

Social Media in Teaching of Languages

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Abstract—With advancements in communication technology, humans can now bridge the constraints of time and space with minimal effort. Through this, the ability of individuals to interact with millions of others at an instant has not only been increased, but also improved. As a result of these developments, endeavours such as education could benefit greatly. Undertakings such as distant education, blended learning, and even interactive education could be made considerably easier and more efficient. For instance, with regards to education, the teaching of languages could draw important uses from the application of social media to teach learners new languages. Through social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and YouTube, instructors could help learners access greater competency in language learning and use. The social media sites would allow learners to immerse themselves in situations where they openly interact with others who are more competent than them in the use of the language. In this way, learners may be able to improve their grasp of the language. From this research article, it is evident that social media can be applied to aid in the teaching of languages. Learners can interact freely with native speakers of the language they seek to learn, and they could also direct the process of learning themselves. These would be enabled through the application of social media in the instruction process. Further, learners could also immerse themselves in the culture associated with the language they seek to learn. Consequently, the learners would increase their grasp and end up improving the learning experience. Finally, social media may allow free interaction with native-speakers of a language. In this manner, the learners would be improving their diction and pronunciation of the words and phrases; a fact that would greatly enhance the learning process.

Keywords—Immersion, Self-Direction, Social Media, Native-Speakers, Pronunciation

1 Introduction

Over the years, the manner in which humans communicate with each other has changed drastically. Much of this change has been mediated by technology and the development of resulting competencies. For instance, it is currently easier for an individual to talk to one person without the limits of time and distance. Such an undertaking would have been nearly impossible before the advent of information and

communication technologies that are in use today. Just as much, it is also possible to talk to millions or even billions of people without seeing them or being in close proximity to them. This ability, as conferred upon individuals by the use of social media, can be applied to the process of teaching English, especially to foreigners who already have a first language. Using different social media platforms, it would be possible for teachers to impart in learners the competency to acquire English language skills. Social media can thus aid in the improvement of listening, speaking, writing, and reading, particularly among learners of the English language. In this report, the role of social media in teaching of English as a second language is highlighted. The report further looks into how learners can improve their English language skills through directed engagement on various social media platforms. To such end, the immersion learning approach will be applied and assessed. Finally, the research highlights the revolutions that the inclusion of social media in teaching learners English as a second language has brought to the process of instruction and even assessment.

For purposes of this research, existing sources of data will be consulted with the aim of illuminating how social media can aid in learning. Further examination will focus on how the teaching and learning of English can draw benefits from the use of social media. To such ends, published sources of literature will be examined with the aim of determining how social media platforms can be applied in teaching of languages. Such literature is also expected to provide insight into how learners can benefit from open and guided interactions with their peers and other learners. In such regard, the instruction process would be carried out using a second language that the learners are already proficient in. To this end, relevant publications will be consulted with the aim of establishing how peer support can aid in the learning of new languages. Further, the research will look into literature detailing how immersion based language learning can be achieved through the use of social media platforms. Overall, the research is expected to demonstrate how social media can revolutionize the teaching of English language to foreign learners.

2 Teaching English as a Second Language - Social Media

Plenty of literature exists on the various methodologies and approaches that could be applied to the process of teaching languages to learners. For this specific research, the focus will be on literature related to the use of social media for teaching languages, the benefits of social media for education, the immersion approach to teaching languages, and the bridging of time – distance constraints through the use of technology in the learning process.

2.1 Social media allows immersion

Social media, considering its interactive set-up, can allow for learners to freely interact with others in a near-natural setting. Learners can competitively acquire new languages if they are immersed in an environment where the foreign language they

learn is used for instruction [1]. There are different ways though which such immersion may occur. For one, learners may be exposed to shared time between their native language and the foreign language they seek to learn – a phenomenon called partial immersion [2]. This would allow the students to learn new concepts in their native language while also acquiring competencies in the foreign language. In essence, learners would be instructed in different subjects and disciplines using both their native language and the English language that they seek to learn. With regards to the use of technology, social media sites such as Facebook and WhatsApp can be used to achieve such ends. For instance learners could be added to WhatsApp groups and Facebook pages created purposely for the learning of new languages. As such, the learners would be immersed into situations where they can use their native and the foreign language for learning. The use of these technologies would confer greater efficiencies in language teaching and learning among students [3].

The use of social media would enable learners to access content at any time and from any location thus increasing the effectiveness of instructions. This would allow for round the clock immersion of learners into the process of language instruction. In regards to the competencies of online learning, online learning allows individuals to carry out independent study at their own time thus supplementing the content provided by instructors during class sessions [4]. In this way, learners can choose to either read ahead of the instructor – thus improving their acquisition and retention of information in class, or revise the content taught in class – thus improving retention of information [5]. Overall therefore, the use of social media would allow learners to be immersed into environments where they can learn foreign languages without the need to be physically present in other cultures. In this way, the process of teaching new languages by instructors and learning such languages by students would be rendered more cost effective.

As [1] defines it, immersion as applied in the teaching of languages involves the use of a specific language for instruction of learners seeking to gain and improve their proficiency in such language. By this definition, if English were being taught to foreign learners, it would be applied as the language of instruction with the aim of improving the grasp that such learners have of the language. Essentially, the use of social media platforms would allow instructors to expose learners to scenarios where they can use English in their daily interactions with others – specifically fellow learners who seek to improve their proficiency of the English language. As such, social media platforms could be used to impart competencies in the learners by allowing them to use the language in their daily interactions – within an environment where they feel comfortable enough to do so [6] [7]. In addition to this, the learners could even make use of in built social media tools such as translation in a bid to improve their understanding of the new language. Immersion in such instances would be more effective because students interact with fellow learners as well as with instructors thus are more comfortable using the new language [1].

2.2 Greater interaction and collaboration

Students are more likely to learn from each other in interactive forums [8]. Being that the teaching and learning of new languages is a collaborative effort that calls for free and open interaction with others, the use of social media would thus be important for teaching languages. Particularly, foreign students who seek to learn a second language would benefit a great deal from the use of social media platforms to freely interact with others. These interactions would ordinarily involve persons who already use the language to be learnt as a second language – and possibly share the learners’ first language. The interactions may also be with those who use the language to be learnt as a first language and thus are more competent in the use of the language [9]. From these interactions, in the teaching of English, the foreign learners who seek to improve their knowledge and literacy of English as a language would be well served. Specifically, considering the multimodal nature of such interactions— involving speech and text – it would be possible for foreign learners to improve their reading, speaking, writing and listening skills through the use of social media [6]. These four skills are the cornerstone of learning new languages [3]. Overall, therefore, the use of social media platforms would be necessary in equipping learners with the four skills that demonstrate literacy and competence in a new language. Social media platforms allow learners to interact on more than just audio or text platforms but also to include video in their interactions [10]. In this manner, learners are actually offered the chance to be in setting where the language they seek to learn is used – a process referred to as immersion [2].

Introducing a second language is markedly more challenging in instances where learners have no supplementary mechanisms of acquiring, or self-assessing their acquisition of competence [11]. As such, the use of social media platforms to teach learners, and to allow them interact with their peers in purposively selected forums, would be crucial in improving learning. This is based on the fact that the social media platforms would enable learners to interact with others and thereby assess their own competencies in the use of the English language. Bilingual education is based on developing an individual’s competency in a second language by drawing on the foundation of the first language [11], [9]. Going by this perception, the use of social media would thus be critical for teaching learners second languages. In this regard, instructors would be wise to create connections between learners of English as a second language who speak a specific first language, and speakers of English as a first language who seek to speak the other first language. This would result in the development of an exchange program of sorts, mediated through the use of social media. In practice, the learners would be able to direct each other on the acquisition of the second languages they seek to grow their proficiencies in. Overall, the use of social media would allow learners to acquire a second language through peer-directed learning.

2.3 Blended Learning

Application of social media in the teaching of English to non-native speakers can aid in the fusion of online and traditional learning. That is, social media can be used to allow instructors provide content for learners in brick-and-mortar classrooms as well as in virtual classrooms. The teaching of languages through blended learning approaches enable the content used to reflect the prevailing trends and forms of the language [10]. In this way, learners are able to relate the concepts they learn in the classroom with those that they interact with in the cyber sphere. The use of social media would enable teachers to interact with their learners in the classroom and in the digital space thus increasing the learning that can be derived therefrom [11]. Through the formal setting of the classroom, learners get to access formal concepts while in the digital space they can interact in a more informal fashion with their instructors and fellow learners. Through these the process of learning is strengthened [12]. In addition, the use of social media platforms to achieve the blended learning environment would also offer the learners access to multimedia through which they can learn languages better. For instance, learners would be able to learn pronunciations through listening to audio clips, gain competencies in non-verbal cues through watching videos, and even strengthen their grasp of the language through games and word puzzles [8]. Overall, social media allows instructors to create a blended learning environment through which learners can advance their language skills and competencies.

Learning of any new language requires practice in vocabulary development, speech writing, and word identification [5]. The use of social media within the classroom during the teaching of English to non-native speakers would enable instructors achieve such ends. Teachers would be able to apply the use of social media platforms – created specifically for such purpose – to advance the skills of learners. Social media would allow the instructor to interact with learners within and away from the classroom. As such, this would offer the opportunity for offering of guidance to learners even without physical proximity [4]. Overall therefore, social media, by allowing learners of new languages (particularly English) to learn through blended settings, increases the speed and outcome of the learning process. Through open interactions with other learners, and with instructors, learners can improve their competency and grasp of concepts faster than they would through the traditional classroom alone.

Languages are dynamic and ever changing, as such, learners and even native users need to stay updated with any new terminologies or vocabularies. Social media, is based on, and driven by current events [13]. The platforms are also rich in creative content that applies the use of languages – specifically English. In this regard, instructors who teach the English language to both native and non-native speakers would be well served taking a blended learning approach [14]. Learners would thus be able to learn in class and also use social media platforms for practical application of language skills. Through these, they would be able to not only develop their competencies but also deepen their grasp of emerging phrases, words, and terminologies.

2.4 Self-direction in learning

For learning to be effective, it requires a sense of self direction. As such, in the teaching of languages, self-direction would be important [13]. Technology can be applied to such end through the use of collective approach to learning. That is, learners seeking to gain competencies in English as a second language, can come together in groups to enable the success of such effort. This would be particularly applicable in cases where the learners share a common native language and seek to learn the same second language. Self-direction in learning is even more effective where a collaborative approach is applied [11]. Social media can be used to enable such efforts by offering a common space for learners seeking competencies in a second language – in this case English [14], [15]. Through collective engagement in social media platforms such as Facebook pages and groups, WhatsApp chat groups, and other platforms, learners can brainstorm with each other. In so doing, they would be able to address their weaknesses thus improving their learning. Essentially, the use of social media in teaching learners a second language would be similar to the use of group discussion to teaching other subjects such as sciences where collective engagement is used to spur greater learning. Group learning helps improve outcomes as individuals are freer to interact with their peers than they would with instructors [16]. As such, the use of social media in teaching of English as a second language would improve learning outcomes among individuals.

Social media can allow learners to take charge of their learning process. The most effective formats of learning new languages is through the ability to take charge of such process [17]. As such, the application of social media would allow learners to interact with English speaking individuals outside of the classroom through the cyber sphere [18]. By so doing, the learners would be able to put into practice the concepts they learn in the classroom [16]. Consequently, the learners would access the opportunity to direct the process of learning for themselves – away from the classroom setting [19]. Overall, the use of social media in teaching of English as a second language to learners would improve the learning outcomes among individuals.

3 Conclusion

Teaching of languages is a tasking affair that needs to be approached from creative standpoints. In the recent past, technology has been applied to ease this endeavour. Among the options preferred include the application of social media to the teaching of languages – particularly English. From a consultation of existing sources of literature, it is evident that learners can competitively acquire new languages if they are immersed in an environment where the foreign language they learn is used for instruction. Immersion allows students to learn new concepts in their native language while also acquiring competencies in the foreign language. The use of social media would enable learners to access content at any time and from any location thus increasing the effectiveness of instructions. Further, such application of social media would allow instructors to expose learners to scenarios where they can use English in

their daily interactions with others – specifically fellow learners who seek to improve their proficiency of the English language.

Students are more likely to learn from each other in interactive forums. Being that the teaching and learning of new languages is a collaborative effort that calls for free and open interaction with others, the use of social media would be important for teaching languages. Particularly, foreign students who seek to learn a second language would benefit a great deal from the use of social media platforms to freely interact with others. In addition, given the multimodal nature of such interactions – involving speech and text – it would be possible for foreign learners to acquire reading, speaking, writing and listening skills. Because social media platforms allow learners to interact on more than just audio or text platforms but also to include video in their interactions. In this manner, learners are actually offered the chance to be in setting where the language they seek to learn is used. Under the traditional approaches to teaching English language to students, the learners have no supplementary mechanisms of acquiring, or self-assessing their acquisition of competence. As such, the use of social media platforms to teach learners, and to allow them interact with their peers in purposively selected forums, would be crucial in improving learning.

Application of social media in the teaching of English to non-native speakers can aid in the fusion of online and traditional learning. The teaching of languages through blended learning approaches enable the content used to reflect the prevailing trends and forms of the language. In this way, learners are able to relate the concepts they learn in the classroom with those that they interact with in the cyber sphere. Social media allows instructors to create a blended learning environment through which learners can advance their language skills and competencies. For learning to be effective, it requires a sense of self direction. As such, in the teaching of languages, self-direction would be important. Technology can be applied to such end through the use of collective approach to learning. Social media can allow learners to take charge of their learning process by enabling them interact with English speaking individuals outside of the classroom through the cyber sphere. In this way, the learners can put into practice the concepts they learn in the classroom. As such, the use of social media in teaching of English as a second language to learners would improve the learning outcomes among individuals. This would be achieved by the ability to immerse learners in real-life situations where the language is used, thereby increasing their overall competencies in language use and application.

4 References

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