



The Impact of Social Networks on EFL Medical Students' Academic Performance at Jazan University

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Abstract

Social networks such as Twitter, Blackboard and Instagram are the most feasible tools to enhance EFL medical students' academic performance through collaboration. This study aims at investigating the impact of social networks in increasing the students' improvement and creativity in learning medical terminologies at Jazan University. It examines the impact of Social networks, enhancing higher education students' motivation to collaborate on creating creative stories by using medical terminologies. The research adopted the descriptive, analytical and empirical methods. A survey of 15 items distributed to 150 students in 2015. The (computer) results indicate that networking has a great influence on students' enhancement and performance. Students are active in sharing personal experiences and ideas in creating creative stories about terminologies and solving complex medical problems through collaboration. Basing on these findings, the study recommends the application of social networks in EFL classroom interaction in creating a healthy environment.

1.0. Introduction:

The Internet access and web tools change the nature of learning because of its wide variety of the preferred features of flexibility. For example, learners, lecturers, and administrators have a wide range of options to study what they need, at any time they like, from any place they are in, with anybody, in varied settings such as language laboratory, colleges, formal or informal online learning programs etc., (Greenhow, 2011). Social networks have a significant impact on students' literacy and used as tools for aiding students' academic achievement. Social networks provide chances for learners of English to express themselves and communicate in the target language (Kerstin Borau et al, 2009). Educators and researchers have found that networks are becoming rapidly used in medical education. The emergence of social network tools revealed value in the medical learning practice. Researches reported that "Social media tools can be used safely in medical education settings and that their user may have a positive impact on learner outcomes"(Cheston et al, 2013:896).

1.1. Statement of the Problem:

Medical students required to memorize medical terminologies and use them professionally, however old-style learning strategies such as simple note taking, rote memorization do not effectively engage students in the active learning. Out-of-date supportive teaching methods are an extremely important reason in Saudi students' low achievement in English. In addition, studies show that Saudi students face many difficulties in learning English. For example, Saudi students' output of the English language is limited to the classroom. They do not have access to use English in their daily life interaction on varied settings such as home, market or public places (Khan, 2011). Using English seems essential for Saudi medical students and they need to communicate and interact with others on social settings that provide the professional collaborative opportunities for using the English Language. "Universities must integrate technology into educational environments to address learner needs, prepare students to work and function in blended (virtual and face –to- face) communities of practice upon graduation"(King et al, 2009).

1.2. Objectives of the Research:

The objectives of the research can be summarized in the following

- To investigate students' thoughts about their use of social networks to learn medical terminology.
- To know about how the students feel the effects of social networks on their writing abilities.
- To understand the students' feelings toward using social networks in medical class.



- Realizing students' opinions about using social networks for creativity and discussion as well as investigation.

1.3. The Significance of the Study:

Social networks for supporting classroom instruction has become a trend movement. This paper designs to explore the opinions of medical students toward using social networks in learning medical terminologies. Numerous studies and reports refer to *“the importance of continually adapting technologies to provide students with the skills required to practice in an ever changing health care system”*. (King, et al. 2009). The importance of this study is that discovering how social networks enhance the students' motivation, engagement and their desire to learn medical terminology.

The study tries to investigate the learning opportunities and possibilities the technology may provide for EFL students at Jazan university. In addition, the researchers expect that students, perhaps have positive and good experience toward learning English language through social networks.

2.0. Literature review:

2.1 Social Networks and Learning:

Social Networks are “a group of Internet-based applications that build on ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content” (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010 p. 61). Social networks turn to be more widespread in educational environments, with instructors discovering how such tools are being to be utilized for instruction and learning (Schwartz, 2009). Social networking sites are communication tools that include profile pages for users who can be able join groups, chat, blogs, and discussion forums. Many current social networks are free and have features for teachers and students to make the virtual environment without additional cost, and this is considered a motive reason for teachers to integrate technology in the classroom. Through the use of experimental learning tools, students can be professional in computer-mediated communication (Arnold, & Paulus, 2010).

Language is educated through the socialization process. Duff (2012:582) refers to second language socialization as the procedures included when second language learners *“Seek competent in the language and, typically, membership and the ability to participate in the practices of communities in which that language is spoken, although may not experience the same degrees of access, acceptance, or accommodation”* (Duff, 2007: 310).

Digital tools support collaborative learning. Geer & Barnes, (2007) asserts that the technological collaboration communities provide flexibility in the way users as students work together to achieve their shared goal which is accomplished through varied stages of reflection, evaluation, discussion, negotiation, problem solving. Greenhow, Walker (2009) states that students use digital tools to improve many of skills such the ability for creative ,cooperative problem solving, investigation, network literacy, and citizenship) also, innovation *“Knowledge creation is fast becoming the most important sources of new material and intellectual wealth”* (Hakkarainen et al., 2006, p: 1) Research into online networking reported that social networks environments offer great opportunities for developing writing skills for English language learners (Black, 2005).

3.0. Research Methodology:

3.1. The Instrument

- Survey and computer analysis
- These instruments will be used as a tool for collecting evidence and justification for questions.

3.2. Research Design:

The researchers will use a qualitative and quantitative standard of research.

3.3. Participants:

The participants will be the EFL medical students in the Preparatory Year, Jazan University. There will be 150 medical students who participated in the study in this year 2015. They enrolled from Level-2 Course Code 164-3prep. All students are Saudi and their native language is Arabic. Their average age is 20.



3.4. Research Questions:

- To what extent can application of social networks affect students' writing skills?
- To what extent do social networks enable medical students to communicate effectively and collaboratively in a survival digital era?
- To what extent do social network tools help Saudi medical students to solve medical problems?
- To which degree do students think that social networks improve their creativity and discussion skills?

3.5. Assumptions:

- The applications of social networks affect students' writing skills.
- Social networks enable medical students to communicate effectively and collaboratively in a survival digital era.
- Social network tools help Saudi medical students to solve medical problems.
- Medical students prefer using social networks to increase creativeness and language skills.

4.0 Data Analysis and Discussion:

This study followed the statistical analysis of the overall results of social networks that used in teaching and learning English as a foreign language. The paper is in the form of tabular charts and graphs, and the analysis is done in the form of the comparison of the percentage of groups of learning through social media and continual observation of the impact of the social networks application on the students' ceativity and performance.

Table (1) shows the Impact of the Social Networks on the Students' Performance

Questions	Agree	%	Neutral	%	Disagree	%
Q1	81	54%	54	36%	15	10%
Q2	90	60%	42	28%	18	12%
Q3	111	74%	30	20%	9	6%
Q4	114	76%	36	24%	9	6%
Q5	120	80%	30	20%	0	0%
Q6	135	90%	9	6%	6	4%
Q7	87	58%	48	32%	15	10%
Q8	90	60%	45	30%	15	10%
Q9	114	76%	21	14%	15	10%
Q10	129	86%	18	12%	3	2%
Q11	117	78%	24	16%	9	6%
Q12	105	70%	36	24%	9	6%
Q13	99	60%	30	20%	21	14%
Q14	119	79.33%	9	6%	3	2%
Q15	129	86%	15	10%	6	4%
	73.08					

Regarding the participants' perception of the social network applications (question number 3), results showed positive perception of this effectiveness (see Table 1). The participants' mean score on the utility variable was quite positive.

Participants reported that social networks increased their course achievement, performance, and grades in questions such Q3 (111=74%) of the students agreed that learning medical terminologies need collaboration through social networks. About (120=80%) of them have positive effects on their creativity when they use social network. The majority of the students (135=90%) agreed that social networks are interesting. In addition, they reported that social networks usage increased their writing production and creativity in learning medical terminologies by keeping in touch with the instructor and colleagues via social media.



4.1. Findings and Conclusion:

In the light of the findings of this study, the researchers concluded that:

- From the data analysis, results indicate that social networks have a great influence on students' enhancement and performance.
- Using social network materials generate a higher degree of interaction among EFL students.
- Using social network technology devices are better than using traditional methods in learning a language specially for medical terminologies.
- Medical students have positive thoughts toward using social networks in classrooms.
- Medical students have positive experiences of communicating effectively and collaboratively on social networks.
- Computers and the internet are effective at helping students learning a language.

It is recommended that that more diversity of respondents should be considered. In conclusion, this study was conducted to provide some insights into the using of social networks as a modern tool to motivate the level 2 students at Jazan university to learn medical terminology. The study provides data and information that encourage the lectures on Jazan university to integrate social network tools into all medical classes and other departments.

5.0. Implication for Further Research and Development:

There is much that is good about social networks and much that still students can learn more effectively from using them. As this study is limited in its nature many possibilities are open for further research. There is a need for further studies with different age groups, and with a larger population in other colleges and institutions in and outside Saudi Arabia.

Although the findings of study do not include all other groups of students and the whole university colleagues, the researchers are sure that the use of social networks in learning will improve students' performance and achievement, so the lectures of Jazan University need to implement social networks in their classes to promote more motivating and healthy learning environment.

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Appendix(Students' Survey)

No	Questions	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	I use social networking to study the terminology through it. ادرس المصطلحات الطبية من خلال شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي					
2	I feel well motivated to learn medicine if the teacher uses social networks. يزاد حماسي في تعليم الطب اذا استخدم مدرسي شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي					
3	Learning Medical Terminologies need collaboration via social networks يحتاج تعلم المصطلحات الطبية للتعاون خلال شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي.					
4	I feel creative in generating ideas by using social networks. تنمي شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي الابداع لدي بخلق افكار جديدة					
5	Using medical terminologies on social networks, motivate my creativity. المصطلحات الطبية في شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي لترقية الابداع يؤدي استخدام					
6	Social networks are interesting. شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي ممتعة					
7	I produce and share my experiences through social networks. انتج وشارك افكاري خلال شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي					
8	Social networks provide enough information about medical terminology. توفر شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي معلومات وافية المصطلحات الطبية					
9	Writing English on social networks improves my writing skills. تتحسن كتابتي للغة الانجليزية عند استخدام شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي					
10	It is interesting to write sentences on social networks using medical terminology. انه من الممتع استخدام شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي للتعبير عن المصطلحات الطبية					
11	Studying Medical terminologies through social networks improve my English skills for me further. دراسة المصطلحات الطبية من خلال شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي تحسن استخدام مهاراتي اللغوية في المستقبل					
12	I can read about medical problems on social networks. استطيع قراءة المشاكل الطبية عبر شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي					
13	Social networks help me understanding how to solve some complex medical problems. تساعدني شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي في فهم كيفية حل بعض المشاكل الطبية					
14	Social networks enhance discussion skills. وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي ترقى مهارات النقاش عندي					
15	Social networks improve medical investigation about medical terminology. شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي تطور مهارات البحث حول المصطلحات الطبية					