

SOCIAL NETWORKS IN TEACHING ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES

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Abstract

Information technologies are nowadays integrated in the educational process at all levels. Russian educational institutes have become more equipped with different means of telecommunications providing students and professors with the Internet access. With the development of web 2.0 technologies the Internet has become not only the source of information but the environment for teacher-students interaction. Nowadays universities are implementing internal information educational environments that integrate different Internet services and technologies. Students and teachers can have access to this type of educational environments from any geographical point. The only thing required is Internet access. Using this type of web 2.0 based educational environments all users can work together creating different educational content and solving various educational problems. These kinds of informational environments are nowadays called social networks. The article describes implementation of web 2.0 services including social networks in the process of teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP).

Keywords: web 2.0, social networks in language teaching, English for Specific Purposes (ESP).

1 INTRODUCTION

The idea of using social networks in teaching foreign languages is challenging and encourages many ESP teachers [1-3] as web 2.0 technologies provide online communication between teachers and students and their collaboration in terms of creating texts, audio and video materials as well as discussing educational issues. They also give an opportunity to communicate with language speakers from all over the world. Using web 2.0 technology does not require special IT skills from the users. That is of special importance for language teachers.

2 EDUCATIONAL SOCIAL NETWORK «COUNTRY STUDY»

The objective of the educational social network «Country Study» is to provide university students with ability to form and develop foreign language competency in terms of professional development. The users are also supposed to develop information competence that includes the following skills:

- to deal with the amount of incoming information;
- to search and choose necessary information and information resources;
- to work collaboratively with all the participants of communication.

Educational social network «Country Study» was created with the help of the Taba website builder. A language teacher is both the owner and the moderator who can add or delete necessary modules (audio, video, articles, tags, useful links), create file archive, edit and update information, accept or deny incoming information from other users to protect the resource from spam. Being a moderator the teacher limits social network users accepting only the students of the required group or university thus performing censoring functions.

Students perform as members who get access to all the social network resources as well as making comments, posting articles, audio and video files, Power Point presentations and his or her own web-page as part of the «Country Study». The main aim of this project is to organize a foreign language educational environment in order to provide additional communication between students and teachers outside classroom doors. Due to various web 2.0 resources and applications students are able to contribute to the content construction of the social network. They are eager to participate in online activities. The most popular activity among students is watching videos and commenting on them.

The ability to post a comment allows a teacher to correct student's mistakes and provide thorough explanation that is not always possible due to lack of time in class. A student can also analyze and

develop writing skills, share his or her thoughts and ideas. This kind of activities allows students to continue or finish some of the activities outside classroom. That is also an excellent opportunity for a teacher and a student as well to track his or her self-study progress.

The created social network consists of the following modules: main page, member pages, articles, photos, video, forum, audio, tags and useful links. Due to convenient navigation that is created by the teacher every user can easily access the required page.

3 STUDY GROUP IN «VK.COM»

In order to organize additional educational environment for students' communication outside classroom a special study group <https://vk.com/club58822551> was organized on the basis of www.vk.com. That is, according to numerous research, considered to be the most popular social network among Russian teenagers and young adults in Russia. This web page is a platform for students who study professional English (ESP) as a part of their university course. The aim was to develop foreign language and professional competences as well as using web 2.0 for educational purposes.

The teacher uses the web page to publish teaching materials, instructions, example tasks and works of the students. The following is the example of such interaction. The students are offered to create a Voicethread presentation basing on the vocabulary studied. In order to perform the task a student has to register on <https://voicethread.com>, watch the example video and create his own Voicethread according to the plan:

- 1 Give a definition of a word or a word combination English;
- 2 Give examples of the vocabulary studied using context;
- 3 Translate the words and word combinations into Russian.

While creating a Voicethread, students are supposed to take advantage of all the possibilities provided by the <https://voicethread.com> like making a video record or audio commenting, etc. The link to the created voicethread is published on the group's webpage. Thus the teacher can check student's pronunciation and translation skills and his or her knowledge of the vocabulary studied.

One more task can be used to control and assess both language and content at the same time. As the studied content contains new notions like aerodynamic and mechanical forces, there comes a necessity to assess the degree to which the students understood it. In order to do that the students are to create a Power Point presentation where they have to explain and describe the aerodynamic and mechanical forces affecting the aircraft during the flight. They must use the studied vocabulary and additional material given by the teacher. The presentation and further discussion takes place in the class and is continued online.

4 CONCLUSION

The article shows that online communication in a social network makes the process of acquiring knowledge and developing language skills continuous. It should be noticed that usage of web 2.0 is a motivating factor for students of different language levels especially when studying specific professional terms and notions.

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