



Using Facebook in the Language Classroom

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Abstract

This paper sets out the application of Facebook as an assignment tool for the language classroom at a secondary school in Reykjavík. The study case is a result of a grant approved by the Icelandic Ministry of Education to promote research and try to improve the study of Danish as a foreign language at secondary school level in Iceland. Danish is losing popularity among Icelandic secondary school students confronting other foreign languages. Today's students rely on technology for information gathering, to stay updated on social concerns, for inter-personal communication and also as a way to learn. In the last decade research has illustrated how the Internet and various communication technology support meaningful educational experiences. There is a general consensus that Digital Natives enjoy computer- and Internet- based resources in their classes. Consequently, e-learning tools are more prominent than ever in education as they have been acknowledged to meet the connectivity demands that today's students expect. The popularity of the social networking site Facebook is indisputable, so it seemed the perfect tool to use in this case. From January to May 2010, Facebook was the platform used by the teacher to apply as a pedagogic and assignment tool during one semester. Two courses were used during the experiment, one worked as an experimental group and the other worked as the control one. This study pretends to prove that using a social networking tool to motivate students has a positive effect on their level of language competence at the end of the course and will get a better attitude towards the subject. It will also help the students to develop a sense of community and to improve their socio-pragmatic competence in the target language. The final purpose of this paper is thus provide empirical evidence of the positive effects of using virtual community participation and highlighting its practical importance in educational environments.