Towards Enhancing E-learning: Using Digital Literacy, YouTube and Facebook, to Encourage EFL students' Learning Autonomy

Vers l'amélioration de l'apprentissage en ligne: Utiliser la littéracie numérique, Youtube et Facebook, pour encourager l'autonomie de l'apprentissage chez les étudiants de l'anglais langue étrangère

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Résumé

Avec le nouveau développement de la technologie et la situation actuelle de Covid-19 généralisée, les établissements d'enseignement ont dispensé un enseignement et une formation avancés tels que les conférences Facebook et Zoom Live et les chaînes YouTube. Cela a incité les enseignants et les apprenants à intégrer la littérarité numérique dans le processus d'enseignement-apprentissage. Cependant, cet article expose l'utilisation de YouTube et Facebook dans l'apprentissage autonome. Il explique comment la technologie peut aider les apprenants à développer leur autonomie d'apprentissage et comment l'autonomie d'apprentissage peut aider les apprenants à utiliser la littérarité numérique. Par conséquent, il utilise l'observation et des entretiens pour étudier l'utilisation et l'effet de la promotion des outils d'apprentissage en ligne sur l'autonomie des apprenants EFL pour développer leurs compétences ainsi que la motivation des enseignants pour les apprenants à utiliser régulièrement les outils numériques et

l'apprentissage en ligne pour atteindre leurs objectifs. Les résultats obtenus indiquent que la majorité des étudiants sont satisfaits de la nouvelle méthode pour développer leurs compétences de la langue.

Mots clés : Autonomie des apprenants EFL, culture numérique, compétences d'apprentissage, apprentissage en ligne.

Abstract

With the new development in technology and the current situation of Covid-19 widespread, the educational institutions have provided advanced education and training such as Facebook and Zoom Live Lectures and You Tube Channels. This urged teachers and learners to integrate digital literacy in the teaching-learning process. However, this progressive onward impetus necessitates learners' readiness to be autonomous learners along with the teachers' efforts to encourage their learners and help them apply digital tools in their studies. Yet, this paper attempts to shed light on the use of YouTube and Facebook in autonomous learning. It explains how educational technology can help learners develop their learning autonomy skill and how learning autonomy can help learners use digital literacy. Hence, it uses observation and interviews to investigate the use and effect of promoting E-leaning tools on EFL learners' autonomy to develop their skills along with teachers' motivation to learners to make them regularly use digital tools and online learning to achieve their goals. The obtained results state that the majority of students are satisfied with the new method in developing their speaking and listening skills.

Keywords: EFL learners' autonomy, digital literacy, learning skills, online learning.

Introduction

Recently, the use of electronic data such as videos, audios, virtual online meeting on Google meet and Zoom, along with electronic document such as uploaded lectures on Moodle platform has increased constantly due to popularity of free internet services' access, mostly Facebook and YouTube. Henceforth, in the EFL teaching-learning context, educators and teachers have integrated different methods to instruct their students and guide them towards foreign language practice and production in a successful way. Alongside the development of technology, the current situation of the spread of Covid-19 pandemic urges teachers and learners to switch to virtual learning through platforms such as Moodle platform, Google Meet and Zoom. Meanwhile, hybrid learning has been seen as an appropriate method for the fundamental modules such as written expression, oral expression, literature and civilization and phonetics. To achieve good results through hybrid learning; teachers delivered lectures in the classroom once

per week for each of the above mentioned modules and carry on lecturing their students depending on online platforms and some digital tools such YouTube and Facebook.

I. Technology in Education

The development of the new educational system necessitates the use of digital tools and a blended learning environment to enhance learners' autonomy and encourage them to use different sources in their learning process. Thus, it urges the integration of technology in the teaching and learning process (Stosicet et all, 2018, p.95).   Mohammad Reza Ahmadi states that *"Bull and Ma believe that technology provides unlimited amount resources to language learners."* He calls for the encouragement of the use of new technologies in learning, asking teachers to encourage students to use technology to learn because suitable technologies are useful for individual and cooperative learning. According to him Larsen-Freeman and Anderson emphasized the importance of technology in learning since it provides learners with infinite teaching and learning sources that enhance students' motivation and productivity (2018, p.116).

The advancement in technology and its integration after the new reforms in the educational system facilitates the accessibility to digital literature. This accessibility fostered the learning process making the learning environment more effective. MongThi T. Nguyen argues that; scholars have also recognized that learning with and through digital tools transcends hardware capabilities and intended purpose as users creatively repurpose them to meet their needs and express their identities (2017, p.73). This advancement in technology and availability of devices such as smart phones and computers have motivated teachers and students to explore the world of cinema and photography using these tools to create a new learning strategy that is referred to as digital storytelling. This latter is used to motivate students to be autonomous through using dictionaries to explain the new words they learn from videos.

2. Literature Review

1.2. Distance Learning and Technology

Distance learning has got its origin from paper based studies broadcasted on the radio by the 1800's when access to higher education was limited to certain learners only. They argue that Miller has stated in 2014 that; Chicago University was the first American institution of higher education that broadcasted educational lectures in the radio in 1922. This has been followed by television college class courses in 1953. Likewise, web-based learning was first initiated by the U.S. Department of Defense's Arpanet in 1969 (Falih.M et all, 2016, p.32).

The 21st century has noticed the incorporation of technology in the process of teaching and learning such as computers and technological tools and apps. Along with delivering lectures at university, institutions of higher education around the world adopted web-based learning. It is reported that in 2011 the United State was ranked the first in terms of the use of online learning with more than 6 million students taking online courses. Recently, Allen and Seamans have reported that this number has been doubled for each a million students; all of them taking at least one online course (Falih.M et all, 2016, p.32).

Technology facilitated the learning process; the where, the how and the what. Students are able to learn at any time, time that suits their daily timetable along with choosing the appropriate tool and class that suits their needs. In the beginning, online learning has been used to assist traditional classes by helping learners improve their learning skills especially learners of foreign languages; they use YouTube videos for instance to improve their listening and speaking skills along with the use of social media to interact with the faculty, their teachers and their colleagues. However, nowadays, online learning started to substitute traditional learning through web-based learning and online national and international classes; it provides a useful learning environment for teachers and learners (Yeboah et all, 2018, p.472).

Yet, this new learning environment raised many questions in the field of foreign language learning. Scholars start testing and examining online classes, multicultural online classes. The Newly emerged paradigm has been adopted in different fields; thus, it is suggested to be adopted in the Arab

World higher education to enhance students' cultural awareness, develop critical thinking, and improve their skills along with highlighting the postcolonial history in this case. All these goals are taken into account to fill the gap of culture and understanding the postcolonial status quo in the ex-colonized Arab nations.

2.2. Social Networking and Connected Learning

Social Networking offers a wide range of free services compared to other internet services that require professional emails for subscription and payment to benefit from their services. YouTube and Facebook are commonly used by learners and educators and thus they are a comfortable learning zone. These digital tools have been integrated into the educational process since they are part of individuals' daily life.

Facebook is considered as one of the most used and wide spreading social networks. This latter grants free access to its users as it requires only an email address or a phone number to create an account. These criteria gave Facebook fame and popularity (Garoufallou, Vassilakaki, 2014, p.226). Therefore, it is currently integrated in education and as it has been integrated in business and chatting. Teachers believe that Facebook is the most effective tool through which they can keep contact with students; they can easily respond to their questions and share information with them. They believe that Facebook allows students to discuss and express their opinions as it helps them to go back to the information or discussion to read what they have missed out. As Isham Salah Hassan states that,

> …by using Facebook in learning, the role of students can therefore shift from only receiving knowledge to both searching and sharing their knowledge. Moreover, interactions with teachers can become more instant since teachers and students can respond quickly via Facebook (Hassan, 2014, p.01).

Yet, he believes that the use of Facebook alone is not sufficient; it requires teachers to use another teaching and learning tool in parallel with Facebook. For instance, teaching pronunciation requires the use of videos from YouTube.

In its infant stage by 2005, YouTube served entertainment purposes; it was used by musicians and artists to promote their works either for marketing aim or just for sharing. Yet, with the development of technology such as the widespread smart phones use and availability of the internet people began to put their videos on YouTube platform. Teachers start to deliver no fees lectures on their YouTube channels and therefore people benefit from these lecture as they start learning by themselves and choosing what suits their educational needs. Lie K argues that *"YouTube has become one of the most visited places online. Its increasing popularity appears to be illustrated by our university's students' greater reliance on YouTube and less on the library's physical CDs/DVDs"* (2013, p.199).

YouTube provides free access to an unlimited number of educational videos. Thus it has become an educational instrument as it receives an extended pledge of attention and scrutiny from teachers, learners and researchers. Buzzetto More believes, YouTube EDU is a service for educators which contains short lessons from teachers, entire university courses, professional development materials, and motivational videos from international leaders (E. T et all, 2020, p.126).

The use of the professional YouTube platform for learning purposes and skills' improvement aided students and helped them achieve their goals and be autonomous learners. YouTube help students and teachers through generating interest in one subject ; it pushes them to observe people experiences and help them focus on the content as it attracts their attention because they learn and enjoy what they are doing. Moreover, it builds distance connection between learners and teachers as well as between peers of learners because they share, exchange and discuss the content of the videos they are learning from. These activities foster learners' creative and critical thinking. The videos of native speakers motivate students to imitate the way they speak and thus their pronunciation gets improved. Accordingly, YouTube makes learning funny and enjoyable and thus anxiety decreases while understanding and motivation increase (E. T et all, 2020, P.126).

The use of YouTube by EFL students plays a central role in improving their language skills inside and outside the class. Students build positive attitudes towards learning English because YouTube exposed them to the

English culture, English Literature and the English language itself. It allows them to develop an authentic vocabulary and use it in their daily life. As Maziriri, E. T., Gapa, P., & Chuchu state,

> Students who utilize YouTube tutorials could also be classified as content creators and users since some students upload the content for sharing purposes and other view for learning purposes. It has been found that social media fosters social learning in effective ways such that it can substitute traditional modes of instruction (2020, p.126).

3.2. Portfolio Assessment

In evaluating EFL students' skills, teachers use several methods and strategies. Portfolio is one of the mostly used methods. According to Yang, portfolio is defined *"as a compilation of students' work, which documents their effort, progress and achievement in their learning, and their reflection on the materials negotiated for the portfolio"* (Nezakatgoo, 2011, p.232). The aim of using portfolio is to enhance students' achievements and motivation; it gives them the opportunity to be autonomous learners in the EFL learning context. Moreover, it allows them to work collaboratively and reflect on their writings with the help of their teachers. This latter is used as an evaluative reviewing tool for students' progress and skill's development.

The use of portfolio in EFL learning context aims at helping students to acquire knowledge and enhance their skills. Foreign languages educators believe that portfolio helps students evaluate their writings, learning from their mistakes and following some writing techniques such as brainstorming, outlining and using drafts. This tool requires time and patience from both students and teachers. It needs hard and continuous work along with continual evaluation and grading (Aygün. Aydın, 2016, p.207). Besides, O'Malley and Chamot state that portfolio success requires students' self-assessment, reflection and responsibility to achieve their learning goals and language learning as a continuous process (Nezakatgoo, 2011, p.232).

The use of portfolio digital storytelling and learning stories through You Tube allows students to develop their speaking and writing skills as well as their interpretative abilities and critical thinking. They approach the dilemma

of their individual problems and issues and their peers' problems when they work collaboratively. This method of assessment makes them aware about details in their lives and therefore aware about the appropriate use of diction, interpretations and reflections in the EFL learning environment. Accordingly, *"… [this style] provides a vivid and enjoyable mechanism for charting the development of their learning skills"* (MongThi , 2017, p.73).

3. Methodology

1.3. Research Participants

The participants of this study are 65 second year EFL students at Mohamed El-Bachir Elibrahimi University of Bordj Bou Arréridj in Algeria and 5 teachers from the same university. The 65 participants were chosen as following: 35 female participants and 30 male participants. Participants were selected randomly while participant teachers volunteered to take part in this study.

2.3. Method

This sociological educational qualitative research requires the use of "participant observation method" to collect data. The selected participants were under observation for three months and their outcomes were recorded using portfolio assessment. All the outcomes during this period; behaviors, reactions, interactions, perceptions and assumptions, were systematically observed and described. According to Kawulich, *"[observation is] the systematic description of events, behaviors, and artifacts in the social setting chosen for study"* (2005, p.05). She believes that participant observation enables researchers to observe the participants' activities along with taking part in the study. This method provides the context for development of sampling guidelines and interview guides. By the end of the study, participants were asked to answer a questionnaire in order to check out the relationship between the obtained results of observation and their perception towards integrating digital literacy in their learning process.

Observation method facilitates the description of the existing situation along with analyzing it objectively. It enables us to write the observed details, to evaluate the field of work and to write detailed notes about the study. It allows researchers to maintain objectivity, trustworthiness and reliability. This method helps us to check for nonverbal expressions, feelings,

and understanding and analyze students' interaction and communication with each other along with observing the surrounding events to understand the context of the study. Yet, the use of questionnaire allows researchers to obtain further details about the study, to check the reliability of the predetermined hypothesis and to confirm the trustworthiness of the results obtained from observation.

3.3. Data Collection Procedures

During the second month of the first semester, the selected participants were asked some questions about the influence of the use of YouTube and Facebook on their studies and learning skills. First year students were a bit confused and unable to decide about the impact of the above mentioned tools. However, second year students shared some common views as they disagreed on other points. Some second year students were able to justify their views towards the use of digital tools in their learning process while other, second and first year students, could critically build only some hypotheses about learning autonomy and the impact of digital literacy. Henceforth, a number of students were asked to participate in this study to assess their language skills and to let them discover one of the ways they should follow to learn English and enhance their skills.

In conducting this research, several steps have been followed during three months. At the first stage, students were divided according to their level, first and second year students. They were invited to several online lectures in literature using Facebook lives and then they were asked to do some assignment on the light of what has been tackled. On Facebook live lectures students were asked to write down their questions in comments section in order to be discussed and answered. Once the lecture is over, the video life is registered in the group to be referred to when they need it. On the other hands, they were given some You Tube videos' links to study history and civilization.

Yet, participants were free to choose videos they see they are suitable to learn pronunciation and vocabulary. They were given some links from "English with Lucy" and "mmm English" You Tube channels. Then, they prepared short video presentations to be evaluated and given feedback. After this, participants were asked to write short compositions on the following question; "Literature is the mirror of society; it affects as it

affected. It is a thought provoking since it allows us to raise questions about social and historical facts along with giving us a deeper understanding of social, political and psychological issues. Discuss!" Their works were collected and evaluated in terms of grammar, vocabulary, syntax, and critical analysis.

Additionally, participant students were given another assignment; they were asked to write compositions during their exams without using any digital tool or dictionary. They depended on what they have studied and learnt during the previous three months of experiment. When they finished reading, writing and discussing what they have been given as assignments, they were asked to write and tell their own stories. They were allowed to use some social media tools such as Facebook and You Tube, meanwhile they used video recording to film themselves narrating their own stories. By the end of the experiment, 20 volunteer students and the 5 teachers were interviewed (see Appendix 01).

4.3. Findings and Discussion

The Major findings of the conducted study were based on the observation of the participants' actions, reactions, communications and the portfolio notes along with the interview. The findings of the interview state that 45 students use digital tools such as Facebook, YouTube and Skype in their studies and to entertain themselves. The remaining 20 students state that they use YouTube to entertain themselves and learn how to pronounce but they believe that Facebook and other social media tools are used for entertainment only. Most of them say that they are addicted to Facebook more than YouTube, and thus the average of time they spent using Facebook and YouTube is between 7 to 9 hours per day.

Yet, when students were asked about the appropriate time teachers should upload lectures and share links of educational content or extra lectures, they contend that they welcome lecture at any time except weekends and holidays. Meanwhile, they state that they join Facebook groups to download files, seeking help like asking for books and lectures, discuss subject matter with peers and specialized individuals in the discussed subject and contact their teachers when they need their help.

On the other side, they use YouTube to download songs and watch movies to learn new vocabulary and pronunciation along with subscribing in some educational channels such as "Zamericanenglish", "CrashCourse", and "TEDx Talks" to learn about other subjects in English. Accordingly, when participant students were asked which one, Facebook or YouTube, is more helpful they agreed that You Tube is the first choice because it provides them with the practical side of language learning by offering audio-visual format. In the end of the interview, their all state that they are facing some difficulties with e-learning; these include time management and internet issues along with some difficulties on being autonomous learners due to the huge amount of books, videos, Facebook Groups and websites on the internet. (See Appendix 01)

Teachers' results of the interview state that they use social media such as Facebook and YouTube links to teach their students and motivate them to become autonomous learners. They post on Facebook students' group when needed, mainly in the weekends. Yet, when they were asked about the problems their students are facing with e-learning they said that the main problem is time management and the ability to be selective when it comes to content are the biggest issues students are facing. However, they emphasized the usefulness of these digital tools in students' learning process stating that these digital tools help students to be autonomous learners along with enhancing their listening and speaking skills. Teachers, themselves, strongly support the use of digital tools mainly Facebook and YouTube and use them to teach and instruct their students. For example, the teachers of literature and civilization argue that they use Facebook to upload lectures, to discuss important ideas and to do further practices and to announce assignments. As well as, they state that Facebook live lectures and YouTube links of lectures play a vital role in the teaching- learning process during the period of Covid-19. (See Appendix 02)

Before participating in this experiment, students found it difficult to discuss and answer questions related to literature and history. They were shy and exhausted; they have the fear of making mistakes and errors, they hardly talk and share their ideas. Some were able to pronounce correctly while others were stuttering and mixing English with French either in terms of pronunciation or vocabulary.

After evaluating their compositions, the results were as follow; lack of vocabulary, grammatical mistakes and errors, redundancy, repetition of words, incomplete ideas, and misuse of linking words. However, the results that were reached by the end of the experiment were totally different. Students are able to initiate discussions, to argue and defend their ideas. They become more confident; they become able to speak and pronounce words correctly. They could discuss their works without hesitation and their fears were diminished. They are able to compare some of the events that they have read in the literary texts with events in their lives creating their own stories.

Concerning their writing skill, throughout the three months of experiment every participant wrote 2 compositions as an assignment given by the teacher of literature. The results of the portfolio evaluation show that their writing skill has developed in terms of linguistic competence, vocabulary, grammar, coherence and cohesion, the use of figurative language; creating an elevated writing style. Same for their speaking and listening skills, the evaluation of their videos shows that they have developed their skills and become more autonomous in their learning journey.

Concerning the impact of media and social media, participants confirmed their impact on students' reading habits. Participants state that they were motivated by some movies trailers, which are based on novels, on YouTube, some tweets or even blogs and posts on social media; talking about writers, some books and novels as well as using some literary sayings and quotations to talk about some issues or the status quo. All interviewees said that they are influenced by the texts they read, the movies they watch and discussions they get involved. They use some expressions, words, and even some quotes as arguments in their discussions or studies as well as in their daily communications with their peers or in social media. They, all, agreed on one common point which is the usefulness of digital tools in general and digital literature specifically in enhancing their skills and critical thinking. Alongside, students who use multimedia and audio visual tools and learning strategies such as YouTube, compose more detailed stories that are rich of new vocabulary. YouTube videos allowed them to acquire a merge of vocabulary and linguistic structures along with enhancing their listening and speaking skills.

5.3. Results Interpretation

The findings of the study proved the role of Facebook and YouTube in building students' self-confidence while speaking, discussing subjects, sharing ideas and defending their opinions and points of view. It emphasized the contribution of YouTube videos in strengthening students' linguistic performance, enhancing productive and receptive skills. It shows the positive influence of second year EFL students, positively. It encourages them to become autonomous learners, enhance their speaking and listening skills. Facebook and YouTube

Facebook and YouTube are considered as an effective way in enhancing pronunciation, vocabulary, critical thinking and interpretative mental and cognitive abilities. These learning strategies strengthen both writing and speaking skills; reduce students' anxiety, eliminate their fear of making errors, and raise their awareness towards learning from their mistakes. The use of digitalization learning zone creates a comfortable language-learning environment for students, in classrooms and outside classes, helping them to be autonomous learners.

Conclusion

The development in technology has extremely revolutionized the traditional teaching and learning process during the period of Covid-19. Therefore, higher education institutions have gradually integrated technology in the educational process. This leads to creation of either online classes instead of traditional classes or a hybrid learning atmosphere that is based on the ministry's curriculum. However, some learners found online learning more effective since learning itself is a social process that requires interaction and knowledge sharing between learners. As Lsa Dawly asserts; learning is a social event and requires interaction with multiple individuals, including peers, as the student moves through the knowledge construction process. The development of higher order thinking skills is almost always dependent on interactive teaching and learning. The effectiveness of the use of social media such as Facebook and YouTube Higher education studies paves the way to a more enhanced and sophisticated subject matter such as historical and literary movements, pronunciation improvement and critical thinking development. Digital literacy aims at teaching English language skills

and linguistic communicative competences as well as socio-historical and cultural facts through literary texts, videos, movies, songs, and documentaries to enhance students' skills and to fill the cultural gap in the EFL learners' minds.

III. Appendixes

- What are the digital tools you use the most in your studies ?

- How many times you check You Tube and Facebook for studies ?

- What is the best time teachers should post on social media ?

- How are You Tube and Facebook useful in your studies ?

- Which is best for you ; You Tube or Facebook ? Why ?

- What are the problems you are facing with e-learning ?

Appendix 01: Students' Interview Questions

- What is the best time to post on social media ?

- What are the problems your students are facing with e-learning ?

- How do you evaluate You Tube and Facebook usefulness in students' studies ?

- Can You Tube chanels and videos be used for educational purposes ?

- How do you evaluate students' learniong autonomy ?

Appendix 02: Teachers' Interview

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