Impact of Social Networking Sites on Students' Learning English Language at Tertiary Level in Bangladesh

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Abstract

With the advancement in technology, Social Networking Sites (SNS) are being used by millions of students in Bangladesh for various purposes. People use SNS for communication, interaction' sharing posts, photos, videos; creating blogs, sending messages, and for real time conversations (Zaidieh, 2012). Students can learn their target language through SNSs as these platforms engage students more and inspire them. Moreover, the usage of SNSs minimises learners' fear and nervousness and authority of the instructor (Gilbert, Fiske, &Lindzey, 1998; Beauvois, 1998, cited in Millis, 2011). Moreover, an opportunity of interaction for both teachers and students is ensured through authentic tasks and materials which promote constructivist learning through meaningful communication (Woo, Herrington, Agostinho, & Reeves, 2007). This study has explored the impact of SNS in learning English at tertiary level. So, it focuses on the effects of Social Networking Sites in language learning platform, developing reading, writing, listening and speaking skills and creating ease to teachers and learners in English has been examined in this study. To investigate this, I implemented quantitative research method with 120 students studying Honour's in English Language and Literature at Public, National and Private Universities. Forty students were selected randomly from each of the university category. All the students were surveyed by using close-ended questionnaire and later descriptive statistical method was used to analyse the data. Despite having hesitation of communicating with each other, it is clearly evident that students use SNS mainly Facebook to improve their language skills.

Keywords: Social Networking Sites (SNS), web 2 tools, four integrated skills, language learning (LL), learning ability (LA)

Introduction

Social Networking Sites are such sites by which people can communicate with each other and share their feelings, thoughts, emotions, daily activities, liking, disliking, professional and non-professional experiences virtually. Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, LinkedIn, My space, Google+ are popular SNS according to the usage of user's frequency. Social networking sites support the unity of people

by emphasizing their shared interests (Maloney, 2007).These sites are used by millions of users all over the world. Even users of all ages use Facebook for various purposes. And most of the users are students. Generally parents and teachers tend to believe that using Facebook is a waste of time. This waste of time hampers their learning. Bran, Grosseck and Tiru (2011) conducted a research which showed that students spend most of their time on Facebook communicating with their family and friends, sharing photos and videos, and commenting on posts, but not sharing anything educational. However, there are other researchers who believe that SNS can be a better learning platform for education. For example, Jones et al. (2010) stated that social networking websites are tools that can be used by teachers and students to facilitate education. This study is important due to the increasing number of students using SNSs as a platform to learn English language through communication, interaction and browsing educational materials. So it is required to explore the extent of students' using SNS positively in learning target language.

SNS in Bangladesh

Ensuring quality education from primary to tertiary level is one of the goals of Sustainable Development (SD). English and ICT are two main tools by which a country can accelerate the process of development. Moreover, the use of different ICT applications in education is a driving force which can elevate the learning and teaching process. Even quality education and ICT are prioritised in our National Educational Policy 2010 as we tried to achieve Millennium Development goals. To be an economically solvent country by 2021 and to achieve Sustainable Development Goals, quality education will make an overall development (Ahmed & Kabir, 2018). The country realized that without ICT-based quality education from the primary to tertiary level, this goal cannot be completed. ("Digital Bangladesh: dreams and reality", 2015). To make this country digitalised, Bangladesh government has run some developmental projects which provided high speed Wi-Fi connections in public universities at free of cost, laptops, and multi-media projectors to more than 20,000 institutions all over the country within 2014. Gradually, the government has a target to bring all the institutions under the project to achieve quality education for its people to face the global challenges of this century (Chandan, 2015). Language learning pages like "BBC Janala" and "Robi 10 Minute School" got thousands of learners of English from different categories within a very short period of time via SNS. In this respect, SNS could be an effective platform of learning by which students can be skilled in English and ICT. More than 30 million people use Facebook in Bangladesh and many of them are students (BTRC November 2018's report). And

these students are learning through SNS because of easy access of the language learning materials. So, it will be a huge potential to explore the possibility of accepting SNS as a virtual platform of language learning.

Objectives of the Study

Throughout the work, I aimed to find out:

- the positive impact of SNS on students in learning English language, and
- to determine the relationship between usage of SNS and Language Learning.

Literature Review

Nowadays, the use of information technology causes changes in a learning environment (Uzunboylu, Bicen & Cavus, 2011). Information technology and social networking tools have created a new dimension of learning. Thus e-learning has managed to become one of the hallmarks of our lives. (Cavus, Uzunboylu, & Ibrahim, 2008). Research studies show that social networks can be used for educational purposes and have a positive impact on students (Bicen & Uzunboylu, 2013; Kamenetz, 2011; Kabilan et. al., 2010; Locker & Patterson, 2008; McLoughlin& Lee, 2007).

Milana-Abbasova (2016) conducted a research on the impact of Social Networks on students' English Language of Khazar University from the schools of Human and Social Sciences, Education, Economics and Management, Engineering and Applied Sciences in Azerbaijan. The researcher clearly stated that social networks impact students' writing mostly compared to the other skills.

Using Social-Networking Sites in Learning English Language and Students' Self-Efficacy is another study done by Almarwaey (2017) where he aimed to explore the academic purposes of 286 students from Umm AL-Qura University for using social-networking sites (SNSs) to enhance self-efficacy (SE) of learning English language .The findings depicted that SNSs can be online learning platform to the students and teachers communicate with each other in English sharing educational materials and resources. Moreover, this platform can posit an enjoyable and useful learning environment through sharing, communication and socialisation. He recommended regulated learning environment of using SNS in academic field for promoting effective learning English language.

Sharma and Vishvakarma (2016) studied on the effect of SNS on academic performance. This work suggested that sometimes SNS are used for educational

purposes and sometimes for non-academic purpose, which adversely impact on the academic performance of the students. Similar kind of study was also conducted by Amin (2016) with 300 students of Abia State Polytechnic, Aba, Nigeria. Here the researcher asserted that social media such as Facebook, twitter, Google, and Skype attracted the attention of students and positively impact on their academic performance. Asha Shashikala and Nandini (2017) tried to find out the similar output from 30 students of Sindhi College, Reva University, Bangalore. This study tried to throw light on the various factors leading to their poor performance due to excessive usage of social media.It suggested managing the current trend of using the social media and making the students able to cope up with studies as well as bringing a balance between the effective usage of the social media and their studies. Similarly, Bicen, Sadıkogluand and Sadıkoglu (2014) administered similar research on undergraduate students of Near East University, Nicosia, Northern Cyprus. In this study, the Students of different faculties were asked to express the extent of their feeling while learning foreign language through social networking sites for each of the 16 positive items on a 5-point Likert scale. The findings of the study indicated that even though students learn foreign language through social networks, they are still apprehensive in communicating with one another. Zaidieh (2012) discussed the challenges and opportunities of the students of ICT, College of Information and communication technology, IIUM, Malaysia for using SNS in education in his paper "The Use of Social Networking in Education: Challenges and Opportunities". He mentioned some benefits and obstacles which students face the using of the SNS as educational tool. Privacy, real friendship, taking up time and miscommunication are the most important challenges while browsing social networking for educational purpose. In contrast to such, flexibility, repeatable and convenience and accessibility have a vital influence in the use of social networking in education. Students use social networks for making assignments and maintaining communication with fellow students and teachers. They learn through two step flow interactions e.g. student-student interaction and teacher-student interaction. He suggested to design and tailor the use of social networks for specific educational needs for getting better language learning platform (Mehmood &Taswir, 2013). Concentrating on the same aspect Ajjan & Harthshorne (2008) mentioned in their research that through the use of social networks students' course and their learning satisfaction could be increased. In addition, Silius (2010) depicts the desire of students in using social networks in higher education as engagement of technology could improve their learning. However, there are also some students who use social networks purely for communication purpose having beliefs of using SNSs informally for educational purpose (Madge, Meek, Wellens & Hooley,

2009). Even, Lewis (2010) confirmed that inclusion of social networks in the curriculum focusing on students' current need can provide a better language learning platform through interaction, communication and learning.

Methodology

It was a thematic study in which the process of language learning is discussed with reference to SNS.The quantitative study was conducted through a questionnaire where all the questions are stated as statements with existing students of Honour's in English from public, private and national universities. The questionnaire was submitted by 120 students studying Honours' in English from different universities where 40 students from each university category were selected randomly. Google doc form was used for preparing the questionnaire and it was sent to the students through e-mail and SNS. Responses were also collected from the students physically taking help from the teachers of universities.The descriptive statistical method was used to analyse the questionnaire. This questionnaire was presented by dividing into two main parts. General information (Gender, university, purpose other than LL and for LL purpose) was given in the first part that is measured in semantic scale. And in the second part 12 statements were given which were focused on four integrated skills of English language.8 statements were chosen to measure the influence of SNS on students in"Reading &Writing"and 4 statements were in "Listening & Speaking". All the statements were given to the students to measure the degree of SNS' influence on them in learning English through the above mentioned categories. The measurements were taken on 5-point Likert-scale with endpoints ranging from 5 = "Strongly agree" to 1 = "Strongly disagree". The items of the second part were adopted from previous studies, which have been validated and believed to be highly reliable in data collection. To measure the influences of SNS all the items of questionnaire were adopted from previous study of Bicen, Sadıkoglu & Gunay (2014) and Abbasova (2016). Figures, charts, percentage, frequency of users and descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data and present the findings.
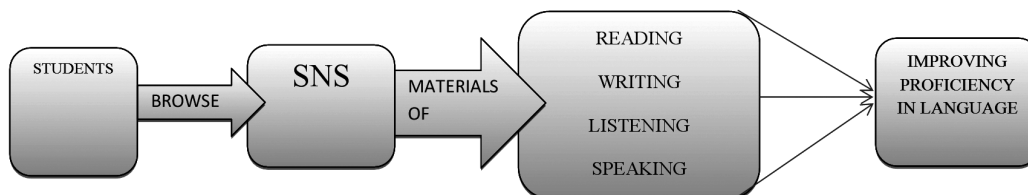

Figure 1: Process of Language Learning through SNS

Results and Discussion

Statistic package for social science (SPSS) was used to analyse the result of the study. There were four questions in the first part of the questionnaire which were described semantically. Here the data are presented depending on frequency and percentage in the table below:

Table 1: Users of SNS According to the Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	65	54.2
Female	55	45.8
Total	120	100.0

Table 1 represents the clear indication of using SNS of both male and female. From 120 students, 45.8% female students use SNS whereas the number of male students was 54.2%. Here the percentage of male is 14% higher than that of female. Their response proved that they use SNS. And they were using this platform for general purposes and language learning purposes.

Table 2: Usage of SNS from 3 Categories of University

University	Frequency	Percent
Public University	40	33.3
Private University	40	33.3
National University	40	33.3
Total	120	100.0

Equal participation of the students in this study from different categories of university is stated in the table 2.

Purpose of Using SNS

Students reflected their usage of SNS for various purposes in the following figures. Facebook is the most used Social Networking Site for both the purposes among other SNS. 53.85% male students and 56.36 % female students use Facebook for general purposes whereas 70.77% male and 76.36% female students browse Facebook for language learning. The following table presents the data in this regards.

Table 3: Users of SNS for General Purpose Other than Educational

SNS	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	Frequency
Facebook	35	53.85	31	56.36	66
WhatsApp	13	20	9	16.36	22
LinkedIn	1	1.54	5	7.69	6
google+	12	18.46	8	14.54	20
Twitter	4	6.15	2	3.07	6
Total	65	100.00	55	100.00	120

Table: 3 and 4 indicate the dependency of three types of universities on SNS especially in Facebook for general and language learning purposes. After Facebook, google+ and WhatsApp are two popular SNS according to the frequency of the users.

Table 4: Users of SNS for Language Learning

SNS	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	Frequency
Facebook	46	70.77	42	76.36	88
WhatsApp	5	7.70	5	7.70	10
LinkedIn	1	1.53	0	0	1
google+	13	20	8	14.54	21
Total	65	100.00	55	100.00	120

Table: 4 indicates the users of Social Networks in terms of their liking for language learning. From the table, it can be said that 65 students are male and 55 students are female. The highest number of students chose Facebook as their desired language learning platform whereas google+ is the second platform for language learning among the students. LinkedIn and WhatsApp have the least users in both male and female students.

Table 5: *S*ocial Networking Site as a Platform for LL

Items	Mean	ST. Deviation
Reading news, blogs, posts and comments play an important role in developing reading and writing	4.84	0.36
Accepting applications through SNS for improving reading and writing	4.79	0.54
Paying attention in grammar while reading and writing through SNS	4.68	0.56
Trying to write always in English in Social Networks	2.37	0.93
Following teachers and seniors to enhance LA	4.59	0.76
Using auto-fill tools for improving my writing skill	3.90	0.72
Having tendency to communicate with ESP through SNS to improve my LA	2.45	1.11
Using translation features for incomprehensible text	4.14	0.59
Listening to audio and video materials help me to distinguish the varieties of English) (American & British)	4.55	1.06
Improving my pronunciation and accent by listening the conversation of native speakers	3.89	0.79
Enhancing listening and speaking ability through audio and video calling in SNS	2.50	1.10
Being confident while chatting in English via SNS	2.39	1.02

Table 5 presents students' responses for choosing SNSs as language learning platform. From the table, it can be clearly said that students use SNS for language learning purposes as they experience the mentioned items to develop their four integrated skills of English language. Students' response as "Strongly Agree" is stated as the best option among other scales. "Strongly Disagree" and "Neutral" are not chosen by most of the students in these items. Students choose "Strongly Agree" for 5 items which are "Reading news, blogs, posts and comments play an important role in developing reading and writing"(M=4.84, SD=0.36), "Accepting applications through SNS for improving reading and writing" (M=4.79, SD=0.54), "Paying attention in grammar while reading and writing through SNS" (M= 4.68, SD=0.56), "Following teachers and seniors to enhance LA"(M=4.59, SD=0.76) and "Listening to audio and video materials help me to distinguish the varieties of English" (M=4.55, SD=1.06). Students' responses for the above stated 5 items depict their acceptability of using SNSs to improve their reading, writing, listening and speaking skills as all the results of mean are above 4.5.

The second affirmation response is "Agree" which is chosen by the students for 3 items. Students choose "Agree" with "Using auto-fill tools for improving my writing skill" (M=3.90, SD=0.72), "Using translation features for incomprehensible text" (M=4.14, SD=0.59) and "Improving my pronunciation and accent by listening the conversation of native speakers" (M=3.89, SD=0.79). From the responses to 3 items, it can be mentioned that students take help and assistance from the Social network tools which may enhance their language learning process.

Finally, "Disagree" is ticked by the students to choose their desired answer. Students disagree with "Trying to write always in English in Social Networks" (M=2.37, SD=0.93), "Having tendency to communicate with ESP through SNS to improve my LA" (M=2.45, SD=1.11), "Enhancing listening and speaking ability through audio and video calling in SNS" (M=2.50, SD=1.10) and "Being confident while chatting in English via SNS" (M=2.39, SD=1.02). Going through the mean result of the above mentioned 4 items, it can be argued that students are still struggling to communicate in English in Social Networks both in oral and written forms.

Summary of the Findings

The collected data depict that students read blogs, articles and materials related to language learning which enhance their reading skill. They use language learning apps and web tools for taking assistance in language learning which develop their reading, writing, and listening skills. Though they still hesitate to communicate and interact in target language but their engagement in Social Networks during their learning inside or outside the classroom can accelerate their language learning process which mean students' attitude towards English language learning through SNSs is positive. And this shows a positive relation between the usage of SNSs and English language learning.

Recommendations

Based upon the findings of the study, the following recommendations have been made:

▪ Students should be more involved in browsing materials of four integrated skills in SNS to be developed and proficient users of English language.

▪ Teachers should use more web 2 tools in the classroom to make students familiarize of using those tools inside and outside the classroom.

- Making groups in SNS of the same level can enhance their interpersonal skills because of oral and written communication.

- Foreign language teachers and native speakers of English can enhance their four skills through SNSs.

Conclusion

Facebook is the most popular Social Networking Site according to the frequency of the users in Bangladesh among other Social Networking Sites. Other social networks could not accentuate the students' interest to use them like Facebook. From the above findings it is evident that students browse materials of reading, writing, listening and speaking while staying active in social networks for language learning purposes. Though there is no negative impact of using SNS, still students are very much concerned about using target language in communication. They are not developed as efficient learners since they hesitate to communicate and interact with others in English yet. Teachers are suggested to use various Web 2.00 tools on social networking sites in order to develop new teaching tools, which will help students to improve and practice their language skills (Bicen, Sadıkoglu & Sadıkoglu, 2014).Students are attached to use technology in language learning through social networks which shows their positive attitude towards SNSs (Mehmood, 2013). To overcome their nervousness they are advised to browse materials of four skills and having maximum involvement in educational materials through social networks. It is recommended to educate our students about the usage of SNS in a regulated learning environment for getting the optimum benefit from this virtual platform.

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