

The Role of Facebook and YouTube in Enhancing EFL Learners' Cultural Communicative Competence

العنوان: دور الفا يسبوك و اليوتيوب في تحسين الكفاءات التواصلية الثقافية لدى طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية

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Abstract

As our world is permeated by widespread digital technologies, foreign language learners tend to rely hugely on these technologies to enhance their achievements. It is a matter of fact that social media play significant roles in developing EFL learners communicative and cultural knowledge about the target language. Facebook and YouTube offer EFL learners a supplementary setting for interesting and engaging learning activities as they can practice autonomously reading, writing, listening and speaking in non-classroom real life-semblance contexts. Therefore, this study tends to explore the impact of Facebook and YouTube on the development EFL learners' communicative and cultural knowledge about the target language. A case study was conducted at the department of English in University of Tiaret. The results showed that these two social media platforms play significant roles in enhancing EFL learners' communicative and cultural competence.

Keywords: Communicative and cultural competence, Facebook, EFL learners, Social media, YouTube.

الملخص

نظرا لانتشار التكنولوجيا الرقمية في عالمنا المعاصرة، أصبح طلبة اللغات الأجنبية يعتمدون بشكل كبير على منصات التواصل الاجتماعي لتحسين مهاراتهم ومعارفهم اللغوية التواصلية والثقافية المتعلقة باللغة الإنجليزية. حقا يوفر الفاييسبوك و اليوتيوب لمتعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية فرصا تعليمية فعالة ومهمة بحيث يمكنهم ممارسة نشاطات القراءة و الكتابة و الاستماع و التحدث بشكل مستقل في سياق شبه واقعي خارج الأقسام الدراسية. لذلك يهدف هذا البحث لاستكشاف اثر الفاييسبوك و اليوتيوب على تحسين المهارات التواصلية الثقافية لدى متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية حيث أجريت هذه الدراسة في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة تيارت. أظهرت النتائج ان هاتين المنصتين تلعبان دورا مهما في تعزيز الكفاءات التواصلية والثقافية لدى طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية.

الكلمات المفتاحية : الكفاءة التواصلية و الثقافية- فاييسبوك- متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية- وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي- يوتيوب.

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1. Introduction:

Social media connect people around the world despite the cultural, linguistic, and geographical differences. In fact, people with different languages, traditions, customs, ethics, beliefs, and religions can interact and build up relationships and friendships.

According to Chen and Zhang (2010), in the age of globalization and social media, space and time are not considered as obstacles as the world has shrunk into a small place. Students can use social media to learn about the different cultures without being obliged to travel around the world. Within seconds, they can send and receive messages, watch a video in YouTube, or receive notifications about events.

In Facebook and YouTube, copious opportunities to listen to authentic speeches and to communicate with native speakers are raised. In the age of new information technologies and globalization, the physical space has become an uninfluential factor as relationships can be easily tied among people from different cultural backgrounds.

2. The Importance of EFL Cultural Knowledge for Communication:

Culture and language are sturdily related and cannot be taught separately; language does not exist apart from culture and culture does not exist apart from language (Sapir, 2021). Certainly, language is the container of the cultural trends of its speakers. Customs, traditions, religions, and behaviours are all transmitted through language. The political, social, religious, and historical concepts can be transmitted only through linguistic structures.

According to Kramsch (2013), the beliefs, monuments, and habits that constitute culture can be observed and seen as cultural phenomena through language and other symbolic systems. He adds that cultural realities and aspects and the social lives are reflected through communication which is language. Liu (2013) defines culture as a system of public and social behaviours and norms that hold what people believe, the way they communicate, interact and act, and the way they live.

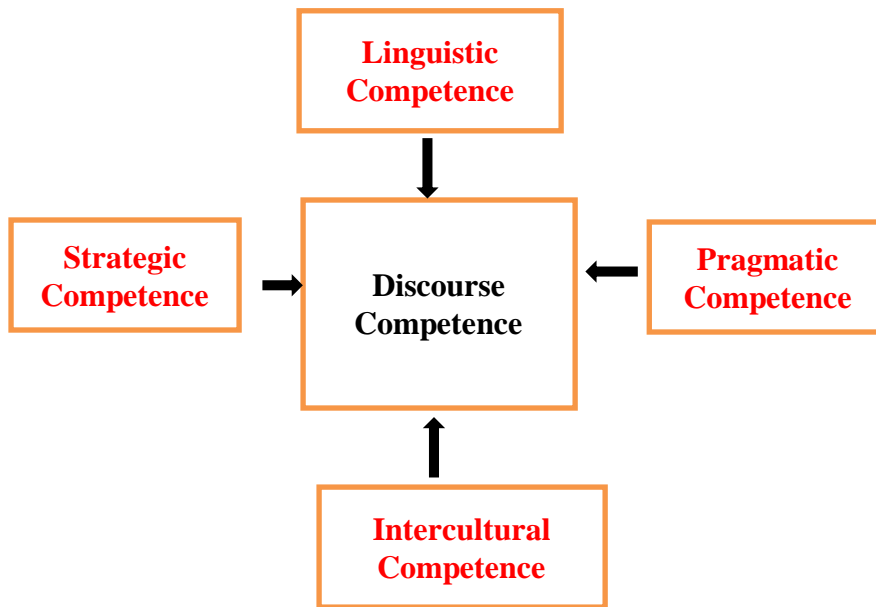
Byram (1989) called for including culture in foreign language instruction because the cultural knowledge and awareness are of great importance in language teaching. He recommended the Intercultural Communicative Competence that gives significant consideration to the cultural features of the target language. According to him, the intercultural knowledge involves several constituents; sociolinguistic knowledge, linguistic knowledge, discourse competence, interpretation skills, interactional skills, intercultural attitudes, and critical awareness. All these components help EFL learners to successfully communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds.

Definitely, introducing culture in EFL classes has been emphasised by many scholars and educationalists over decades. When learning a foreign language, learners are supposed to be exposed to ample cultural models. Indeed, for EFL learners to be communicatively competent, they must acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and the skills that help them develop a pertinent cultural knowledge about the target language.

3. The Communicative Competence:

The communicative competence involves various skills and elements such as the mastery of grammar, phonology, semantics, and cultural knowledge. Indeed, the communicative competence is a vast domain that involves metacognitive strategies and higher processes that integrate linguistic and cultural competence. To achieve this competence, EFL learners need to develop a vocabulary repertoire that helps them to negotiate meaning in different contexts and in real life situations. The following figure demonstrates the constituents of communicative competence:

Figure 1: Components of Communicative Competence



Source: (Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor, 2006: 16).

The above figure informs that communicative competence is a combination of intercultural, linguistic, discourse, strategic, and pragmatic competence. It involves numerous elements such as the grammatical and vocabulary knowledge.

Certainly, the communicative competence helps learners communicate without giving much focus to language because low-level communicators face difficulties as they make pauses to think a lot about grammar and vocabulary (Betty & Boris, 2004). Further, proficient communicators possess multiple linguistic structures as they can express effortlessly their ideas in different linguistic, cultural, academic, and social contexts.

As a matter of fact, most EFL learners are addicted to social networking sites, especially Facebook and YouTube. Shuter (2012) views that the social media is conveying communication across cultures. In fact, people from different nations have become highly interconnected. Facebook and YouTube have considerably enhanced the intercultural communicative competence among EFL learners. Contacts across cultures via these mediums have enormously increased. Indeed, they have brought new kind of communicative and cultural contacts.

4. Facebook and YouTube:

Facebook was created in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg who aimed to bring people together with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Through this space,

millions of users can communicate and exchange messages. Actually, Facebook is the major social media platform that is used by millions of users. According to Grossman (2010), if Facebook were a country, it would be the third most populated country in the world after China and India. This social networking medium enriches social life as the factors of distance, language, and culture are overlooked.

Generally, people use Facebook as a medium to get informed and updated about the vents that take place in their home countries as well as in the world. More, they use it to build new relationships and friendships. It is a means of interaction and communication among people with different cultures, different languages, different religions and different traditions.

Wong et al. (2011) says that learners at all levels are deeply immersed in social media platforms such as Facebook and YouTube. Many studies have emphasised learning benefits of Facebook. According to Wong et al (2013), the learning tasks and activities can be performed through social media platforms. According to Walsh (2012, Facebook is a social media platform that encompasses abundant content and gives place to communicative interactions as learners and teachers can share their experiences and make conversations. Indeed, forums and EFL groups in Facebook help learners collaborate, interact, discuss, and exchange knowledge.

Further, Facebook provides learners with a comfortable tranquil learning atmosphere without being under the classroom pressure. It is fortified with many peripheral applications that make it useful for learning as they provide ground for messaging, watching, emailing, and downloading. Thanks to Facebook, students can interact, share knowledge, communicate with each other, and discuss information.

As for YouTube, it is a video-sharing medium which started in 2005 and has allowed people, artists, students, scholars and all other components of society to interact with global communities over the world by producing, watching, or sharing videos (Georgetwon University, 2010). In fact, people can comment on videos, take part in international conferences and engage in discussions. According to Ostrow (2010), YouTube has become the driving force for the change of human society. Due to its utility, many companies make videos to promote their business and millions of people upload videos for learning or entertainment. Many intellectuals, politicians and scholars use videos to voice their opinions and ideologies.

Certainly, YouTube is a social media platform through which learners can access effortlessly to videos of EFL lectures. Even when they watch movies in English, they gain the language delivered by the native speakers within its cultural contexts. Learners who watch EFL videos or videos produced in English show real understanding of EFL input and can grasp and distinguish phonetically and culturally different speeches. Indeed, YouTube is a very useful e-learning source that helps students develop their learning skills as they are exposed to a wide range of EFL materials.

5. Methodology:

This research was conducted in the form of a case study style. The case study is an empirical inquiry style that provides an in-depth investigation of a specific phenomenon within a real-life contexts. This research explores two main research questions :1) Do Facebook and YouTube affect and enhance EFL learners'

communicative cultural skills? 2) Do EFL learners enhance their linguistic and cultural knowledge through these two social media platforms,?

In order to explore the role of Facebook and YouTube in developing EFL learners cultural communicative knowledge, an interview was conducted with seven (8) EFL Master students, 5 females and 3 males at Ibn Khaldoun University of Tiaret.

Actually, the interview is useful and helpful research instrument to gather information from participants' experiences. According to McNamara (1999), the interview gives the researcher the opportunity to learn in depth about the subject of study and to learn more about a participant's experiences.

6. Interpretation of the Results:

The following points were targeted in the interview:

6.1 Item One: Do You Use Social Media?

All informants use Facebook, YouTube, and Google while few of them use Skype and Twitter. YouTube and Facebook are used multiple times a day, many of them spend hours watching videos, viewing photos and information, communicating with friends, or seeking news.

Most participants' answers showed that they are satisfied and fulfilled when using social media. According to them, social media keep people in touch with each other, and it is very useful for EFL learners ,especially for developing linguistic and intercultural communicative skills. All respondents admit that they became addicted to social media, the reason that got them away from real learning. They spend too much time on social media to fulfil their desire for entertainment.

Indeed, social media is playing important roles in EFL learners' life as it upholds interconnectedness in a culturally diverse world. In fact, students interact, communicate and exchange information quickly via social media. The ample literacy that is allowed and available in the online contexts and the communication that occurs through social media have considerably promoted dialogues and built up new understanding about diverse cultures. The social media raise opportunities to learners to express their views and acquire new cultural knowledge in a virtual world.

6.2 Item Two: Why do you Facebook and YouTube?

Three students said they use Facebook because of their need to fulfil the desire to build up new relationships and friendships and the need to show the sense of belonging in a diverse world. Two students revealed that they use Facebook due to their need for connection and interaction with native speakers. That is not possible in real life situation for the majority of EFL learners. Further, all the informants said they use YouTube to gain knowledge and learn about different ideas, attitudes, perspectives , topics, and events.

All participants said that they use Facebook to communicate with their friends and families. In EFL contexts, all interviewees said they use them to share information, articles, photos, or videos. One participant said he uses Facebook and YouTube most of the time for entertainment.

Indeed, Facebook gives learners the opportunity to freely express their ideas, initiate online discussions, and collaborate with mates. It offers innovative ideas about EFL learning. Besides, YouTube videos are massively used for EFL learning by EFL students. These videos inspire EFL learners to get updated input in EFL skills. YouTube is, indeed, a very motivating medium that helps learners improve

not only their cultural communicative skills but also their listening skills and their pronunciation.

6.3 Item Three: Do you learn from Facebook and YouTube?

The eight interviewees said that they have got a lot from Facebook and YouTube. As for listening, they said that they rely on YouTube to enhance their listening skills. One interviewee said she watches short videos and movies produced in English to overcome her listening difficulties. Three students affirmed that the university lectures of listening hardly offer them the opportunity to listen to authentic materials. In this platform, they have the chance to repeat the same spoken speech for several times. They can distinguish the different pronunciations of certain sounds from different speakers with different accents.

As for writing, four students said that Facebook and YouTube have helped them a lot to learn about writing. They learn about how to organise ideas, punctuation, topic sentence, and spelling as they engage in EFL learning groups in Facebook. "Videos in YouTube concerning the writing skills are abundant" one student said. One participant said she "learned a lot about spelling, abbreviation, grammar, and vocabulary from Facebook". Another student said that thanks to YouTube, he learned how to write invitations, reports, letters, applying for studies and jobs, and got how to write letters of motivation. According to him, these activities are not offered in the university writing programmes.

More, the findings from this question showed that grammar and vocabulary are supplementary gains from Facebook and YouTube. Grammar and vocabulary acquisition and learning are significantly eased. For grammar, all students said they learn about the use of tenses, modals, conjugation, morphology, nouns, adjectives, adverbs, compounding, derivation, and many complex grammatical structures by joining Facebook EFL groups and watching short lectures in YouTube. Indeed, the answers showed that students are offered copious material in Facebook and YouTube dealing with Syntax and lexis. One informant said: "I always come across new words when I review Facebook pages or when I watch videos in YouTube, yet I use my dictionary to learn more about these words". Indeed, Facebook and YouTube empower autonomous learning and student-centred approaches.

6.4 Item four: Has Facebook enhanced your cultural communicative competence? Give examples.

The results showed that learners can express their opinions, personalities, attitudes, and emotions, as they can get and transmit information freely through Facebook and its annexed application messenger. Further, many students argued that Facebook gave them the opportunity to perform several communicative functions such as making requests, apologies, and introducing oneself. Another informant said that she could engage in longer conversations with native speakers through messenger and she learnt a lot from them. More, she became able to use English for several purposes and produce accurate speech in English.

One of the students viewed that her interaction with friends raised her awareness about the way British people spend their holidays, the food they prefer, and their attitudes towards Arabs and Algerians in particular. Thanks to Facebook, one participant said, she could know about the Thanksgiving holiday in America. The following examples are expressions that have been learnt by participants from Facebook:

1/ *I am down in the dumps*: I am sad

- 2/ *It's not my strong suit*: I am not good at that
 3/ *I am swamped*: I am very angry
 4/ *He is absolutely loaded*: He has a lot of money, he is rich.
 5/ *I feel a bit under the weather*: I feel ill
 6/ *He is as cool as cucumber*: he is calm
 7/ *I had a fender bender*: I had a minor car accident.

All informants revealed that Facebook offers them continuous exposure to new and updated literacies in the EFL areas. For example, it helps them a lot to learn and interact with culturally diverse individuals around the world, yet new knowledge, attitudes, and convictions are gained.

Certainly, online interactions help EFL learners produce meaningful exchanges in the target language in useful ways. The participants responses revealed that Facebook helped them learn about the differences between American English and British English. They download books, articles, and videos related to their field of study since most of them are members in EFL learning groups.

6.5 Item Five: Has YouTube enhanced your Cultural Communicative Competence? Give examples.

One participant argued that thanks to YouTube, he could enhance his abilities to construct and understand full speech as he became able to understand both formal and informal speech in English. One of the students listed the following expressions that she learnt from YouTube videos that teach English as a foreign language:

- a/ *"I have a bigger fish to fry"*: It means that I have more important issues or things to deal with. I don't have enough time to tackle such trivial matters. She gave the following example: "I must leave now, I have a bigger fish to fry".
 b. *"It's my bad"*: An expression used to confess ones' mistake. She provided the following example: I told him that he is not intelligent, it is my bad.

Another interviewee gave the following expressions that she learnt from YouTube:

- a/ *I am mortified*: it means I am very embarrassed
 b/ *Water under the bridge*: It is ok, there is no problem now

Another participant put the following examples:

- a/ *Between jobs at the moment*: Now I am jobless, but I am looking for a job
 b/ *To blow a fuse*: to become angry, *I am in the muddle*: I am confused

This participants insisted that these expressions are not taught at university as it is not possible to find them in books, so thanks to YouTube, they could know, understand, and use these expressions even when they communicate with native speakers through social media platforms.

Through YouTube, learners learn effortlessly, freely, and excitedly. One participant said: "*When I watch EFL learning videos in YouTube, I feel stress-free, without any fear or obstacles. I have the chance to replay the video when I don't understand something without feeling ashamed. This advantage is not available in the classroom*".

Another informant said: "*YouTube offers me the opportunity to select my own material according to my learning abilities*". Another interviewee said: "*Truly, our teachers at university rarely focus on the cultural aspects of the communicative elements. The oral-aural module hardly affords such cultural differences between different English varieties. Thanks to YouTube, I have learnt a lot in this area.*"

Another interviewee said: "*there is no time or place constraints, I can watch EFL videos at any time and everywhere*". This means that students' autonomy and motivation are highly increased. Another participant said: "*When I face difficulties in speaking, for example, I check YouTube videos to solve these*

problems. I feel ashamed to ask my teacher in the classroom when I have a problem of understanding, thus, I always rely on YouTube to solve my learning problems”.

Certainly, YouTube is a problem-solving platform. It helps learners consolidate their background knowledge and reflect on their learning.

7. Summary of the Main Findings:

In the age of globalization, Facebook and YouTube have become increasingly important components of our everyday life. In fact, they offer opportunities for students from different nations with different cultural backgrounds to interact and communicate, exchange ideas and opinions, and share knowledge. Many EFL learners use Facebook and YouTube to connect with foreigners. These social networks have a great impact on the intercultural communication. EFL learners are required to accumulate cultural knowledge about the target language. They are required to know how to express gratitude, agreeing or disagreeing, and making requests because the linguistic knowledge alone is not enough to communicate successfully with the target population.

The results revealed that both Facebook and YouTube play important roles in foreign language learning, and particularly in the improvement of EFL learners' communicative and cultural competence. Indeed, students use these two social media platforms for entertainment and for learning as well. Facebook is extensively used, it helps them develop their language skills as they are exposed to ample EFL authentic materials.

Linguistically speaking, the huge amount of foreign language input in YouTube and Facebook EFL learning pages offers multiple opportunities for EFL learners to get access to free input and many of them interact with native speakers and develop their communicative skills. Indeed, Facebook and YouTube are making effective contributions not only in EFL learning, but also in the whole educational system. As for YouTube, it significantly develops learners' fluency, syntax, vocabulary, listening, and communicative and cultural competence. In fact, a medium provides learners with updated contents about all varieties of English with different cultural facets. It offers culturally contextualized dialogues with authentic inputs. As for writing, students can watch videos that teach them how to organise their ideas, produce coherent sentences, and use the appropriate punctuation. With regard to listening, needless to mention the abundant videos that are intended to teach listening, further; as an audio-visual material, YouTube affords real-life communicative situations.

Moreover, the findings revealed that YouTube and Facebook provide a secured learning environment as learners' anxiety does not exist and learning is actually boosted in non-classroom contexts. As for communication, YouTube videos develop EFL learners' oral abilities as they can use proper intonations, stress, assimilation, correct grammar, and appropriate vocabulary. They became able to make long conversation freely and confidently.

In sum, YouTube and Facebook increase significantly learners' motivation of learning as they feel stress-free. They view, watch and listen freely and get interesting authentic EFL materials produced by native speakers in the target language. These materials actually comprise all varieties of English.

8. Conclusion:

Various internet sites and platforms are playing significant roles in the fields of information, communication, knowledge, education and learning. For example, Facebook and YouTube have changed people's lives in different aspects. In the field of foreign language learning, they inspired and encouraged EFL learners to make higher achievements as they offer up-to date, free, and field related contents.

The use of Facebook and YouTube led to the increase of interconnectedness and understanding among linguistically and culturally different learners. They are the most popular social media platforms. They affected people's professional, personal, and educational lives.

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