

The Impact of Employing Telegram App on Iranian EFL Beginners' Vocabulary Teaching and Learning

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Abstract: In the present technology era, a new trend of using social media or social networking sites (SNSs) has been developed. Social media has a lot to offer when it comes to education in general and second language acquisition (SLA) in particular. This study aimed at investigating the impact of Telegram, as an available social network, on learning L2 vocabulary by Iranian EFL beginners. To achieve this aim, a quasi-experimental research design was used. Thirty one Iranian students, aged 10-14, were selected through the convenience sampling method. The teacher taught English vocabulary to the participants in two ways: for four weeks by using Telegram and for another four weeks through the traditional face-to-face classroom instruction. Comparison of the scores obtained from words taught through Telegram and the scores of the traditionally-taught lexical items gave rise to the conclusion that learning vocabulary through the social network was more effective than the traditional approach. This study could help the teachers and material developers to consider incorporation of technology and common applications in language classes for the purpose of L2 vocabulary acquisition.

Keywords: Iranian EFL Learners, Social Networks, Telegram App, Vocabulary Learning.

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Introduction

Today people around the world are using information and communication technologies (ICTs) and the Internet almost anywhere and anytime. Technology is playing very crucial role in everyday life and in academic settings. As Ralston (2012) pointed out, technology is a fact of life as the medium of daily communication affecting language learning. According to Van der Beemt, Akkerman, and Simons (2010), today's young generation is called net generation because technologies and World Wide Web are the two most familiar items for them. Horovits (2012) stated that this net generation has been found to be applied in different methods of learning from the earlier generation. The new generation is more engaged and constantly connected to the net. It is believed that net generation students prefer independent learning style and have stronger beliefs in technologies for better learning.

Tapscott (1998) coined the term net generation that refers to the children who grow up with digital world. He believes that the new generation is exceptionally curious, self-reliant, contrarian, smart, focused, able to adapt high in self-esteem, and has a global orientation. There has been a change in the way children gather, accept, and retain information. The main positive influence of social network has been connection and interaction between their members as well as exchanging and sharing information, knowledge and ideas. By these networks, students can increase their creativity and productivity and learn how to work in a group and society. They can make groups, help each other solve problems. This can be related to learning a second language. The members can be from all over the world without any limitations. Studies conducted by the Institute for Prospective Technological Studies (IPTS) demonstrate that the high speed of social media application outside the formal educational classroom provides new opportunities for innovation and modernization of education and training institution.

Online social networking websites like Twitter, Facebook, Myspace and YouTube are becoming more and more popular among people around the world. These networks become part of daily life for many purposes including educational ones at all levels. Recently, many studies have shown that younger people spend a considerable portion of their daily routines interacting through social media. These sites have become important part of most students' lives (Van den Beemt, Akkerman, & Simons, 2010; Boyd, 2007; Lomicka & Lord, 2011; Van der Beemt, Akkerman, & Simons, 2010; Yapici & Hevedanli, 2014). Therefore, these have a great potential for the pedagogical system. Social networks can help students and

teachers for facilitating teaching and learning inside and outside the classroom. In recent years, numerous studies have attempted to explain the potential of these networks in different teaching and learning areas (Ajjan & Hartshorne, 2008; Armstrong & Franklin, 2008; Jones 2008; Jones, Blackey, Fitzgibbon, & Chew 2010; Tiryakioglu & Erzurum, 2011).

Jones, Blackey, Fitzgibbon, and Chew (2010) explained that social networks can develop formal learning, and become part of the educational environment of students. According to Lee (2009) and Kabilan (2010), students believe that social networks such as Facebook, Telegram, or Tweeter could utilize an online situation to facilitate learning English. Some studies have shown that online environment can be an appropriate device to help learning different language skills, increase students' motivation, confidence, and attitudes towards learning English that can lead to successful application of CALL (Kabilan, 2010; Vandewaetere & Desmet, 2009).

One of the main problems that students challenge in language learning is lack of chance for having personalized course contents and they complain about following the same curriculum. (Bartlett-Bragg, 2006; Donmus, 2010). New technologies such as social network sites have created an effective new means irrespective of time, place, and pace which lead to self-study autonomous learning where language is always described as a self-study subject. These tools and many others, are tools to change traditional approaches in language learning generally. Recently, many studies have been carried out to investigate the impact of social networks on learning second language in EFL learners. The most related studies are to determine whether the student and teacher find out it commutable, helpful and to use social network as a tool for educational purpose inside and outside the classroom. A large number of these studies agree on the positive impact of social networks on teaching a second language (Habash, 2015; Oxford, 1990; Oxford & Ehrman, 1995; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Tapscott, 2009; Wenden, 1991).

Selim (2007) stated that users who were very familiar with web technologies and the skills needed to use computer and mobile devices for in-structure developed positive attitudes. On the other hand, students who were not skilled in ICT became anxious about the use of computers, had lower expectations from educational technology, and they did not believe in the benefits of e-learning (Vrana, Garyfallos, Zafiroopoulos, & Pascha-loudis, 2005). In addition, Habbash (2015) represented the impact of mobile phones on learning English vocabulary. The main objective of his study was investigating the role of mobile phones in EFL classes for the undergraduate student of the University of Tabuk for

improving their English vocabulary. The data distributed among the teachers who teach to EFL students. Mobiles were the new technological tools that show younger students and teacher can use new technology.

Due to the popularity of applications like Telegram, a study was conducted on the use of such applications on the differences in the textese (Akbari, 2013; Chalak, 2014). There have been other studies which have focused on the use of social network language learning. Some of these studies have focused on the vocabulary knowledge of Iranian EFL learners. Jafarizadeh et al. (2014) of WhatsApp in the vocabulary learning improved the performance of students and found that WhatsApp was an effective tool for EFL learners and improved their vocabulary gain. Ghaemmaghami et al. (2014) study on Iranian EFL learners via social network enhanced their interest in learning vocabulary. The results showed that students in the experimental group outperformed the control group. Social networks were regarded as teaching tools that had a positive effect on learning. The study by Mashhadi Heidar and Kaviani (2014) showed that English through the use of Telegram can have advantages for Iranian EFL learners and could have a positive effect on EFL learners' vocabulary gain.

The present study was a similar attempt to determine the effect of an available social network, on learning L2 vocabulary. For the purposes of this study, the following research questions were proposed:

1. Does using Telegram have any effect on the vocabulary learning of EFL beginners?
2. Do EFL learners have positive attitudes to using Telegram for learning English vocabulary?

Methodology

Design of the Study

Based on the purposes of study, the best research design to investigate the effect of