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Ensayo

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH AT UNIVERSITY LEVEL

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Abstract

For several years now, we have been living in the digital age. During this time, the rise of social media has significantly transformed many aspects of society, including education. The way students communicate, engage with content, and learn has changed with platforms like Facebook, Twitter (X), Instagram, TikTok, and LinkedIn. Social media has fundamentally reshaped the landscape of education, particularly in higher education, where it has impacted both teaching methods and student behavior. For English language and literature departments at universities, social media presents both a unique opportunity and a significant challenge. This article will examine the impact of social media on teaching English at the university level, focusing on both the positive and negative effects, the evolution in pedagogical practices, and how educators are adapting to this new digital environment, both in Chile and abroad.

Resumen

Desde hace algunos años, vivimos en la era digital. En esta era, el auge de las redes sociales ha transformado diversos aspectos de la sociedad, incluyendo en gran medida la educación. La forma en que los estudiantes se comunican, interactúan con el contenido e incluso aprenden ha cambiado con la llegada de plataformas como Facebook, Twitter (X), Instagram, TikTok y LinkedIn. Las redes sociales han transformado radicalmente el panorama educativo, especialmente en la educación superior, donde han influido tanto en las metodologías de enseñanza como en el comportamiento estudiantil. Para los departamentos de Lengua y Literatura Inglesas de las universidades, las redes sociales representan una oportunidad y un desafío únicos. Este ensayo se explorará el impacto de las redes sociales en la enseñanza del inglés a nivel universitario, centrándose tanto en los efectos positivos como negativos, el cambio en las prácticas pedagógicas y cómo los educadores se están adaptando a esta nueva realidad digital, tanto en Chile como en el extranjero.

The Role of Social Media in Student Engagement

Social media impacts teaching in various ways. One of the most important effects of teaching English at the university level is that it provides new opportunities for student engagement. Traditional classrooms have always focused on face-to-face interaction between professors and students, but social media creates additional spaces for students to connect with the content both inside and outside of class. It has introduced a completely new dynamic.

We'll explore these issues now. Social media platforms, with their interactive nature, allow students to participate in discussions in ways that might not be possible in a traditional classroom. Online forums, comment sections, and group chats let students share ideas, ask questions, and challenge each other's thinking. This had never happened before. The asynchronous nature of many social media interactions can be especially helpful for students who may feel shy or reluctant to speak in class, as they can share their opinions without the pressure of immediate verbal interaction. Additionally, they can now use mostly pictures to convey full ideas, unlike the sentences of the past that relied only on words and proper punctuation.

Furthermore, social media provides access to a diverse range of perspectives. For instance, platforms like Twitter and Reddit allow students to engage with global communities, broadening their understanding of English literature and language in various cultural contexts. This type of engagement can foster a deeper appreciation for the subject matter and contribute to the development of critical thinking skills. Nevertheless, some experts disagree with this last point, and there is still much to be researched in this new area of knowledge.

A Case Study: Can Twitter (X) be used as a Learning Tool?

There was a study conducted by researchers at the University of Leicester. It found that using Twitter (X) in the classroom increased student participation, fostered informal academic discourse, and helped students to connect more directly with scholars, authors, and other experts in the field. By using Twitter (X) hashtags for course-related topics, students were able to follow discussions that extended beyond the classroom. They could also interact with peers from other institutions, adding a global dimension to their learning. Students engaged willingly and successfully in this kind of activity.

Yet, that was not all. Additionally, Twitter (X) allowed students to summarize key points from readings or lectures in concise tweets, encouraging them to engage with the material in a more focused and creative way. This practice not only improved their understanding of the material but also helped them develop a crucial skill in modern communication: writing concisely and clearly in a limited space. This is certainly an amazing outcome.

Social Media as a Supplement to Traditional Teaching Methods

It is important to mention that social media has not replaced traditional methods of teaching English, but rather has supplemented them. Many professors have incorporated social media tools into their teaching strategies to enhance student learning and participation. According to experiences reported, a significant number of university professors benefit from these technological advances when doing their academic work.

Digital Content Sharing and Access to Resources

In this new scenario, it is significant to mention platforms that have a wide scope and can be accessed by people all over the world. Platforms such as YouTube, Pinterest, and Instagram

can be used to share visual and video content that enhances traditional lecture materials. For example, YouTube offers numerous channels dedicated to analyzing classic English literature, providing both in-depth and brief video essays that students can watch in their own time, 24/7. This supplementary material can serve as a valuable resource for students who prefer multimodal learning, as well as for those who have flexible time to study.

Moreover, social media allows for the creation and sharing of online reading lists and resources. Professors can use platforms like Pinterest to curate collections of articles, videos, and images related to course topics, making learning more interactive and dynamic. Similarly, platforms like Facebook and Slack can be used to create class groups where students share resources, participate in informal discussions, and ask questions in a more casual setting. All this undoubtedly enriches the learning process and experience at the university level.

Learning with others through social media.

The term social media is not used arbitrarily, because the purpose is to foster socialization in opposition to isolation. One of the significant advantages of social media in education is the promotion of collaborative learning. Students can engage in group discussions, share ideas, and work together on projects through various platforms. For instance, Facebook Groups and WhatsApp provide spaces for students to collaborate on assignments, exchange ideas, and share useful resources related to English literature and language studies. We have to bear in mind that languages are alive, and people bring them to life through their interactions.

Collaborative learning is crucial for English departments, where students often engage in peer-reviewed writing, group presentations, and literary analysis. Social media platforms can enhance the sense of community and support among students, providing a space where they can easily collaborate outside of scheduled class times. This is the positive side, however, there are still some issues to be addressed..

The Challenges derived from the use of social media in English Education

While the benefits of social media in English education are evident, universities and educators must also address several challenges when integrating these platforms into the curriculum bothat the secondary and higher education levels.

Dealing with Distractions and Time Management

Let's talk about a very important point. One of the primary concerns with social media is its potential to distract students from their studies. With constant notifications, memes, videos, and updates, social media can become a significant time sink, detracting from the time students spend reading, writing, and engaging with academic material. This is especially troublesome in the context of English studies, where reading comprehension and critical thinking are paramount. Language acquisition is and has always been a complex process.

In a study conducted by the University of California, researchers found that students who used social media during class were more likely to be distracted and less engaged with the content being taught. The distraction was linked to poorer academic performance, as students struggled to focus on complex texts and assignments. As students progress in their learning journey, the texts they encounter become increasingly complex.

The Gradual Erosion of Formal Writing Skills

A significant concern is that social media may contribute to a decline in formal writing skills. Platforms like Twitter (X), Instagram, and Snapchat encourage a more informal, conversational style of writing, often characterized by shorthand, abbreviations, and emojis. While these forms of communication are appropriate in certain contexts, they may negatively impact students' ability to write formally in academic settings. As future

professionals, they need to master the skill of "proper" writing in their field and daily working life.

Students may become accustomed to using a more casual writing style in their social media interactions, which can carry over into their academic writing. In particular, this shift can undermine students' ability to write coherent essays, engage in in-depth analysis, and construct well-organized arguments—skills that are central to the study of English.

Impact on Critical Thinking

This is a very relevant issue in education. While social media can foster diverse perspectives, it may also present the challenge of "echo chambers" and misinformation. Social media platforms often show users content that aligns with their existing beliefs, which can limit exposure to diverse viewpoints and critical debates. In an academic setting, this can affect the development of critical thinking skills, as students may only be exposed to ideas that confirm their preexisting opinions.

For English teachers and educators, this presents a challenge when teaching students how to critically analyze texts and engage with differing interpretations. Students may struggle to navigate the complex and nuanced arguments that are often present in literature, opting instead for oversimplified perspectives based on what they encounter on social media every day.

Adapting Teaching Strategies to Incorporate Social Media

Given the impact of social media on students' lives, English departments must adapt their teaching strategies to harness the benefits of these platforms while addressing the challenges they pose. Below are several ways in which educators can adapt their teaching methods to incorporate social media effectively. Here are some:

Setting clear Guidelines and Rules

For practical and ethical purposes, Professors can establish clear guidelines for how students should use social media concerning their coursework. These guidelines should outline expectations for participation, appropriate use of platforms, and how students can engage with course materials in a productive manner. For instance, professors may encourage students to share academic articles, discussions, or reflections on social media, but with an emphasis on respectful, scholarly discourse. This would be an enriching experience for both students and educators.

Using Social Media as a Tool for Feedback

Social media can also be used to provide timely and informal feedback to students. For example, educators can use Twitter (X) or class Facebook groups to give feedback on drafts of papers or to pose questions that encourage critical reflection. By using social media for feedback, they can create a more dynamic and interactive learning environment.

Incorporating Social Media into Assessments

Educators may also consider incorporating social media-based assignments into their courses. For example, students could be tasked with creating a blog post, writing a tweet summarizing a text, or participating in a Twitter discussion using a specific hashtag. These types of assignments would encourage students to engage with the material creatively, while also improving their ability to communicate effectively in digital spaces.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that the impact of social media on English teaching at the university level is complex and multifaceted. On one hand, social media offers new opportunities for student

engagement, collaboration, and access to diverse perspectives. On the other hand, it poses challenges related to distractions, informal writing styles, and the erosion of critical thinking skills. These effects are now well documented in the research literature. As social media continues to play a central role in students' lives, English educators must adapt their teaching strategies to integrate these platforms in a way that enhances learning while mitigating potential drawbacks. By striking a balance between traditional teaching methods and the opportunities offered by social media, educators can support students in navigating the digital landscape while simultaneously strengthening their academic competence in English language and literature—two interrelated components of effective language education.

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HISTORIA DE LAS CIENCIAS EPIS
FILOSOFÍA LITERATURA EDUCAC
GEOGRAFÍA SOCIAL DISEÑO FIL
EDUCACIÓN E IDIOMAS GEOGRA
PSICOLOGÍA SOCIAL ARTE PSICO
FILOSOFÍA EPISTEMOLOGÍA ART
DISEÑO HISTORIA DE LAS CIEN
GRAFÍA SOCIAL EDUCACIÓN E ID
STORIA DE LAS CIENCIAS ARTE
ICOLOGÍA SOCIAL ARTEFILOSOF
ARTE DISEÑO FILOSOFÍA LITERA
HISTORIA DE LAS CIENCIAS DISE
DISEÑO HISTORIA DE LAS CIEN
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