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THE USE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS IN THE PROCESS OF LEARNING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Abstract. In the recent decade many changes in the process of education took place because of the development of information and communication technologies. Online social groups tend to be used by teachers and students for formal (study) and informal (personal communication) purposes. An efficient teacher may turn social networks into an effective tool, encouraging students to communicate in the target language. With the help of social networks the teacher can activate students in the process of learning, create situations for better understanding and perceiving the material. The use of such approaches as blended learning, corporative learning and active learning helps make the classes more attractive and effective. Moreover, social networks can help in the development of students' creativity, provision of feedback and cooperative learning. The article deals with the question of influence of Massive online open courses on effectiveness of the educational process for students who learn English as a second language.

Keywords: information and communication technologies; social networks; target language; communication skills; blended learning; active learning; cooperative learning.

1. INTRODUCTION

The problem setting. Modern educational systems are greatly influenced by new information and communication technologies, the rapid spread of knowledge and diversified ways of delivering information in accordance with the economic, social and cultural needs of the country. These factors force educational systems to function in the conditions of permanent changes. Professional and experienced educators use information and communication technologies as an activator of learning process and the effectiveness of educational managers is increased. As a result of ICT development a great number of online social groups have appeared, used by both teachers and students for communication, as well as to achieve learning goals. In a knowledge-based society, online social groups aimed at social interaction have integrated into the everyday life of people. The growing number of users proves the increasing popularity of social media. And incorporation of on line social networks into educational process changes the traditional teaching model, enhances the effectiveness of the educational process. Moreover it provides new opportunities for students in construction of their own learning trajectory, guarantees access to information resources, educational services, and encourages communication with native speakers. Such tendencies in

learning make contemporary teachers encourage students to use these technologies independently and outside of the classroom for their integration into the educational process at the same time improving their own competence.

The analysis of recent studies and publications. The problem of bringing social networks in the educational process is quite new. However some scientists made attempts to examine the role of Facebook in foreign language teaching (M. Hamada, C.-K. Huang, C.-Y. Lin, D. S. Villarreal, C. Balcikanli). They recognized that determining its effectiveness is a question that needs more research. In addition to them the popularity of social networks, especially Facebook, was studied by P. Ventura, E. Martín-Monje, M. Ellison, C. Steinfield. The effect of using Facebook to assist English for specific purposes was considered by Ru-Chu Shih, K. Keenan, the use of Facebook in educational activities and its role in increasing students' motivation was discussed by N. S. Ping, M. Maniam, J. Mazer, R. Murphy, C. Simonds.

The study of social networks' influence on different aspects of human activity and education, in particular, should be carried out with reference to theoretical foundations. Thus, sociocultural theory is valuable for our study, which indicates that man is an integral part of the world they live in, so students are not independent in their activities, i.e., the student does not study in isolation, but in interaction with others. Therefore, teachers should offer more chances to learn interactively and in cooperation. H. Pi believes that the messages that are exchanged in social networks develop students' critical thinking and literacy skills by using language in a real context. D. Marmc, D. McCormick expressed the assurance that the socio-cultural theory was the basis for the development of learning strategies in foreign language learning. They found out that students' participation in the communication with the members of community was characterized by their ability to grow, reflect on and improve their language strategies.

The social constructivist theory recognizes that students act in a certain environment; in such a way there is reflection, abstraction and increasing practical knowledge. On the other hand, it is focused on the effect of social interaction, language and culture in the learning process. Some scientists believe that according to the principles of the constructivist theory substantial interaction in the educational environment of social groups is directed at strengthening the values, exchange of opinions and experience with a practical orientation. Some of them suggest that the paradigm of social constructivism is focused on student-centered learning so that students can share their knowledge, skills, experience and ideas with others. Also, students are encouraged to take part in active dialogues with group-mates and teachers, cooperate with each other, create knowledge and discover some principles for themselves. British scientists Q. Wang, H. L. Woo, C. L. Quek, Y. Yang, M. Liu note that learning should be conducted through web technologies emphasizing the creation of specific learning environment where students can have an access to knowledge and share information and resources with others [1, p. 15].

The **objective of this paper** is to study the possibility of incorporation of social networks in the process of teaching students a foreign language and development of communicative competence, identification of the advantages and disadvantages of the educational process with the use of such method.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

In our research we used theoretical methods such as analysis of pedagogical literature; inductive and deductive approaches; interpretation of the results; practical approach.

3. THE RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Mastering the skills of a foreign language communication is a difficult task because their acquisition involves the mastery of different language subsystems to the point where they are used automatically in spontaneous communication. Therefore, the main function of the foreign language teacher is to create special conditions for the development of communication skills, abilities to interact in different linguistic and social circumstances, to teach students to use accurately but spontaneously these language subsystems. Such a task is extremely important in the globalizing world when today's youth wants to communicate with representatives of other countries, ethnic groups, races and the like, because the ability to speak a foreign language increases their confidence and self-esteem [1, p. 16].

Development of foreign language communication skills involves the development of the ability to focus on the understanding of foreign speech and simultaneously think and if necessary speak in the foreign language. However, we must understand that the success of verbal communication is affected by a certain range of factors such as age of students, their language development, level of foreign language proficiency, motivation, etc (M. Pawlak) [3, p. 144].

Traditionally, learning process in foreign language took place in the formal environment of the classroom. However, the rapid development of ICT, computer and Internet technologies is playing an increasingly influential role in learning English communication skills. More and more teachers make their choice in favor of the incorporation of such technologies into everyday teaching practices because "technology can improve teaching" (D. Smith, E. Barber). The effect of IR technology has resulted in the appearance of the communication process between teachers and students outside the classroom. Computers and Internet technologies enable a wide range of synchronous and asynchronous communication, which is known as "Computer-Mediated Communication - CMC" (S. C. Herring [3, p. 144].

This informal learning process is gaining popularity and offers teachers and students a variety of resources that can be combined to create individual and student-tailored programs according to their learning opportunities. MOOC (massive open online courses) is the latest trend in education, which is enriched by the incorporation of a variety of social media tools such as blogs and social networks (Facebook, Google etc) to enhance students' participation in the learning process and their educational experience. In addition, they contribute to the study of specialized terminology in professional English language [4, p. 118].

MOOC is one of the latest models of online learning which becomes increasingly popular. Although there is still no consensus on its definition, and despite some criticism from experts, statistics on the number of students covered by this type, the average satisfaction of teachers with the efficiency of the educational process testify to its benefits. One of them is the way in which they emphasize the importance of social interaction, offer flexible learning materials which allow students to manage their own educational process according to individual needs and abilities [2, p. 444], and at the same time have the feeling of belonging to a group.

Social networks and online platforms are used to establish relations among individuals with common interests. Users have the opportunity to share opinions, interests of certain groups, which is especially important for those who lack personal communication, or those who have skills in development of strategy of interaction [5, p. 30]. Social networking technology offers more effective tools for communication in the educational context through increased personal interaction and provides a sense of community among students [6, p. 159].

Materials studied for the research indicate that in the modern world there are many ways and methods that teachers can use in the educational process to improve writing skills. Now educators' attention is directed to such a popular with the youth modern social network

as Facebook. Its importance for the learning process is greatly increased because of its availability and opportunities to deliver educational information to students at any time and place. The studied materials allow us to make conclusion that besides the fact that Facebook is popular with young people as network for communication, it also performs the function of effective learning technology in such countries where English is taught as a second language (Japan, Malaysia, Taiwan, Turkey etc). In this context, the possibility of using Facebook by university students to enhance proficiency in foreign language through its integration in the educational process is in the sphere of our interest. No less interesting is the question about the influence of Facebook on self-motivation to learn languages and interaction among students. In Taiwan Facebook is used to encourage students to study, as it allows instructors to create meaningful learning environment. This occurs by activating students to use the target language on condition of providing necessary support and ensuring access to multimedia and authentic materials [6, p. 159].

We witness the fact that social networks have become an integral part of everyday life of young people. According to some scientists, integration of social networking, particularly Facebook in the MOOC provides students with a diversified method of learning a foreign language and a more familiar to them approach to the study of a course, and therefore activates their participation in the educational process.

The introduction of ICT into the educational process ensures the exchange of knowledge through online meetings and discussions between students. Thanks to them, users have the opportunity to share, interact, collaborate, and chat with others in virtual communities. C. Xsu pointed to the fact that virtual groups focused on communication and interaction of participants to share collective knowledge. According to the constructivist paradigm, a student acquires new knowledge at the initial stage of motivation and the learning of new information. J. Bruner also focuses on the fact that students are encouraged to actively participate in the dialogues, in collaboration with other students and instructors for the acquisition of new knowledge. F. Tilfarlioglu indicates that the emergence of these technologies since 2014 has changed the principle by which people use web sites in education in general and in foreign language learning in particular [4, p. 126].

The documents that we analyzed allow us to conclude that the emergence of these technologies has made the process of foreign language teaching more flexible and accessible. This process can take place both in the classroom and out of it. W. Richardson has studied the benefits of using blogs in teaching, among which is the fact that, for example, blogs and interactive sites allow you to chat, share ideas, and develop the skills of team work, providing feedback due to the possibility to express your opinion in the comments. The incorporation of online learning platforms in the training “minimizes the limitations of the walls of the classroom” and provides students with more opportunities for communication [5, p.30].

The conducted studies indicate that online learning with the web technologies has become an extremely important form for the development of foreign language communication skills. According to R. Smyth video communication technology provides the opportunity for more authentic learning in the online format, in-group, formal and informal [7, p. 52].

C. Hsu and J. Lin argue that blogs can be considered as the primary means of information exchange. Expected benefits, reputation, altruism, trust, and other determinants that influence knowledge sharing among students and educators are considered to be motivational components for this. C. Chang, G. Chen, L. Li concluded that the cumulative knowledge of the students cannot effectively be distributed among the students in the traditional classroom. L. Li and G. Chen believe that asynchronous online discussions in different forums encourage students to cooperate, to discuss information without having to meet or work at the same time. Students can maintain relationships among group members through effective communication and discussions in such a collaborative learning

environment. Moreover, the training capacity is developed at the individual and group levels [7, p. 53].

Facebook is considered a more advanced online interactive site than a blog. However, both have common features: they facilitate the online discussion, have a wall to leave messages, download photos, images and videos. The advantage is the free access, the opportunity to exchange information, establish cooperation, to carry out communication in synchronous or asynchronous mode. Online interaction in a group helps conservative students who rarely speak in the classroom or take part in discussions to express their thoughts. Such functions as e-mail, chat rooms, forums, online discussions improve the interaction between students and instructors and make it possible to study and exchange information and opinions freely, to participate in discussions to deepen understanding of the problem [7, p. 53].

In addition to the use of Facebook Skype is a useful computer-mediated communication, a medium of exchange of linguistic knowledge and information. According to researchers Skype allows "students to interact, modify and work on incoming information during conversations" [7, p. 55].

In this study, we refer to Skype as a communication tool through the computer, using the Internet as the main means of online communication and social interaction. T. Dumova and R. Fiordo confirm that the introduction of technologies of online social interaction helps reflect the real world with diverse social ties and interactions in more detail [3, p. 150].

At the same time, we should stress that according to the common European scale of language proficiency (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages - CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001), skills in oral language of A1 level should be divided in language interaction and oral productive skills. The CEFR defines the skills of interaction as "the ability to ask and answer simple questions in the sectors of basic needs or on familiar topics." The presence of productive oral communication skills requires the ability to use simple phrases and sentences to describe where they live and people they know (Council of Europe, 2001). Thus, the skills of oral interaction and productive skills may be developed through conference calls on Skype. These calls are designed to create more opportunities for adult students with A1 level to enhance the learning content [3, p. 145].

As it was already noted, the CMC offers two types of online communication: synchronous and asynchronous. Skype conference calls often occur as synchronous communication. S. Hrastinsky is convinced that video conference and chat rooms are more likely to support synchronous communication and have the potential to support "e-students". He believes that the advantages of synchronous communication include the fact that "students and teachers participate in synchronous learning as a more social phenomenon because they ask and answer questions in real time." Synchronous sessions help e-learners to be participants and not to feel isolated. M. Lamy, R. Hampel confirm that synchronous communication develops cooperation on an equal basis and can be used for feedback [3, p. 146].

A. Sheppard emphasizes that Skype is a free computer program that you can use for phone calls for communication, for conference calls and video calls, chats in the target language. L. Abdulezer and H. Dammond believe that Skype significantly changes the process of information exchange and communication, meeting new people [3, p. 147]. Z. Chen and D. Cordier indicated that Skype offers the most popular communication in which native speakers and people who are studying the language of native speakers can communicate with each other in different time zones.

It was revealed that social interaction in such activities as surveys, focus groups studies, and reflective tasks was particularly active. Students noticed the relationship between the developing communication skills in a foreign language and better social interaction. K. Fitch

and R. Sanders found that "the use of language is validated by social interaction and social interaction is checked by the language which shapes and organizes it" [3, p. 151].

Students say that with Skype they are able to communicate more quickly, the speech becomes more fluent because they have time to organize their thoughts in a time when other participants are expressing opinions. In addition, this contributes to the list of topics tentatively scheduled for the discussion; students can plan beforehand and structure their ideas before the beginning of the conference. The main purpose of communication through Skype is to strengthen the oral aspect of the same content that was previously discussed during personal sessions. It activates the participation in conferences, provides an opportunity to communicate effortlessly. The speech speed is measured by speed of access or production and the number of pauses (I. Nation, J. Newton) [8, p. 153].

We should note that at the National Aviation University the course "Business English" is obligatory for students of Master's degree of all specialties and areas of training, and aims to prepare young people for work in different enterprises and companies, to teach them peculiarities of business oral and written communication. To our belief the integration of social networks in MOOC will provide students with a diversified and more familiar approach to knowledge, encourage them to study, taking into account the fact that social networks have become an integral part of everyday life of modern youth. The main goal of our research was to study the effect of learning Business English through a blended approach that included the combination of traditional method, online Facebook support and communication with classmates.

The participants in the experiment were 70 students who used Facebook to perform the assignments offered by the teacher in a specially created Facebook group, mark and grade the implementation of these tasks by the classmates, write comments and share their ideas. All members of the group had to come up with several tasks and offer them on the website. Classmates had to do an assignment and comment on this job. Comments were not limited to the teacher. Statistical analysis showed that in each academic group, the average number of comments reached 30. The content analysis explains that all comments were made regarding grammatical errors made by classmates. There were no comments on the stylistic choice of lexical units.

The test was conducted at the beginning of the experiment in the 6th week of the term and the test after the training was aimed to trace the dynamics of the process. The results of the validation tests before and after the experiment showed significant improvement in academic results of mastering the necessary vocabulary (from 68 for the group to 82 in 100 scale).

Within 7 weeks the teacher suggested writing assignments on the group's website, making comments, and then received feedback. Material for written assignments includes the most important vocabulary and professional terminology and phrases that were related to business communication that was studied in the classroom. After the assignment, each student had to write a review regarding the tasks performed by other students in the group. Thus, students checked the results of their classmates, and the teacher only played the role of facilitator, who controlled this process and the students' comments.

For the study of student satisfaction with the integration of Facebook into the educational process, a survey was conducted, the answers to which were assessed on a 5 point scale (5 – strongly agree, 4 – agree, 3 – neutral, 2 - disagree, 1 – strongly disagree). In addition, questions were suggested involving the statement of students' own thoughts. So, to the question "What do you think about the organization of the course and its implementation?" 78% of the students responded that they liked this approach and that this was a new and interesting experience. 14% thought that this approach should be used on a

permanent basis, 8% said that they always use Facebook to communicate with native speakers.

To the question "What advantages and disadvantages do you see in using Facebook in the course of Business English" the students answered that it helped see the work of others (14%), contributed to group discussion (20%), ensured the effectiveness of the course (57%), promoted interaction (6%), and simultaneously allowed to study and to carry out other activities on the Internet (3%).

The question "What are the advantages and disadvantages in the use of group-mates' tasks in learning Business English?" revealed that students' level of knowledge is different, so they need to analyze the comments of group students to check the answers (87%), and that this approach is very useful for learning (13%).

The statement in the questionnaire "Group cooperative learning makes me put in more effort in communication in target language" received an average score of 3.6, which means that some students do not agree with this statement. "Standards of evaluation of group mates are like mine" got 3.97 points. "The use of the site Facebook makes me love English more" received a 3.86. "I feel involved in the achievements of the classmates" scored 3.94, which means that not all students feel their involvement in the success. These questions received an average score below 4.0, that is above average, and it shows that all students recognize the benefits from integration and blended learning for Business English course, which they find interesting and effective. Blended learning using assignments from classmates and Facebook reinforce learning business English skills and improve language competence.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND PROSPECTS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

So, today higher education is gradually taking "social networking technology" in the curriculum design. The transition from more traditional learning environment and social interaction (e.g., a classroom) to a more computer oriented educational environment can be a challenge and task for language teachers and students. Social media such as Facebook, Skype, blogs are considered contextual interactive learning environment, and are popular among students, therefore, they are often integrated in the learning process on an academic platform. Such technologies provide educators with new mechanisms of activation of educational activity of students, development of the necessary foreign language communication skills. In addition to the ability to provide communication, interaction, flexibility in the learning content the social network can meet the students' individual needs.

The study showed that students can learn Business English effectively with the help of such approaches as cooperative learning, blended learning, active learning. The results show that students are more confident when inviting friends on Facebook for communication and comments. Group-mates' assignment help students in language learning and can be an effective way to improve grammar, encourage the learning of new vocabulary. However, this use of blended learning can take much time, and the teacher needs to make extra efforts in grading students' results, to monitor their activities and tasks.

We believe that such studies should be carried out for further understanding educational process with new technologies of social media. Much attention should be paid to the organization of training courses for teachers for development of ICT competences.

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ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЕ СОЦИАЛЬНЫХ СЕТЕЙ В ПРОЦЕССЕ ОБУЧЕНИЯ АНГЛИЙСКОМУ КАК ВТОРОМУ ЯЗЫКУ

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Аннотация. За последнее десятилетие произошло много изменений в процессе обучения английскому языку благодаря развитию информационных и коммуникационных технологий. Онлайн социальные группы все больше используются учителями и студентами для формальных (обучение) и неформальных (личное общение) целей. Умелый учитель может превратить социальные сети в эффективный инструмент работы, так как основная цель его деятельности – это поощрение коммуникации на языке, который изучается. С их помощью учитель может активизировать студентов в процессе их обучения, создать ситуации для лучшего понимания и усвоения материала. Использование таких методов как смешанное обучение, корпоративное обучение и активное обучение помогает сделать

заняття більш привлекательними і ефективними. Більше того, соціальні мережі можуть допомогти в розвитку креативності у студентів, забезпеченні зворотного зв'язку, роботі в команді. Стаття розглядає вплив масових відкритих онлайн курсів на ефективність освітнього процесу для студентів, які вивчають англійську як другу мову.

Ключові слова: інформаційні та комунікаційні технології; соціальні мережі; мова, що вивчається; комунікативні навички; змішане навчання; активне навчання; робота в команді.

ВИКОРИСТАННЯ СОЦІАЛЬНИХ МЕРЕЖ У ПРОЦЕСІ НАВЧАННЯ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ ЯК ДРУГОЇ МОВИ

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Анотація. В останньому десятиріччі відбулось багато змін у процесі навчання англійської мови завдяки розвитку інформаційних та комунікаційних технологій. Онлайн соціальні мережі все більше використовуються вчителями та студентами для формальних (навчання) та неформальних (персональне спілкування) цілей. Досвідчений учитель може перетворити соціальні мережі в ефективний інструмент праці, тому що основна мета його діяльності – це заохочення комунікації мовою, що вивчається. З їх допомогою учитель може активізувати студентів в процесі їх навчання, створити ситуації для кращого розуміння та засвоєння матеріалу. Використання таких методів як змішане навчання, корпоративне навчання, активне навчання допомагає зробити заняття більш привабливими й ефективними. Більше того, соціальні мережі можуть допомогти у розвитку креативності у студентів, забезпеченні зворотного зв'язку, роботі в команді. Стаття розглядає вплив масових відкритих онлайн курсів на ефективність навчального процесу для студентів, які вивчають англійську як другу мову.

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