TIỀM NĂNG ỨNG DỤNG MẠNG XÃ HỘI
TRONG MÔI TRƯỜNG GIẢNG DẠY TIẾNG ANH

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Trong kỷ nguyên số ngày nay, khoa học công nghệ đã trở thành một phần tất yếu của cuộc sống, tạo ra nhiều thay đổi trong mọi lĩnh vực, bao gồm giáo dục. Các giảng đường ngày nay đang ngày càng đề cao việc ứng dụng và kết nối với mọi người bằng công nghệ như một kĩ năng cần thiết để đạt được thành công trong tương lai. Tương tự, việc ứng dụng công nghệ nói chung và mạng xã hội nói riêng vào giảng dạy tiếng Anh đang nhận được nhiều sự quan tâm của các nhà giáo dục. Bằng cách tích hợp mạng xã hội vào lớp học tiếng Anh truyền thống các nhà giáo dục hy vọng tạo ra một công cụ hỗ trợ để thúc đẩy tương tác giữa các học viên với nhau và với giáo viên đồng thời thúc đẩy động lực cho người học. Để có được cái nhìn sâu hơn về những mặt tốt và chưa tốt của việc ứng dụng này, tác giả bài viết này sẽ tổng hợp kết quả của một số nghiên cứu gần đây; từ đó, tác giả mong muốn đưa ra những bài học và gợi ý cho việc tích hợp mạng xã hội vào bối cảnh giảng dạy tiếng Anh tại Trung tâm Giáo dục Quốc tế, Trường Đại học Hà Nội.

Từ khóa: *Mạng xã hội, tiềm năng ứng dụng công nghệ, giảng dạy tiếng Anh, cách thức khai thác.*

Recently in digital world, science and technology has become an integral part of human life and brought about many changes in all fields, including education. Using and connecting with others through web-based technology are now increasingly essential skills for successful future. Likewise, the application of technology in general and social networks in particular to English teaching has aroused increasing interest from educators. Integrating social networks into traditional English classes is hoped to create a supportive tool to facilitate interaction among students and with teachers, thus, enhance learning motivation. This paper reviews some recent empirical research studies on the use of social networks for teaching and learning in order to have a deeper insight into its pros and cons. Lessons and suggestions for using social networks in English classes are thence drawn from the teaching context at the International Education Center (IEC), Hanoi University.

Key words: *social network, potential of technology application, English teaching, exploiting method.*

APPLICATIONS OF SOCIAL NETWORK IN CLASSROOM

INTRODUCTION

Web-based technology in general and social networking software in particular

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are more popularly used nowadays and there are vast opportunities for teachers and students in using social software for teaching and learning.

As educators look for ways to engage and motivate students, social media

technologies are becoming a viable supplement to the traditional learning environment (Ebner, Lienhardt, Rohs, & Meyer, 2010). Most agreed that social networking sites can help educators share information and resources, create professional learning communities and improve schoolwide communications with students and staff. They hold a strong belief that these tools could improve student motivation and engagement, help students develop a more social/ collaborative view of learning and create a connection to real-life learning (Brady, Holcomb, & Smith, 2010; Lee & McLoughlin, 2010; Veletsianos & Navarrete, 2012).

In fact, as stated by the National School Board Association's survey in 2007, 96% of the American students with online access reported using social networking technologies, and on average they spent 9 hours per week chatting, blogging, and visiting online communities. This survey also showed that 60% of the students talked about schoolwork while online. In another study, Wang, Chen, and Liang (2011) reported that students spend roughly 100 minutes per day on Facebook. In 2007, 92% of college students reported that they had a Facebook account. By 2008, 99% of students had an account on Facebook (p. 5).

Despite this prevalence in everyday life, schools have been hesitant to adopt social networking as an education tool. However, doubtful issues concerning the use of social networking in teaching and learning are not uncommon among

educators and parents: How can we protect students? What are the educational benefits? What policy issues need to be considered? There seem to be no quick or easy answers. As a result, the adoption of social networking for education purposes lags behind the public's general usage. This is particularly true to the context at International Education Center (IEC), Hanoi University.

This paper is going to give an insight into the practice of using social network in teaching and learning in different schools in the world. Lessons together with pros and cons of social network for educational purposes will be drawn with the hope that this digital tool would become more affordable in the future of teaching and learning at IEC.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Social network

Social network, derived from the social software movement, are a collection of Internet websites, services, and practices that support collaboration, community building, participation, and sharing (Junco, Heibergert, & Loken, 2010). As defined by Bryer and Zavatarro (2001), "Social media are technologies that facilitate social interaction, make possible collaboration, and enable deliberation across stakeholders" (p. 327). These technologies now include blogs, wikis, media (audio, photo, video, text) sharing tools, networking platforms (including Facebook), and virtual worlds (Bryer & Zavatarro, 2001).

Social media sites such as Youtube, Twitter, and Facebook have been worldly wide known of playing important roles in the lives of "Net-Generation" students, who have engaged in digital and highly social network for several years. Regarding to that, integrating one of these social media sites to curriculum can be useful in language teaching since they promote users' interactions by exchanging profiles, photos, and videos with others. In accordance with that using social media sites in teaching a foreign language communication course should also yield outstanding results.

2. Practices in using social network for teaching and learning

Today's college students (which consist of Baby Boomers, Generation Xers, and Millennials) are exposed to all types of technologies in many aspects of their lives (Browning, Gerlich, & Westermann, 2011). On a daily basis they use desktop computers, laptops, e-readers, tablets, and cell phones to actively engage in social networking, text messaging, blogging, content sharing, online learning, and much more (Cassidy, Griffin, Manolovitz, Shen, & Turney, 2011). As documented in recent research, students and faculty are using these emerging technologies and platforms in all facets of their daily lives, specifically social media (Browning, et al. 2011; Chen & Bryer, 2012); yet, a low percentage of users are engaging in such for academic practice (Chen & Bryer, 2010; Lenhart, et al., 2010; Tiryakioglu & Erzurum, 2010).

Junco, Heibergert, and Loken (2010) examined the link between social media use and student engagement. The semester-long study consisted of two groups, experimental and control. With the experimental group, Twitter was used for various types of academic and co-curricular discussions, class and campus event reminders, faculty and student connections, providing academic and personal support, and organizing service learning projects and study groups for 70 students. Ning, a social networking site, was used to deliver the same course information to the control group of 55 students. Analyses of Twitter exchanges and survey responses showed that: (1) the experimental group had significantly greater increase in engagement and (2) both faculty and students were highly engaged in the teaching and learning process.

Daniel George (2011) developed a mini course entitled "Friending Facebook" for 15 healthcare students at Penn State. The mini course was designed with the use of a variety of social media tools as a means to provide participants with content through anecdotes and examples. For instance:

Really Simple Syndication (RSS) readers – were used to track clinical trial data from multiple journals, to follow blogs originated by researchers, and to receive news and relevant literature regarding the latest trends in the healthcare industry.

Twitter – was used to share and receive information from colleagues, health organization, and patients.

Facebook and LinkedIn – were used as the course platform for networking among peers, faculty and medical professionals.

Google Resources (Alerts, Mail, and Realtime) – were used as search tools that indexed Facebook posts and Twitter tweets and provided social updates on healthcare topics from around the world.

George (2011) conducted course evaluation which revealed that the majority of the participants were open to experimenting further with RSS readers and Google alerts; however, many expressed resistance to using the other social media tools on the grounds that they invite violations of patient privacy laws such as Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

Deng and Yuen (2010) explored the role of academic blogs in supporting a group of 19 pre-service teachers in Hong Kong. Specifically, the purpose of the study was to investigate the pros and cons of using blogs to support self-expression, self-reflection, social interaction, and reflective dialogue among pre-service teachers. Xanga, a free commercial blogging platform, was used as a means of documenting, sharing, and reflecting on their teaching practice experiences. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected through blog frequency counts, questionnaires and interviews. The investigation revealed that only 13 pre-service teachers wrote 75 blogs entries with 62 comments exchanged; 13 participants acknowledged the values of blogs with respect to self-expression and

the documentation of experiences; and 12 pre-service teachers felt more connected through blogging when compared to the teaching practice in the previous year.

3. Potentials of Social Media use for Academia practice

There is an ongoing debate regarding the integration of social media in education. Advocates of social media usage point to the benefits of using social media for academic practice while critics are calling for regulations and/or the removal of such online technologies in the classroom. Finding middle ground has become a challenge.

Proponents argue that contemporary college students have become habituated to a world where social media is the norm; thereby, as an educational tool, social media enriches the learning experience by allowing students and instructors to exchange ideas, foster collaboration and discussion, and engage and interact using such emerging social platforms (Lederer, 2012;Turkle, 2004). Lederer (2012) outlines several benefits to using social media in education. First, she argues that social media is an effective way to increase student engagement and build communication skills by allowing students to feel more comfortable expressing themselves in a less intimidating environment. Secondly, Lederer believes that social media can improve communication between students and instructors, while the latter can answer students' questions, post homework assignments and lesson plans, send

messages and updates, schedule or announce upcoming events, and share Web sites and multimedia content. Finally, Lederger points to students use of social networking sites to find employment by establishing a professional Web presence, posting a resume, and researching potential employers.

Despite the aforementioned benefits, critics argue that there are serious risks to using socia media in the classroom. Furthermore, educators and instructional designers believe that social media technologies are not always appropriate nor successful vehicles for teaching and learning activities (Waycott, Bennett, Kennedy, Dalgarno, & Gray, 2010).

Lederer (2012) cites the following as reasons to censure the integration of social media for academic practice. First, she suggest that social media can be a distraction. A common complaint among instructors is that tools such as Facebook and Twitter divert students' attention from classroom participation and utilimately are disruptive to the learning process. Secondly, while social networking sites provide ways for students and instructors to connect, Lederer argues that cyberbullying can be used as a weapon for malicious behavior. Finally, Lederer argues that social media discourages face-to-face communication, that is, "while real-time digital stream may create a safe harbor for students who are uncomfortable expressing themselves, students are missing valuable lessons in real-life social skills" (Lederer, 2012, p. 2).

Additional challenges that may arise when using social media in education include workload concerns for faculty and students, lack of trust in peer feedback, ownership isues regarding public and collaborative spaces, and difficulty in adapting publicly available tools (Schroeder, et al., 2010). Another challenge concerns suitability and appropriate integration of social media technologies into curriculum. For successful integration, social media technologies should become a seamless part of the curriculum and not just an additional means of communication (Lester & Perini, 2010). Technology infrastructure also pose challenges for using social media to engage students. Third-party Web-based innovations are a major concern for most colleges and universities because the information is stored outside secure campus servers, yet, an alternative arrangement such as the development of a social networking site may be too costly for most institutions of higher learning (Lester & Perini, 2010).

While the debate continues regarding the pros (socialization, engagement of students, development of a community, collaborative and reflective learning, peer-to-peer support and feedback, employment resource, and information management) and cons (cyberbullying, ownership issues, workload issues, lack of student engagement, lack of trust in peer feedback, and technology infrastructure issues) of using social media for academic practice, no one can argue the influence that social networking has on today's

students (Lederer, 2012; Lester & Perini, 2010; Schroeder, et al., 2010; Turkle, 2004).

SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

The growing interest in social media has led educators to examine its use for academic practice. As institutions of higher learning are challenged to enhance collaborative learning and community building amongst students, Minocha (2009) recommends that educators make use of "tools that facilitate collaborative authoring, such as blogs and wikis; applications that enable sharing of bookmarks, photographs and videos…; social networking platforms such as Facebook, Elgg and Ning; and virtual worlds, such as Second Life that facilitate synchronous collaboration" (p. 248).

The reviewed literature suggests that social media holds promise for academia. As reported throughout the current review, students have diverse beliefs, perceptions and experiences with regard to social media technologies. Many of the studies reported a willingness among students to incorporate social media into their learning experiences (Lenhart, et al., 2010; Liu, 2010; Poellhuber & Anderson, 2011; Westermann, 2011). Likewise, the majority of faculty were supportive of utilizing social media not only to enhance student engagement but also to provide course content in a more active and participatory role (Chen & Bryer, 2012; FSSE, 2010; Tiryakioglu & Erzurum, 2010).

The current review continues the tradition of digital divide scholarship by

discussing issues of equality and opportunity for using social media technologies. Several studies presented report a non-significant difference when comparing access and use of social media tools between students of color and White students; however, as new media emerge, questions of who is accessing and using such technologies will remain paramount if we are to be successful in utilizing social media for academic practice.

With respect to the traditional classroom environment, faculty and instructional designers have successfully utilized social media technologies for various types of academic activities that include collaborative learning, inquiry-based learning and reflective learning (Deng & Yuen, 2010; George, 2011; Junco, et al., 2010). Based on students' responses, it is evident that using social media in distance learning environments allowed for increased collaboration, communication, and interaction through blogging, document sharing, networking, tweeting, and social bookmarking (Brady, et al., 2010; Manan, et al., 2012; McCarthy, 2009; Veletsianos & Navarrete, 2012).

Despite its popularity among students for personal use, there is an ongoing debate concerning the role of social media in education. Advocates point to enhanced student engagement, enriched learning experiences, and increased communications as reasons to incorporate social technologies in the learning environment (Lederer, 2012; Turkle, 2004) while critics cite cyberbullying, faculty and student workloads, and technology infrastructure issues as reasons

to censure the concept of social media in education (Lederer, 2012; Waycott, et al., 2010).

The published research on the effectiveness of social media in teaching and learning is limited to the use of discussions, chats, blogs, and wikis; therefore, the need exists for further exploration in determining how other social media platforms can be used for academic practice. The review of literature presented only began to delve below the surface with social media. There are numerous opportunities for researchers and educators alike to continue to build upon the current studies cited in this article in determining the usefulness of social media.

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