

Use of Facebook by Foreign Language Instructors

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Nowadays the widespread use of information and communication technologies in every field, especially in education, brings forward the idea of use of them by teachers and students intensively. Although teachers and students are far from each other physically, they communicate thanks to information and communication technologies, learn new information about their lessons, repeat this information, and reinforce what they learn in class. When taking learning and teaching into consideration, learning and teaching do not happen without communication and interaction. The importance of social media tools in information and communication technologies has been increasing in terms of education. Social media tools are generally called as social networking sites. Facebook is the most used and known tool among them. Facebook is a social network that provides communication and information exchange. People who have Internet connection in every part of the world communicate and interact among themselves via this social tool. In other words, people compose virtual social lives for themselves. People in these virtual lives identify themselves, communicate and get along with people who have the same cultural level via the facilities that the Internet provides. This case tries to find out

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the use of Facebook by language instructors via a questionnaire which was given to 160 English, French, and German language instructors at the School of Foreign Languages, Basic Languages Department of Anadolu University. Findings emerged related to every aim of the study. Some conclusions were drawn from the findings gained in the study. The results of the study revealed that Facebook has been used widely by instructors. There were some differences in the use of Facebook among English, French and German instructors. It was found that English instructors made extensive use of Facebook. Moreover, some instructors were found to create class pages and have some activities like communication, sharing class events, giving homework and sharing videos. Based on the results, the study was concluded by some implications to use Facebook in foreign language learning.

BACKGROUND

There have been many differences in the way people communicate with each other by the emergence of the Internet. Starting in 2004, Web 2.0 became a collective term for a mass movement in society: a movement towards new forms of user engagement, supported by Webbased tools, resources, services and environments. Online collaboration and sharing have become the norm (Collis & Moonen, 2008) and with Web 2.0 fostering the development of a more socially connected web, users of this space have become important producers of content, thoughts and ideas, as much as they have been consumers (Anderson, 2007). Wikis, blogs, instant messaging, Internet telephony, social bookmarking, and social networking sites are some of the examples of Web 2.0 technologies. These new technologies make sharing content among users and participants much easier than in the past and change the way documents are created, used, shared, and distributed (Dearstyne, 2007).

However, the openness of these new applications, allowing anyone to modify content, make Web 2.0 technologies different. Users now play a more fundamental and active role in information architecture (Alexander, 2006).

Web-based programs such as Friendster, MySpace, and Facebook offer users a medium to create a virtual identity and network with friends and family. Unlike Friendster and MySpace, Facebook is used by millions of people and it operates exclusively for those in the academic community and has become increasingly popular on college campuses. Teacher use of Facebook provides a unique perspective to the current CMC literature. With large numbers of students and teachers using this virtual social network as a medium of communication (Lashinsky, 2005), it is important to understand how students use and make sense of specific social networks. This understanding can provide useful information for teachers who use virtual social networks to communicate with students.

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