Breaking Physical Barriers With Mobile Technologies:
Web 2.0 for Education

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Considering the growing popularity of mobile technologies and therefore social media tools, the idea of this study is not to promote or romanticise a social media tool but to explore the potential of social media for educational use by presenting a specific example. The study also aims to bring a deeper understanding of how mobile applications could be used to foster language education and consider their possible potential in education. Unlike the common trend investigating English vocabulary in the field, this study does not expose students to word lists but attempts to support the curriculum that students have to follow in their formal education. In this context, this chapter suggests an example of going beyond the physical constraint of language classroom by providing learners informal opportunities to practise English outside school in various contexts by using one of the most popular tools, namely WhatsApp.

INTRODUCTION

Developments in information and telecommunication technologies have triggered a drastic change in education with more focus on technology supported teaching and learning activities. The widespread of mobile devices such as smartphones, iPads, tablets and personal computers among students have transformed learning and

teaching environments as well as students' learning and their academic achievement (Huang, 2016; Barrot, 2016) which have increased using mobile technologies in foreign language learning and teaching environment.

As part of mobile technologies, use of social media is rising day by day all over the world which also paved way to its use for various purposes one of which is education. According to the latest statistics 2.95 billion people, which is about one third of the world population, use social media across the globe (Statista, 2019). In its simplest form social media can be defined as an internet-based technology that allows users to create and share content according to their interests. While allowing users to connect and communicate instantly, social media appears in different forms such as blog, vlog and instant messaging through which people can interact and communicate easily (Zincir, 2017; Chugh & Joshi, 2017). This brings with it the inevitable question of whether and how it is possible to utilize social media in education in particular in language education.

Within the context of social media, mobile technologies' giving the users the opportunity to combine formal and informal learning is said to contribute to students' learning practices and experiences inside as well as outside the school. Yet, mobile technology-supported educational activities differ from the ones employed in formal settings. One of the most well-known platforms that offer students the chance to communicate and engage in activities outside formal settings is WhatsApp. This smartphone application breaks the physical barriers involved in communication by providing users with a wide range of functional features from instant text messaging to sharing documents, links to web addresses and different ways of chatting through voice and video calls.

To conclude, this study aimed to investigate using a social media tool with mobile instant messaging feature in English language education in terms of university prep-students' performance in vocabulary and explore their opinions within the context of mobile technologies in English as a Foreign Language.

BACKGROUND

Mobile Technologies

With the introduction and advancement of mobile technologies there have been great changes in almost all aspects of life all over the world and education is no exception to this transformation. This drastic change has caused many different terms to have entered into the literature in education. In this sense, one of the terms that has attracted great interest is called mobile learning which eliminates temporal and spatial lines and enables students to reach educational resources through the