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**The Eurasia Proceedings of Educational & Social Sciences (EPESS), 2016****Volume 5, Pages 26-29****ICRES 2016: International Conference on Research in Education and Science****SOCIAL MEDIA AND LANGUAGE TEACHING**Agim Poshka  
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**Abstract:** The popularity of social media is evident in all spheres of life and in this regard this article aims to reflect on the impact this media has in the language learning process. The focus is in creating utensils on using the increasing momentum of popularity that the social media have into the process of language teaching. The study investigates not only the impact but also the uniqueness that social media has and its role as the leading technologically mediated spaces. It reflects on the drastic changes in the study habitat in the public pedagogy. A number of learning opportunities are cited in the process to confirm that the pedagogical reality in the foreign language teaching process has changed drastically since the Grammar Translation method although some “constructivists” might argue that constructing a learning authenticity is unfeasible without the presence of technology and the vices inheriting it.

**Keywords:** Social media, language teaching, facebook, twitter, non-traditional methodology

**Introduction**

Teaching foreign languages has always aimed to bring up-to-date topics combined with the best technologies. The growing momentum of the popularity social media reminds us that living in the technological decade in which all aspects including culture are digitalized, requires from us to be more open to the medium that our students consider their favorite and that is social media. It seems that it is expected that pedagogy should be way beyond the paradigm that technology is important in class but reflect on the ways that public technology such as social media affect the learning process. It is clear that Facebook, Twitter and similar media are now present more than ever in the daily *habitus* of the 21<sup>st</sup> century learner. The yearly report on the usage and popularity of Facebook released in December 31, 2015 ([zeforia.com/social-media-infographics](http://zeforia.com/social-media-infographics)) states that in Europe, over 307 million people are on Facebook. The success of this corporation might seem as a remarkable success in income however for us as educators it would be another opportunity to face this new Facebook age regardless of our age or pedagogical views. Obviously the reality is quite different from the time when we graduated and keeping up is more than a must. It is important to note that after the appearance of internet and later-on the Smartphone technology our students are distracted more than at any time in the history of education. You are trying to impress with your marker in the white board, by using your voice, although your students have in their hands or pockets every possible piece of information needed. Among other reasons why teachers were quite respected few decades earlier was also that teacher was the one of the most important source of information. Unfortunately this is not the case today. Often our students have access to more information than we do. This does not minimize in any way the role of the educator but raises the bar regarding the methodology we ought to use in order to get their attention and hopefully inspire them.

The changes in the reality affects changes in mentality.

In a study conveyed by Jason L. Frand, named “The Information-Age Mindset: Changes in Students and Implications for Higher Education,”, the author reflects on certain changes in mentality which will affect the teaching reality in our classes. According to the text the changes are include the following aspects :

1. Computers are not just “technology”,
2. The Internet is better than TV,
3. Reality is no longer “real”,

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4. Doing is more important than knowing,
5. Learning resembles Nintendo more than logic,
6. Multitasking is a way of life,
7. Typing is preferred to handwriting,
8. Staying connected is essential,
9. There is zero tolerance for delays.

These changes should be reflected in our teaching process as well. In order to raise efficacy we need to adapt to the natural *learning habitat* that students are learning today. It seems that it's quite important and logical for an educator to use all this available technology and media and develop what Henry A. Giroux (1996) calls a *public pedagogy*. According to his concept we use the term and concept of public pedagogy to refer to the informal learning and educational experiences occurring within popular culture, popular media, and everyday life that teach youth through the ways in which they represent people and issues and the sorts of discourses they produce and disseminate (Richard L. Freishtat & Jennifer A. Sandlin, 2009, p. 504).

### **Can Social Media be used for educational purposes?**

Being conscious as educators that the best time to accelerate learning is when students' attention is at peak, or similar to the proverb of Sir James Dewar "minds are like parachutes they only function when they are open". The fact that they voluntarily access this media is a category of positive state of mind that students have by wanting to socialize and get informed. This is a moment when our goals can be absorbed more naturally. The process might be more natural and similar to the state of mind of first language acquisition in which the learning is acquired naturally since the cognition process progression is at the anxiety-free setting.

The frequency and the dynamic of this and similar social media have been investigated by a number of educators in order to measure or evidence the possible presence of the public pedagogy. There are a number of studies conveyed lately (besides the impact of radio, TV and movies) that examine the practices of the so-called technologically mediated spaces including a number of interactive applications such as video games, Smart Phone applications, free SMS applications etc and one media that had an enormous popularity is Facebook. According to Facebook.com, there are over 1.19 billion active Facebook users. This is an 18 percent increase year on year. For us as educators it is quite clear that Facebook is extensive in size, information and usage, and instead of taking no notice of we have to consider it as a new exploratory tool in our classes. One pedagogical goal would be to consider it as a new common ground for educational interaction among us and our students.

### **What are the disadvantages of this medium?**

We are all aware that this medium is relatively new, there has been very little research regarding its educational practicality. Also there is very little evidence that the technologically mediated spaces can serve for educational research purposes. Stuart Hall (1996) states that studying the public pedagogy of technologically mediated spaces where youth engage within a context of globalization and emerging technologies works to deconstruct how meanings are produced "in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies" (Freishtat & Sandlin, 2009, p. 505). Richard L. Freishtat & Jennifer A. Sandlin (2009), also state that despite the growing popularity and incorporation into youths' daily lives of technologically mediated spaces, ideas regarding their public pedagogy are seldom taken up as part of a bigger attempt to explain how learning takes place outside of schools or what it means to assess the political significance of understanding the broader educational force of culture in the new age of media technology, multimedia, and computer-based information and communication networks (Giroux, 1996).

### **Can social media promote student-centered approach?**

Very often in the teaching methodologies there is an aspect that asks special consideration, that is the constant need for student-centered classrooms. Also most of the methodological philosophies promote the approach for the need for a group work, peer correction or other modes of cooperation in the learning process. This feature is also seen as a bridge from teacher-centered to a more student-centered approach. This kind of behavior opens floor to the exploration of more cooperation tasks in the learning process instead of competition. Accidentally or not, the social media has created cooperation through communication in the center of activity as a main element of the social media which leads to natural networking opportunities. Although often we create this preconceived notion that networking is important to our students, social media is not necessarily only important for students but also for teachers in creating networks, contacts and opportunities for professional development. What seems

to be advantage with this type of media is the networking with fellow professionals and the opportunity to reflect, measure, launch and share professional beliefs and values that are central for professional development.

### Accessibility provided by social media

There are a number of advantages that specific social media has if applied properly in the process of education there are a number of factors that make this type of tools more attractive in comparison to the traditional teaching tools and norms. Among them two factors that seemed to be central in the process is the accessibility to these tools and the timing that expanded considerably the conventional modes in education.

The abovementioned factors gained a clear support also from the technological developments of smart-phones, I-pads and other similar gadgets that made the accessibility more practical and approachable. William Ferriter & Nicholas Provenzano,(2012) state that the answer is that innovation happens when minds come together in order to share ideas. Traditionally, that sharing required people to be in the same place at the same time. Today, sharing ideas can happen anytime, anywhere. Whether they are poking through Twitter streams on Smartphone's before the morning bell rings, reading blog entries on iPads while sitting in waiting rooms, or extending conversations started on e-conferences on laptops while unwinding after a long day of work, digitally connected teachers are tapping into what Clay Shirky and Dan Pink (2010) call "the great spare time revolution".

If followed carefully the labeling that traditional media used to describe these networking phenomena developed as follows. The growing popularity of the social networking moved from a basic website promoting socializing opportunities to a number of sites with similar goals that were later labeled as social mediums and lately more and more in literature we find this phenomenon labeled as socially mediated spaces. Here is a visual figure of these developments:

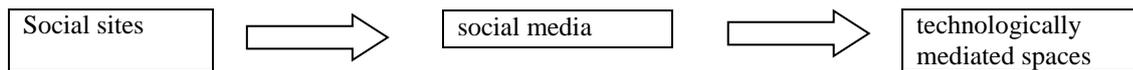


Figure 1. (Social media development) source: Poshka, A. ( 2014)

A similar advantage of this type of media is the possibility in creating opportunities to avoid the so called *self-created intellectual chamber* in which educators are sometimes consciously or unconsciously are trapped in. This type of media allows exchange of educational ideas and concepts that should be considered as benefits of the technologically mediated spaces.

### Conclusion

From what was said earlier it is evident that social media is too big to be ignore and finding ways in incorporating it in class makes our classes more attractive and esthetically more approachable. By *esthetically* I mean creating a learning setting that is similar to stage performance which allows students to enjoy the class development through using their favorite gadgets as variety of learning. The settings in which we teach are not even similar to students natural environment. They are considered today digital natives since their aces and usage to technology, social media is as similar to the process of first language acquisition. We cannot alienate the learning process by prohibiting the usage of technology or even their smartphone even courageously are sometimes named *life companion* gadgets. Although this might seem as unconventional and not loyal to the learning practices it is important for us to be loyal to the learning process and not the learning tools. Social media is becoming significant to the teachers community as well and it helps in achieving the goals for networking in the teaching community, while promoting cooperation versus competition in the teaching profession. It is also very important to be aware of possibilities for professional developments.

Last but not least important are the following advantages:

Wider aces to students free time.

Create learning environments that are similar to the natural environment of today's digital natives

Create opportunities to avoid the *self-created intellectual chamber* but allow to share and challenge ideas and concepts in education.

Social media is increasing its popularity and application and is becoming a reality and should be part of the educational tools, although they are managed by virtual platforms and not academic institutions. However, we need to be aware that this new reality will be even more present in our student's life and use these spaces for educational processes although with caution and good facilitation. Social media today is not only a networking space but a medium that helps in increasing values on and about education.

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