Impact of Social Media Method for Retake Students of English for Academic Purpose Courses

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Abstract

The growth of social media has made it an ingrained part of today's society. The constant use of different platforms for example: Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube made it convenient to share individual thoughts, opinions, and to connect with people. These communications can be diverse and complex as it can be conducted through integration of text, graphics, animation, sound, and video. Many teachers have already implemented the practice of social media or multimedia in their classrooms. English as a foreign or second language (EFL/ESL) could be a difficult course to be taught and learned for both ends (teachers and students). In tertiary level many students fail to complete the course in one chance. They need improvement. As a result they need to retake the course. This group of students adds some extra challenge for the teachers .Therefore EFL/ESL requires innovation in the teaching process. One of the techniques to develop this situation could be the usage of the combination of social media and multimedia during the process of teaching and learning in the classroom. This study investigates retake group of students' participation in EAP course using facebook for English language . A survey was conducted for data collection, in which all 40 participants of American International University-Bangladesh (AIUB) were instructed to join a group named 'EAP I Intelligent Mind'. All the tasks were posted in the group and students provided answers in comment box. This paper includes findings which shows that the retake students possessed positive attitudes, motivation, and gain self-confidence in learning English language.

Keywords: Social Media Method, EFL, ESL, Retake Students, EAP course, OBE

1. Introduction

Teachers often find it difficult to have the full concentration of the students in the classroom. And in the context of our country if the course is EFL/ESL, students might find themselves at lost and think it as a tedious course to attain as they are not used to of using it like their native language. Using multimedia in classroom helps teachers engage students and provide them with valuable learning opportunities. It is easy to remember a picture than a paragraph, an animated video of a concept worth more of a lecture. There is no doubt technology enhanced multimedia is a great tool to implement in the classrooms. But still educators find it hard to get the full participation of the students in the classroom activities. As

English language teachers, it can be widely observed that students often are disinterested in EFL/ESL classes specially those students who are re-taking the course. Despite English being taught from primary levels there is a tendency to alienate the language and students tend to show general disinterest. As a result the instructors face lack of student's concentration, poor performance, and high absenteeism in the class. Moreover as they are retaking the course they have some prejudices that they are not good in English. Here, controlled exposure to social media may make EFL/ESL classes such as in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses attractive and participatory and achieve the goals of Object Based Education (OBE). The purpose of this study see show how controlled exposure to social media in EAP courses for retake students may positively impact student performance as well as assess the effectiveness of this approach in other contexts.

2. Literature review

2.1 Social Media as a learning tool at Tertiary Level

Various studies have dealt with social media availability and the new horizons they have created, especially for the youths (Lin et al., 2016). Out of these media, YouTube and Flickr are used to share visual materials, Facebook and Linkedin provide social networking, Wikipedia specializes in the development of collaborative knowledge and Twitter in microblogging (Balakrishnan & Lay, 2016). For Lin et al. (2016), social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, not only give users the possibility to generate information but also to share it with other users around the globe.

In view of their proliferation and the possibilities they provide, researchers have called for the use of social media in the field of education (Everson et al., 2013; Greenhow & Robelia, 2009; Roblyer et al., 2010). Balakrishnan and Lay (2016) report that Facebook and YouTube have been used "within and outside classrooms for teaching purposes, such as to upload educational videos or learning materials for students". Such action has been taken due to the popularity of these media among students who use them to complement and thus enhance their classroom learning due to their ease and speed of communication.

Consequently, it can be argued that users' attitudes depend on medium functionality and students' environment. Attitude is, in turn, determined by users/students' learning style. By environment, we mean the opportunities the students have to communicate in English as a second language, which will partly determine their recourse to social media to fulfill their communicative needs within a meaningful setting. As it has been investigated by Chartrand (2012), students who have limited time for real English communication can be encouraged use to the Internet to upgrade their English language communicative skills. As to students' learning styles, as it is argued here, they partly determine the degree and manner in which those students use social media. Balakrishnan et al. (2015) explore the effect of these styles on their intentions to use social media for learning. More particularly, the researchers studied the causes behind students' intentions to use social media for learning, as this phenomenon has been gaining ground among university students.

Balakrishnan and Lay (2016) underline the importance of teachers' awareness of their students' learning styles and their effect on social media usage. The researchers base their view on the Social Learning Theory (SLT), which posits that learning is most effective when learners are allowed to observe and interact with other learners, as well as form or participate in small study groups compared to the lecturers' teaching styles (Bandura, 2002; Gong et al., 2014). They argue that "this theory has become popular with the widespread use of social media and mobile technology" (Balakrishnan & Lay,

2016, p. 810). Out of the three types of learning styles – participatory, independent, and collaborative – Balakrishnan et al. (2015) advance that students with a participatory learning style might favor Facebook and YouTube as learning tools as they permit them to acquire information from their peers anywhere and virtually instantaneously. As such, these media can be quite appealing for such a category of students.

Independent learners, too, can benefit from social media, as these students tend to rely on themselves in retrieving information when they can access it, either through Facebook or YouTube. According to Umrani-Khan and Iyer (2009; cited after Balakrishnan and Lay, 2016), such learners tend to prefer independent study, self-paced work, or special projects based on their interests. Besides, the practicality and omnipresence of social media can give them the possibility to decide about their study schedules. As collaborative students are generally extroverts, they are not concerned about anonymity. Hence, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube can facilitate their collaboration and information exchange by providing platforms for their discussions. Therefore, such sites can be successfully exploited to enhance collaborative learning.

2.2. Effects of Facebook use on students' English language skills

With the interaction opportunities Facebook offers its users, it is the embodiment of the social-interactionist approach to language acquisition advocated by Lantolf (2000), in keeping with Vygotsky (1978). Facebook can provide language learners with new prospects of real time cultural and linguistic interchange (Harrison & Thomas, 2009; Harrison, 2013). Besides, from an ecological perspective, which views context as fundamental to language learning (van Lier, 2004), thanks to the contextual clues it provides and the conversational features it provides, Facebook can represent ideal sites of language learning. Cain and Policastri (2011), following Gibson (1979), evoke the use of affordances, defined as objects, places, events or things, by students, with the help of their teachers to maximize language learning. In the recent years, affordances have come to be embodied in high-performance mobile devices, which have enhanced connection and interaction features, providing learners with more opportunities of target language contact, thus contributing to the improvement of their academic performance.

One fundamental interaction pre-requisite is the acquisition of target language vocabulary. Sim and Pop (2014) focus on the effects of social media, notably Facebook, in eveloping students' English vocabulary. Besides, social media were shown to be effective in developing the areas of language production, as proposed by Chartrand (2012). Chartrand argues, following Swain (2007), that production is an integral part of language learning. Chartrand claims that social media can assist students in learning the language through the use of podcasts and videos. In the same vein, Woo et al. (2007) maintain that multimedia materials can enhance students' motivation to learn the language. Kamnoetsin (2014) found that the Facebook platform assisted students in developing their grammar, vocabulary, and writing, as it helped them share information and acquire new knowledge. Moreover, the platform proved to be useful in updating students about modifications regarding their courses, as an online information center. Facebook, therefore, was shown by the above studies to be a useful tool for enhancing language skills such as writing and reading. In writing, users may gain experience through composing various messages, and in reading they have the chance to read a variety of new messages. Thus, they have the opportunity to learn new words in authentic contexts.

2.3. Is social media use beneficial all the time?

While certain researchers and educators lament the scarcity of empirical research which addresses the question of social media as facilitators of language learning (Stevenson & Liu, 2010; Lamy & Zourou, 2013; Zourou, 2012); others have claimed that the use of social media by university students is more harmful than beneficial. Selwyn (2012) argues that social media are not always used for the good cause, i.e., for learning. He cites Selwyn (2009) who found that 95% of Facebook interactions involving UK students were not related to their academic concerns. Instead, the study proved that those students tend to use social media to deal with ordinary subjects. In keeping with Waycott et al. (2005), and Selwyn (2012) advance that students, generally, do not use social media for academic reasons, and that the applications they have recourse to do not match their academic level, as they tend to be simple and therefore do not necessitate high intellectual aptitude. In the same vein, Tariq et al. (2012) claim that social media use affected negatively Pakistani students' academic achievement, as these students' were drawn towards chatting and subjects that had nothing to do with their education. Akram and Albalawi (2016) found that Facebook distracted Saudi students and therefore negatively affected their concentration and academic achievement. Amidst the above claims and counter claims, the present research takes the case of retake students of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses and attempts to examine the impact of implementation of social media as a tool for improvement in the learning outcomes.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 The Participant

All the participants in this study were undergraduate students from a private university, namely American International University-Bangladesh (AIUB). The participants were the students who took the course English Reading Skills and Public Speaking from the department of Bachelors of Business Administration (B.B.A). Every semester this university open atleast one retake section for students. This particular section had 40 students so our sample size was 40. The sample size was 40. The students were particularly chosen for the study because they were doing a course in which they had to learn about English as a foreign or second language and implement the learning to improve their reading and speaking skills.

3.2 Methodology

This study was carried among the students of American International University –Bangladesh (AIUB) who were retaking their EAP I course. The course's title was "English Reading Skills and Public Speaking. A quantitative study was conducted for this research. For this 40 students of AIUB who were retaking the course and also Facebook users were selected as the participants of this study. The participants were requested to be added in the created group named "EAP I Intelligence Mind" which is designed for this study. The respondents were required to actively participate and do their assignments prepared by the researcher. Researchers, apart from class room teaching, posted minimum one task every class on the mentioned Facebook group and asked participants to answer in the comment box. The whole process took 12 consecutive weeks.

The techniques that were adapted and put into operation include both usage of social media and multimedia. The methods used in this study are:

I. Class Facebook Group

Facebook is known as a place to post and share status updates, photos, and video that can be effective tools to implement in our classes. In order to do so a Facebook group was created for those specific 40 students. The name of that Facebook group was EAP (I). In this group students were asked to join as a part of their class participation. Activities were given in the page and the students were asked to participate. Since students often learn from others, having students share their insights, opinions, or experiences with a topic can expand learning for them and social media like Facebook helped a lot in this regard. Activities that were given to the students as their both class and home tasks are:

II. Pictorial Method

Pictures of certain situations (e.g. Traffic Jam) were posted in the page and students were asked to describe these situations in the comment section of the post. The participation of the students was incredible. All the comments were viewed and feedback was given to them. This not only let them share their opinions but also let them read what their class mates have written and also from the feedbacks of each student they were able to know new things.

III. Selfie Method

A selfie is a self-portrait photograph, typically taken with a digital camera or camera phone held in hand. Selfies are often shared on social media and a very popular trend among the young generation. Students were asked to take selfies keeping a thoughtful background behind them and post those in the page. Then other students were asked to guess when and why the selfie was taken and give a brief description of it in the comment box. This created huge buzz among the students. Their participation was really enthusiastic. It helped them to explore their imagination as unlike the pictorial method this method was not based on common situations that they were familiar with. Here they had to understand the context from the pictures and explain them using their thoughts.

IV. Video Clip

Interesting and educative video clips from video sharing website YouTube were posted in the page and also shown in the classroom. Students then were asked to give brief presentation on those video clips. This helped them to overcome the stage fear which is crucial in public speaking.

V. Synonyms Symphony

Here word lists were given and the Facebook group and students were asked to come up with synonyms of those words. It was sort of competition. The student who came up with the most synonyms was being appreciated for his performance in the class. This allowed the students to compete with each other and also from the comments they came to know about many synonyms too.

4. Findings

Retake students are commonly found very reluctant in their course work since they are redoing the activities of a previous semester. Introduction of SMM apparently proved to create general enthusiasm among the students as they were willing to accept the change. This could also be attributed to the fact that Social Media, an already popular platform among young generation, was being used for academic purpose. Although it might be noted that some students were initially reluctant to participate in the interactive posts on the aforementioned Facebook group but with encouragement of bonus marks soon vibrant participation of the students could be observed.

Initially the instructor had to dictate the interactions among the participants but it soon became more spontaneous and participatory. Besides the variety in the activity types also ensured avoidance of

monotony. The immediate outcome of the SMM in classroom was positive as students were more confident with the responses in classroom activities as well. Group work and interpersonal communication among the students and the instructor was in general more fruitful than traditional classes. The method is apparently more students' centric and stimulant to the cognitive, affective and psychomotor faculties.

Through analyzing the survey outcomes at the end ojf the semester some positive results could be observed. we have found that majority of the students' grades were increased in the final term. Moreover 72 % of the students claimed that their classroom participations were increased and a majority opined that vocabulary increased than the first time they took the course. (1) Concerning the development of cognitive faculties 62% were in favor of SMM method in comparison to the traditional method(fi: 5). Majority of them also claimed the topics under discussion were more approachable using SMM method. (2) A substantial number of students also believe their reading, writing and speaking as well as presentation skills have considerably developed through the SMA method (fig: 6 and Fig: 7). (3) Finally, they feel more competitive and think the system may help them in other courses if properly implemented(fig: 8).

It could also be observed that the overall grades had general improvement from mid to final term, as seen in the figure above.

5. Discussion

Using social media in classroom clearly have clearly shown a number of positive outcomes. From the findings it can be seen the students are generally optimistic with SMA and from the term result it can also be validated. Since the specified group of students is facing challenge in traditional method, this experimental method may be applied in order to achieve general improvement in their cognitive, affective and psychomotor faculties. SMA changes the learning experiences, reduces the learning monotony and increases participants. Besides, from an ecological perspective, which views context as fundamental to language learning (van Lier, 2004), thanks to the contextual clues it provides and the conversational features it provides, Facebook can represent ideal sites of language learning. Cain and Policastri (2011), following Gibson (1979), evoke the use of affordances, defined as objects, places, events or things, by students, with the help of their teachers to maximize language learning. In the recent years, affordances have come to be embodied in high-performance mobile devices, which have enhanced connection and interaction features, providing learners with more opportunities of target language contact, thus contributing to the improvement of their academic performance. For example, in a particular case one of the students left the class to get better internet connection so that he can answer first in the assigned question. Whereas, another student used different emoticons while giving answer in comment box. These incidents reflect their competitiveness and their involvement in the class. As to students' learning styles, as it is argued here, they partly determine the degree and manner in which those students use social media. Balakrishnan et al. (2015) explore the effect of these styles on their intentions to use social media for learning. More particularly, the researchers studied the causes behind students' intentions to use social media for learning, as this phenomenon has been gaining ground among university students.

One fundamental interaction pre-requisite is the acquisition of target language vocabulary. Sim and Pop (2014) focus on the effects of social media, notably Facebook, in eveloping students' English vocabulary. Besides, social media were shown to be effective in developing the areas of language

production, as proposed by Chartrand (2012). In this context observing the data of the present research it can be observed students have become more confident concerning their vocabulary skills. (Appendix 2) Chartrand argues, following Swain (2007), that production is an integral part of language learning. Chartrand claims that social media can assist students in learning the language through the use of podcasts and videos. In the same vein, Woo et al. (2007) maintain that multimedia materials can enhance students' motivation to learn the language. Proof of such claim can be observed as students did claim of increased involvement in classroom activities as well gained higher motivation to attend these classes. (Appendix 1,2) Kamnoetsin (2014) found that the Facebook platform assisted students in developing their grammar, vocabulary, and writing, as it helped them share information and acquire new knowledge. Overall it can be claimed that SMA have in general worked as an incentive for the students in their learning process.

6. Limitations of the Study

As the study was conducted on a small scale where forty students took part in the process, it cannot be generalized that the concept of using social media and multimedia can be used as an effective classroom tool to enhance students' performance in EFL/ESL course. Another limitation was time duration. In a class with duration of 1-1.30 hours, it was not possible for both students and teacher to participate and provide feedback in the Facebook group. Also having uninterrupted internet availability was another limitation of this study. Many times it happened that few students were not being able to log in Facebook because of poor internet service.

7. Recommendation

From this study few recommendations can be drawn. Firstly, In this study, it was found out that most students were satisfied and found the activities interesting. Moreover, most students had positive perceptions toward these methods and preferred them over traditional classroom lectures. So if implemented carefully, these methods can prove as useful tools in teaching EFL/ESL course.

Secondly, Training sessions or workshops on teaching EFL/ESL using multimedia social media in classroom can be arranged for instructor's professional development. While conducting this study it was found that students engaged in these activities started to have different perceptions of instructors' methods in traditional classrooms and social media and multimedia based classroom.

Thirdly, as technical support and maintenance are very important to the effective using of multimedia in the classrooms. Equipments such as projector, speaker, and computer should be maintained properly. Also universities should provide uninterrupted Wi-Fi connection so that students can get access to the internet whenever they are in need of. Finally, Privacy concerns are always an issue whether using social media for personal or educational use. Course instructor must read all social media platforms' privacy pages, and ensure that class feeds, activities are set to private to protect students' work. Furthermore, instructor must make sure that students are well versed in etiquette and other proper use of technology.

8. Conclusion

The paper attempted to consider impact of adapting of social media into ESL classrooms of retake students of EAP courses. This study was conducted on those retake students who did this EAP course previously in lecture based method. As contents of the course remain same in retake semester, it

is quite challenging for the teachers to involve them in class. To make the class more interesting, this SMA method was implemented on this particular group of students. From this study, it was found that, retake students were relearning the same content with ease. Their class participation rate, sense of competitiveness and overall grades were increased after the completion of the semester. While conducting this study, two major difficulties were faced and these are- low quality of multimedia and poor internet connection. If university facilitates teachers with necessary equipment, it will help them in their teaching.
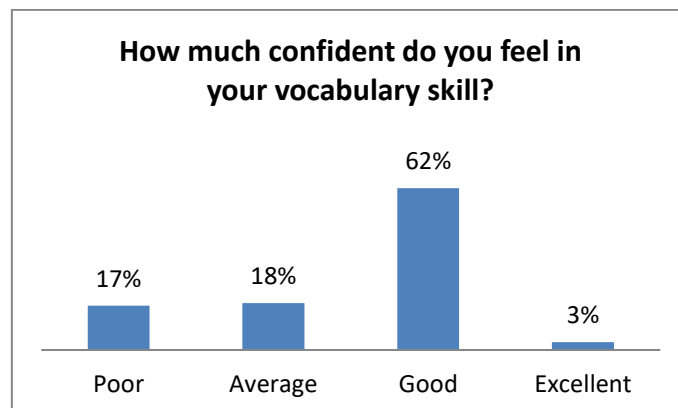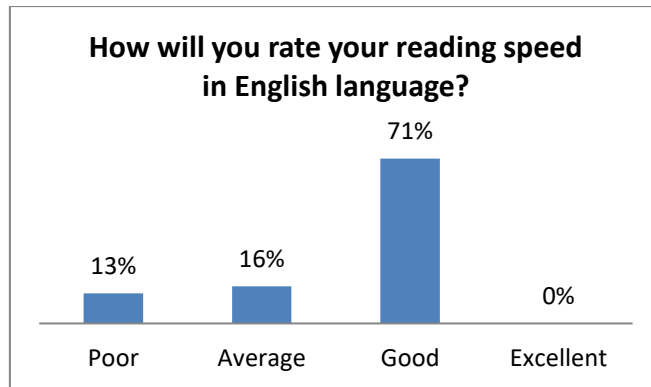
Appendix
Survey Results
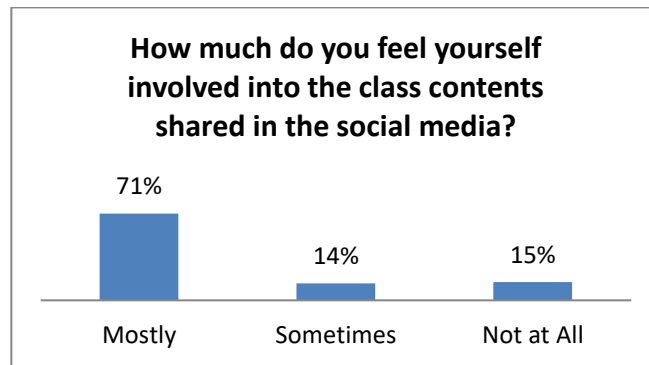
Figure: 1

Figure: 2

Figure: 3

How will you rate your reading speed in English language?

Poor 13%
Average 16%
Good 71%
Excellent 0%

Figure:4

Do you think SMA method helped in improving your cognitive (analytical/critical thinking) ability than the first time you took the course?

Yes 67%
No 33%

Figure: 5

Does SMA method help you improving your English reading, writing, and speaking skills?

Yes 83%
No 17%

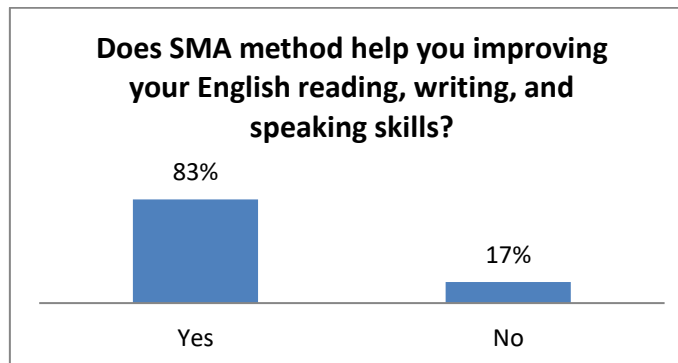Figure: 6

Has your presentation skill improved than before?
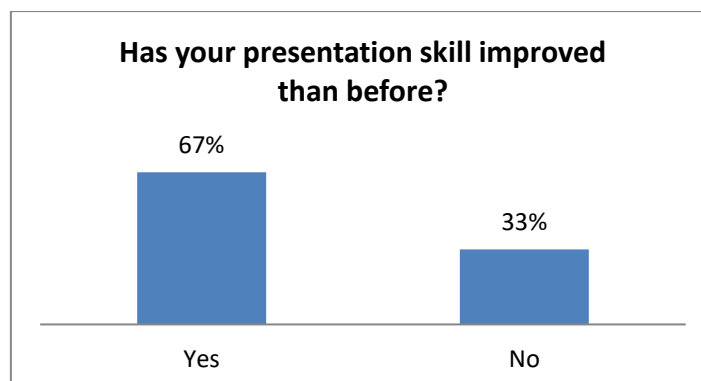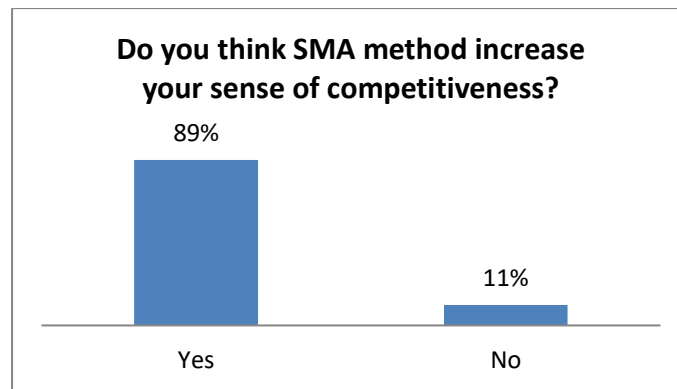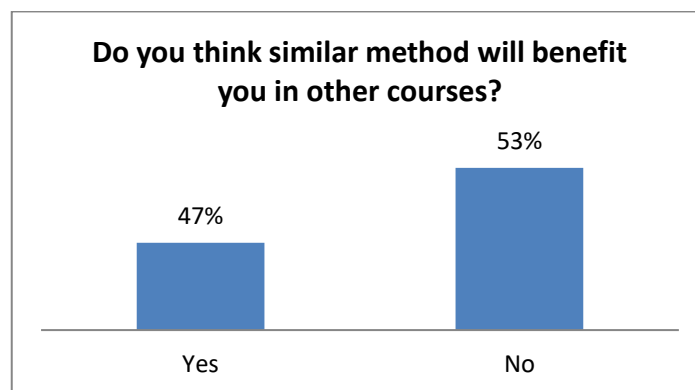
Yes 67%
No 33%

Figure: 7

Figure: 8

Figure: 9

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