Social Networking: A Collaborative Open Educational Resource

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ABSTRACT

As a result of the Web 2.0 evolution, teachers and learners of English as a foreign language seem not to encounter any hindrances when there is the requirement to approach, access and take advantage of massive Open Educational Resources (OERs). EFL teachers and learners have been conversant with some kinds of OERs like open textbooks, streaming videos, online tutorials, open access journals, email, blogging, etc. In addition, the necessity of collaboration in learning English should be taken into consideration. Social networking sites are also considered to be an effective learning tool for EFL learners outside class time. They also play an essential role in encouraging the process of collaborative learning. This paper aims to study how social networking is facilitated as a collaborative open educational resource.

Introduction

It cannot be denied that the widespread of Information technology and the Internet provides Internet users with a large number of opportunities to broaden their minds, create their perspectives, exchange information as well as cultural background, and so forth. Additionally, the Internet can be regarded as an enormous and available source of academic materials or research relevant to various areas of study. Internet or social media help learners resourceful information for learning a foreign language (Pham, 2021; Chau, 2021). For many years, a majority of Internet users have been well-acquainted with social networking sites or social networking. Their social function can be known as the ability to offer the users services to keep in touch and interact with others instead of providing private functions like blogging. In terms of education, social networking can play a significant role as a connection between teachers, students, and parents in and outside the classroom (Greenhow & Askari, 2015). As mentioned before, the Internet is considered a various source of learning or an "open educational resource" (OERs). In the light of teaching and learning a new language, the demand for focus on

cooperative and collaborative learning, as well as the usage of OERs, has been dramatically increased (Toetenel, 2014). The obligation of social networking can satisfy this demand thoroughly. Therefore, social networking is being believed to be a collaborative available educational resource for many reasons. This article will review some works which contribute to the definition of "collaborative open educational resource (OER)," "social networking," mention some features of OERs, and indicate how social networking can facilitate an OER. As a final point, some barriers to social networking sites used in teaching and learning will also be mentioned at the final stage of the article.

Literature review

What is an open educational resource (OER)

There has been a great deal of definition for the term "open educational resources (OERs)." It can be straightforwardly manifested as a source of learning or teaching materials and documents available on the Internet. The users have the permission to access and take advantage of those for their learning purpose. According to Wiley, Bliss & McEwen (2014), the very initial definition of this term and considered to be the one used majorly is derived from the Forum on the Impact of Open Courseware for Higher Education in Higher Education Developing Countries, organized by UNESCO in 2002. The term is defined as "The open provision of educational resources, enabled by information and communication technologies, for consultation, use, and adaptation by a community of users for non-commercial purposes (UNESCO, 2002, p. 24). The term then was added the second definition as "a universal educational resource available for the whole of humanity" (UNESCO, 2002, p. 28). It is evident that there are various kinds of OERs that language learners are able to approach, which can be listed as online textbooks, streaming videos, online tutorials, learning modules, and so on. Besides those learning tools, Youtube also contributes to improving speaking, pronunciation ability and enhancing learners' vocabulary (Su et al., 2021). Due to the COVID19 pandemic, there has been a rapid increase in online courses, and learners have many opportunities to access these resources.

Additionally, Wiley (2010) contributed to the explanation of the word "open" in the term by mentioning four permissions that make any resources available for free (Toetenel, 2014). Those four permissions (4Rs) can be listed as follows reuse (the right to reuse the content), revise (the right to adjust the content itself), remix (the right to integrate the original content with other content to create a new one), and redistribute (the right to share the content with others).

In conclusion, open educational resources (OERs) can be defined as an abundant source of academic material distributed online for free, without any commercial purpose.

What is a collaborative open educational resource?

The necessity to think and cooperate on matters of consideration, and the change from individual work to group work, from independence to community across the globe has increased for more than two decades (Austin, 2000; Welch, 1998; Leonard & Leonard, 2001, as cited in Laal & Laal, 2012)

There has been an emerging trend in using "collaboration" in the educational reform movement, especially in teaching and learning a second or foreign language. Regarding teaching and learning English, "collaboration" plays a crucial role since learning a language doesn't concentrate on learning the rules, but it requires communication, conversation, and interaction. "Collaborative learning" is also regarded as a practical approach encouraged to facilitate in most educational institutions.

Srinivas (2011) stated that Collaborative Learning is an educational approach that contains groups of learners who cooperate to find a solution to an issue, carry out an assignment, or produce learning outcomes. Learners are equipped with a great deal of opportunity for personal growth. Thanks to collaborative learning, learners can listen to others' perspectives and indicate and protect their opinions. "In so doing,

the learners begin to create their own unique conceptual frameworks and not rely solely on an expert's or a text's framework" (Laal, & Laal, 2012, p.491).

Combined with the definition of the term "open educational resource" from the previous section, "collaborative open instructional resource" can be understood in various ways. It can be regarded as a numerous source of nonprofit academic materials that is public in the domain. It has the function of enhancing collaborative learning by motivating learners to work together via the Internet. Moreover, the resource itself is also collaborative, which means the learners are required to cooperate, to connect to each other to distribute the achievements, subject matters, research to this network. Toetenel (2014) emphasized the importance of the collaborative component in OER by stating, "The accessibility of OERs is beneficial to second language learners, but without the collaborative element, it could lead to a return to a more product-driven approach to language learning" (p.152).

Social networking sites as open educational resources

It was evident that the appearance of Web 2.0 technologies has changed human beings' lives. Parameswaran and Whinston (2007) created a definition for the term "Web 2.0 technologies" as "applications and services that facilitate collective action and social interaction online with a rich exchange of multimedia information and evolution of aggregate knowledge." (p.762).

In many countries, the applications of Web 2.0 technologies like Wiki, blogging, vlogging, and social networking sites in education are becoming more and more concerned. It is known that Wiki is regarded as the giant encyclopedia with abundant and prestigious information storage. It contains plenty of disciplines across the globe and can be edited by Internet users. Next, blogging, known as "an online diary," is the place where users are able to distribute their daily

activities, expressions, perspectives in written form. It provides the teachers and learners with a realistic environment in which writing and reading occur in connection with real and interactive audiences. People who access learners' blogs can observe as well as give responses under the authors' posts. The process of utilizing blogging allows language learners to improve their writing and reading skills (GodwinJones, 2003; Alexander, 2006; Ševelj, 2006, as cited in Fageeh, 2011). Another means of communication that a number of learners tend to take advantage of for improving their speaking skills commonly is Vlogging. Vlogging (or video blogging) can be known as short videos created and edited by learners. By creating vlogging, learners have the chance to share their perspectives, viewpoints in speech so that it can be considered as an effective tool for practicing speaking skills. Nowadays, blogging and video blogging are manipulated by some language teachers in order to evaluate learners' processes. Learners are asked to write their daily activities on their blogs. Then other learners are required to give responses (in target language) in the posts. Another strategy is to ask learners to create a daily vlog, in which learners must use the target language to tell stories.

For a long time, the term "social networking" is not been an uncommon concept to most Internet users across the globe. As Abhyankar (2011) claimed, a "social network" is an online society where people around the world can expand their relationships with different groups or individuals for a particular purpose. Social networking sites permit users to construct "user-generated content that is highly dynamic and changeable and is mainly characterized by the emphasis on community and collaboration" (Arnold and Paulus, 2010, as cited in Peñuelas, 2013). Some social networking sites popular with most Internet users can be named Facebook, Twitter, Myspace, Ning, Zoho, and others. Although they may differ in some features, they share some similar characteristics. Once users successfully create an account, they can interact with other users by adding friends to their friend list, following famous people, sending messages, and others. Those social networking sites distribute opportunities for cooperation for educational and non-educational purposes all over the world (Peñuelas, 2013). As mentioned by Abhyankar (2011), the initial social networking sites on the Internet appeared in the form of "generalized online communities" named: Theglobe.com (1994), Geocities (1994), and Tripod.com (1995). The core function of this social network is to connect people via chat rooms and encourage them to share personal information on simple web pages. Other social webpage encouraged people to link to each other via email addresses such as Classmate.com. By the end of the 1990s, many sites started to expand the interaction among users without distance by setting up more advanced features which allow users to find and make friends with those who share the same interests. Friendster, which was created in 2002, can be seen as the first new social networking site, followed by MySpace (2003), Facebook (2004), and similar things.

In the light of education, there have been a number of studies that state that social networking sites can encourage collaborative knowledge construction and develop peer interaction (Greenhow & Askari, 2015). Social networking sites are well appropriate to the Connectivism theory, which mentions "the process of creating connections and articulating a network" (Siemens, 2005, as cited in Greenhow & Askari, 2017, p.5). Based on this principle, conversant

or fluent can be regarded as the ability to promote and pass this connection to approach and take advantage of information just in time. In other words, learners' knowledge in social networking sites is built up by the materials they construct themselves, by exchanging with other users' materials, and by others' assessment of their uploaded materials. In addition, social networking sites play a significant role in boosting peer interaction. Most sites are furnished with Pages, Groups, or Chat groups for those who share the same interests. These features allow learners studying in the same discipline to ask for and give support by seeking and sharing the materials in necessity. Finally, social networking sites provide not only the environment for stimulating peer interaction but teacher-learner connections. Teachers can take advantage of these sites to give lectures by streaming videos, video calling, and help students solve problems. Thanks to these social networking sites, teachers and learners can learn from each other.

Social networking sites and their use in education to date

In recent years, a majority of teachers and learners of English have taken advantage of social networking sites in education. This section will mention the features of four popular social networking sites: Myspace, Facebook, Twitter, Ning, and how they facilitate the process of learning English.

Myspace, one of the first new social networks, was launched in 2003 in the USA. From 2005 to 2008, it was the largest social networking site in the world (Wikipedia). At that time, Myspace was claimed to "assist in creating a positive attitude towards technology, content revision and content tailored to the students' needs" (University of Minnesota, 2008). Although at present, Myspace is not as popular as it was in prior days, it is furnished with some meaningful tools that English learners can take advantage of for their learning. Myspace allows users to connect with people they get acquainted with and famous artists and singers across the globe. The " status box " with limited characters is maintained despite not being furnished with the "blogging" tab. The "status box" with limited characters is maintained. In terms of education, Myspace can assist the process of learning reading and writing skills for learners. They are able to enhance vocabulary and improve reading skills by reading articles posted by those with whom they connect. The status box provides learners a chance to improve writing skills by updating short stories, whilst the chatbox helps learners develop peer interaction by keeping in touch with people on friend lists.

Facebook, which is the most popular social network globally, is used by a large number of teachers and learners in terms of education. It was first established in 2004. Facebook has been claimed to "promote socio-pragmatic competence and facilitate problem-solving and peer support" (Blattner and Fiori, 2009; Minocha, 2009: 253). It has increased the number of students using Facebook as a collaborative source of learning. Thanks to Facebook, the teacher-centered approach seems no longer to exist, while the students have to create the knowledge themselves by interacting with their peers. It is worth saying that Facebook is the most common social network for the features of group work furnished in Pages, Groups, and messenger. English learners are free to download documents or materials which is posted on pages they "liked."

Additionally, the appearance of a public or private group for those who share the same interests, issues is also a meaningful characteristic of this network site. When learners encounter learning problems like searching for materials and asking questions, they can ask for support on this group and get help from a number of other proficient learners just in time. Learning groups also permit learners to share their own articles, documents and receive feedback from others. As a result, Facebook is an efficient vehicle of collaborative learning that requires learners to work together to be knowledgeable. Furthermore, students are able to learn actively from their teachers on these sites. Due to the COVID19 pandemic, a significant number of teachers decide to give the lecture by "streaming videos directly." Learners are able to pay attention to the lecture and make questions for teachers by giving comments. A fascinating feature of streaming videos is that teachers can invite students to join his or her videos and communicate immediately. Collaborative learning can be carried out if teachers invite many learners and ask them to make dialogues, whilst the others watching can follow and give feedback. In conclusion, Facebook is a very effective social network site as a collaborative open educational resource, which enables learners to improve interaction and various language skills.

The third social network that can be considered a collaborative open pedagogical resource is Twitter, which was created in 2006. This social network is not very popular in Vietnam. However, many people from other Asian countries like China, Thailand, Korea, and many celebrities, influencers, and presidents have been selected to share daily activities. In comparison with Facebook, Twitter allows users to "tweet" their status with limited characters. Teachers can take advantage of this feature to require learners to practice writing short sentences with authentic materials such as "tweet" what they are thinking of or how they are feeling at the moment. Twitter is also furnished with "Message," so users can create or join a group chat with many members and create a collaborative learning environment. However, there is a hindrance in that it does not permit users to attach files so that learners encounter the challenge of sharing the materials. Nevertheless, Twitter can also be considered when mentioned as a collaborative open educational resource since it stimulates learners' interaction by sending messages to exchange information. In conclusion, Minocha (2009) stated, "Twitter has been concluded to facilitate a better understanding of the students' needs, which results in immediate response to the students' queries without a need for a formal meeting" (p.251).

Ning is the last social networking site that is mentioned in this article. Launched in 2004, Ning is not expected as the first three social networks, but many conducted research highly recommend Ning as an effective open educational resource for many reasons. It was claimed by Brady et al. (2010) that "the Ning site encourages student engagement, learning ownership and collaboration with students and professionals" (p.156). The students in the study admitted that Ning provides "convenience and ability to reflect on classmates' responses." The benefits of facilitating Ning in education are also contributed by David (2010) that it is considered to be more private and secured than Facebook. Ning owns an attractive appearance that looks like a website so that users feel like they can create their own website. Besides the feature of posting videos, audios, photos like other network sites, Ning offer users plenty of special characteristics,

for instance, Blog and Articles, Forums, Groups, Polls, and Events. "Blog and Articles" encourage learners to improve and enhance their writing skills. "Groups" and "Events" strengthen the ability to lead a team of learners by letting them manage a group and event themselves. In groups, learners are able to cooperate to solve problems and complete tasks together. "Forums" is where a user can post a thread, and many users can contribute to the topic. "Polls" help users create surveys and get feedback from others.

Furthermore, "Ning also offers extensive levels of customization for the teacher" (Toetenel, L., 2014, p.155). The features in Ning can be changed so that the teachers who are not proficient in technology can completely adapt and take advantage of this site. From what was listed, it no wonders why many researchers considered Ning to be a sufficient social networking site as an open-source of learning.

It can be obvious that each social networking site owns specific features. The use of social networking sites as open educational resources must depend on the context, necessity, and proficiency of the learners. For instance, if teachers require students to practice simple writing skills, Twitter or Myspace will be the most appropriate option. Otherwise, if learners are asked to interact with others or to collaborate, Facebook or Ning are highly recommended.

Disadvantages of using social networking sites as open educational resources

There have been a number of advantages of using social networking sites as open educational resources. They attract learners, provide learners with the motivation to collaborate for learning, to self-learn everywhere and every time. However, these tools imply some drawbacks that learners should be cautious when they access this resource.

Firstly, even though Facebook is the most popular social networking site globally and is familiar to a majority of learners, it is not welcomed by many teachers for its privacy (Lafford, 2009). There has been an increase in the number of accounts that were "hacked" or used by strangers without permission. Therefore, it is not completely secured for users. Because all the personal information and photos or videos are displayed public, users' sites can be "attacked" and misused for criminal purposes. It is suggested that students create one more account used for academic purposes only instead of using their personal accounts.

Secondly, Halverson (2011) indicated that "blurring the boundaries between

formal learning spaces, socializing spaces and leisure spaces can also challenge

learning and teaching. " That is, if students are allowed to access social networking sites in the classroom context without teachers' control, they may access to other content which is not reaching the educational objective of the lecture.

Thirdly, because of the students' privacy when using social networking sites, it is challenging for teachers to ensure whether students take advantage of social networks for collaborative learning or another purpose. The appearance of closed Groups or Chatrooms may threaten the Security of licensed academic resources since teachers cannot manage students' posting and

sharing.

Additionally, the misunderstanding of information when discussion is also regarded as a drawback of social networking sites in cooperative learning (Bui et al., 2021). Group members can search for various sources of information that refer to the same issue, and they also have a number of distinctive viewpoints. Without a proper assessment and discussion, it is challenging for members to reach an agreement when they are required to find solutions for tasks.

Moreover, the information on social networking is not always authentic and verified, so that it may lead to misunderstanding for learners. It is not beneficial for students to believe the ambiguous information on the social network and take advantage of that news for their research or assignment.

Later, the use of social networking sites as a learning tool may lead to addiction if learners do not control their time and distinguish the use of social networks is for research and study, not for entertainment.

Conclusion

It can be claimed that the advent of Web 2.0 technologies and social networking sites have changed the way human beings live and learn. In terms of education, they play a crucial role in educational reform, with the requirement to take advantage of technology in teaching and learning. In the light of learning a new language, the necessity of collaboration and interaction instead of one-way communication is an obligation; social networking sites are completely taken into account for their various benefits. However, these network sites also contain a number of challenges that teachers, learners, and researchers have to deal with. Security and privacy can be regarded as the two most concerning aspects when using social networking sites as open educational resources. Teachers should know how to manage and raise awareness for students when they use social networks for academic purposes. Students are recommended to be self-aware and increase cognitive minds when taking advantage of social networks as a collaborative learning tool.

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