

The Role of Social Media in Learning English as a Second Language: A Study Based on the Students of National Apprentice & Industrial Training Authority (NAITA), Trincomalee, Sri Lanka

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Abstract- This study aimed to identify the role of social media in learning English as a second language among Sri Lankan English as Second Language learners. According to Sri Lankan English as Second Language curriculum, formal classroom language learning using traditional teaching methods seems to be failure. Therefore, this study investigated whether the use of social media help the learners of National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority, Kinniya and how the social media help the learners to improve their language skills, pronunciation, grammar and vocabularies. In this study, 40 students from different courses have been randomly selected. This study was a survey research, and quantitative method was used to collect data. The instrument of this study was a close-ended questionnaire, which was used to collect respondents' opinions concerning social media and their role for learning English. According to the analysis of the data, the findings show that most of the respondents like different kinds of social media, and they spend their large amount of time on social media which help them to learn English. Facebook and YouTube help the learners very much to learn grammar rule, to improve language skills, pronunciation and vocabularies and to communicate in English with multilingual people. Several useful pages on Facebook and YouTube help them to obtain new language materials. It is recommended that the English as Second Language teachers can implement online learning through using social media in the classroom, and the learners can be guided to use social media towards learning English. Moreover, the English as Second Language curriculum designers should implement online learning process through using social media in adult language classes at higher educational institutions to develop the English language proficiency in Sri Lanka.

Index Terms- National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority, English as a Second Language, social media, English as Second Language curriculum

I. INTRODUCTION

We live in the modern era. Every task of human beings has become modernized and technology-based. The entire globe depends on technology, and social networking and social

media play a vital role in the day-to-day life of human beings and communication. Social media such as Facebook, YouTube, Whatsapp, Twitter, etc. are widely used for entertainment, education, business, marketing and advertisement around the world. A large number of people utilize these kinds of social media for various purposes since they get several benefits. In this sense, many developed countries utilize them for education, called as online learning. On the contrary, according to the Education system of Sri Lanka, there is no such online learning system. The utilization of social media can help the students to explore more and learn on their own. Especially they help to learn a new language apart from the first language. In Sri Lanka, English Language is learned as a second language in educational institutions such as schools, colleges, universities and other vocational training institutions.

However, English as a Second Language (ESL) learning in Sri Lanka seems a failure. Especially, the learners are very poor in listening and speaking since very less emphasis has been given for listening and speaking in ESL classes. The reasons are formal classroom language learning and the use of traditional teaching methodologies in the ESL curriculum of Sri Lanka. Moreover, the students at National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority (NAITA), Kinniya learn English as a second language. But the attitude towards learning English seems negative. They show their disinterest in learning English because they do not like formal classroom learning. However, the use of social media can help them to learn English if they are properly guided by the teachers. Since the ESL learners at NAITA are adults, most of them utilize social media only for entertainment. There are several useful English learning pages on Facebook and YouTube for easy online learning. These will help them to learn language skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing and to improve grammar and vocabulary. Learning a second/foreign language through social media will bring a change among ESL/EFL learners since the young generation spends their time on social media to a great extent.

1.1 Study Questions

- i. Do the social media help the ESL learners of NAITA for learning English?

- ii. How does the use of social media help the learners to improve their language skills, pronunciation, grammar and vocabularies?

1.2 Research Objectives

- i. To investigate whether the social media help the ESL learners of NAITA to learning English
- ii. To explore and find out the benefits of using social media in learning English and how they help the learners to improve their language skills, pronunciation, grammar and vocabularies.

1.3 Research Hypotheses

- i. The social media help the learners of NAITA to learn English.
- ii. The use of social media helps the learners of NAITA in many ways to learn English.
- iii. The social media can help the learners of NAITA to improve their language skills, pronunciation, grammar and vocabularies.

1.4 Methodology

This study was investigated on whether and how the use of social media helps the ESL learners of NAITA to learn English. The aim of the study was to find out how the use of social media helps the learners to learn English. In this sense, to collect the relevant data from the students, survey research was conducted. The method of the research was quantitative. The sample of study contained 50 students from different courses who learn English as a second language at NAITA, Kinniya who were randomly selected through random sampling method. Further, a questionnaire was used as the research instrument of this study which was used to collect the opinions of the respondents about social media, their benefits for learning English and the way they use to learn English. The data which were collected using questionnaire were analyzed to find out the answers to the research questions. Various opinions with regard to the use of social media and their role in learning English were analyzed through graphs.

II. RESEARCH ELABORATIONS

In this part, some relevant sources are presented based on the research questions to support the current study. First, the role of social media in ESL/EFL learning and their use for learning English are presented. Second, other relevant studies are presented are logical argument.

2.1 Role of social media in learning English

The use of social media helps the language learners to a great extent for second/foreign language development. Most of the ESL/EFL learners develop their language skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing and vocabularies through social media. Formal classroom ESL learning seems to be failure in Sri Lanka. As a result, large amount of people have lack of English language proficiency. Several studies have been conducted on the role of social media in language development. In this sense, Khan et al (2016) say that English language vocabulary development is easy nowadays because, a learner may get help for online sources. According to the above statement, the ESL/EFL learners do not improve their vocabularies and communication in classroom; instead they get them on social net workings. Kern (2006)

highlights that online blogs like social media is greatly support by constructivists approach as their use underscores learners' interaction. Moreover, Ferdig (2007) mentions that social media are full of interaction in language learning process which are necessary and quite helpful for learners.

According their point of view, social media create social interaction and which help the learners to develop communication skills through connecting with multilingual people. Therefore, Irfan et al (2012) highlight "language is a source or tool of communication and plays an important role in all walks of life". Further they mention that it is language which is used for transmission and communication among friends, family members, colleagues, and especially in teaching learning process. The social media are significant for language learners to apply the skills among the people around the world. Further, Khan et al (2016) conclude that the role of social media in English vocabulary development is like a bright day because social media facilitate the English learners to learn new words and phrases and to improve their vocabulary. Likewise, there are a number of useful online pages on Facebook and YouTube to learn English grammar and language skills.

2.2 Other relevant studies

Several studies with regard to the use of social media in learning English have been previously carried out. According to Mills (2011), he says that Facebook was used as a collaborating tool on which students could share resources that may help improve the various topics discussed in classrooms. As Mills (2011) stated, the use of Facebook assists the students to share learning materials among students and also helps to obtain new language learning materials such as grammar, vocabulary, reading and speaking.

Similarly, Li (2017) reports that students may use YouTube for the subject-related materials and also utilize the E-learning Blog, Forum or Wiki tools because of the need of subject requirements, or access Facebook and other social media tools for learners self- learning practices. According to Li (2017), though he suggests general learning ideas through social media, the above learning techniques using social networkings can help ESL learners to learn English. Moreover, the social networkings help the students to build social interaction and develop communication among multilingual people. According to Thorne (2010), he says that social media applications allow users to cross the boundaries of their countries, connect and express themselves on a global scale. Similarly, Slim and Hafedh (2014) says that applications such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and WhatsApp have massively boosted social interaction and information sharing within student and teacher communities alike. Facebook plays a vital role in assisting the students to learn a second/foreign language. In various previous studies, Facebook has been investigated on how it assists the students to learn a new language apart from the first language. In this sense, Lee (2006) argues that the use of Facebook enhanced students' oral proficiency, vocabulary acquisition, and syntactic complexity in the Korean language. Similarly, Derakshan & Hasanabbasi (2015) say that Facebook promotes students' communication and language skills. Therefore, Facebook helps the ESL/EFL learners to develop four skills and vocabularies. And also, they build social diversity and

communicate with multilingual people. This communication will help them improve their oral and written communication.

A study was conducted by Zaidieh (2012) regarding the challenges and opportunities in the use of social media in education in Malaysia. He reports that similar students feel more comfortable and have less pressure with the time they have to answer questions because they do not have to respond to questions immediately as in the classroom setting. And also, the second advantage of Facebook in an ELL environment is that using Facebook helps enhance students' critical thinking. Similarly, Yunus (2012) says that Facebook plays a significant role in promoting students' creative thinking skills.

ESL/EFL learners should have creative thinking. Therefore, through the use of social media, the learners get creative thinking. Moreover, Shih (2011) points out that the advantages of social media in learning and improving the second language can be characterized as a unique and entertaining atmosphere, Facebook has been reported in some studies to lessen students' stress levels and enhancing learners' engagement and interactions. Social media help to improve not only listening and speaking but also reading and writings. In a study, White (2009) reports that social media helped to improve the students' motivation and academic writing in Japan. However, the use of social media highly assists the ESL/EFL learners to learn English, and develop their language skills and vocabularies as well as grammar.

III. FINDINGS

The questions were designed to find out the opinions concerning social media and their role towards learning English. In this sense, respondents' answers to the questions are given below:

The first question was concerning the ways the respondents like to learn English. The analysis of the opinions shows that 56% of the respondents like online learning through social media and 30% of the respondents like classroom learning. On the other hand, only 14 % of the respondents like self-learning. The second question was concerning social media which are mostly liked by the respondents. According to the analysis of the opinions, the results show that 41% of the respondents like Facebook the most and 35% of the respondents like YouTube the most. On the other hand, only 16% of the respondents like WhatsApp. Likewise, just 8% of the respondents like Viber the most. Moreover, the third question was about frequent use of social media in a day. According to the analysis of the opinions, the results show that the frequent answer was: 56% of the respondents spend their several times on social media in a day whereas 28% of the respondents spend time to some extent on social media. However, 16% of the respondents responded 'never'.

The following graph (figure 4.1) shows the opinions of the questions 1, 2 & 3

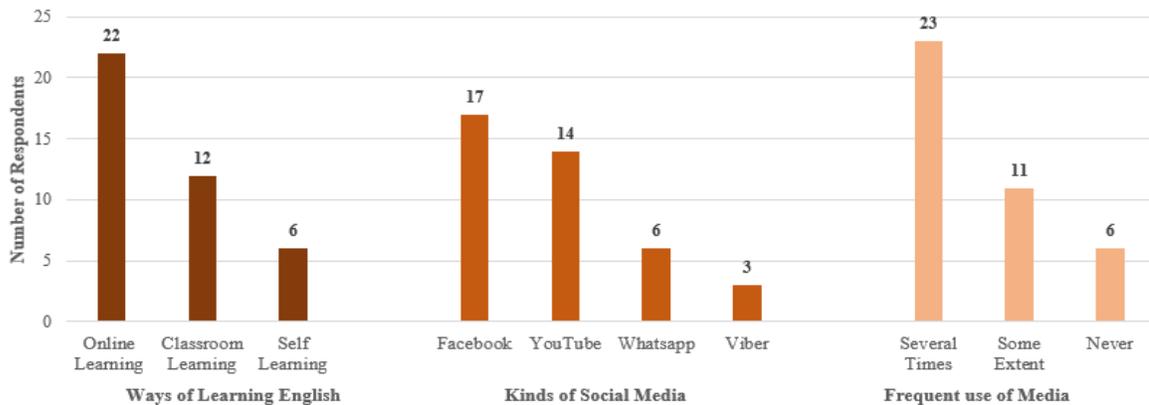


Figure 1

The fourth question was whether the use of social media such as Facebook and YouTube can help the learners to learn English easily. According to the analysis of the opinions, the results show that 91% of the respondents agreed with the above statement whereas 9% of the respondents disagreed with the statement. Further, the fifth question was whether English learning pages on Facebook help the learners to improve grammar and vocabulary. According to the analysis of the opinions, the results show that the frequent answer was: 90% of the respondents responded 'Yes' and only 10% of the respondents responded 'No'. In the questionnaire, the sixth question was whether the learners think that English videos on YouTube help them to improve their listening and speaking skills with pronunciation. The results of the

opinions show that the frequent answer to the question was: 88% of the respondents responded 'Yes'. On the other hand, 12% of the respondents responded 'No'. And also the seventh question was whether social media help the learners to communicate in English with multilingual people around the world. According to the analysis of the opinions, the results show that 94% of the respondents agreed with the above statement. On the other hand, only 6% of the respondents disagreed with the statement. The last question was whether Facebook and YouTube assist the learners to obtain useful English learning materials. The results of the opinions show that 95% of the respondents responded 'Yes' and only 5% of the respondents responded 'No'.

The following graph (figure 4.2) shows the opinions of the questions 4, 5, 6, 7 & 8.

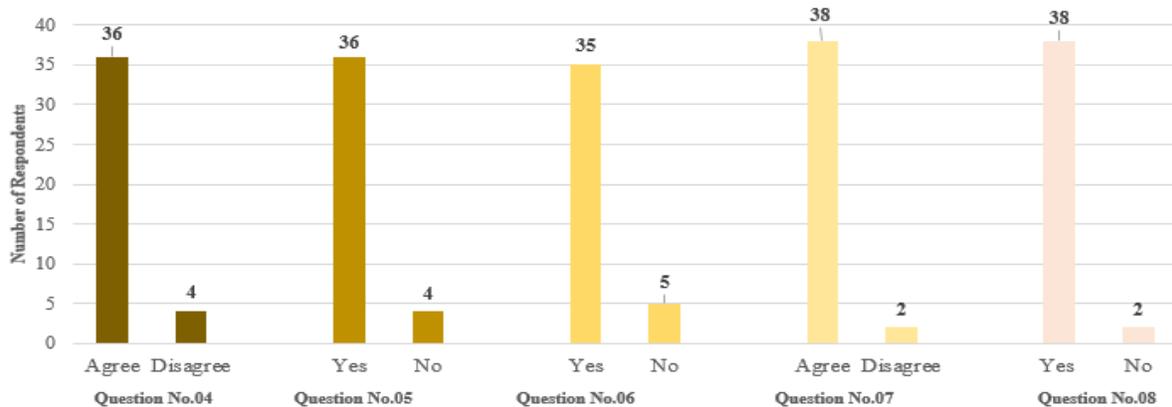


Figure 2

IV. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to explore the role of social media in learning English as a second language. In this study, ESL learners of NAITA, Kinniya were investigated that how the use of social media help them to learn English since the formal classroom language learning is failure in Sri Lanka. The findings of the study reveal that most of the sampled students use social media and they are interested in learning English through using social media to improve their English language proficiency. The traditional teaching methodologies and formal classroom learning make the ESL learners get bored. As a result, adult learners show their disinterest in learning English at higher educational setups. But social media can be significant tool for teaching language. They help the students to learn English since there are number useful English learning pages on Facebook and YouTube, and which help them to develop their language skills and vocabularies. And also they get opportunities to communicate in English with multilingual and multicultural people around the world.

Therefore, The ESL teachers in Sri Lanka should implement online learning process for adult learners. Therefore, the opportunities will be given to the learners for independent learning and application. Moreover, the use of social media helps the learners to explore and obtain various useful learning materials. The ESL curriculum designers in Sri Lanka should consider this issue and online learning process through social media such as Facebook and YouTube should be implemented as one of the tools for language teaching in higher educational institutions. And also the learners should be guided to use these kinds of social media for learning purposes.

APPDENIX

Questionnaire

This questionnaire has been designed to collect the opinions concerning social media and their role in learning English to research on How the use of social media help the ESL

learners of NAITA to learn English. Therefore, I kindly request you to provide your support to achieve the aim of this study.

Select your opinions by placing a tick () in the relevant bracket

1. Which of the following ways do you like to learn English?
 - a. Online learning through social media ()
 - b. Classroom learning ()
 - c. Self-learning ()
2. Which of the following social media do you like the most?
 - a. Facebook ()
 - b. YouTube ()
 - c. Whatsapp ()
 - d. Vibar ()
3. How often do you use social media in a day?
 - a. Several times ()
 - b. Some extent ()
 - c. Never ()
4. The use of social media such as Facebook and YouTube can help you to learn English easily.
 - a. Agree ()
 - b. Disagree ()

5. Do English learning pages on Facebook help you to improve grammar and vocabularies?
- a. Yes ()
- b. No ()
6. Do you think that English videos on YouTube help you to improve your listening and speaking skills with pronunciation?
- a. Yes ()
- b. No ()
7. The social media help you to communicate in English with multilingual people around the world.
- a. Agree ()
- b. Disagree ()
8. Do Facebook and YouTube assist you to obtain useful English learning materials?
- a. Agree ()
- b. Disagree ()

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