

لتعزيز تليجرام تصورات أساتذة الجامعة الليبية واستخدامهم لبرنامج

التدريس الفعال للغة الإنجليزية

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الملخص :

تقدم هذه الورقة البحثية مراجعة للأدبيات الخاصة بمعتقدات ومواقف خمسة من المدربين الليبيين للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية تجاه دمج تليجرام في تعليم اللغة وتعلمها. وقد تم استخدام نهج نوعي لقياس المستوى الحالي للتكامل، وتم جمع البيانات حول استخدام تليجرام من خلال المقابلات ، ووجدت النتائج أن جميع المشاركين كانوا مهتمين بدمج تطبيق تليجرام في تعليمهم كمثال جيد لتكنولوجيا الفصل الدراسي التي تعزز بيئة تعليمية متحمسة للطلاب، ومع ذلك وعلى الرغم من الموقف الإيجابي والدافع القوي لتطبيق التكنولوجيا في التدريس ، فقد أبلغ المعلمون عن العديد من الصعوبات عند محاولة القيام بذلك وهي : نقص الخبرة أو المهارات التكنولوجية ؛ الوقت غير كاف؛ رهاب التكنولوجيا المتبقية. وضعف الاتصال بالإنترنت. لذلك من المهم زيادة وعي كل من المعلم والطالب بفاعلية استخدام تليجرام للأغراض الأكاديمية، تليجرام هو واحد من أشهر المواقع على الإنترنت التي يستخدمها الطلاب الليبيون لأن فوائده الوفيرة ، مثل المرافق التعاونية ، تمكن المستخدمين من مشاركة الأفكار وتعزز دافع المتعلم لتنمية بيئة تعليمية أصيلة وتحسين استخدام اللغة الإنجليزية.

Libyan University Instructors' Perceptions and Use of Telegram to Promote Effective Teaching of English

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Abstract

This article presents a review of literature of the beliefs and attitudes of five Libyan EFL instructors towards the integration of Telegram into Language teaching and learning. A qualitative approach was used to measure the current level of integration and data on the use of Telegram was collected through interviews. The results found that all participants were interested in integrating Telegram application into their teaching as a sound example of classroom technology which fosters an enthusiastic learning environment for students. However, despite a positive attitude and strong motivation to apply technology in teaching, instructors reported several difficulties when attempting to do so: namely, lack of experience and/or technological skills; insufficient time; residual technophobia; and poor internet connection. It is therefore important to raise both teacher and student awareness of the efficacy of using Telegram for academic purposes. Telegram is one of the most popular online sites used by Libyan students since its abundant benefits, such as collaborative facilities, enables users to share ideas and boosts learner motivation to cultivate an authentic learning environment and improve English language use.

Keywords: *EFL; ELT, Social media; Social networking sites; Telegram.*

Introduction

In recent years, the unprecedented growth of internet and the social networking sites has changed the world dramatically. As such, research into social media in the context of language learning has gained traction due to the extensive advances and proliferation of SNSs among learners studying English as a Foreign Language (EFL). It is evident that such social

networking sites (SNSs) provide learners with the opportunity to create personal profiles, interact more authentically with peers, and forge relationships (Thorne, 2010). In fact, the emergence of and ease of access to both the Internet and SNSs, have fundamentally transformed people's ability to communicate and interact with each other. This is particularly discernible among contemporary university students.

Social media enable virtual communities and virtual learning environments (VLEs) to expand (Hussain, 2005) and disseminate learning amongst users. By using social media university students may interact freely with various members of virtual communities as a means to "share information and study experiences, research projects and job opportunities with each other" (Hussain, 2012, p. 640). Through such activities as reflection and collaboration in virtual environments (Armstrong & Franklin, 2008), third-level students can harness the potential of diverse social media platforms to enhance and strengthen their learning. In this way, a range of

SNSs can arguably improve student motivation to learn and better equip them to manage autonomous learning (Ushioda, 2006; Thorne, 2003; Ware, 2005).

According to Kaplan and

Haenlein (2010), several of these technologies are referred to as "social media" in that they assist the foundation and exchange of user-created content. Such new media afford learners the opportunity to exchange ideas and communicate about related content. Moreover, they can enhance teacher-student and student-student interaction both during and after classroom hours. SNSs are deemed a welcome form of learning practice for many university students, since the learners in the university interact in a social way within an academic framework (Hwang, Kessler & Francesco, 2004). It is observed that social media tools are deliberately rooted in the daily routine of young people, particularly university students, based on the large percentage of the online social media platform population they occupy (Madge, Meek, Wellens & Hooley, 2009; Subrahmanyam, Reich, Waechter & Espinoza, 2008). Social media are now ingrained in our culture, and broadly utilized by students (Rainie, 2012), and commonly employed pedagogically by academic teachers and researchers (Giordano, 2011). Multiple studies indicate that the use of social networking sites has risen dramatically: from 8% of adults Internet users in 2005 to 35% in 2009. Dohn (2009) contends that effective use of

social media sites is now a required skill for the contemporary world, and purports that a „lifelong, life-wide“ group of skills weakens the boundaries between formal and informal learning. Additionally, college students can acquire more responsibility for their university education by elevating their own role and engaging in peer-supported online communities for different academic tasks (Selwyn, 2009).

Integrating digital technology into the educational field became essential during the coronavirus pandemic this was particularly the case in higher education where it was deemed most suitable. In the aftermath of the pandemic, continued use of such technologies may lead to the achievement of many educational objectives within a shorter timeframe through qualitative advances in learning and teaching. Indeed, “The importance of information technology in today's world cannot be denied, and educators are aware that information technology is already an important force in modern education. Technology is found in schools everywhere, represented by different tools and instruments” (Al-Alwani, 2005, p. 2).

The recent exponential growth of SSNs means they are now familiar across all knowledge areas. As a result, the majority of people own a portable device such as iPad, cell phones, laptops, and other electronic devices. Mobile phone ownership is particularly popular among university students since as well as enabling learners to stay connected and increase their social inclusion, they provide a sense of security in cases of help or emergency (Balakrishnan & Raj, 2012). Yamaguchi (2005) posits that the “Mobile phone is superior to a computer in portability and some students don’t have their own computer”. Mobile phones are used extensively by young students since their multi-tasking features are considered the most adaptive tool for future technologies (Miller, 2014).

As teachers play an essential role in education, it is essential to equip them with knowledge of the use of technology for educational purposes (Danwa & Wenbin, 2010). In fact, teaching staff can facilitate better student learning experiences through more effective use of technology and elearning (Mapuva, 2009). Applying digital technology in education helps teachers in many areas. For example, teachers with a good knowledge of digital and information technology can engage in real communication and collaborate with peers, and share instructional units through computer networks. Further, teachers with

sound technological knowledge can also recall diagnostic information, organize student attendance, and maintain records of grades and other information on the computer (Boysen, 1994). The use of technology in educational activities engages students in a positive learning environment (Günüç & Kuzu, 2014) and can improve general communication and interaction between teachers and students. It is reported that availability of ITs in the classroom raises student interaction through the use of digital technology (Kalasi, 2014). Lam (2000) also supports EFL teacher use of technology in the classroom in that it creates an enthusiastic learning space for students, while Lyons (2012) purports that, “Almost all the possibilities of face-to-face teaching can be replicated by technology” (p. 1). In fact, it is widely accepted that the integration of digital technology, such as a white board, word processors, and social networking sites, improves student communication skills and encourages them to assume more responsibility for their own learning.

Successful integration of technology into the classroom is associated with several critical factors. For instance, teachers’ perceptions and attitudes towards teaching and technology can be a facilitating or restricting factor in either boosting student confidence in or creating a barrier to the use of technology (Kim, 2002). In fact, Redmond, Albion and Maroulis (2005) emphasize that factors which best support successful ICT integration in the classroom, include the teachers’ personal skills, interests, and willingness in using ICT in the classroom.

However, a positive attitude towards implementing technology in the classroom is no guarantee that teachers have the opportunity to do so in their teaching (Egbert, Paulus & Nakamichi, 2002). Indeed, Kim (2002) found that teachers’ overall use of Web-based lessons was limited, avoided, or withdrawn. Despite a largely positive attitude and strong motivation towards using technology in teaching, many teachers encounter a range of difficulties in pedagogical technologies relating to lack of knowledge, experience and/or technological skills, insufficient time, residual technophobia, and/or a general lack of IT confidence. In light of this, the current study explores the efficacy of using the popular student platform „Telegram“ to teach English to Libyan university students and to elicit instructor perceptions of using Telegram for academic purposes.

Literature Review

Telegram is one of the many social media sites used for communication and instant messaging.

In addition to voice or video calls, it also offers the additional option of sending media files.

Originally launched in August 2013, Telegram has seen numerous improvements and additional technology capabilities, and has become the most heavily used social site among university students. According to the Statista business data platform, there are currently about 500 million users of Telegram (STATISTA, 2021a) worldwide, with the number of users growing dramatically year-on-year. This has been attributed to the unique service available to users, particularly in terms of encryption and security. Unlike comparable SNSs, Telegram assures the privacy and security of its users. These include a two-step verification process; controlling who can see the status, blocking unwanted users, and hiding the users' phone number (Vaziripour et al., 2018). Furthermore, the Telegram app can transfer data and different means of SNSs to a Messenger network to more than 5000 members. As such, it affords users the opportunity to manage all types of documents which can be accessed by the computers of cell phones. As a free application, it can be easily downloaded and used through a mobile device. In short, Telegram can bridge the gap between the teachers and students outside the classroom (Sarvari, 2019).

Telegram and Higher Education

Social media refer to the collection of websites, methods, and services which are applied to support numerous forms of collaboration, sharing, and discussion. Inevitably, interactive SNSs have attracted and engaged the interest of university students and faculty members seeking optimum educational outcomes (Hughes et al., 2009). Such interactive technological methods are now considered an integral aspect of learning practice for many university students, since the learners in the university interact in a social way within an academic framework (Hwang, Kessler & Francesco, 2004). Social media are now ingrained in our culture, are utilized broadly by college students (Rainie L., 2012), as well as becoming a common tool among academic teachers and researchers (Giordano, 2011). Integrating SNSs assists students to be more independent learners by supporting learning autonomy.

The proper integration of social media positively impacts student progress by increasing their motivation to learn, enabling them to communicate easily, expanding their understanding, and improving their higher-order thinking skills. Yang and Cheng (2011) found that university students held more positive attitudes towards peer interaction and academic achievements when using interactive blogs. More recently, Telegram has been effectively used for academic purposes. Various studies which evaluated learners' attitudes towards the use of Telegram for academic purposes indicated that learners enjoy this platform because it makes their courses more interesting (Alkhezzi & AlDousari, 2016). The use of Telegram enables students to access their accounts via any device. The ability to access their laptops or cell phones affords learners the opportunity to maintain and control the flow of information (Faramarzi, Tabriz & Chala, 2019). Moreover, since Telegram supports sharing all file formats up to 1.5 GB, teachers have the scope to employ this feature across a range of pedagogical activities, including sharing educational video clips/images with students. Al-Abdli (2018) notes that university students particularly enjoy using Telegram due to its capability to carry the video clips, voice recording and images shared by teachers. Moreover, this method of sharing educational content on Telegram directly improves student English pronunciation skills by giving learners the opportunity to listen to and emulate the correct accent and phonation of native speakers (Xodabande, 2018).

Telegram can easily reach groups of up to 200,000 members: these groups can be private or public for its user. Research has consistently demonstrated that Telegram groups help students to attain higher course scores and enhanced academic performance (Faramarzi, Tabrizi & Chalak, 2019) by improving student interaction and discussion with both teachers and peers resulting in optimum information exchange. Group discussions also enable learners to better understand the course content through the frequent clarifications of peers (Habibi et al., 2021). Additionally, many teachers post peer assessment tasks through Telegram which directly encourage students to learn from each other and expand their knowledge. Peer assessment tasks in Telegram groups improve students' critical thinking skills, while prompt group feedback from teachers also boosts academic performance (Faramarzi, Tabrizi & Chalak, 2019).

However, the implementation of Telegram in universities can pose certain challenges; particularly technical issues related to poor Internet access/coverage which can disturb students' online learning (Shin & Son, 2007). The high cost of internet provision is another significant drawback. Aghajani and Adloo (2018) also caution that the social dimension of Telegram can divert student focus from their academic priorities; indeed students may forget to complete their Telegram assignments. Other potential disadvantages are cheating and plagiarism, addiction to Telegram, and sharing social or entertainment materials which distract students attention (Alizadeh, 2018).

While the aforementioned challenges of implementing Telegram for educational purposes may limit instructors' use of this platform to teach English, it is nonetheless considered a beneficial method for teachers to interact and engage with their students. In fact, Telegram has the potential to play a crucial role in carrying many student activities which enhance collaborative learning.

Methodology

This research investigated teacher usage of Telegram as a teaching and learning instrument of English, and the related opportunities and challenges related as reported by teachers of Sabratha University. The research adopted a qualitative approach to discern the teachers' use of Telegram as a social media platform in the classrooms, both in terms of teaching aims and the main obstacles encountered when using Telegram for academic purposes. The sample of five English teachers interviewed to derive rich information related to usage of Telegram in EFL classrooms, were asked the following questions:

1. How often do you use Telegram to teach English language?
2. What is the significance of integrating Telegram for academic purposes?
3. Do you use Telegram to interact with your students?
4. In your opinion, what are the main advantages and disadvantages of using Telegram to teach English?

Results

As the following excerpts from instructor interviews demonstrate, teachers evinced a high level of interest in and use of Telegram platform to teach English and for general academic purposes.

The teachers reported a good use of Telegram to teach English: for example, *“I use Telegram to post lectures, assignments and connect with my students”* (Teacher 2); and *“Yes. Because of the large numbers of students and short time of the lecture in the university, I was encouraged by my colleague to use Telegram to cover the course syllabus in the classroom”* (Teacher 5).

The majority of teachers interviewed acknowledged the significant positive effects of Telegram in learning English as *“it improves learners’ communication skills”* (Teacher 4). Another mentioned that *“since the lock down of COVID-19 pandemic, it became necessary to integrate SNSs particular Telegram in teaching because it was more efficient in covering the curriculum and post the teaching material”* (Teacher 2). Moreover, (Teacher 1) mentioned that *“integrating Telegram platform in teaching English has many positive effects and many students have the ability to access the platform and learn at any time regardless of time and place”*. However, other teachers observed that *“Telegram is a good tool for posting announcements related to students’ course, but not effective tool for teaching English”*.

Regarding the use of Telegram as an interaction tool between teachers and their students, the majority of teachers interviewed showed a boundless use of Telegram in the classroom as following:

Yes. I like to use Telegram in the classroom; it seems that most of the students prefer to use it in the classroom and outside the classroom. They interact to all posts that I post through the Telegram channel. (Teacher 2)

Telegram is a very interesting and useful method to keep classroom discussion ongoing. All of my students have an account and they make a good interaction to any task or assignment I post. We make a direct communication and Telegram saved time and effort. (Teacher 4)

Telegram makes a good interaction environment. Students make a good interaction and they help each other to answer certain questions. Students can log in at any time and share assignments, tasks, and information with students in English. (Teacher5)

Telegram gave an opportunity to shy students to share the online discussion with their classmates. Telegram helps to overcome psychological issues and make learners in charge of their learning. (Teacher 1)

Only two teachers reported a more limited use of Telegram in the classroom which they clarified in their responses:

No. Although I prefer to use Telegram in the classroom, but it seems that many students do not have a Telegram account. (Teacher, 1)

Actually I do not use Telegram because I lack the knowledge of using it to interact with students. Also, many of my students have poor internet connection. (Teacher 1)

Overall, the interview responses acknowledged the effectiveness of creating Telegram channels as a method of communication and interaction between teachers and students. Despite the challenges teachers face, they demonstrated a successful integration of Telegram for academic purposes.

Teachers' responses also highlighted the obstacles encountered when using this social media. Some of the issues mentioned by teachers included, "*poor internet connection for some students was the main obstacle*" (Teacher 3) and the inability to upload more than one file to share, unlike other social networking sites (Teacher 2). While another teacher warned that "*using Telegram inside the classroom distracts learners' attention and may browse irrelevant sites*" (Teacher 1). Teacher 5 enthused that "*Telegram improves students' English language and it encourages selfstudy and changes learners' role*".

The findings of the study confirm that Libyan teachers are willing to integrate Telegram in their teaching. Indeed, the majority of teachers welcome the educational potential of Telegram. Clearly then, the major obstacles to not utilizing Telegram more fully in the classroom rest on external barriers such as poor internet connection and/or infrastructure facilities.

Discussion

It is evident that the Libyan EFL teachers interviewed for the current research had excellent access to social media using different platforms. According to the data, Telegram is very popular online platform among Libyan university instructors. Teachers use Telegram to share information with their students,

post lectures, and interact with their students. Since Telegram can be accessed at any time, language teachers also maintain that frequent use can improve learners' language proficiency, resulting in better course performance and grades. The data obtained from the interviews confirm that Libyan university teachers recognize the value of SNSs as a means to improve English language skills.

Mashhadi Heidar and Kaviani (2016) posit that "integrating Telegram channels into existing learning practices can provide informal learning contexts and create new opportunities for English learning". Due to the extensive use of Telegram among university students then, teachers could harness it in higher education programs as a means to both enhance education and make the educative process more enjoyable. Moreover, Telegram has many advantages compared to other SNSs, such as sharing videos, photos, files, messages with other users, either individually, or to groups of up to 5000 members.

Pirouz' (2015) study interrogated the relationship between using Telegram and interpersonal communication among learners. The results indicated the average score of students who adapt Telegram to be higher those who do not use Telegram. In addition, Mashhadi Heidar and Kaviani (2016) conducted a study to explore whether Telegram can be a useful learning and teaching tool of vocabulary among Iranian female EFL students. The results of a vocabulary proficiency test on 50 female EFL university students indicated that Telegram has unique technological pedagogical advantages for EFL learners. Interestingly, the results also confirmed that using Telegram significantly boosts vocabulary acquisition. This offers useful suggestions for many language teachers to help promote autonomous learning in their classrooms.

Social networking sites can arguably guide learners toward innovation since they are rapidly becoming the most popular connective tools among university students. Compared to traditional teaching methods, the Telegram platform increases student interest in learning English more quickly and efficiently by providing a range of interesting and supportive facilities for teaching and learning English. In fact, integrating Telegram into regular language teaching across Libyan universities is crucial. Although it is still a

relatively new phenomenon, the majority of teachers and students have the ability to use it.

Conclusion

This study sheds light on Telegram as an ELT platform among Libyan university teachers. Telegram is an excellent platform which promotes the teacher-student/student-student interaction that is known to enhance autonomous learning. University teachers can use Telegram to share their lectures, course syllabus, assignments, and announcements with students, in order to achieve successful learning. Notably, many instructional activities can be employed by teachers who perceive interaction as an integral aspect of effective learning. Moreover, teachers can utilize Telegram as an absorbing engagement tool for students to interact with the lecture discussion. The teachers who participated in this research study expressed positive perceptions of using Telegram in their teaching due of its ease of use, strong privacy options, and media sharing support.

Therefore, along with many EFL teachers, I advocate for utilizing Telegram platform in university language teaching programs since it facilitates the possibility of coordinating a communicative link to achieve student goals. In addition, university administrations should fully support the use of digital technology in order to best achieve the long-standing objectives of learning.

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