

Effect of Facebook Closed-Group Usage on English Language Learning: The Case of English LMD Students at Djilali Liabès University

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ABSTRACT

Social networking has become a vital tool for a university student. As a means of communication, students share tremendous information, pictures, videos, and searching portfolios. Facebook closed-group is the most used instrument among the university students. They create and use Facebook closed-group as virtual space for satisfying different educational needs and purposes. Besides dealing with social affairs, the students also post and share content relevant to their English studies. The aim of this research is to find out the strength of relationship between the use of Facebook closed-group among students for academic purposes and their English language learning achievement. A total of 156 students, majoring in English as a foreign language at Djilali Liabès University participated in this study. Based on related studies, the researcher designed a 5-likert scale questionnaire as a tool of data collection. The data was analyzed through the statistical methods of Pearson's correlation coefficient using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences Software version 19 to find out the correlation between variables. The result shows that the use of Facebook closed-group for educational purposes has positive significant effect on students' English language learning achievement regardless the classroom setting.

Keywords: Facebook-closed group, English language learning, EFL Learning.

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INTRODUCTION

People communicate to each other for different reasons. In the past, face to face, e-mail and telephone were the tools that humans utilized to facilitate their interaction. However, the last fifteen years, humans' communication has transformed due to technology integration into their lives. Social networking is the most influencing technology that has changed the way people connect one to another. Meet new people, stay in contact with friends and socializing are indeed the major motivational reasons that drive people for using social networking sites (Brandtzæg & Heim, 2009), and creating many accounts for these purposes (Obrist, Geerts, Brandtzæg, & Tscheligi, 2008). Although Twitter, YouTube, Facebook; etc. all are Social networking sites, Facebook without doubt is the widely used one. In fact, it allows people to create profiles, connect with their friends in easier and faster ways, join groups and communities, share updates, as well as use of direct messaging. Facebook is an environment where it contains many interactive features (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).

The use of Facebook is not restricted to the people' social life only, but it has also expanded the domain of higher education and has changed teaching and learning in significant ways. The main reason for such transformation is that Facebook maintains relationships between individuals that have common interests such as shared class (Ellison & Lampe, 2007); consequently, being an effective tool to share more personal information than the other means of communication, students consider it as an important means to stay in contact with their friends (Hew, 2011). Building students' relationships on Facebook do not only promote different aspects of their life but it can have significant effects on their learning. Discussions and work in-group on Facebook (such as asking and answering questions, discussing assignments, and supporting each other) help students better improve their learning (Haverback, 2009).

Today, Facebook has become a crucial component of teaching/learning in higher education. When the university students realize that it provides instant communication and connection with friends who have common interests, the amount of time students spend on Facebook increases (Cheung, Chiu, & Lee, 2011). Besides, teachers also found that Facebook as a learning environment has a positive effect on their learning attributes (Sirivedin, Soopunyo, Srisuantang, & Wongsothorn, 2018). Although a great amount of studies focus on relationships between Facebook and higher education, not much is, in fact known about the

effect of using Facebook closed-group as closed environment among students on their English language learning/achievement in Algerian contexts. Therefore, the aim of the researcher is to investigate whether the creation and use of Facebook closed-group among LMD English students at the university of Djilali Liabès as a tool for satisfying academic needs has a significant effect on their achievement in learning English language away from the EFL classroom settings to this closed group. Researcher hypothesis that the use of Facebook closed-group for educational purposes has positive significant effect on students' English language learning achievement regardless the educational environment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social networking is a web 2.0 technology, young and adult people became attached to this new technology. As matter of fact, its usage is not only restricted to the social aspects of individuals, but also integrated the students/ teachers' daily life, their academic issues and teaching / learning experiences. Among the various studies that have been conducted on its utility in higher education, Jones, Blackey, Fitzgibbon, and Chew (2010) found that Social networking allows students as well as teachers to think about their practices; and they suggested that teachers should take into consideration all factors that may facilitate the learning experiences for students by these social networking websites. Ajjan and Hartshone's (2008) also investigated the faculty's awareness of the benefits of Web 2.0 and their decisions to adopt these tools in class learning. The result of their study revealed that Social networking websites have a significant potential in higher education due to their benefit in creating interactions between students and their attention to the course. Student-student interaction is a very important element in learning as Lenhart and Madden (as cited in Young & Rice, 2010) showed that learners communicate with each other, make new friends, share information, and knowledge through social networking websites. That is why; they mentioned that these technologies are beneficial in creating and building academic cooperation in classroom. Besides, Johnson and Johnson (as cited in James, 1989) reported that cooperative learning has potential impact on students' learning as it gives the opportunity of understanding and retention.

Facebook is one of the existing social networking websites. Today, the primary goal of Facebook is allowing people to communicate, share videos, and pictures; also, they can post, and comment. Recently, teachers and students have taken advantage of this website as an alternative environment for educational purposes. Consequently, Facebook has become the

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center of study for many researchers for instance Dalton (2009) stated that young students feel relax and comfortable in their connection with people and global knowledge through technology. Moreover, in his research about exploring students' education-related use of Facebook, Selwyn (2009) concluded, that students use of Facebook is primary for satisfying different needs such as sharing academic information as well as university life experiences.

Other studies highlighted the benefits of Facebook usage in higher education. For example, Atik (2012) studied the use of Facebook as an alternative media in learning English; she found that writing, posting and commenting through this virtual environment enhance students' English skills. Students not only appreciated advantages of Facebook due to its functions but also expressed their satisfaction, desire and willingness about it as Roblyer et al. (2010) indicated in their research about students' uses and perceptions of Facebook in education as social networking site. Indeed, they concluded that students showed willingness to the use of Facebook and e-mail technologies as a supportive means of classroom work. Facebook is also a medium, which can create and promote student-student interaction, Al-dheleai and Tasir (2017) research dealt with the use of Facebook for promoting students' interaction and academic performance. Their study results give evidence that when students began interacting and sharing with their peers all information, their understanding of course content improved a lot. Furthermore, students' usage of Facebook for sharing links and checking updated information and knowledge correlated with positive academic outcome (Junco, 2012).

Besides, different studies showed that Facebook increases student's learning engagement as Wang et al. (2013) revealed in their study about students' meaningful engagement in Facebook learning environments. They provided evidence that students became more engaged in their learning, satisfied with university learning experience, therefore, they advised the use of Facebook as a means of academic interaction. Heiberger and Harper (2008) also confirmed the previous results in their research about current usage of Facebook for increasing college students' involvement, and they concluded that there is a positive significant correlation between the use of Facebook and the engagement of college students.

Evidently, English students can be motivated through the Facebook usage as Blattner and Fiori (2009) clarified that in the language classroom, Facebook is a beneficial tool for authentic language interaction. As Facebook reinforces sense of belonging, it both provides students with opportunities to increase their motivation and enhance their English learning (Rovai, 2002). Similar results obtained by Zarei (2019), in his study about social Networking site and English language, he believed that integrating Facebook into English classroom settings has a positive influence and enhances English language skills. He tested his hypotheses on a sample of 22 postgraduate students from an English Language course at a Malaysian private university. The findings showed that Facebook helped the students improve their English language learning as it considerably increased their motivation in the process of learning.

In fact, applying Facebook in higher education for academic purposes is also beneficial in many ways, Kajornboon (2013) mentioned that students and teachers should benefit from this powerful instrument because it is an environment where English language learning occurred and learning attributes promoted. Additionally, Huseyin and Huseyin (2013) stated that Facebook helps teachers to establish much more activities than the classroom setting, and thus they became aware of its usefulness as a tool in helping students' best learning achievement.

Facebook closed-group as the name indicates it is a close, private space, and available only for those who have been invited to join the group. The aim of creating such group is for sharing ideas, allowing communication between group of people who have or share the same objectives. Content on this group is only restricted to the members. Many studied concentrated on the relationship between Facebook group and higher education, as an alternative means of communication. According to Li and Pitts (2009), Facebook group establishes Student-teacher relationship and provides students with increased opportunity for interaction with their teachers. It also boosts students' interaction, as Omar, Embi, and Yunus (2012) proved in their research. After investigating its usage as a platform for information sharing discussion among tertiary students in Malaysia, they finally approved that Facebook group is an alternative environment to build constructive interaction among students.

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Different studies examined integrating Facebook group in learning environment. For instance, Qiyun et al. (2011) study dealt with using the Facebook group as a learning management system. The results of their study provide evidence that due to its multidimensional usage, Facebook group gives students potential for sharing ideas, resources, and implementing online discussions. Whereas, Cain and Policastri (2011) declared that using Facebook as an informal learning environment was a successful as it gives students opportunities to deal in details with real-life topics, exchanging ideas and experiences with outside leaders and experts, activities that are impossible to do in classroom.

According to Tananuraksakul (2014), Facebook group can be used as blended learning and learning management system in writing. He suggested that teachers could utilize it to achieve both goals because students have positive perspectives towards Facebook group as practical and beneficial tool to learn English language. Besides, Tananuraksakul (2015) conducted other inquiry to research the impact of Facebook group usage on students' affect in language learning in a Thai context. The outcomes of study showed that the students enjoyed learning English better with the use of this instrument and concurrently felt more enthusiastic to learn the language. Finally, the implications are that Facebook group gives learners sense of happiness and relaxation. Such feelings about learning could have positive effects on students' attitudes and motivation, which are very important factors for student's English language learning/ achievement.

METHODOLOGY

The quantitative method was used for the data collection. The questionnaire was employed as a tool of data collection from the participants. The population of the present study were all undergraduate students of English department, Djilali Liabès University, Sidi-Bel-Abbès. The researcher use GPower3.1 software to compute the sample size. Therefore, the participants in this study were 156 students. The data was analyzed using SPSS Software version 19.

INSTRUMENTS

Based on related studies, the researcher designed the questionnaire to determine the relationship between the use of Facebook closed-group among students for academic purposes and their English language learning. The questionnaire included 21 questions using a five-

point Likert scale ranging from one to five (strongly disagree = 1 and strongly agree = 5). The researcher tested the reliability of questionnaire through Cronbach's alpha. The obtained Alpha value (Facebook closed-group questionnaire 0.74 and English language learning 0.82), that is presented in Table 1 and Table 2, is significant, as Pallant (2010) states that the accepted value of Alpha for social sciences research is ($> .60$). Before data collection, the questionnaire was piloted with 10 students, and then two of questions were removed to increase its reliability. The validity of questionnaire was checked by qualified EFL teachers.

Table 1: Reliability Statistics (Facebook closed-group)

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,746	9

Table 2: Reliability Statistics (English Language Learning)

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,827	12

DATA ANALYSIS

The data obtained was entered and analyzed with Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 'SPSS Software version 19'. The researcher used the Pearson Correlation to calculate the correlation between the use of Facebook closed-group among students and their English language learning/ achievement. The researcher also computed independent sample t-test to analyze whether there is a significant difference in relationship between the use of Facebook closed-group and English language learning based on gender.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Pearson Correlation was computed to determine relationship between the variables. The results in Table 3 revealed that there was a significant positive relationship between the use of Facebook closed-group among students for academic purposes and their English language achievement, $r = .397$, $n=156$, $p=.000$ and $r^2 = .15$. The correlation coefficient between the two variable accounts for 15%. According to Cohen's "Rules-of-Thumb" (1988), the strength

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of correlation between the use of Facebook closed-group among students and their English language learning was interpreted as medium, as $r \geq .10$ indicates small correlation, $r \geq .30$ indicates medium correlation, and $r \geq .50$ indicates large correlation. The finding obtained from the analysis confirms that the creation and the use of such closed-groups via Facebook allows more interactions among students upon the academic issues, and consequently leads to good performance and achievement in English language regardless the classroom setting. Table 4 showed that for the use of Facebook closed-group for academic purposes, female students were slightly lower (Mean = 30.49, SD = 5.71) than male students (Mean = 32.06, SD = 5.34). For English language learning, female students also were slightly lower (Mean = 46.65, SD = 7.65) than male students (Mean = 47.96, SD = 5.91). The difference between female and male in their use of Facebook closed-group, and in their English language learning was not significant ($t = 1.415$, $df = 154$, $p = .159$), ($t = .913$, $df = 154$, $p = .363$) respectively. Therefore, the overall results revealed that the gender has no significant difference in the relationship between the use of Facebook closed-group and English language learning.

Table 3: Correlation matrix between the use of Facebook closed-group among students for academic purposes and English language learning

		Facebook Closed-group	English Language Learning
Facebook Closed-group	Pearson Correlation	1	,397**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000
	N	156	156
English Language Learning	Pearson Correlation	,397**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	
	N	156	156

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4. Group Statistics

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Facebook closed-group	Male	33	32,0606	5,34988	,93129
	Female	123	30,4959	5,71506	,51531

English Language Learning	Male	33	47,9697	5,91864	1,03030
	Female	123	46,6585	7,65103	,68987

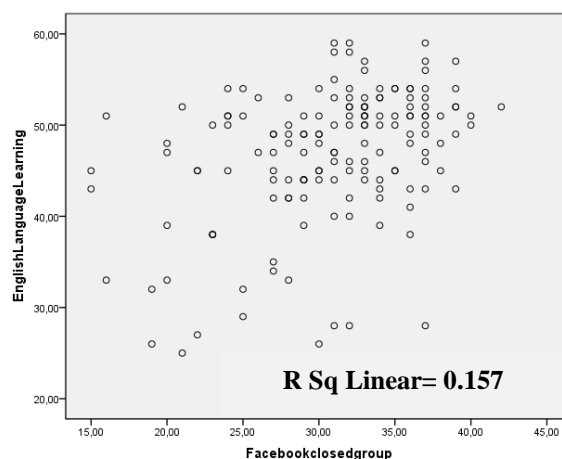


Figure 1. Scatter-plots for Correlation between the use of Facebook closed-group among students for academic purposes and English language learning

The researcher utilized Scatter-plots to figure out the linear relationship. The aim of linear relationship is to reveal whether the use of Facebook closed-group among students for academic purposes was significantly related to their better English language learning/achievement. The X-axis represented the use of Facebook closed-group and the Y-axis represented achievement in English language. Results from the figure.1 shows that student with high scores on English language learning, he has similar high scores on Facebook closed-group. The majority of the points are close to the straight line, there is linear correlation between the use of Facebook closed-group and the English language achievement. The statistics show that the more the students use Facebook closed-group for interacting, sharing and discussing upon the academic issues, the better they do in English language learning.

CONCLUSION

The present study proved that the creation and the use of Facebook closed-group among university students in Algeria has a significant effect on their achievement in English language learning away from the educational environment. The finding shows that the students prefer interacting through this means for performing different tasks with their peers.

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The closed-group is a relaxing and appropriate environment for students to discuss, share, and learn all information that are relevant to the course content and their specialty. This finding is compatible with previous results, which showed that Facebook does not only improve students' team working skills, but also helps them gain better results in learning as well as class assignments and tasks (Zarei, 2019). Besides its educational advantages, the closed-group is used as social instrument to communicate students' needs. Therefore, it is helpful to encourage students for the use of such tool due to its benefits on university students' life and education. As this study is adapted to the English LMD students at Djilali Liabès University, the findings of using Facebook closed-group among university students cannot be generalized, the researcher suggests further explorations to find out the use of this instrument not only in EFL context, but also in other branches or specialities.

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