is still claimed by many scholars. According to Greene's theory of imaginative response to the arts (1995), she maintained that the study of arts aids in the creation of open-minded students by engaging their imaginations by means of emphasizing the development of a 'critical consciousness' of the world through 'a critical engagement' with the arts. She challenges teachers to rethink their clichéd notions in order to develop the social imagination in their students' thoughts, to move them to see things in fresh ways and to become more "wide-awake", she said "we who are teachers would have to accommodate ourselves to lives as clerks and functionaries if we did not have in mind a quest for a better state of things for those we teach and for the world we share, it is simply not enough for us to reproduce the way things are" (Greene (1995), p1 quoted in Wendy Kohly (2018), p194). Further, her idea of 'the potency of arts' to deepen people's lives was taken from Dewey's understanding of the power of art. According to him:

... The function of art has always been to break through the crust of conventionalized and routine consciousness. Common things, a

flower, a gleam of moonlight...not things rare and remote, are means with which the deeper levels of life are touched...this process is art...artists have always been the real purveyors of news, for it is not the outward happening itself which is new, but the kindling by it of emotion, perception, and appreciation. (Wendy Kohly 2018, p. 190)

Greene's modernist educational philosophy appreciated the aesthetic value of a work of art like: painting, literature, music, drama dance, photography and film. In this context since literature is an art form, it can offer new horizons to envision the world and to identify of oneself as a part of society. In doing so, students can consider diverse ways of living and contributing to make the world a better place. Ergo, Rosenblatt (2005) in her Reader Response Theory sheds light on the way literature affects the reader, it focuses on the necessity and the pedagogical value of developing the students' awareness to be critical readers and not passive, just recipients of what has been delivered to them in class, according to Rosenblatt,1985; Long and Carter,1991; Tudor, 1996) literature aims to elicit students' response to the text and guides them to a personal discovery. She helped spawn the idea that sees "literature as a source of insight and emotional liberation" While working with literary texts, students not only learn to improve the basic literacy skills, but also to explore the historical, cultural and social contexts in which texts are being created and interpreted. Furthermore, working with texts contributes positively to students' personal growth and psychological development. (M. Fernández De Caleyá Dalmau, 2012). But how can teachers cope with the new demands and tendencies of nowadays digital generation, a generation addicted to social networking sites? Yet, a shared vision about a strategic and suitable change process that aims to reconsider learners' needs and the requirements of literature's curriculum goals is highly needed.

3. The Statement of the Problem

As far as teaching literature is concerned, a clear incapability of literature courses to make students experience a worthwhile and meaningful reading process was highly related to the mode of instruction. Hence, the aim of conducting this research is to examine if the usage of Facebook as one of Social networking sites -which has captured the attention of educators as well as academic researchers- can be used as an alternative tool for foreign language teaching and learning of Literature. Furthermore, this study endeavors to find out the benefits of using Facebook in teaching literature, hoping in this way to stimulate students' desire to read, to encourage their response towards language learning as well as to examine their perceptions towards Facebook use in literature classes in order to give them a chance to voice their hidden feelings towards that matter. Thus, the following research questions were asked:

- ✓ What are students' perceptions towards using Facebook as a supplementary tool to help them rejoice effective language learning experiences?
- ✓ To what extent the use of Facebook as a learning tool can affect students in their literature attainment?

4. Review of Literature

Facebook: an Outside Learning Space?

To find out how Facebook is used to teach literature in the EFL classroom, the researcher has made a literature review of both Algerian and international texts on teaching literature. Surveys indicate that with the growing importance in the use of literature in EFL/ESL teaching, there has been a corresponding interest and enthusiasm in the use of innovative literature teaching techniques, methods and approaches to promote more active and student-centered learning where technologies have been blended successfully in education all over the world. According to Norm Freisen "Blended Learning' designates the range of possibilities presented by combining internet and digital media with established classroom forms that require the physical co-presence of teacher and students'. (N. Freisen, 2012.

p.1). EFL students do not have enough exposure to develop or correct their English extensively that is why teachers should use innovative teaching methods to boost their students' interest to acquire the target language gradually. There are a plethora of digital tools that exist with a Web 2.0 era which can be used as innovative techniques and sustaining tools in the classroom like: wiki, weblog, podcasting, social media, videos-games, youtube etc.,. Hence, the aforementioned tools can equip students with skill based and knowledge based learning which are indispensable for their growth and development as well as they may alleviate teachers' concerns about the loss of connection with their students.

Yet, since language can be learnt only through practice, and when there is sufficient opportunity to engage in meaningful use of that language in a relatively anxiety-free environment, learners may experiment their knowledge by communicating with others confidently. Thus, Facebook provides a convenient space where students can create their personal profile page enabling them to construct a congenial atmosphere in which they would feel contented to be a part of the learning process where their errors can be corrected or pruned through this practice meanwhile teachers should increase students' confidence, autonomy, interest, and assist them to realize that their motivation and independence are of paramount importance to grasp the target language confidently. According to Vygotsky's socio-cultural ideas (1978) learning takes place through mediated social interactions, the creation of innovative and fresh learning communities where discussions can be expanded beyond the classroom and provide new ways for students to collaborate within their class and beyond it as Owen et al. noted that these communities may offer "personalized collaborative learning experiences such as those that are already emerging in the world outside the school gates" (2006, p.11). Bryant (2006) sheds light on the social aspect of language acquisition and its role in creating a learner-centered environment, he pointed out that in this technological epoch with Web 2.0 tools engenders greater learner participation and interaction in which learners gain good affinity with other

learners through chatting and virtual collaborative conversational interaction. (M. Thomas. 2009, p 123)

Soraya Halfaoui Ghomari (2015) dealt with the underlying factors influencing an effective ICT-based approach to the teaching of English for Specific Purposes, according to her; ICT successful integration in a teaching/learning context requires the implementation of strategic organization that is not possible unless supported by a suitable change process at psychological and pedagogical levels. In the same token, Naima Ladaci (2017) investigated teachers' perceptions where she found that almost all the teachers who had participated in her study had a positive attitude towards the implementation of technology and were fully aware of the great potential it offers. She claimed for the necessity to integrate technology in the 21st century classroom. Noteworthy are studies done by Logenthini Mariappan et Al (2017, 2018) in which they recommended the use of Facebook as a supplementary tool in teaching Literature because it gives instructors the chance to improve their teaching via a lively classroom.

Currently, new and varied activities are needed to be designed by teachers to empower students to face many real challenges in grasping the target language as well as to be active agents in shaping their future lives. It is commonly believed that, contemporary students are more accustomed with social networking platforms in learning, this becomes today's tendency in their education process. Facebook for instance, is an important space to impart knowledge where teachers and students are collaborators. Such chats' corners aid students to think and react in practical, innovative and confident way. Engaging students in group chat will guide them to have authority over themselves and develop good rapport with teachers and fellow students. According to Noyes (2015), of all the social networking sites, Facebook is considered as the most widely used social networking sites due to its continually increasing active members and due to this it can be a favorable educational tool as well.

In addition to that, (Kho & Chuah (2012), Northcote & Kendle (2001), Li & Chen, 2009), Northcote & Kendle (2001))

recommended educators to integrate Facebook in teaching and learning activities to create more fun and interactive lessons, they affirmed that participating in online learning activities provided students the opportunity to obtain practical skills such as critical analysis of resources to advance their learning performance and creating for them free spaces to collaborate and share knowledge. In the same vein, Melor et al. (2012) revealed that using Facebook actually can assist students in completing their essays easier by participating in Facebook group discussion.

5. Research Methodology

5.1 Implementing the Teaching Experiment

The researcher has taught literature to EFL students for many years. For the aim of the study, she made many sessions of classroom observation to several groups of second year licence students at the university of Saida during their classes of literature. Hence, she noticed that despite all the efforts done by teachers to help their students improve their educational attainment and especially their proficiency in literature classes, they seem to suffer from diverse obstacles that thwart their engagement with the literature classroom activities, a lack of competence in English with particular regards to Literature was very clear. Furthermore, the researcher noted that the students found their literature course complex in nature, they were unmotivated and were likely -so dutifully- to perform a set of mechanical tasks with the texts they were assigned to read, showing little commitment and evidence that a text has worth for them. Due to that the researcher wanted a technique that can assist students to meet all their needs, striving to help them in their classroom to learn and develop their language learning process. Based on this problem, she opted for new techniques by incorporating technologies in teaching to create a lively and collaborative learning environment.

To this end, Facebook was chosen as an additional tool to teach 'English Literature' module because it is currently the most popular online social networking site among students and previous studies highlighted that its use as an educational tool may foster students' attainment (Madge et al., 2009, Kabilan,

Ahmad, & Abidin, 2010, Hamid et al., 2011). ‘English Literature’ was part of the Fundamental Unit in the Second Year Curriculum under the New Common Core Programme that was implemented during 2013, but just a weekly session of one hour and a half was allotted to it. The researcher considers that the time allotted to this module ‘English Literature’ is insufficient to help her achieve the course’s aims and above all to give the students opportunities to work with their peers and express their views that contribute to their language development and the appreciation of literature. Consequently, ‘Saida Literature Corner’, a Facebook Chat Group was created during the second semester of the academic year 2017-2018 for second year students to give to the teacher extra time to carry on with interesting and purposeful discussions about the literary works seen in the class. She informs her students that the group’s main aim is to provide them with an outside free space to read, discuss, exchange, criticize and propose ideas related to the course. ‘Saida Literature Corner’ was chosen by the students to name their virtual literature class.

5.2 Research Design and Materials

The methodology employed in this study was a case study design as it involved a particular group of Second Year EFL students at the Department of Literature and English. For this reason, classroom observation and a questionnaire permitted the researcher to closely study the data within the specific context of 35 EFL students in a literature class during the second semester of the academic year 2017-2018. Deciphering students’ perceptions about the use of Facebook as a supplementary tool in their literature classroom was the study’s main aim. Their views were of paramount importance since; in response to their feedbacks; significant changes to the programme and the assessment pattern were made. Case studies are considered useful in research because they enable researchers to examine data at the micro level especially when a big sample population is hard to obtain. Thus, after achieving the first part of the study which was about classroom observation, a web-based survey based on purposive sampling was used. Due to the time frame

and students' preferences it was the most suitable method for data collection. It contained factual, behavioral and attitudinal questions and it was divided into two parts.

The first was a Yes/No part asks for demographic information of the students whether or not each participant has a Facebook account, how often they log on to Facebook, whether or not they are familiar with the Facebook group and the second was a 5-point Likert-scale, ranging from strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, to strongly agree, it was based on the previous studies as a measuring instrument. The questionnaire is seen as a practical way to collect quantitative information "... that is relatively easy to tabulate and analyse" (Richards, 2001:60). In a next step, a preliminary check of the questionnaire was done by a teacher of literature in the same department, she was requested to suggest any appropriate changes to improve the quality of the instrument, to evaluate if the layout was clear as well as to check if the question flow was good. The survey was then published online in a closed Facebook group 'Saida Literature Corner' and was open for one week.

6. Findings and Discussion

To begin with, data analysis is governed by a number of parameters: research question, the goals of the study and the data collection procedures though it is not an easy task to realize but it is a fascinating process, as Marshall and Rossman (1990:111) explained that data analysis: "is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. It is a messy, ambiguous, time consuming, creative, and fascinating process. It does not proceed in a linear fashion; it is not neat". Therefore, the following were the most revealing results on students' perceptions vis a vis the use of Facebook. The findings are presented in two sections. The first one presents students' general performance on Facebook while the second investigates whether or not Facebook facilitates learning English as it focused on students' perceptions towards the use of Facebook in learning Literature.

Accordingly, it was found that the majority of students have a Facebook account (95.5%) and a total of (81.8%) like its use. All students (100%) think that the use of new technologies in teaching English as a foreign language is a good strategy to boost their motivation in learning English. These results confirm that through peer-assistance and collaborative interactions students are acting as 'tutors' exercising their own authority upon their learning process. They were free to post the excerpts that attracted them as well as to comment, discuss and criticize them. Hence, they gain a higher self-esteem that empowers them to be more productive.

Further, it is revealed that (42.9%) of the participants are logged in to their Facebook accounts more than 2-3 hours per day while (33.3%) less than 2 hours per day. This can direct teachers' attention to exploit students' dependence to facebook in order to integrate it in their learning process since they are highly accustomed to its use in other words, teachers can seize this opportunity by wisely investing in 'this extra time' through designing interactive activities to hook students' attention to practice, debate, reflect and criticize literary excerpts posted by/for them on their online space.

Furthermore, (36.40%) of the students agreed on the idea that learning literature via Facebook helps widening their knowledge and a total of (50%) of participants have positive perception towards the use of Facebook in enhancing their learning effectiveness.

As far as the question if Facebook enhances students' interest to read literary texts, (22.7%) of them agree and (18.20%) strongly agree. Almost (50 %) of participants agreed that while using Facebook to learn literature the level of engagement between teachers and students increases. (61.9%) of the sample are in agreement with the idea that they can learn from others posts while, (23.8%) strongly agree. Furthermore, 57.1% of participants agreed upon the idea that Facebook increases their collaborative learning. Discussions were free-form that is any student could write on any topic during the course. A list of questions to consider on each literary work was regularly provided by the instructor, and many of these served as a jump-

start for discussion. Besides, several unresolved in-class face-to-face discussions were continued in the online space.

One may conclude that these results correlate well with the findings in the researcher's literary review, as the benefits of Facebook integration in literature classes are mentioned in the works of the aforementioned researchers. More importantly, this investigation points out that the high majority of students support Facebook integration in their literature classroom.

With regards to the first research question, the obtained results indicated that students' perceptions towards the general ease of Facebook's use in literature were overall positive. Regarding the second research question, findings showed that via the use of Facebook students are keen to learn more about literary texts in a self-conscious and empowering manner. They had a strong favorable perception of using Facebook for English literature learning as it proved that the teaching method has a positive influence on their attitudes toward literature. Finally, the results of this study put forward that teaching literature in EFL classrooms via social media use can be useful to students unless it is taught properly.

7. Conclusion

The motive of carrying out this research is to figure out if the implementation of Facebook group 'Saida Literature Corner' as an accompanying learning tool can help out EFL students in their Literature learning as well it sought to bring to light their perceptions towards its usage in their learning process. Moreover, it is assumed that the findings from this study will encourage the use of Facebook in teaching Literature and improve literature teaching in EFL classrooms.

Learning via Facebook does not only help to improve students' team working skills, but also assists them to achieve better results in learning, developing their reading skills and interpretative abilities. Through this 'outside' virtual learning space students can get to know each other better and take education to its highest level and made it more interesting, therefore creating richer learning environments. One may suggest that instructors should be more active in conducting

activities in the Facebook group, this in turn will motivate the students to participate more.

Additionally, assigning discussion topics is another strategy that can be used to encourage Web-based discussions through monitoring online debates by taking advantage of students who might have differing opinions so as to encourage student discussion on a course topic. According to Marc Prensky (2001) students as 'digital natives' where educators are 'digital immigrants'; yet; they are lacking the training to integrate technology into their pedagogies that is why teacher education programs need to be updated to comply with the current era's demands and help student teachers to gain the needed technology skills to effectively integrate both latest technology and appropriate teaching styles into their future literature classes. Technology can help also Literature more than before to preserve its place first and to help teachers and students to decipher its genuine essence just to arouse in them a moment of pleasure, enthusiasm, excitement, elation, or ecstasy, to hook them to their worlds so as to loosen their sense of alienation.

The selection of a limited size of participants comprising 35 learners may not permit for the representativeness of the sampling for the whole population. At this level, it is roughly impossible to generalize the research findings. Yet, drawing on purposeful sampling in this context may provide a description of the situation under investigation. Moreover, participants' Lack of access to internet was problematic to the study and hampered the researcher from being in daily contact with her students. All in all, teachers need to try something fresh, to make their students more energetic and their lessons more valuable. Novelty resides in perception; how something is seen by teachers, headmasters, administrators or others involved in its implementation so it is high time for change to take place.

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