



**The Impact of Social Networks on Foreign Language Learning;
Case Study: First Year University Students**

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Abstract:

The impact and role of social networks have become increasingly visible in our daily lives. This communication and learning tools have revolutionized the education system. They are increasingly used by professionals, teachers and students to communicate with each other. The present study is based on a case study that investigates the impact of social networks on learning English as a foreign language at Tahri Mohamed University (Béchar) in order to examine the benefits foreign language classroom students and teachers can derive from Social Networks Sites. The study aims principally to examine the use of social networks in higher education as means to enhance the quality and flexibility of teaching and learning programs in order to find out the effectiveness and importance of social networks tools on foreign language learning and teaching.

Key words: Teachers; Education; Facebook; Foreign language; Social networks

المخلص

أصبح تأثير ودور الشبكات الاجتماعية أكثر وضوحا في حياتنا اليومية حيث أحدثت أدوات الاتصال والتعلم ثورة في نظام التعليم. لذلك أصبح كل من الطلاب و الأساتذة و كذا المتقنون يستخدمون الوسائل للتواصل مع بعضهم البعض. تستند الدراسة الحالية إلى دراسة حالة تبحث في تأثير الشبكات الاجتماعية على تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في جامعة طاهري محمد (بشار) وذلك من أجل دراسة الفوائد التي يمكن أن يستمدتها طلاب وأساتذة اللغة الأجنبية من مواقع الشبكات الاجتماعية. لهذا تهدف هذه الدراسة بشكل أساسي إلى دراسة استخدام الشبكات الاجتماعية في التعليم العالي كوسيلة لتعزيز جودة ومرونة برامج التدريس والتعلم من أجل معرفة فعالية وأهمية أدوات الشبكات الاجتماعية في تعلم اللغة الأجنبية وتدريسها.

كلمات مفتاحية: الأساتذة; التربية الفيس بوك; اللغة الاجنبية; شبكات التواصل



1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the use of information technology is a source of change in different learning environments. The popularity of the internet and the availability of educational tools to learners a multiplicity of advantages such as e-learning. This type of learning could be accessed through social networks like Facebook and Twitter, where users have the access to an unlimited number of sources. Through networking tools, learners may share News, Videos and Educational subjects. In addition, social networks could be used for educational purposes and this positively affects learners' ability to master the foreign language.

Some students may find traditional methods, based on textbooks difficult; however, social networks could be available everywhere. Therefore, we need to look into ways in which we can incorporate them into learning a foreign language.

The present research assumes that the majority of students prefer using social networks because it can facilitate learning and push them to improve their language proficiency.

Moreover, both students and teachers seem to be inclined favourably for such option. Thus, this research aims at finding out the answers to the following questions:

- Can social networks facilitate learning for students?
- Do all students have the opportunity to use the computer?
- To what extent do students learn from social networks?

To expand year after year, schools, colleges, and universities have the chance to include social media tools into students' organisational learning processes, allowing individuals to watch, gain, and share knowledge.

- According to (Ashley, 2003) "Social To what degree do teachers communicate with students and advise them through these social networks?"
- Do social networks bring individual teaching to students and to what extent it is beneficial?
- To what extent do students know how to use social networks?

1. Social media

People use internet-based technology to conceive, create, and exchange online material, making media and information sharing, collaboration, and involvement easier. Social media allows a group of two, three, or more individuals to connect, communicate, and share information and interact with one another. Social media platforms like Google, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube have a lot of potential as online channels to help students learn since they provide a huge pool of information from all over the world. The rapid advancement of technology, as well



as the widespread use of social media, has aided learning by inspiring students to learn and conduct research.

Many students use social media to communicate with one another daily. It has become a widely used technology-assisted learning tool in both public and academic settings. According to (Regan, 2015), 1.93 billion individuals use mobile technology for social media platforms. In 2015, the number of social media users increased by 176 million, reaching over 2,206 billion active users, accounting for 30 per cent of global penetration. Because social media usage continues media is classified into two categories: synchronous and asynchronous communication tools. "A synchronous tool offers real-time communication and cooperation in a separate location at the same time, whereas a synchronous tool permits communication and collaboration over a period of time through a different time and location."The synchronous tools, such as audio-video conferencing, chat and instant messaging, Twitter and Skype have some advantages. They provide spontaneous responses, updated data, and immediate feedback. However, the asynchronous tools, such as e-mail, web boards, web blogs streaming video-audio, have less immediate interaction, and the delayed response will cause the information to be out-of-date, and their selection is dependent on the purposes of correspondence.

1. Social media in Education

Social technologies have been widely and intensively employed by students in recent decades. It was first viewed as a sort of technology mostly utilised for social and entertainment purposes, but it has now been adapted for use in education (Top, 2012). There are many free and inexpensive applications available on the network that provide potential occasions to the academic world and researchers. The use of these apps contributes to the development of a social media-centric society that is influencing how people communicate, teach, and learn (Mao, 2014, pp. 213-223). Others stated that online social networks assist pupils in initiating learning activities. Students who use online social networking sites can expand their knowledge through significant contact and knowledge sharing. Many institutions throughout the world have established courses for students who are unable to attend due to their jobs or because they live a long-distance away.

According to the findings, students have good views and ideas about the use of social media in education. They stated that using social media may help them learn better and that they would enjoy using it for an assignment or after school learning. Some students, on the other hand, believed that social media was a time-waster and a distraction. The findings also show that for social media to be used as successful learning tools, instructors and coaches must provide help and supervision (Mao, 2014, pp. 213-223).



2. Social media and Student Engagement

It has been said that social networks can be used to facilitate interactions and encourage active engagement (Junco, 2011, pp. 119-132). (Chen, 2010, pp. 1222-1232) studied the impact of Web-based learning technologies on student engagement and learning outcomes in a traditional classroom and online learning contexts using a set of items produced by the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). The utilization of Web-based learning technologies and student engagement were found to have a beneficial association. Students who use social networking tools in their study are not just active and engaged but also made more progress in general education.

This work conducts an experiment using Twitter as a social networking tool for academic and curricular talks. Twitter may be utilised as an educational tool to encourage active engagement and collaboration, according to the findings (Junco, 2011, pp. 119-132). The use of Twitter as a micro blogging tool can assist students to strengthen their sense of connection and help them communicate more effectively. The Twitter assignments encouraged active learning and provided educators with immediate feedback. (Revere, 2011, pp. 113-124). In general, social media tools serve as venues for learners to access, collect, and exchange information, which is critical in the learning process.

Nevertheless, online social networking enables students to (a) form satisfying relationships with their peers (Yu, 2010, pp. 1494-1503), (b) improve engagement and communication with peers and professors (Faizi, 2013, pp. 50–53.), and (c) collaborate to achieve common goals (Yu, 2010, pp. 1494-1503).

It's also likely that some students will feel better at ease expressing themselves and discussing their opinions online rather than in traditional face-to-face sessions (Faizi, 2013, pp. 50–53.). Unlike traditional instructional models that focus on individual learning processes, online social networks enable students to discuss their ideas with peers, and post them in a form that allows them to be revisited and revised (Faizi, 2013, pp. 50–53.). Finally, research has shown that students who work in groups learn more and retain material for longer, especially when they are able to participate actively in the process; social media may be a method for students to participate in those activities (Faizi, 2013).

3. The social network services

Social networking services are learning aids for students, and they bring together a variety of resources such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, blogs, and Skype, each of which has its own set of qualities.



3.1. Facebook

Facebook is one of the major social networking platforms utilized by students for many purposes, and it is regarded as a part of their everyday lives. This use outside of the University can help to establish and sustain relationships, as well as add to stronger cohesion and dynamism in the classroom, which can help with attendance and retention. Facebook can be used by the instructor to share course resources, initiate discussions, promote collaboration, improve student relationships, integrate a variety of learning tools (such as videos, images, boards, chatting, and private messaging), and use it in conjunction with other social media platforms (Uthiwartnarueput, 2012, pp. 194-214).

In this context, it is appropriate to present some of the Facebook benefits, which were developed by the instructors. To begin, they form closed groups where participants will only be able to join by invitation, and no one else will be able to see the group's contents, debates, or messages. Open groups are created for larger audience for a given course, topic, application or even school. The creation of polls is necessary to get feedback on a course or program you considering launching. This of course, for soliciting your audience's opinion on a certain topic, or even to gather data.

After that, questionnaires are created to learn about your existing or future students' likes, dislikes, and interests, and design the course around them. In your account or the closed group you formed, upload course content materials and resources and consider the benefits. At the end, everything will be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and if a mistake is made, it can be fixed and re-uploaded. The user will receive fast feedback and secure reception confirmation, your material will be accessible remotely regardless of where your students are, and you will be able to efficiently save classroom time.

3.2. Twitter and YouTube

Twitter (Mork, 2009, pp. 41-56) is a social media platform that allows users to post and receive 140-character messages known as "tweets." Unregistered users can only read tweets; registered users can read and post them. Twitter can be accessed via the website, SMS, or a mobile device application.

YouTube (Oddone, 2011, pp. 105-110) is a huge source of educational content and one of the most popular websites in the world. Over 10 million instructive films are available on the site, many of which have been donated.

3.3. Blogs



A blog is a web-based collection of writing and photographs that is self-published. The focus, sophistication of issues, and popularity of blogs vary widely. Regular updates, exchange of comments, and short postings are all part of the blogging culture. (Thorne, 2005, pp. 371-397) Blogs provide a fantastic opportunity for language learners to express themselves in a new language. Because articles are often short and new content is uploaded regularly, they are appealing and interesting for classroom adaption. Make it your mission to only publish content in the language you teach. Request that the students write something, no matter how small, and post it for all to see. Blogging in the classroom necessitates many judgments regarding the blog's functionality, as well as how these decisions affect user security and privacy. However, in the case of a group or class blog, the tutor can function as the administrator, setting up the blog and selecting what permissions to provide students, privacy settings, required widgets, and so on. WordPress (www.wordpress.com), Blogger (www.blogger.com), and Edublogs (www.edublogs.org) are probably the top three for anyone interested in class blogging. With the blog set up properly, the instructor can still delegate some management to the student while still ensuring a secure and productive blogging environment.

3.4. Skype

Skype is a website that was created with education in mind. It is a website where instructors and students may share information about their courses, share educational resources, and find partners to start classroom projects. It was created in March 2011. Students learn in a variety of ways and at varying rates. Some students may be less confident in their abilities to utilize the new language at the end of the class than others. Communication and interaction activities do not have to be limited to the classroom; they may also be carried out online using a number of web technologies such as chat-rooms, forums, blogs, wikis, and real-time audio and video conferencing apps like Skype (Marsh, 2012, p. 16).

3.5. Other applications

Mobile device features can provide users with a high level of independence while also allowing them to connect with the rest of society. Much of this is due to the user's ability to browse the internet for information or the usage of mobile applications such as dictionaries, grammar and spelling apps, encyclopedias like Wikipedia, and text translation tools like Google Translate. Journey planners and map programs give users more independence by allowing them to research information on their own time, which is commonly done while they are on the road.

II. Methods and Materials:



This study is based on a case study that investigates the impact of social networks on learning Foreign Languages at Tahri Mohamed University (Bechar). It attempts to examine FL classroom students and tries to highlight the benefits that teachers can have from social networks sits in the teaching process. To do so, a questionnaire form, which contains a teacher interview and classroom observation have been provided for this purpose. In fact, these triangulated methodologies are the most appropriate tools for this kind of investigation. Specifically, the questionnaire is paramount in any study because it can allow the collection of both quantitative and qualitative information and the use of open and closed formal questions.

The present study provides a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, which are regarded as important methods for improving understanding. In practice, both methods are considered appropriate within a single investigation.

II. Results and Discussion:

Analysis of the Survey Question:

A: Students

01. How old are you?

Questions	Responses
Less 20 years	28
Between 20 -25 years	11
Between 25 -30 years	00
More 30 years	01

Table 01: Age of the students.

This table shows that the majority of interviewees are less than 25 years old. It can be said group uses multimedia a lot, which encourages the introduction of this computer tool in the teaching and learning foreign languages.

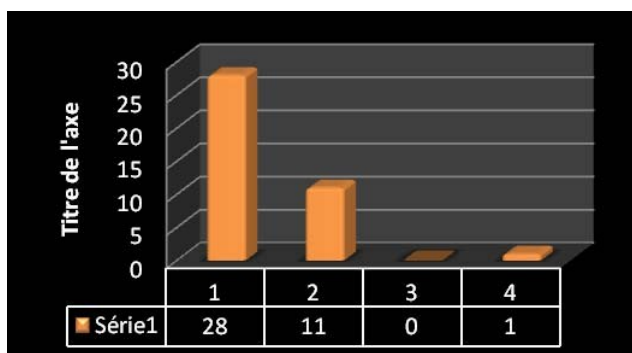


Figure 01: Age of the students



02. Are you male or female?

Questions	Responses
Male	10
Female	30

Table 02: Students' gender

This table allows us to compare students' gender and leads us to notice that girls are threetimes more numerous than boys (75 %).

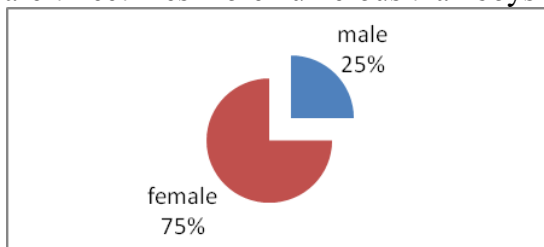


Figure 02: Students' gender

03. Where do you have access to Internet?

Questions	Responses
At home	35
At the University	03
Elsewhere	02

Table 03: Place where students connect to the internet

This table shows that the vast majority of students have a connection at home (87%). This advantage facilitates the connection to the internet for language learning and speaking. Unfortunately, very few students justified their answers. Those who answered affirmatively to this question provided different reasons, like the fact that using Facebook can help them practise more and improve their English knowledge. Others responded that the Facebook group was very interesting and that it had been a good way to be in contact

Figure 03: Place where students connect to the internet

04: How often do you use social networks?

Questions	Responses
Often	30
Sometimes	10
Rarely	00
Never	00

Table 04: Frequency of using the internet

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It can be read that most of the students use the internet very often (75 %). This facilitates communication between students and also between students and teachers if this tool is used correctly and will be profitable for both of them.

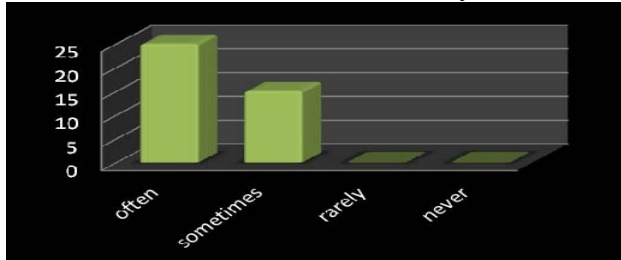


Figure 04: Frequency of using the internet

05: Do you feel that social networks are useful for education?

Questions	Responses
Yes	32
No	08

Table 05: Usefulness of the internet in education and learning

More than 80% of respondents believe that the internet is useful in education and learning atuniversity.

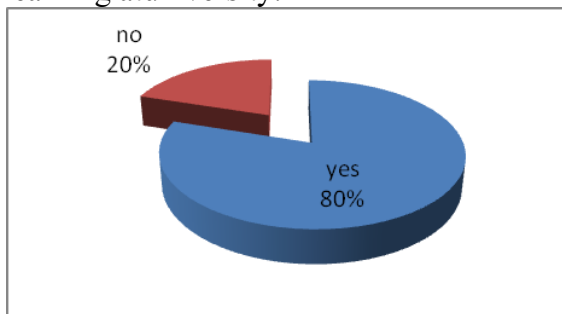


Figure 05: Usefulness of the internet in education and learning

06: How often do you use social networking to discuss educational matters?

Questions	Responses
Often	06
Sometimes	24
Rarely	10
Never	00

Table 06: Frequency of using the internet to discuss educational matters

The goal of this question was to know whether or not the students regularly checked the Facebook group websites and practices posted by the instructor. This table indicates the underutilized of internet by students in the field of education.



Huge efforts must be made by those concerned to make it more beneficial to our students.

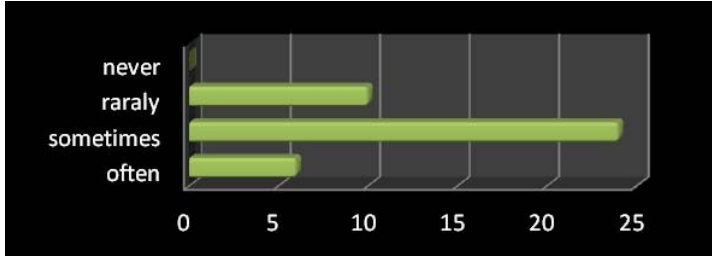


Figure 06: Frequency of using the internet to discuss educational matters

07: How often do you access your Facebook account?

Questions	Responses
Often	22
Sometimes	09
Rarely	08
Never	01

Table 07: Access to Facebook

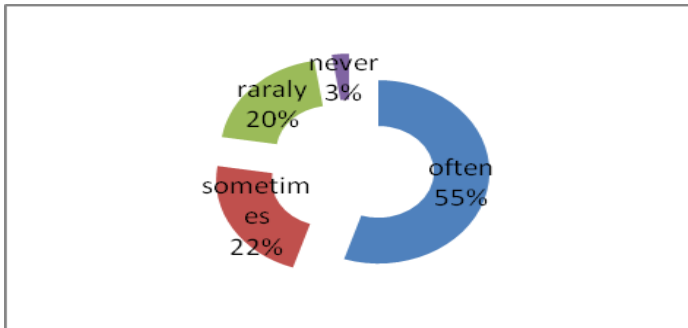


Figure 07: Access to Facebook

08. How often do you access your Facebook group posts websites and practices?

Questions	Responses
Often	10
Sometimes	20
Rarely	08
Never	02

Table 08: Access your Facebook group posts websites and practices

According to the students’ opinion, the use of the Facebook group helped them to improve their language knowledge. More than half of the students surveyed say that they communicate and discuss with their classmates about the classes given by the teachers and especially before exams (75 %). This allows them to catch up on lessons they have not attended.

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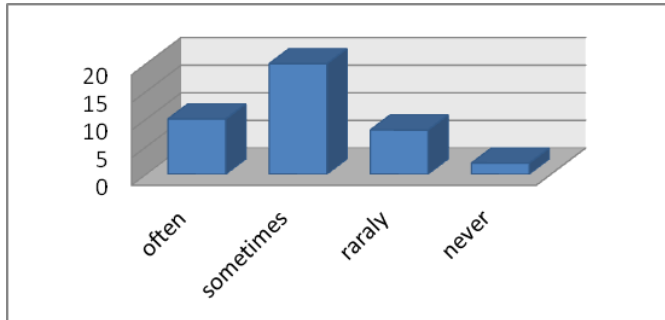


Figure 08: access your Facebook group posts websites and practices

09: In your opinion does the use of the Facebook group contribute positively to improving your language proficiency?

Questions	Responses
Yes	25
No	15

Table 09: Facebook group improve language skills and practices

More than half of respondents (62%) believe that the use of Facebook significantly improves the learning of foreign languages and especially speaking. Talks with friends from foreign countries allow them to make efforts to understand their interlocutors.

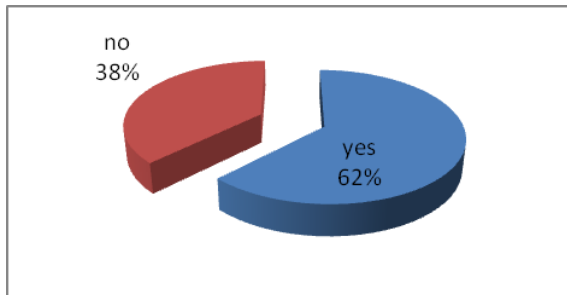


Figure 09: Facebook group improve language skills and practices

10: Have you ever experienced the use of Facebook in class?

Questions	Responses
Often	05
Sometimes	13
Rarely	12
Never	10

Table 10: The use of Facebook in the classroom



Results show the idea of using facebook in the classroom is not accepted by all the students. Some of the students who provided a negative answer argued that he had not dedicated time to the group since it was optional. Others said that the reasons are the lack of internet access at university and especially in the classroom.

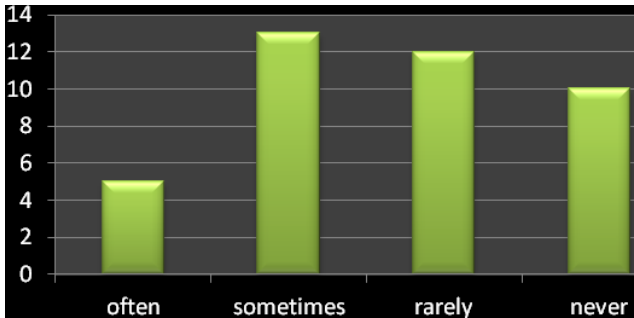


Figure 10: The use of Facebook in the classroom

11: Have you encountered any disadvantages when using Facebook

Questions	Responses
Yes	25
No	15

Table 11: Disadvantages when using Facebook group

A large portion of the survey participants thinks that there are a lot of inconveniences when connecting to the Facebook group. This is particularly due to the misuse of this means of communication and the choice of friends. The topics discussed are of a general nature and do not often relate to the subjects dealt with in the class. The reasons that this last group mentioned were the lack of internet access, the time-consuming nature of the activity, and the unwanted friend requests that they received while being in the group.

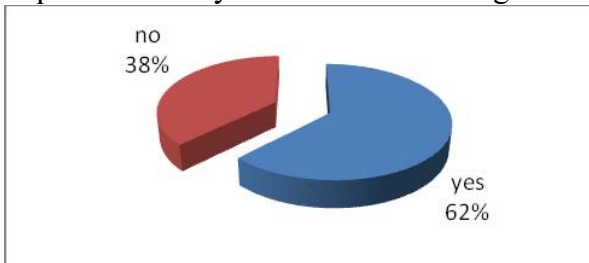


Figure 11: Disadvantages when using Facebook groupB: Teachers

1. How old are you?

Questions	Responses
Less 25 years	0
Between 25 -35 years	4
More 35 years	11



Table 01: Age of the teachers

This question makes it possible to observe that the age of the majority of the teachers exceeds 35 (table 01) years and that they have access to the computer tool.

Figure 01: Age of the teachers

2. Are you male or female?

Questions	Responses
Male	8
Female	7

Table 02: Teachers' gender

This question shows that the female sex is dominant among the staff of teachers. This can encourage the exchange of information between teachers and students.

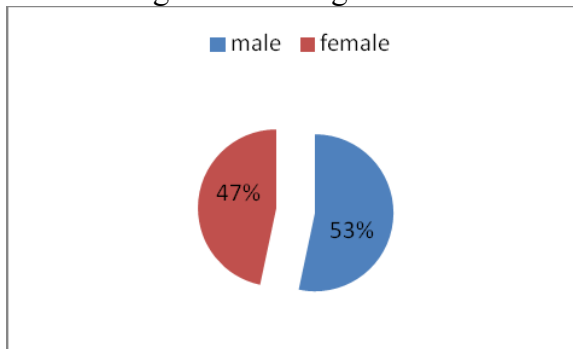


Figure 02: Teachers' Gender

3. Where do you have access to Internet?

Questions	Responses
At home	10
At the University	03
Elsewhere	02

Table 03: Access to the internet

Half of teachers (50%) have access to the internet at home, which facilitates the preparation of courses, and access to social media.

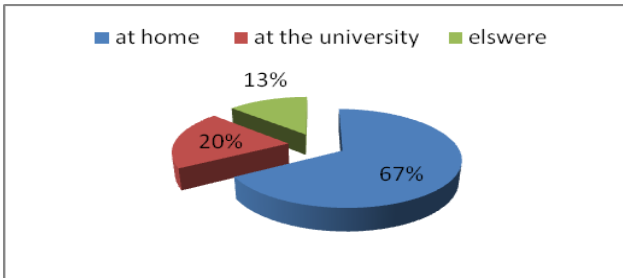


Figure 03: access to the internet

04: How often do you use social networks?

Questions	Responses
Often	08
Sometimes	05
Rarely	02
Never	00

Table 04: Frequency of using the internet

Half of the teachers use social media very often, while 15% never use it.

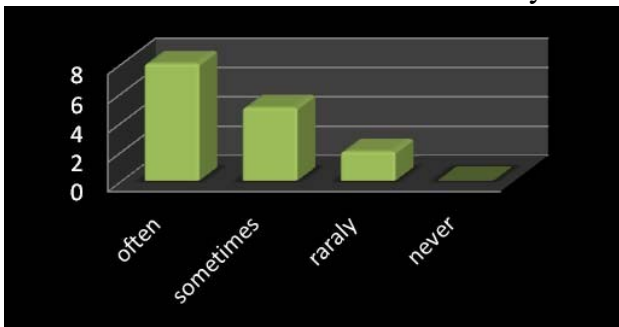


Figure 04: Frequency of using the internet

05: Do you feel that social networks are useful for education?

Questions	Responses
Yes	14
No	01

Table 05: Usefulness of social networks in learning

The vast majority (93%) of teachers believe that using social media can advance student learning.

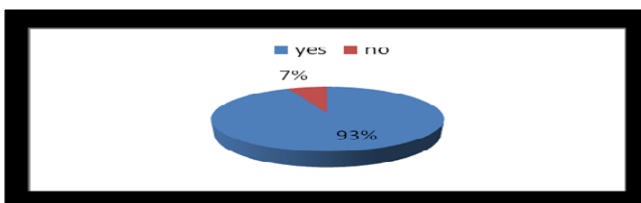




Figure 05: Usefulness of social networks in learning

06: How often do you use social networking services for teaching?

Questions	Responses
Often	09
Sometimes	00
Rarely	04
Never	02

Table 06: Frequency of using the internet

This table shows that 60% of teachers use social networking services for teaching.

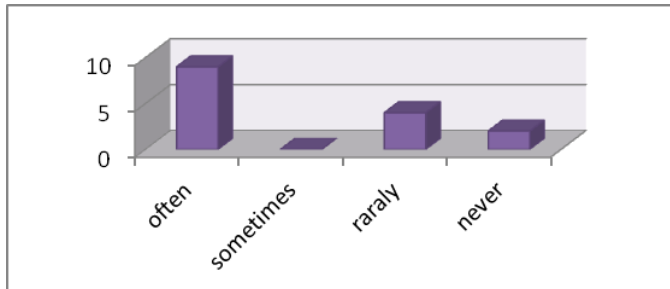


Figure 06: Frequency of using the internet

07: Do you believe that social networking is a good complementary tool for teaching?

Questions	Responses
Yes	13
No	02

Table 07: Networking as a good complementary tool for teaching

The vast majority of teachers are in favour of using social media as complementary tools in the delivery of courses (87%).

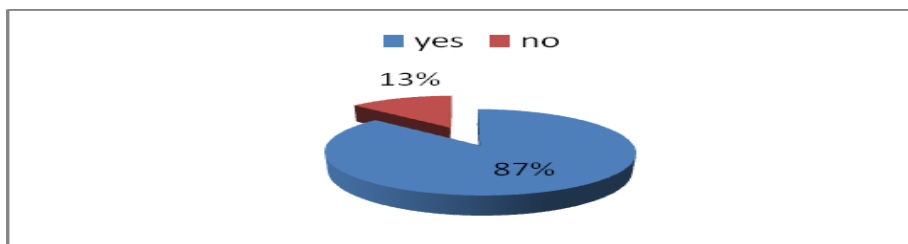


Figure 07: Networking as a good complementary tool for teaching

08: What kind of social network sites do you use to communicate with your students?

Questions	Responses
Facebook	10



Wilber	02
Twitter	03
Skype	00

Table 08: Types of the social network used to transmit courses

A large majority of teachers use Facebook as a medium for sending courses to their students with representing 67 % of the interviewer.

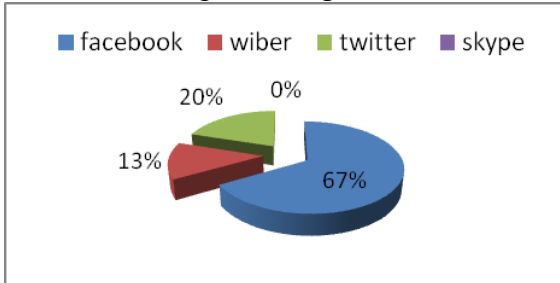


Figure 08: Types of the social network used to transmit course

09: In your opinion does the use of the internet improve the students' learning and speaking?

Questions	Responses
Yes	13
No	02

Table 09: The role of social networks in improving education and speaking foreign languages among students

According to the teachers interviewed, a very large majority of them believe that social media improves the teaching and the speech of foreign languages among the students (87%).

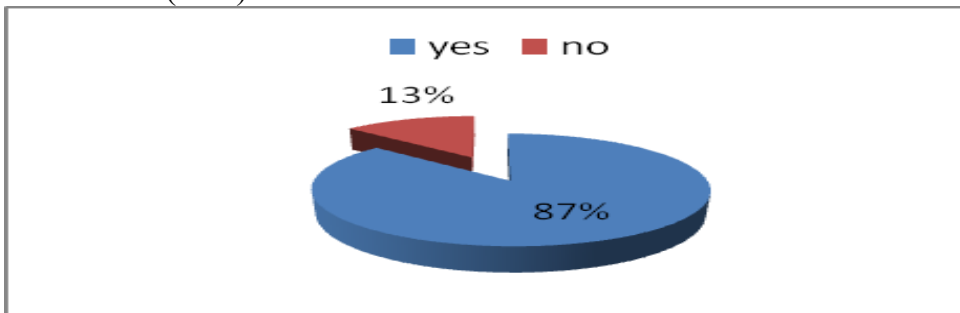


Figure 09: The role of social networks in improving education and speaking foreign languages among students.

10: Do you think that the internet can substitute the course offered at the university?

Questions	Responses
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Yes	13
No	02

Table 10: The use of the internet as pedagogical support instead of lectures

This question divided the teachers. Some think it's possible, but others think it's impossible to substitute the Internet for the classes given by teachers.

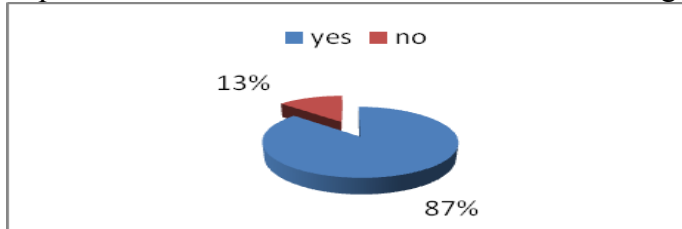


Figure 10: The use of the internet as pedagogical support instead of lectures

11: How often do you post your courses to your students on the internet?

Questions	Responses
Often	03
Sometimes	04
Rarely	03
Never	05

Table 11: Frequency of posting courses on the internet

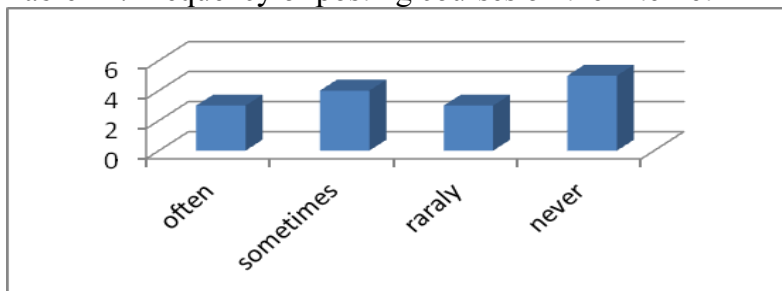


Figure 11: Frequency of posting courses on the internet

Half of the teachers publish the courses on the internet so that students can enjoy them while the other half do so only rarely or never.

12: Can you give the percentage of students who follow your courses and comments on the internet?

Questions	Responses
Less than 25 %	02
Between 25-50 %	05
Between 50-75 %	05



More than 75 %	01
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Table 12: Percentage of students following the courses on the internet

This table allows us to know the number of students who follow the courses thanks to the internet. It is found that a large majority use this multimedia to complete the courses given at the university.

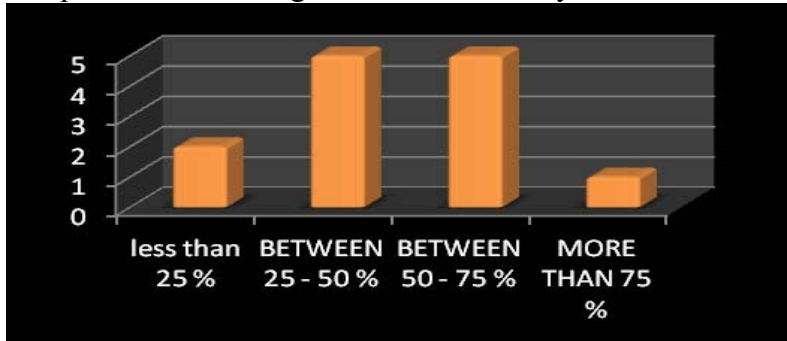


Figure 12: Percentage of students following the courses on the internet

13: Do you believe that teachers can communicate with students and advise them through this social network?

Questions	Responses
Yes	13
No	02

Table 13: Communication and advice through the internet

All the teachers who use this multimedia think that they can communicate and advise their students through the Internet (87 %).

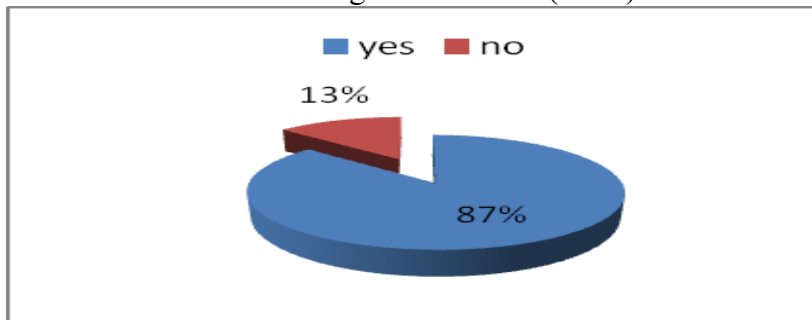


Figure 13: Table 13: Communication and advice through the internet Classroom observation

Classroom observation revealed that:

- Students have positive attitudes and perceptions toward social networks sites especially when they are used in practical modules like Social and human sciences, linguistics or grammar.



- Social networks sites are used in teaching English as a medium between the teacher and students or as a helper.
- The students in the social networking sites group were more active than those who do not use the SNS.
- There are teachers who post the lectures to the students on the social networks sites in order to prepare it.
- Some teachers prefer to distribute the handouts or use the data show to present their lectures.

III. Conclusion:

To conclude, the findings demonstrate positive attitudes to the integration of social networks sites into foreign language learning. Teachers and students sampled in this study held positive beliefs about the effectiveness of social networks sites in foreign language learning. This research sheds light on the importance for Foreign Language teachers to find new ways of incorporating social networks into their lectures. Incredibly over 90% of the students appreciated the idea of using Facebook as a way to review course contents. Moreover, the students using this tool are more motivated to learn the language or the ones who encounter difficulties understanding the course contents. On the teachers' side, most of the foreign language teachers have not integrated the use of social networks into their lessons mainly because of the lack of information about the topic or the fear of implementing such practice. Nevertheless, most of the instructors have used different websites to obtain authentic materials for their classes. In general, terms, the use of social networks in foreign language courses is quite beneficial and motivational for learners as long as the instructors manage and use these websites properly. For this reason, this work recommends the use of Facebook and other social networks as optional learning tools where students can practice and review course contents. That is, all topics and assignments should be covered in class before being posted in the group; otherwise, students' total dependence on the group posts will decrease their interest in the class.

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