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SOCIAL NETWORKS IN FOSTERING ESL STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS

An article is devoted to the problem of implementing social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Blogging, Google Hangouts, and TikTok into ESL classrooms to provide opportunities for students to practice and improve their speaking abilities.

The article is aimed at analyzing the potential of social networks for teaching English to promote ESL students' speaking skills.

As an academic device, the social media has become tools to share academic works, research findings, book reviews, and communicate effectively.

This study presents some teaching methods that have been already implemented in academic environment at English sessions for University students:

– Facebook: utilize group discussions, role-playing, language exchange, language games, and language learning videos.

– Instagram: implement daily vlogs, interview series, photo description tasks, speaking challenges via reels, live discussions, and interactive polls.

– WhatsApp: engage students in voice messaging conversations, daily conversation starters, language exchange pairs, audio journals, group discussions on current events, storytelling chains, language games via voice messages, and virtual debates.

– Blogging: encourage class blogs for collaborative writing projects with oral feedback, personal blogs for reflection, multimedia elements integration, and discussions on language-related topics.

– Google Hangouts: facilitate collaborative projects, virtual meetings, guest speakers' sessions, virtual language exchange partnerships, and virtual language assessment sessions.

– TikTok: encourage short monologues or dialogues, daily English challenges, storytelling tasks, interview series, and creative content creation.

The article underscores the transformative potential of social networks in ESL education by providing interactive and immersive opportunities for students to practice speaking English in real-life contexts in a safe and friendly environment.

Key words: *social networks, social media platforms, speaking skills.*

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СОЦІАЛЬНІ МЕРЕЖІ ЯК ЗАСІБ РОЗВИТКУ РОЗМОВНИХ НАВИЧОК СТУДЕНТІВ, ЩО ВИВЧАЮТЬ АНГЛІЙСЬКУ ЯК ДРУГУ ІНОЗЕМНУ МОВУ

Стаття присвячена проблемі впровадження соціальних мереж у викладанні англійської мови як другої іноземної мови для вдосконалення розмовних навичок студентів. Наголошується на важливості використання таких соціальних медіа, як Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Blogging, Google Hangouts і TikTok, з метою вдосконалення розмовних навичок студентів. Огляд останніх досліджень, висвітлених у статті, демонструє позитивний вплив соціальних медіа на комунікативні навички тих, хто вивчає англійську мову, як другу іноземну, вказуючи на підвищення рівня їх сформованості, впевненості та зниження рівня розмовної тривожності студентів. Підкреслюється, що впровадження цих мереж може створити динамічне та ефективне навчальне середовище, яке сприятиме розвитку комунікативних навичок студентів.

У статті аналізується потенціал соціальних мереж у навчанні англійської мови через різноманітні види діяльності, що сприяють розвитку комунікативних навичок студентів.

В академічному контексті соціальні мережі є інструментами, які використовуються в навчальних закладах для обміну інформацією, результатами досліджень, рецензіями на книги та спілкування з однолітками та вчи-

телями. Такі соціальні мережі, як Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, WhatsApp, Блоги. Google Hangouts тощо є майданчиком, де користувачі можуть спілкуватися, обмінюватися ідеями та спільно вирішувати проблеми.

Автор пропонує різноманітні способи інтеграції соціальних мереж у процес навчання англійської мови:

– Facebook: використання групових обговорень, рольових ігор, мовного обміну, мовних ігор та відео для вивчення мови з метою покращення розмовних навичок.

– Instagram: запровадження щоденних відеоблогів, серій інтерв'ю, завдань з опису фотографій, розмовних викликів у рілз, живих дискусій та інтерактивних опитувань для розвитку ораторських здібностей.

– WhatsApp: залучення студентів до бесід за допомогою голосових повідомлень, щоденних розмов, мовного обміну у парах, аудіожурналів, групових обговорень поточних подій, ланцюжків розповідей, мовних ігор за допомогою голосових повідомлень та віртуальних дебатів, спрямованих на розмовну практику.

– Ведення блогів: заохочення до створення класних блогів для спільних письмових проектів з усними відгуками, особистих блогів для роздумів, інтеграція мультимедійних елементів та обговорення тем, пов'язаних із мовою для покращення навичок спілкування.

– Google Hangouts: сприяння організації спільних проектів, віртуальних зустрічей, занять із запрошеними доповідачами, партнерського віртуального мовного обміну та занять із віртуального мовного оцінювання з метою посилення співпраці та залученості студентів.

– TikTok: заохочення до створення коротких монологів чи діалогів, щоденних завдань-викликів, завдань зі створення розповідей, серій інтерв'ю та продукування креативного контенту, спрямованих на розвиток розмовних навичок студентів.

У статті підкреслюється трансформаційний потенціал соціальних мереж у навчанні англійської мови завдяки застосуванню інтерактивних технологій у практикуванні мови в реалістичному контексті в умовах безпечного та дружнього середовища. Перспективами подальших досліджень у цій сфері може стати розробка електронних матеріалів для вчителів з метою їх використання у навчанні англійської мови за допомогою соціальних мереж.

Ключові слова: соціальні мережі, соціальні медіаплатформи, розмовні навички.

Problem statement. As the world becomes more interconnected than ever before, proficiency in English has become indispensable for personal growth, academic success, and professional achievement. However, mastery of spoken English remains a persistent challenge for many ESL learners due to limited opportunities for real-life interactions and insufficient practice in formal educational settings.

The traditional classroom setting, while valuable, is often limited in its scope to provide extensive opportunities for verbal communication. Social networks, on the other hand, offer a virtual arena where students can practice, refine, and broaden their speaking abilities in ways that transcend the boundaries of conventional learning environments. In this context educators are increasingly incorporating social media into their teaching methods to provide ESL learners with engaging opportunities to strengthen their speaking skills while boosting motivation levels and confidence. The interactive nature of social media channels enables students to develop communication and language skills effectively.

Literature review. Recent research has highlighted the significant role of social networks in fostering students' speaking skills in ESL classrooms. The study conducted by M. Ramzan, R. Bibi, & N. Khunsa showed that students used social media platforms to a respectable extent (Ramzan, Bibi, & Khunsa, 2023: 407). Additionally, it was found that ESL students' use of social media considerably improved their ESL learning outcomes. By identifying

the influence of social media use, educators and policymakers may create plans to maximize its potential for raising academic engagement and performance among ESL students.

A systematic review conducted by D. Manogaran, & N. Sulaiman, was focused on the effectiveness of social media in improving ESL learners' speaking skills from 2017 to 2021. The review highlighted that social media is a valuable resource for educators to enhance speaking skills, motivate learners, and provide guidance on integrating social media into teaching methods The findings emphasized the benefits of using social media in ESL classrooms to strengthen speaking abilities while fostering a positive learning environment (Manogaran, & Sulaiman, 2022: 737).

Findings on another research on the problems and difficulties learners face when learning speaking, conducted by Emily John and Melor Md Yunus, reveal that there are improvements in speaking skills, as well as confidence to speak and a decline in speaking anxiety. Teachers and educators can now make use of the various social media platforms such as Telegram, Facebook, WhatsApp, and others to provide learners with more practice that is not only restricted to the classroom but has moved beyond it (Donny, & Adnan, 2022).

One more study that investigated utilizing social media to elevate speaking skills done by Claudia Dona Donny and Hafizah Adnan show that social media does help in elevating their speaking skills. The students chose 'WhatsApp,' 'YouTube,' and 'TikTok'

as their preferred social media that help their oral communication skills (Donny, & Adnan, 2022: 539).

The research conducted by A. Purwanto, K. Fahmi, & Y. Cahyono. highlights that social media is an effective way to promote student engagement to share ideas and to express their opinions in a more comfortable way. The advantage of social media applications is that they foster collaboration; given that they offer teachers and students a destination where they can bring their ideas together, social media can be used as a valuable educational tool capable of enriching the learning experience (Purwanto, Fahmi, & Cahyono, 2022: 1).

Recent studies underscore the positive impact of social networks in enhancing ESL students' speaking skills by providing engaging opportunities for practice, interaction, and language exposure. Educators are encouraged to apply these tools to create dynamic and effective learning environments that promote language development and communication skills among ESL learners.

The purpose of the study. The article is aimed at analyzing the potential of social networks for teaching English in the context of various activities that promote ESL students' speaking skills.

Main part. Recent researches indicate that social media serves as a valuable educational tool in the ESL classroom, enhancing language learning and student engagement. Cambridge dictionary defines social network as «a website or computer program that allows people to communicate and share information on the internet using a computer or mobile phone» (Cambridge dictionary). In Merriam-webster dictionary social network is «an online service or site through which people create and maintain interpersonal relationships» (Merriam-webster dictionary).

In everyday usage, social networking refers to the act of interacting with people and organizations and sharing information online. In this case, a social network can refer to the media and technology that facilitate these actions, i.e., online websites and applications (Social Networking). As an academic device, the social media has become common tools that used in educational establishments by everyone to share academic works, research findings, book reviews, and communicate with their peers and teachers. Such social networks as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, WhatsApp, Blogs. Google Hangouts etc. provide a place where users can dialogue, exchange ideas, and find solutions to problems.

In teaching ESL students, various types of social media can be effectively applied to enhance language learning and speaking skills. This study presents some teaching methods that have been already implemented in academic environment at English sessions for the first– and second-year students. Here are some teaching strategies social media can be integrated into ESL classrooms:

Facebook. Specifically, Facebook has been evaluated as a potential instrument for language learning, with certain studies exploring its Closed Groups due to the allure of their private attributes, facilitating secure communication among language learners. Nevertheless, the majority of research tends to concentrate on the more apparent utilization of Facebook in language learning – primarily as a resource for enhancing reading and writing skills – while placing less emphasis on the development of speaking skills.

Here are some ideas of speaking activities that can be implemented in an ESL classroom using Facebook:

1) group discussions: a teacher may create a Facebook group for the class where students can be involved in discussions on various topics related to the course material. Students could post their opinions, receive and provide feedback on each other's efforts, even if limited by the fact that most students would have been unable to use their own personal accounts and would have to use alternative ones such as their teacher's, as occurred. This encourages active participation and promotes oral communication skills;

2) role-playing: students may act out role-plays or interviews on Facebook, recording their performances and sharing them with the group. This dynamic approach not only cultivates a creative and interactive learning environment but also provides students with a valuable opportunity to hone their speaking skills within real-life contexts. By sharing their recorded role-plays, learners can actively participate in constructive feedback loops within the online community, fostering a collaborative atmosphere where peers can offer insights and suggestions for improvement. This process not only enhances speaking proficiency but also cultivates a supportive and communicative online space that encourages continuous language development;

3) language exchange: a teacher can connect a class with other ESL learners or native speakers from different countries to facilitate language exchange. By establishing connections with ESL learners or native speakers from different countries, students can engage in meaningful language exchange experiences. This practice not only offers a platform for honing speaking skills but also serves as a gateway to gaining insights into various cultures. Through interactive conversations, learners can share their perspectives,

linguistic nuances, and cultural nuances, creating an immersive language learning environment. This exchange goes beyond the confines of a traditional classroom, fostering a globalized and interconnected community. Students not only refine their speaking abilities through regular interactions but also broaden their cultural awareness, ultimately contributing to a more comprehensive and well-rounded language education experience;

4) language games: it's possible to use Facebook to play language-based games that require speaking, such as Pictionary or Taboo. Leveraging Facebook as a platform for language-based games introduces an exciting dimension to ESL classrooms, enhancing not only linguistic skills but also fostering teamwork and creativity among students. By utilizing the platform's multimedia capabilities, students can share images, engage in lively discussions, and articulate their thoughts in a foreign language context. The dynamic nature of these games encourages spontaneous and creative language use, helping learners to overcome inhibitions related to speaking in a second language. Additionally, the collaborative nature of these activities promotes teamwork as students work together to decipher clues or express ideas, fostering a sense of camaraderie within the online learning community;

5) language learning videos: a teacher may share language learning videos on the class Facebook page, such as TED Talks or YouTube videos. Students can watch these videos and discuss them in the group, improving their listening and speaking skills. The integration of language learning videos into the ESL classroom, facilitated through platforms like Facebook, emerges as a dynamic strategy for nurturing students' listening and speaking abilities. This not only introduces learners to authentic language usage but also exposes them to diverse accents, idiomatic expressions, and cultural contexts. Following the video viewings, students can actively participate in group discussions within the online community, exchanging their thoughts, opinions, and reflections on the content. Engaging with thought-provoking material stimulates critical thinking, encourages the expression of ideas, and empowers students to articulate their perspectives effectively.

Incorporating these activities into your ESL classroom, can leverage Facebook as a flexible and ubiquitous learning space for developing students' speaking skills.

Instagram. Applying Instagram for English language learning can be an effective and engaging way to enhance students' speaking skills. Here are various methods to utilize Instagram for language development:

1) daily vlogs or stories. A teacher initiates a daily vlogging or storytelling challenge where students share brief videos on their Instagram stories. This regular practice helps improve spontaneous speaking abilities and provides an opportunity for consistent language engagement;

2) interview series on IGTV. Students can conduct virtual interviews or create interview series on Instagram's IGTV feature. This could involve interviewing groupmates, teachers, or even industry professionals, fostering conversational skills and real-world communication scenarios;

3) photo description task. A teacher assigns tasks where students post a photo on Instagram, and in the caption or comments, they provide a detailed description or narration in English. This encourages them to express their thoughts and details clearly in written form and then they may discuss these descriptions in class;

4) speaking challenges via reels and highlights: Instagram Reels can be used for language challenges. For example, students can create short videos responding to language-related prompts, such as tongue twisters, pronunciation exercises, or vocabulary showcases. A teacher may also use Instagram highlights to organize narrative challenges. Students can post a series of stories that together tell a short narrative, helping them develop storytelling skills and maintain a coherent flow in spoken English;

5) Instagram live discussions. Host live discussions on Instagram where students can participate in real-time conversations on specific topics. This interactive format encourages spontaneity and improves speaking skills in an authentic setting;

6) interactive polls and quizzes. Students may be involved in creating interactive polls and quizzes on Instagram with further sharing in the class for speaking activity. This activity not only enhances their ability to ask and answer questions but also encourages them to use English for different communicative purposes.

These diverse methods can serve Instagram as a dynamic platform for students to practice and improve their speaking skills in English while embracing the visual and interactive nature of the platform.

WhatsApp. Using WhatsApp for English language learning can be a convenient and interactive way to develop students' speaking skills. Here are various methods to utilize WhatsApp for language development:

1) voice messaging conversations. Students may be engaged in voice messaging conversations on WhatsApp. This allows them to practice spontaneous speaking, pronunciation, and fluency in a format that simulates real-life communication;

2) daily conversation starters. A teacher shares daily conversation starters or prompts in a WhatsApp group. Students can respond to these prompts with voice messages, initiating regular speaking practice and encouraging them to express their thoughts on different topics;

3) language exchange pairs. A teacher pairs up students, assigning them specific days for voice messaging each other in English. This method provides an opportunity for conversational practice and cultural exchange;

4) audio journals. Students may create audio journals on WhatsApp where they share reflections on their day, experiences, or thoughts in English. This encourages them to articulate their ideas verbally and improve spoken language skills;

5) group discussions on current events. A teacher initiates group discussions on current events by sharing relevant articles or news snippets. Students can then voice their opinions, share perspectives, and engage in discussions, fostering both speaking and critical thinking skills;

6) storytelling chains. A teacher begins a storytelling chain where one student starts a story with a voice message, and others continue it sequentially. This collaborative storytelling exercise enhances creativity, coherence, and speaking proficiency;

7) language games via voice messages. A teacher introduces language games that can be played through voice messages, such as word association or 20 Questions. This adds an element of fun to language practice and encourages students to speak spontaneously;

8) virtual debates. A teacher organizes virtual debates within the WhatsApp group on specific topics. Students can present arguments, counterarguments, and engage in discussions, enhancing their persuasive speaking skills.

WhatsApp can serve as a versatile and accessible tool for students to practice and improve their speaking skills in English, fostering a communicative and collaborative language learning environment.

Blogging. Implementing blogging in English language teaching offers a versatile and contemporary approach that extends beyond conventional methods:

1) class blogs: these blogs may serve as virtual spaces where students can actively contribute regular posts, share insights, and engage in meaningful interactions. This not only hones their language skills but also cultivates a sense of digital literacy. To develop learners' speaking skills, educators can encourage students to share their blog posts on various social media platforms, extending the reach of their content and promoting authentic communication in an online context;

2) collaborative writing projects with further oral feedback. Students can collaboratively create blog entries on specific topics, encouraging teamwork, negotiation of ideas, and shared responsibility. This collaborative endeavor not only sharpens individual writing skills and provides oral interaction among students but also instills a sense of collective ownership and cooperation;

3) a reflective tool. Students may maintain personal blogs to document their language learning journey, articulating their thoughts, challenges, and progress. Then they can discuss these blogs at lessons. This reflective practice not only enhances writing and speaking skills but also fosters self-awareness and metacognition;

4) multimedia elements and blogs. Encouraging students to integrate images, videos, or audio recordings into their blog posts not only diversifies their communication skills but also allows for a more holistic approach to language learning. This method enables students to explore different modes of expression and engage with various forms of media within the blogging platform;

5) discussions on language-related topics. Posting prompts or questions on the class blog and encouraging students to respond in the comment section fosters interactive communication. This method stimulates critical thinking, encourages expression in writing, and promotes a sense of community engagement within the virtual classroom space.

Incorporating these varied methods of utilizing blogging in English language teaching not only enhances writing and communication skills but also caters to diverse learning styles, encouraging a more interactive, reflective, and multimedia-rich language learning experience for students.

Google Hangouts. Google Hangouts presents a dynamic platform that extends beyond mere communication, offering versatile tools for English language educators to enhance collaboration and engagement among ESL students:

1) collaborative projects. Educators can assign group projects where students collaborate in real-time through Hangouts, working collectively on assignments, presentations, or language-based tasks. This not only hones their language skills but also promotes teamwork, problem-solving, and the efficient utilization of digital tools;

2) virtual meetings. Teachers can organize structured virtual sessions where students engage in conversations, discussions, or debates, providing a space for authentic language use. These virtual meetings simulate real-life communication scenarios, offering students an opportunity to express themselves

in a supportive and interactive environment. This method not only refines speaking skills but also nurtures confidence in using English for various purposes;

3) host guest speakers or language experts. Inviting guest speakers for virtual sessions provides students with exposure to diverse accents, idiomatic expressions, and real-world language use. This enriching experience broadens their linguistic proficiency and cultural awareness, making language learning more authentic and dynamic;

4) virtual language exchange partnerships. Connecting ESL students with peers from different locations allows for language practice in a natural and interactive setting. Through one-on-one or group Hangout sessions, students can engage in conversations, share cultural insights, and collaborate on language-related activities. This method not only fosters speaking skills but also creates a globalized learning environment, breaking down geographical barriers and promoting cross-cultural understanding;

5) virtual language assessment and feedback sessions. Teachers can organize individual or group assessments where students showcase their language skills through spoken presentations or dialogues. Immediate feedback and constructive discussions can take place through Hangouts, providing a personalized approach to language development.

These varied approaches transform Google Hangouts into a versatile instrument within the toolkit of English language teaching. This evolution fosters collaboration, communication, and cultural exchange among ESL students, enriching their learning experience.

TikTok. Integrating TikTok into English language learning can be a creative and engaging way to develop students' speaking skills. Here are several methods to leverage TikTok for language development:

1) short monologues or dialogues. Students can create short monologues or dialogues on TikTok, addressing a specific topic or using a set of vocabulary words. This activity prompts them to practice concise expression and articulate their thoughts within the platform's time constraints;

2) daily English challenges. A teacher may initiate daily or weekly English challenges on TikTok, where students share brief videos responding to prompts related to their daily lives, interests, or opinions. Students can also participate in tongue twisters, pronunciation challenges, or vocabulary games, fostering a fun and interactive way to practice speaking English. This regular practice enhances spontaneous speaking abilities and encourages a consistent engagement with the language;

3) storytelling. A teacher may assign storytelling tasks where students share a short story, summarizing a book, or narrating an experience through TikTok videos. This method not only improves speaking skills but also promotes creativity and narrative proficiency;

4) interview series. Students can conduct virtual interviews or role-playing scenarios on TikTok. This can involve them taking on different roles, such as interviewing a historical figure, discussing a topic as an expert, or simulating job interviews. This approach enhances conversational skills and boosts confidence in diverse communication contexts;

5) song lyrics interpretation. Students can be engaged in interpreting and performing song lyrics. This activity promotes listening and speaking skills, vocabulary acquisition, and creative expression through music.

Incorporating these diverse methods, TikTok can serve as a vibrant platform for students to practice and develop their speaking skills in English in a contemporary and enjoyable manner.

Conclusion. The integration of diverse social media platforms and digital tools, including Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, WhatsApp, Blogs, and Google Hangouts, presents an innovative and comprehensive approach to developing speaking skills in the teaching of English. These platforms offer unique opportunities for authentic language practice, real-life interactions, and collaborative learning experiences. From engaging in virtual conversations to sharing multimedia content, each tool contributes distinctively to the enhancement of students' oral proficiency. Embracing these technologies not only aligns with the evolving landscape of language education but also cultivates a dynamic and inclusive learning environment. The amalgamation of these resources empowers educators to create immersive, interactive, and culturally enriched language learning spaces that cater to the diverse needs and preferences of modern learners. As we navigate the digital era, implementation of these platforms in English language teaching not only addresses the imperative of technological integration but also ensures that speaking skills are nurtured in a manner that is both effective and engaging.

Prospects for further research in this area may be electronic materials development for teachers to implement them in teaching English with social networks.

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