



## MOBILE SOCIAL MEDIA CHALLENGES DIGITAL NATIVES IN EFL LEARNING

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### Abstract

Mobile smart devices and social media applications have become ubiquitous in last five years. One can see learners use them all the time. Among them most popular social networking tools are Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Blogging. The advancement of modern technologies tries its best to accommodate the needs from the young generation called digital natives. As educators, how can we take advantage of this momentum? In my paper I study how students' use mobile devices and applications, what their perceptions and attitudes towards these social media tools are, and their preference of social networking groups. Particularly, I will deal with top-used mobile media tools such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. Based on learners input, I suggest some educational implications of some of these tools as a valuable resource for teaching and learning EFL reading comprehension skills.

**Key Words:** Mobile learning, Social Media, EFL Learning, Digital natives.

### INTRODUCTION

Augmented advancement in mobile technologies and wireless communication has made us unable to chase the developments. After buying the latest mobile product, you come home and notice that on the news, a newer one has been launched to the digital world. In last five years mobile devices such as smart mobile (cellular) phones, tablet pcs, notebooks and handheld devices have become popular because of their ubiquitous, wireless connectedness, portable, ambient features. In addition to this, the embedded multi-functional software programs like; social media tools, audio-visual applications etc. made those handheld things a part of our personalities. The latest statistics indicate total number of monthly active Facebook users: 1,310,000,000; total number of mobile Facebook users: 680,000,000. (Facebook Statistics, 2014). These improvements in mobile technologies and social media led educators and programmers to adopt them using in educational field. Thus Mobile Learning has become more and more important (Hwang & Tsai, 2011). Numerous research studies on the use of mobile and wireless communication technologies in education have been conducted, where these technology-supported learning approaches are recognized as Mobile Learning by the researchers (Hwang & Tsai, 2011; Shih, Chuang & Hwang, 2010). But at this point the question to be discussed is "Are the learners and the educators ready to use the social media with their mobile devices?" or "Are smart mobile devices going to be a distracter or motivator in learning process?" So it's high time to discover Learning via Social mobile Media ( LeSoMe).

### HOW MOBILE LEARNING IS DEFINED?

Mobile Learning has been defined differently by different researchers and organizations. A commonly accepted definition of Mobile Learning is using mobile technologies to facilitate and promote learning anywhere and at anytime. (Hwang & Tsai, 2011; Shih, Chu, Hwang, & Kinshuk, 2010).

Ally (2009) defines Mobile Learning as the delivery of learning content to mobile devices. According to Kukulska-Hulme and Traxler (2005), "Mobile Learning is partly about learning and partly about the breakthroughs of mobile computing and global marketing of mobile devices. It is rapidly becoming a credible and cost-effective component of online and distance learning and anyone developing courses in companies, universities and colleges must consider carefully what it has to offer" (p2). Simply defining, Wexler et al. (2007) refer to Mobile Learning as "Any activity that allows individuals to be more productive when consuming,



interacting with, or creating information, mediated through a compact digital portable device that the individual carries on a regular basis, has reliable connectivity, and fits in a pocket or purse" (p21).

Nowadays almost there is no student who has a mobile device in his pocket. Actually the mobile devices are not solely mobile phones, they are mini pocket computers which has lots of peculiarities such as Hd photo-camera, sound recording system, wireless internet provider, web browser, embedded social media tools, text reader and scanner, high resolution wide touch-pad screen etc. The learner also may also use his mobile device for phone callings. They are also internet providers, thus mobile devices can be defined as "All in one".

On the other hand many researchers drive attention to the meaning of 'anytime, anywhere'. Traditionally this term is understood as learning specific content. Actually according the last developments in social media tools and technological features of new mobile devices; educators and individual learners should focus on expanding mobile learning toward engagement in the context with mobile technologies. With the provision of new concept mobile devices the definition of mobile learning can be defined as 3A's. 3A's means anywhere, anytime, anything. This high potential of mobile devices enriches mobile learning process. Breaking through the barriers M learning becomes 24/7. Consequently learners feel much more individual and flexible.

A brief background of Social Mobile media devices and their features. In last decades educators and scholars are struggling to adopt new technologies and their unexpected features into teaching and learning process. However it's not so easy to cover all changings in Information Computer Technologies (ICT) due to rapidly developments in mobile devices and social media. Of course the contribution of increasingly growing use of wireless technology is undisputed.

The personal mobile devices like mobile phones, (in some countries it is called cellphones or handphones ), smartphones, palmtops and handheld computers (Personal Digital Assistants or PDAs); Tablet PCs, laptop computers and personal media players can also fall within its scope, are used widely throughout the world. Not only in developed countries but also in developing countries, both in their rural and urban areas, mobile devices are used with its internet connectivity. Due to those smart devices our world has become global information home.

#### HOW MUCH DIGITAL NATIVE ARE LEARNERS?

The global changings in mobile devices all around the world caused global digitalization on young generation. Unwillingly they are born as a digital native. According to some scholars they are called net generation or google generation. (Gibbons, 2007). In their studies significance of social media tools is highlighted. Constantly usage of mobile devices made some fundamental changes on the characteristics and attitudes of this young generation. Because their communication, socialization and entertainment occurs through mobile social media. They become experts of mobile devices whenever they hold it in their hands. Not depends on the age. For instance my four years old daughter learned the colors through my smart phone quickly. Digital native concept first used by Prensky .He claims that digital native learners receive the information really fast. They think and process the data in a different way comparing to old generation. (Prensky, 2001a). He describes them as native speakers because of the digital language of mobile devices. Who knows may be they use binary system in their minds. However the question to be discussed is how effectively mobile social media is used for education by the new generation.

#### THE USAGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN EFL LEARNING

First of all it is a must to increase the awareness of the potential features and feasibility of using social mobile media tools in education. None the educators nor the students are aware of the treasure in their pocket. First step should be convincing the teachers the benefits of engaging students with social media. They should be open for innovative opportunities using technology in the classroom. Beside social media literacy is crucial to deal with.

Of course we are not completely pessimistic. Because there is a large number of social media friendly teachers in some institutions. They integrate social media tools in their practical lesson to flip the traditional way. Facebook, YouTube, twitter, blogs, wikis, Edmodo etc. presents a breadth usage in formal and informal education.



**YouTube:** A teacher may have nearly 3,000 students in his or her academic life but through YouTube educators make much more contribution to learning process. If you consider one lecture duration as 45- 50 minutes, you can just address a full of students in a classroom. But throughout YouTube thousands of learners could be taught. In blended education system learners can listen to their teacher ones, but on YouTube many times until he or she understands better. It will be an easy revision before exams. Learners can reach many videos or slides related to their topic. On YouTube students can be assigned for video homework.

**Facebook** has always been on the top among the social media tools. On Facebook, real and authentic connections are available. Three kinds of Facebook accounts provide teachers and learners a broad opportunity to use it for learning process. You may have pages, groups and profiles of Facebook. Grouping is the best way for EFL learning to share audio visual language supplementaries. Edmodo is a social media application just designed for educational purpose similar to Facebook.

**Twitter's** fame is all around the world. You can deliver your ideas in a brief way with 140 characters. Learners can have microblogs on twitter.

Social media tools are not consist of those applications. There is lots of it. Just here we mentioned some of them.

#### PROS AND CONS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

The subscriber account is increasing like a snowball day by day.it proves that the exposure of social media in learning process is inevitable. General age range is 14-29. The effect of social media on education is double sided.



Social media made the world a global information village. The knowledge is more accessible. We have the quick ability to absorb the information. You don't have to memorize it. Because at anytime and anywhere you can touch it. Learners have no limitation and boundaries to reach the information that they demand. They don't have to go to any country to get some information. Students became more flexible and more creative. They are fed with new ideas from all over the world. Thanks to social media young generation is sensitive and aware to events around the world.

But on the other hand if the students are engaged for a long time, they lose the connection from the real world. Some social media users live a digital and virtual life. It's getting hard to communicate face to face with people. They see the world through a narrow led screen. They can't smell and feel the real world. It's better to remember, social media is a tool for education not itself. Young learners should not be left with internet and social media because they can be drowned in it. Avoiding from info-pollution is significant.

## CONCLUSION

It is inevitable to be surrounded by internet technology and Mobile devices. Social media became undisputed phenomenon. So stop escaping and start to use the advantages of this century's weapon. The educators and young learners must be armed with them. Social media literacy is important. It should be taught at the schools. Adopting the social media into education system is crucial. Curriculum designers should consider engaging social media into learning system. This concept cannot be ignored by policy makers about education. Banning mobile devices in the learning process is not a sensible option. Here the question is how to harness this social media and its devices in learning process. Education policy makers, curriculum designers, academicians should encourage the teachers to integrate them into their classes. Parents should be involved into the process.

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