



# The Role of Social Networking Sites in Learning English as a Foreign Language in Morocco



## Abstract

This poster illustrates the role of Social Networking Sites in learning English as a foreign language in Morocco. SNSs has been already integrated into education systems in different parts of the globe. This new technology has transformed the education landscape and creates new tools and environment for EFL learners. It creates new community where learners do not have to communicate by means of traditional face-to-face learning strategy, but it brings the true meaning of learning by distance.

### Key words

**Web 2.0 technology – SNS – EEL - Morocco – language learning.**

## Methodology :

This poster starts by introducing the English status as a foreign language in Morocco. Then, it reviews definitions and descriptions of SNSs and its relevant learning theories, as a potential tool or environment for EFL learning activities.

## Introduction

The Internet, through decades, has developed from means for distributing “read-only” and static information resources to a set of social media where people interact, share and frequently update huge amounts of information (Faizi, R, El Afia A & Chiheb R., 2013). It has become an environment with a motto “read-write” as an interactive and participatory platform with invention of Web 2.0 technologies in 2005 ( Harrison.R; Thomas.M, 2009). Web 2.0 has been advanced to provide new opportunities that serve perfectly learning foreign languages in general and English learning as foreign language in particular. An aspect of Web 2.0, which has supported the EFL learning, is the use of Social Networking Sites. The ability for individual users to collaborate, create and share content with users may prove, especially useful, for learning languages ( Lomicka & Lord, 2009). Social Networking Sites are defined by Boyd and Ellison (2007) as web-based services that provide users to build their profiles with a bounded systems, and have lists of other users with whom they share a connection. SNSs allow people to express and interact with each other freely. Basing on self-expression and social interaction, which are the most important contexts for language use that are a must to be created in foreign language (FL) classrooms to encourage language acquisition (McBride, K.,2009). SNS is an attractive environment for FL practice. It is mostly used by youngers ( Cavarlee & Webb, 2008) from different parts of the globe, based on interactions within intercultural communicative contexts. Growing up exchanging information and communication in different ways from those of the previous generations, they not only have different learning styles but qualitatively different thought patterns (Thone & Payne, 2005; Baird & Fisher, 2005-2006; Prensky, 2001). This urges educators to think in integrating SNS usage into class-related activities, to orient students imaginations and thoughts (Godwin- Jones, 2008; Winke & Goertler, 2008). Therefore, the more FL learners become engaged and involved with SNS activities containing pedagogically useful FL practices, the more they become more motivated in fulfilling the FL tasks (McBride, K.,2009). Now, it is essential to integrate social networking tools into EFL acquisition classrooms as it helps to broaden students’ knowledge, increase their motivation and build confidence in EFL acquisition.

## English as a foreign language in Morocco

Morocco is known for its long history of multilingualism. While Arabic and Tamazight are the national languages of Morocco, French has been the dominant foreign language in Morocco. French is the language of Morocco’s colonizer along with Spanish that is used in some parts of the country. Therefore, their linguistic, and cultural and political power as foreign languages in Morocco was imposed. Whereas, English does not have colonial legacy in Morocco (Buckner, E. 2011). English is not a second language, but a third or fourth language for many Moroccans (Buckner, E. 2011). Within Moroccan’s long and complicated history of Arabic-Tamazight bilingualism and colonization of French and Spanish, English is only the latest in long line of Foreign languages in Morocco (Buckner, E. 2011). However, with the growth of technology and globalization and English becomes the international language and the first language of science and knowledge, Moroccan government of higher education shifts from emphasizing French as a language of knowledge and science to emphasizing English acquisition.

« After various statements made by Lahcen Daoudi, Minister of Higher Education, in which he highlighted the importance of English for students aspiring to build a bright future, the Moroccan official has reportedly signed a circular making it obligatory for scientific students to master English language before they can be admitted in science Universities. According to Radio Deluxe, Lahcen Daoudi said “I just signed a circular and all those who do not master English will no longer have access to scientific, technical and economic universities starting from January 1, 2015.” »

English in Morocco has benefited from its international and global prestige and from the government support. It is not only growing rapidly in status and its usage in Morocco in the latest decades, but even it threatens the other foreign languages in Morocco especially French (Ennaji, 2005).

## Web 2.0 in Morocco

Morocco is considered one among the few countries in Africa that provide rapid access of the Internet. It ranks in top three in the usage of the Internet behind Nigeria and Egypt according to recent Internet usage statistics for Africa (Mansouri, Z., & Mrabet, Y. 2014). The number of the Internet users in Morocco has reached 16.477.712, which is over taking the half of the population of Morocco ( Internet World Stats, Africa Stats, section, 2012). This relates to the emphasis of the Moroccan government on development of telecommunication and technology sector as an essential part of the country’s economy. Therefore, Morocco lunched in 2009, by the ministry of industry, a strategy for information and digital economy called “Digital Morocco 2009-2013” for high speed Internet access (Arab science and Technology foundation, 2012). In 2013, the minister of higher education lunched a program called “Injaz” dedicated to engineering and Master students aims to equip students with hardware and 3G Internet access funded up to 85% by the Moroccan government (Bentaleb, 2011). With the emerged using of Web 2.0 as a means of expression and freedom, Social Networking Sites, such as Facebook, Myspace, Twitter, Youtube, blogs and Wikis have become a new dimension and rich resource of information

## SNSs and EFL in Morocco

The booming move in the usage of Social Networking Sites (SNSs) in Morocco has fulfilled the interactive potential of foreign language learning in general and EFL in particular. With the increasing use of SNSs, many aspects of modern society and social interaction have been transformed. It has enlarged space of information media, altered human communication and how people interact with each other, and the ways in which languages are used. It is a corpora consisting of blogs, forums, Facebook pages, Twitter collections and so on that are often multilingual (Maynard, Bontcheva & Rout ,2012). Therefore, it has challenged traditional ways of communication and acquiring linguistic elements that are fixed and static to redefine communication in text, voice and video media, as well as, providing unlimited resources and accessible information (Rodriguez.C.; Oxbrow.G, 2010). SNS tools and their several applications can be used for a variety of language learning tasks outside the classroom context. It is a rich resource of autonomy and self-learning as a platform for interactive learning activities and communicating in the target language. Now, EFL learner can benefit from multiple tools of SNSs to renovate the traditional way of studying into enjoyable meeting and interaction with English native speakers from around the globe. For instance, Facebook and Twitter are platforms a person can practice his language skills with real native speakers (Faizi, R, El Afia A & Chiheb R., 2013). There are also specifically designed groups and pages in Facebook for EFL learners. Moreover, many online language learning communities offer interactive lessons, exams, writing exercises, reading comprehension tests, texts, audio and video chat in various languages (Faizi, R, El Afia A & Chiheb R., 2013). Yet, Youtube, Dailymotion are online platforms where language learners can watch and listen to all kind of spoken languages ( formal, informal, colloquial and even slangs) and also types (films, program shows, debates...) which help them learn more vocabulary and improve their listening skills. Then, Wikis, online forums and blogs can improve the learners’ writing skills (Faizi, R, El Afia A & Chiheb R., 2013). In fact, the emerged use of SNSs in EFL contexts rebels against the traditional learning process. It has transformed the assumed passive receptive learner into an active interactive independent learner.

## Conclusion

The objective of this poster is to describe the effectiveness of SNSs in the acquisition of foreign languages in general and English in particular in Morocco. SNSs as collaborative technologies offer a variety of opportunities for EFL learners to access such online interactive environment. It is, indeed, a fashionable way of learning.

## References

- Arab science and Technology foundation, 2012. In Mansouri, Z., & Mrabet, Y. 2014 Jul 1. Moroccan University Students’ Online Reputation Management. International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies. [Online] 1:1
- Bentaleb, 2011. In Mansouri, Z., & Mrabet, Y. 2014 Jul 1. Moroccan University Students’ Online Reputation Management. International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies. [Online] 1:1
- Boyd, D. M., & Ellison, N. B. (2007). Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship. Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 13(1).
- Buckner, E. 2011. “Culture, Class and Status Competition: The Growth of English Language Learning in Morocco.” in Global English: Issues of Language, Culture, and Identity in the Arab World, (Eds.) Al-Issa and Dahhan. New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishers.
- Caverlee, J., & Webb, S. (2008, April). A large-scale study of MySpace: Observations and implication for online social networks. Paper presented at the International Conference on Weblogs and Social Media, Seattle, WA.
- Faizi, R, El Afia A & Chiheb R. (2013). “Exploring the Potential Benefits of Using Social Media in Education”. International Journal of Engineering Pedagogy (IJEPE). eISSN: 2192-4880
- Godwin- Jones, 2008; Winke & Goertler, 2008. In McBride, K. (2009). Social-networking sites in foreign language classes: Opportunities for re-creation. In L. Lomicka & G. Lord (Eds.), The next generation: Social networking and online collaboration in foreign language learning (pp. 35-58). San Marcos, Texas: CALICO.
- Harrison, R., & Thomas, M. (2009). Identity in online communities: Social networking sites and language learning. International Journal of Emerging Technologies & Society, 7(2), 109–124.
- Internet World Stats, Africa Stats, section, 2012. In Mansouri, Z., & Mrabet, Y. 2014 Jul 1. Moroccan University Students’ Online Reputation Management. International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies. [Online] 1:1
- Lomicka, L., & Lord, G. (2009). Introduction to social networking, collaboration, and Web 2.0 tools. In L. Lomicka & G. Lord (Eds.), The next generation: Social networking and online collaboration in foreign language learning (pp. 1-11). San Marcos, Texas: CALICO.
- Mansouri, Z., & Mrabet, Y. 2014 Jul 1. Moroccan University Students’ Online Reputation Management. International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies. [Online] 1:1