

ОСВІТА У ФІЛОСОФСЬКО-АНТРОПОЛОГІЧНИХ РЕФЛЕКСІЯХ

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SOCIAL NETWORKING IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM

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The article deals with the issues, based on the idea that social networking may have educational potential in the English Classroom. The realities of the modern world of Internet and gadgets demonstrate that young people prefer virtual life to real communication, many students tend to spend time on social networking than doing exercises. Thus, time spent on using a smartphone not for entertainment but for studying foreign languages allows to turn the process of learning into an exciting activity. The article is aimed at analyzing the possibilities of using social networks in the process of learning foreign languages. The advantages of social networks as a means of learning English are outlined. Didactic peculiarities of current popular social networks, such as Lang-8, Mylanguageexchange, Interpals, Youtube, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok are paid attention to. It is proved that social networks serve as platforms to improve the students' foreign language communication skills – reading, listening, speaking and writing as well as spelling, grammar and pronunciation. Besides, students are sure to develop their creativity, critical thinking, cooperation and other soft skills.

Key words:

social networks; learning foreign languages; digital technologies; communication skills; educational platforms.

Анотація:

Гостіщева Наталя, Харченко Тетяна. Соціальні мережі в навчанні англійської мови.

У статті розглядаються питання використання соціальних мереж у навчанні іноземних мов. Реалії сучасного світу показують, що молодь надає перевагу не реальному, а віртуальному спілкуванню у соціальних мережах. Таким чином, використання смартфона для вивчення іноземних мов можна перетворити на інструмент навчання. Стаття спрямована на аналіз можливостей використання соціальних мереж у процесі вивчення іноземних мов. Окреслено переваги соціальних мереж як засобу вивчення англійської мови для вдосконалення іншомовних навичок студентів – читання, аудіювання, говоріння та письма, а також сприяє розвитку креативності, критичного мислення, співпраці, тощо. Приділено увагу дидактичним особливостям сучасних популярних соціальних мереж, таких як Lang-8, Mylanguageexchange, Interpals, Youtube, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok.

Ключові слова:

соціальні мережі; вивчення іноземних мов; цифрові технології; комунікативні навички; освітні платформи.

Introduction. The digitalization of the modern world and the development of computer technologies have become the starting point for the modernization and reconstruction of many spheres of human life including education. The reality of the modern world displays lack of real communication and a tendency to a virtual one. Currently, it is impossible to imagine the learning process without the use of information computer technologies. Otherwise, this process will not meet modern quality standards. However, using a smartphone can become a useful way of studying foreign languages. Every year the influence of digital technologies on education increases sometimes displacing traditional forms of education. Undoubtedly, traditional methods of teaching foreign languages make the basis of mastering foreign grammar and vocabulary but communication with native speakers, which has become available thanks to the progress of information technologies, improves listening, reading, writing and speaking skills more effectively. There appear new software platforms and services containing interactive tasks which contribute to greater involvement of students within the educational process.

The most advanced Internet users are representatives of the younger generation. Many students prefer spending time on social networks to boring exercising. It is easier for them to scroll the phone, surfing the net, chatting or texting while the educational process requires too much effort. Most of them are hard to get interested in the traditional learning process, so new methods with social networking focus are coming to replace them.

The use of resources of the global computer network contributes to the development of intercultural communication, significantly helps in the search for information necessary for students on scientific, professional and social issues. Recently, the number of databases, sites and information search systems that can be used while learning English have expanded significantly. Internet resources are sources of current and authentic information. Modern computer technologies make it possible to use the Internet as a tool for communication and a means of learning.

Many students who study foreign languages outside the language environment, in the conditions of real communication, face certain linguistic and psychological difficulties (the speed of speech of

native speakers, the peculiarities of colloquial speech; psychological fear of making a mistake, being misunderstood, etc.). The need for students to acquire experience of independent speech activity with native speakers as well as formation of various communicative competences require new methodical solutions. One of such solutions can be the use of social networks in foreign language learning.

Analysis of recent research and publications. Social networks have penetrated all the spheres, including the process of teaching English. The essence of social networks is to search for and establish connections between people, which was written about at the end of the 19th century by E. Durkheim and F. Tonis (Tonis, 2005) In the scientific works of these scientists, the idea was developed that social groups can exist in the form of personal and direct social connections.

The term "social network" was introduced in 1954 by the English sociologist James Barnes. Thus, the scientist denoted any social structure and a variety of social relationships, but the definition has changed even today, primarily understanding online networks of remote communication between group members created in virtual space (Barnes, 1975, P. 39-58).

Today, the concept of "social network" is interpreted as a special type of communication between users on the Internet. A more precise explanation is found in D.M. Boyd and N.B. Alison, who call a virtual social network (social network site) a service based on Internet technologies that allows individual users:

- to create open (public) or partially open user profiles;
- to create a list of users with whom they are in social connection;
- to have access to the lists of communications of "friends", that is, to the social networks of other users within the system (Boyd, 2007 P. 210-230).

D. Gilpin defines social networks as interactive online media that act as channels for relationships and the transfer of information (Gilpin, 2011, P. 232-250). A. Handley and A. Chapman define social networks as a steadily growing and developing collection of online tools, platforms and applications that allow all the people to interact and exchange information (Handley, Chapman, 2011).

Nowadays social networks are defined as websites and apps that allow users and organizations to connect, communicate, share information and form relationships. People can connect with families, friends, others in the same area, and those with the same interests. Katie Terrell Hanna considers that social networks have evolved into one of the most important uses of the internet today and play a critical role in modern life, facilitating social interaction as well as business, education, and entertainment. The author outlines several key purposes of social networking:

– Sharing. Social networks allow geographically dispersed friends and families to stay connected by sharing updates, photos and videos.

– Learning. Users can receive real-time news, explore trending topics and keep up with community developments.

– Interacting. Online platforms break time and distance barriers through real-time communication via text, audio or video chat (e.g., WhatsApp, Instagram Live).

– Marketing. Businesses use social networks to build brand awareness, retain customers, and promote products or services. (Terrell Hanna, 2025).

Scientists all over the world take the issues of using social networks as a means of learning into consideration. Thus, foreign experts in the field of distance and online learning G. Dudeney and N. Hockley highlighted their own views on the ways, possibilities, disadvantages and advantages of using information technologies in the process of learning foreign languages (Laborda, Royo, 2007). J. Hall and M. Walsh investigated the problem of interaction between a teacher and a student during foreign language studies using information technologies (Hall, Walsh, 2002).

The use of social networks in the process of learning a foreign language is a range of scientific interests of Ukrainian researchers as well. O. Tyshkova denotes the concept of a social network as "a social structure formed by individuals or organizations. It reflects various connections between them through social relationships, the purpose of which is to transfer various requested information using modern information technologies in virtual space, which is becoming increasingly relevant in the information society" (Tyshkova, 2014, p. 64) S. Ivashnyova considers a social network as "a virtual platform that provides its means for supporting, creating, developing, displaying and organizing social contacts, including data exchange between users, which involves the preliminary creation of an account" (Ivashnyova, 2012, p. 14). B. Vakhula offers the following definition: "A social network is a specially implemented possibility of remote interaction of people for the purpose of exchanging information, usually of a clearly expressed thematic orientation" (Vakhula, 2012, p. 32).

Based on the above definitions, we can identify the main features of social networks, including social structure, information exchange, relevance in the modern information society. Considering these characteristics as those that contribute to the creation of active interaction between participants in the information and communication environment, modern teachers use social networks in the educational process, in particular when teaching a foreign language.

Thus, the purpose of the article is to analyze the possibilities of using social networks in the process

of learning a foreign language and to clarify their didactic characteristics.

Results and discussions. Social networks assume communication between a teacher and students, as well as between students. This means that the teacher can provide various educational materials through social networks, and students can complete assignments independently or in groups. The use of social networks makes the learning process interesting, diverse and involving.

Social networks have evident advantages in their use in teaching foreign languages, among which the following can be highlighted:

- 1) Relevance of social networks in the modern world;
- 2) Widespread use of social networks among young people;
- 3) Ability to post a large amount of information;
- 4) Availability through any device (computer, smartphone, iPad, etc) anywhere and at any time (including during the lesson);
- 5) Ability to carry out activities remotely;
- 6) Interactivity;
- 7) Ability to use information available on the network, comment it and add one's own content;
- 8) Multifunctionality (the ability to implement various types of activities on one platform);
- 9) Ability to organize groups, communities, conversations of different types; while the creation of closed communities and groups can contribute to increasing the status of students, create additional motivation for learning;
- 10) Increasing the authority of the teacher (he becomes closer to the student, since he shows his belonging to the modern world and declares the possibility of working, using modern teaching tools understandable to the student).

Social networks also relieve stress and anxiety in learning a foreign language and practice using it in the environment familiar to young people. The modern student is significantly ahead of the teacher in mastering various Internet resources, including social networks, therefore the issue of studying the use of social networks as a tool for learning a foreign language is becoming increasingly relevant.

During the course of studying a foreign language, the teacher can use a personal account on a social network, a specially created group, page or public, etc. Using of a social network involves not only the exchange of information, but also joint viewing of video materials with subsequent discussion in the comments, the creation of thematic sections, recording thematic "stories", etc. Such types of work significantly increase the level of motivation of students to study, contribute to the creation of information and communicative environment, provide the opportunity to communicate with native speakers, and the opportunity to feel like a real subject of speech.

Among the popular social networks it is worth mentioning Lang-8, Mylanguageexchange, Interpals, Youtube, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok. In order to implement social networks into the English Classroom teachers should analyze and take into account their linguistic and didactic aspects. The most important aim of mastering English is acquiring foreign language communication skills.

Thus, the social network "Lang-8" is focused on communication in text format, improving spelling and grammar skills. The key characteristics of this social network are simplicity and clarity. The users of "Lang-8" communicate with native speakers and are supposed to write and publish texts in the language under study. Any participant who received a message, reads the text, checks and points out the mistakes made. Thus, the sender can immediately see the mistakes pointed by the followers and edit the text. It should be noted that texts with bright, apt titles on interesting, relevant and actual topics are read and checked more actively. Therefore, the teacher needs to work carefully on the selection of topics offered to students. The lack of speaking is considered to be the disadvantage of this social network, although it can be easily eliminated by establishing contacts with foreigners outside of "Lang-8". The main advantage is that the text is checked not by the teacher, but by native speakers, which increases motivation to study English.

The world-famous correspondence service "MyLanguageExchange" is based on attracting people from all over the world and follows the principle of "language exchange". The platform provides the opportunity to select optimal interlocutors. During registration, one must specify which country his pen pal should be from, what his native language is, what language he is learning, and indicate the age category of the person. From the proposed list of people selected by the service, one can choose the most interesting interlocutors in his opinion and start communicating. Unlike "Lang-8", there is the opportunity to practise both oral and written speech. The service also provides word games and interesting material for reading.

Another useful tool for developing oral speech can be the social network "InterPals" which is a platform to make new friends, practice languages with native speakers and meet travellers. This platform provides a search for like-minded people and communication in a foreign language. The subscribers indicate their language priorities, preferences and find interlocutors and improve their level of proficiency in a foreign language.

A wide-spread service YouTube is used not only as an entertainment platform, but as a popular virtual educational space where you can find high-quality educational content for people of all ages who are learning foreign languages. On YouTube, you can consolidate and practice grammar skills, expand your

vocabulary, improve your pronunciation, and broaden your worldview. Users are offered interesting and diverse content: full-fledged courses on learning foreign languages, videos with explanations of grammatical material, with thematic vocabulary, songs and slang, etc. Among the variety of channels aimed at learning a language, there may be highlighted: "BBC learning English", "TEd-Ed", "EngVid", "English with Lucy", "Rachel's English", "National Geographic", "Learn English with Mrduncan", "EnglishClass.101.com", "Puzzle English", "EnglishLessons4U", "English Spot", etc. Using meaningful, interesting, and easy-to-understand YouTube material will become an effective additional tool during foreign language classes.

In addition to the mentioned above services there are social networks that mainly involve communication, namely Instagram, Facebook, TikTok.

Using Instagram, a teacher can create a unique foreign language environment. For example, when viewing created posts with explanations of vocabulary, meaningful pictures and texts, students memorize information faster, since clip perception is triggered. Watching short videos (Reels) improves listening and pronunciation skills. Involving students in commenting on posts actively contributes to foreign language communication. Stories – a function that allows to publish photos and 15-second videos that are stored for a day – attract Instagram users' attention. Students can be offered to complete tasks in stories, for example, publish the correct answer to the questions asked, conduct a survey, demonstrate a certain speech skill. Usually, this type of tasks is positively perceived by students, since they are easy but interesting to complete, but such tasks significantly increase motivation to learn a foreign language.

The social network Facebook can also become an environment for learning a foreign language. Facebook allows teachers to create courses for students, where they can make connections, share university news, write comments practising English communication. Using this Internet resource, a teacher can involve students in analyzing information, improve their communication skills. Facebook is appropriate to use not only for the purpose of exchanging educational materials, audio and video files, presentations, but also for creating one's own content. The teacher can initiate making a public page of the group and encourage the students' posting different thematic materials with the task to comment the information of the groupmates. Such tasks contribute to the development of critical thinking and practising English in use. Working together makes the basis of networking and contributes to communicating in a foreign language at an informal level. After all, sometimes students can express themselves more actively in social networks, rather than in the format of real communication.

Another social network, TikTok, which is a social media platform for creating, sharing and discovering short videos has recently appeared and gained popularity among youth. Videos can last up to 60 seconds. If involved in studying foreign languages through this platform a teacher can offer to watch videos, demonstrating the use of different grammar structures or lexical units in real life situations. Teachers can also participate in creating content: using an entertaining form, explaining key points of the topic, which contributes to better memorization, or explaining the meaning of words and demonstrating their pronunciation. The teacher can also recommend to subscribe to the pages which he finds useful and effective to support students in their process of mastering the language. He can also encourage the students to create their own video that demonstrate understanding of the topic under study. The results of the work can be discussed offline or by commenting on the video.

It should be pointed that using social networks for the educational purpose the role of a teacher changes to a certain degree. He not only teaches and controls, but also organizes, instructs, suggests and is an equal participant in networking. It is important for the teacher to be an active user of social networks, an initiator, advisor, researcher and mentor. Using social networks as a tool for learning a foreign language will also contribute to the establishment of interpersonal relationships, provide an opportunity to shorten the distance between the teacher and students, and create a positive atmosphere for communication. When using social networks as a modern tool for learning a foreign language, it is important for the teacher to remember to adhere to moral and ethical norms, fact-checking, not to violate privacy, and to carefully consider the content and possible consequences of flash mobs and challenges. It is also worth monitoring the time spent using social networks in the educational process, since these resources are based on the principle of maximum attention concentration and are effective additional, rather than the main, means of learning.

Conclusion. To sum up, social networks have educational potential and allow to effectively and creatively solve problems of being used while learning foreign languages. As active users of social networks, students have the opportunity to use these resources not only for entertainment purposes, but also to gain knowledge and skills in communicating in a foreign language. Such social networks as Lang-8, MyLanguageExchange, InterPals, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and TikTok if used professionally can meet the requirements to develop speaking and writing skills, improve spelling and pronunciation, increase grammar and vocabulary and broaden the worldview. Global net provides live use of foreign language, expressed by native speakers that supplies students with authentic patterns of

nowadays English communication. The experience of using social networks as a means of increasing motivation to learn a foreign language proves to

create a communicative environment between a teacher and students. It broadens the perspectives to both group studies and self-study.

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