Using Facebook in and Outside of Classroom for Language Education in Rural Areas of Bangladesh: Prospects and Challenges

Nujhat Nuari Islam[1]

Abstract

Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 are now in discussion all over the world. Web 3.0 is the recent addition in the World Wide Web. Social Networking Sites (SNSs) are the tools of web 3.0 technology. SNSs are mainly used for communicative purpose. Educators, scholars and researchers are trying to use these sites for educative purpose as well. Many of them have done research on this purpose. This paper focuses on using facebook in and outside of classroom for education in rural areas of Bangladesh. There are computers, mobile phones, tablets, etc. electronic devices that can be used to access facebook with 3G/4G connection of internet. Mobile phone service providers like Grameen phone, Banglalink, Robi, Airtel, Teletalk, Citycell, along with Wimax service provider like Qubee, Banglalion, Ollo etc. are there to serve everyone with the fastest internet connection. Therefore, it is easy to access facebook in and outside of the classroom for educative purpose. Some language learning mobile applications are also part of it. After Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL), people are very eager to investigate the ways of using social networking sites in language classrooms. In this age, Facebook, Skype, Twitter, Friendster, youtube, and several blogs are very popular among everyone. This paper is a classroom based research. It delineates how facebook can be used for English Language Teaching (ELT) in language classroom for the students of Hamdard University Bangladesh which is located in Newtown, Sonargaon, Narayanganj. This problem will eventually address the present status quo of internet facility in rural areas of Bangladesh. The researcher used facebook to make a practice of writing and reading English among the students. As the students answer in their mid and final term in writing; therefore, the researcher focused on these two skills.

Keywords: Face book, Internet Facility, Language Learning

---

[1] Lecturer, Department of English, Hamdard University Bangladesh, Sonargaon, Bangladesh.

Introduction

People around the world can easily communicate with one another with just a click these days through a computer, or a tablet, or a mobile phone. Intellectuals, specially, the young scholars are generating these advancements in history of science, technology and engineering. In a country like Bangladesh, internet connection, computer facilities may be limited in rural areas; however, everyone possesses a mobile phone for their daily activities. Walton is the one and only technocrat in Bangladesh to provide cheap mobile handsets with the applications of a smart phone. Smart phone is actually a vague term. A smart phone, by definition, is a combination of web applications, such as, emailing, photo sharing, Social Networking Sites' widgets, and some other third party applications, etc. According to Chang, Pearman, and Farha (2012), Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 are literally transitioning into Web 3.0. They also stated that people now have 3D technologies. As an example, they mentioned 'Google Earth.'

Reading and writing are very important in terms of English Language Teaching (ELT). This paper intends to find out how facebook can be used to develop reading and writing skills of the students. Since Web 2.0 is introduced recently in this South Asia zone, Bangladeshi researchers are trying to accumulate knowledge, and invent new techniques to teach English Language to the students in a very authentic and innovative way. There are some issues that facebook will not be a good option for language learning. However, this paper discusses on the issue of utilizing facebook as a language learning tool and intends to find out how facebook can contribute in language learning and teaching.

Facebook can be a good medium for new updates. Absent students can find important notices, lecture sheets, and other activities from facebook. Though students' attendance is very important in classrooms, yet, there may be some incidents when student will be unable to attend the classes. In this situation, facebook will be beneficial for the students. Students will be able to find out enough activities and practice files in a page or a group that is managed by a language teacher.

The main purpose of this study is to find out the advantages of the facebook for teaching English language inside and outside the classrooms.

In this paper two Research Questions (RQs) are investigated and discussed:

1. How facebook may beneficial for teaching English language in terms of reading and writing?

2. What are the scopes of using facebook for language teaching in classroom of Hamdard University Bangladesh?

Significance of the Study

According to Dr. Muhammed Shahriar Haque (2012), internet is a revolutionary addition in education system. He also elaborated the term Web 2.0 at Dhaka University International Conference 2012. He said "Web 1.0 is one dimensional, Web 2.0 is multidimensional. Both are significant for higher education, particularly in a country like Bangladesh. One does not have to be very tech-savvy to use Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 applications." Web 2.0 applications consist of relevant websites, podcasts, e-books, e-journals, e-encyclopedia, e-dictionary, and virtual resources. Social networking sites are the good resource for information, accumulating of knowledge, language teaching, learning, and practices simultaneously in and outside of classrooms. Most significantly, students can learn language at anytime, anywhere through these networking sites as they can carry laptops, internet modem, mobile phones, palmtops, or handheld devices very easily. This study will help the teachers, and the students to know how they can use social networking sites as their language tool.

Literature Review

A. Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 Technologies

General people may think that internet and World Wide Web are similar which is not correct. According to Chang, Pearman and Farha (2012), Internet is only the hardware and wire; whereas, World Wide Web is a software. Web 1.0 is the first generation of this software. Burners Lee coined the term web 1.0, and according to him, it is a 'read-only software' (Aghaei, Nematbakhsh & Farsani, 2012). Then, internet was slow, time consuming, and desktop-based only. In the beginning of 21st century, the computer specialists started to talk about web 2.0. Tom O'Reilly coined the term 'web 2.0' at Web 2.0 Conference, and he said (2005) that 'Web 2.0 is the network as platform.'

He further mentioned that there is no concrete definition of web 2.0. However, according to Aghaei, Nematbakhsh and Farsani (2012), web 2.0 was defined by Dale Daugharty in 2004 as read-write software.

Web 2.0 needs a web browser unlike web 1.0. Web 1.0 was depended on installed software (Chang, Pearman, & Farha, 2012). Mozilla Firefox, Google Crome, Internet Explorer are mostly used web browsers at this present status quo. These web browsers make the information search easy and speedy as well. Chang, Pearman, & Farha further mentioned that web 2.0 has become a useful language learning tool for its powerful socialization and communication tool (2012). These tools continue to motivate recent teachers, educators, trainers, and others who are related to ESL/ EFL.

B. Web 2.0 tools for language learning

As O'reilly (2005) distinguished between web 1.0 and web 2.0, he also mentioned that web 2.0 is faster than the web 1.0. There are some other distinctive features as well.

- The broadband connection and high speed Wifi connection have made the searching very fast.

- There are many web applications and softwares to use in web 2.0. People can easily upload and download files and documents.

- People not only can read but also can write in the web pages.

- Social networking sites enable them to connect with any person across the globe. Facebook, myspace, twitter, youtube, skype, google+, etc. are some popular SNSs.

The social networking sites may enable the teachers to teach their students through internet. Language learning can easily be done through it. Teachers are already utilizing the tools like multimedia, podcast, vodcast/vidcast, blog.

C. Ways of Using Facebook

Facebook is the most popular social networking site all over the world. Mark Zuckerberg launched this website on February 2004 under Facebook Inc. (Phillips, 2007). It is now the second most used social networking site in the world. Scholars, researchers, and educators from all over the world have been working on to use facebook for educational purpose. In Bangladesh, use of facebook as an education tool is yet to be implemented. However, some researchers in Bangladesh are working on this issue now. Some features of facebook are discussed below:

i. Connecting with the World:

As we already know facebook is a free site where anyone above 18 years can sign up, and make new friends, and communicate with anyone. However, there are some privacy and security issues that frequently made facebook authorities worried as they have to face legal issues.

ii. Marketing Purpose:

Established multinational companies to small entrepreneurs, everyone has facebook page of their own. Film producers also create facebook page to promote their movies. Each male and female actor has their own account or page. Not only movie stars, TV channels, TV stars also have their own accounts or page. Some people create facebook fan group to make publicity of their favorite heroes or heroine. According to Subramani and Rajagopalan (2003), this era is an age of user-generated media where web

2.0 technologies facilitate the marketers with viral marketing. The other name of this marketing is word-of-mouth (Miller & Lammas, 2010). Consumers' reaction is very prior to the marketers of this century. Facebook does not ask for money from its subscribers, yet it earns money from the marketers who post advertisement in this site. Facebook is a significant place for publicity, advertising, and marketing.

ii. Means of Communication:

The subscribers of facebook can communicate with everyone at any time without any cost. Facebook has signed a contract with Skype authority. It has become convenient to communicate with friends, family, and colleagues through facebook chat, email, and video conferencing system. A group of friends can communicate with each other through this conferencing system. They can upload photos, videos, audios, document files at any time. Therefore, it is obvious that facebook can be used as a tool for language teaching very easily.

I. Methodology

This study is a combination of both qualitative and quantitative research. Researcher used the techniques in the classroom to show the possibilities of using facebook, and found out that facebook is a useful way of teaching for some students of Hamdard University Bangladesh, not for everyone. The success of this teaching method is fruitful when every student is able to take part in activities inside and outside of classes. The researcher made a facebook group, ENG 101, English Basics. She added 60 students in this group. Every day she uploaded new activity sheets, lecture sheets, important notices. She observed the performance of every single student of this group. Then, she distributed a questionnaire to the students of English, Economics, EEE, CSE, Mathematics department of Hamdard University Bangladesh (HUB). Students' responses and the demographical data were given importance to find out the impact of using facebook to improve reading and writing skills. The questionnaires were given to 60 undergraduate students. 53 questionnaires were returned to the researcher. Among them, 33 students were male, and 20 students were female. The questions were both open and closed ended. The setting of data collection is formal. It took only 15 minutes to fill up the questionnaires.

II. The Analysis of Data

The research question one is focused on how a teacher can use facebook inside and outside the classroom to develop the students' reading and writing skills. The result and findings of this question are web-oriented. The Research Question two is mainly data-oriented, and it is focused on the scopes of SNSs in town like Sonargaon. Most of the students of Hamdard University Bangladesh live in Narayanganj, Sonargaon, and Comilla zone. Some of them have come from villages of Panchagar and Chapainawabganj as well.

Number of Students	53
Male	33
Female	20
Educational Institution	All are from Govt. colleges & Madrasas
Home Town	2 students are from Comilla & Kishoreganj
	38 students are local (from Jatrabari, Sonargaon and Narayanganj area).
Availability of PC	17 students have their own PC
Availability of Internet	All students use mobile internet facility.
	University has WIFI connection

Table 1.0: Students' Profile

The questionnaire has 16 questions altogether. Question number 1 and 2 are focused on the financial condition of students' parents. Most of the parents are medium wage earner. Therefore, in reply to the question number 3, only 17 students (that is, 32%) answered that they have their own PC/laptop. Question number 4 revealed that among these 17 students, 11 students (that is, 64%) have internet facility. However, 25 students have their own email account. As they have their own email account, they have facebook account as well. 40 students out of 53 students (75% students) said they have facebook account to answer question number 8. They spend at least one hour daily in browsing the internet. 13 students out of 53 students (24%) answered they are not very regular in facebook.

From question number 10, 11, 12, and 13 (Appendix A) it is found out that 100% (53 out of 53) students did not have internet facility in their school. 9% students (5 out of 53) said they only had a few computers at their school for computer lab class. 8% students (5 out of 53) said they studied in madrasa. Those madrasas did not have a proper computer teacher. In reply to the question number 13, 53 students (100%) answered they can now easily utilize internet at their Hamdard University campus.

According to the reply of question number 14, 100% students informed that they all are the members of the facebook group, 'ENG 101.' Through this group, the students interact with the course teachers. The teacher frequently posts questions in the group. The students answer, and the teacher gives feedback to the students after the session.

III. Findings and Discussion

A. According to RQ[1]

Social networking site is a part of web 2.0 technology. According to Stevenson and Liu (2010), a web 2.0 technology is a means of communication, disseminating knowledge, sharing information with everyone through any social networking site. Recently, some educators of Bangladesh are using facebook for language learning and teaching purpose. There are several ways of teaching language through facebook. Groups and

pages both can be used for teaching purpose. The features of groups and pages have some distinctions.

Groups vs. Pages	Groups	Pages
Publish to users' timeline	√	√
Share photos, videos, events	√	√
Include discussion, forums, comments	√	√
Make group private and manage members	√	X
Edit group docs wiki style	√	X
Group chat all at once	X	√
Complete control over posts	√	√
Use widgets on your websites/blogs to promote	X	√
3rd party apps	X	√
Access to users stats	X	√
Delete after course end	X	√

Table 2.0 facebook groups vs. facebook pages

The distinctions show that facebook pages are better to use as a language learning tool. When the researcher created a facebook page of ENG 101: English Basics, she used to upload photos regarding grammar rules, and documents related to drills and activities. The students used to play quizzes through the poll question options.

According to RQ^2

After analyzing the questionnaires, the survey resulted in some interesting statistics. Table 01 suggested that the students are not very internet savvy. Students do not have basic knowledge of computers. Therefore, they are not interested in social networking sites. They use mobile phones but it is impossible for them to develop their reading and writing skills through a normal mobile phone. They need android or symbian mobile phones. Though they have mobile phones through which they can connect with internet, but they could not do it because they are not financially developed. Hence, they use internet in the campus only. Students who do not have computers at home, they use computers in campus. They could not purchase any PC or desktop. Students who live in Dhaka city or at least in any divisional city, they get the facilities of internet. Bangladesh is still developing in IT sector. Digitalization has just begun.

IV. General Discussion

It is quite a challenge for the teachers to use facebook in and outside of the classroom to teach English language. Social networking sites can be beneficial for teachers and students. However, it is at present, only

applicable for the city pupils. Rural area students are yet to get the technological facilities. 3G service is introduced, but it is only available in divisional cities, not in upzilla or villages. For an area like Sonargaon, using social networking sites to improve students' English Language reading and writing skills is quite difficult but not impossible. The university can provide internet facilities to its students. The government should take some necessary steps to ensure uninterrupted internet facility. How? The answer is followed:

1. University authorities can cover their campus with Wifi and internet with the help of an internet service provider like Brac Net, GP IT Solutions Ltd., Aamra Network Ltd., etc.

2. Students may use any 3G service provider which is available in their area. In Sonargaon, GP, Robi, Banglalink 3G services are available.

3. Network providers like Banglalion, Qubee, and Ollo are yet to be reached in rural areas. These networks do not support 3G/4G network facilities in rural areas.

4. The price of the data pack is very high. Students who study with scholarship, their financial condition is inadequate. They are unable to buy these data packs in higher price. Department of English at Hamdard University Bangladesh is facing this situation. The government should think about them, and must reduce the price.

5. All the universities that are located in divisional cities, districts, upzillas need concentration on the technological development in their campus. If the universities completely facilitate the students, teaching will be much easier in those universities.

6. Universities may have cyber café in the campus where students can sit and study.

7. The internet speed gets hampered during bad weather. Sometimes the internet service loses connection with the main server. This happens often in the rainy season. As the service providers are not available at the same day, the teachers and the students have to wait for active internet connection for one week or more. The university must ensure proper internet connection at this period.

8. The government of Bangladesh may donate some computers in the schools and colleges so that the students receive proper knowledge of computer operating. One computer for one student should be the priority but if that is not possible, the government should assure that at least two students may learn computers by using one computer at a time during and outside class time.

V. Conclusion

Technical Education and Training for Changing Rural Income

Social Networking Sites are invented to connect people from all over the world. Educators and teachers are using technologies to teach their students. British Council, TESOL Organization, IATEFL, and some other educational institutions use facebook to spread out their day to day working activities. There are also some private entrepreneurs who are using facebook to groom up their business through facebook. Scholars are using blog to adequate their students in reading and writing by utilizing technology.

References

Chang, C. W., Pearman, C. & Farha, N. (2012).   "Social Language Acquisition: Implications of
Web 2.0 and Beyond" *Critical Questions in Education,* 3 (2), pp 52-64

Haque, M. S. (2012). "*'Who's afraid of technology'*: Implications of Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 in
English Language and Literature Teaching" *International Conference 2012 on Teaching and Learning English Through Technology*, pp. 21

Aghaei, S., Nematbaksh, M. A., & Farsani, H.K. (2012). "Evolution of the World Wide
Web: from Web 1.0 to Web 4.0" *International Journal of Web & Semantic Technology (IJWesT)*, 3(1), pp 1-10

O' Reilly, T. (2005). "What Is Web 2.0 Design Patterns and Business Models for the Next
Generation of Software" *O'reill,.* Retrieved on 11 Sep. 2013 from http://www.oreillynet. com/pub/a/oreilly/tim/news/2005/09/30/what-is-web-20.html

Phillips, S. (2007). "A Brief History of Facebook" *The Guardian*, Retrieved on 20 Oct. 2013
from http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2007/jul/25/media.newmedia

Subramani, M. R., & Rajagopalan, B. (2003). "Knowledge-Sharing and Influence in Online
Social Networks via Viral Marketing" *Communications of the ACM,* 46(12), pp 300-07

Miller, R. & Lammas, N. (2010). "Opportunities for using social media to generate viral
Marketing" *Asia Pacific Public Relations Journal*, 11, pp 1-9, Retrieved on 22 Oct. 2013
from http://www.pria.com.au/journal/area?command=record&id=80&cid=14

Stevenson, M. P., & Liu, M. (2010). "Learning a Language with Web 2.0: Exploring the Use of
Social Networking Features of Foreign Language Learning Websites" *CALICO Journal, 27*(2), pp. 233-259

Appendix A

Questionnaire for HUB Students

Age:

Hometown:

Gender:

1. How many earning members are there in your family?_____

2. What is your father's occupation?_____

3. Do you have desktop, laptop, tablet PC at home?
    a. Yes   b. No

4. If you have a PC, do you have internet connection?
    a. Yes   b. No

5. Do you have any email account?
    a. Yes   b. No

6. Which is your email service provider? You may choose more than one.
    - a   Google   b. Yahoo
    - c. MSN (hotmail/live)   d. Rediffmail
    - e. AOL   f. Others _____

7. Do you have any social network account?
    a. Yes   b. No

8. Which is your social network account from the following? You can choose more than one.
    - a. `Facebook   b. Twitter
    - c. Google+   d. My space
    - e. Hi5   f. Others _____

9. How many hours do you surf the internet? (e.g. 3 to 4 hrs)_____

10. What is the name of your school? _____

11. Did your school have computer lab?
    a. Yes   b. No

12. Did your school have internet facility?
    a. Yes   b. No

13. Does your university have computer lab and internet facility?
    _____

14. Are you a member of facebook group 'HUB Language Society'?_____

15. If yes, how often you visit the group?_____

16. Write about your computer knowledge here.