

The Social Impact of Telegram as a Social Network on Teaching English Vocabulary among Iranian Intermediate EFL Learners (Payam Noor Center)

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Abstract:

Telegram is now considered as one of the most famous platform online social networks among media university students. Nowadays, the immense popularity of social networking websites such as Telegram has created new opportunities for English learners. Accordingly, the present study aims to investigate whether Telegram would be an effective and easy learning tool of vocabulary for Iranian female EFL learners at Intermediate Level at Payam Noor University, Babol, Iran. The participants in this study were 50 female EFL learners, ranging from 18-28 years old, selected from 100 cases. Pretest and posttest were also used to assess learners' knowledge about vocabulary taught during the session (four weeks). The data were collected and analyzed by SPSS. The results indicated that in spite of the popularity of social networks, Telegram learning can bring unique technological and pedagogical advantages for EFL learners and has a significantly positive effect on the development of vocabulary learning. The findings of this study are considered to be useful in English methodology issue.

Keywords: Telegram, Vocabulary, EFL learners, Social network, Intermediate level.

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1. Introduction

Today, there is a vast area of information and knowledge on different aspects of the scientific world over materials are available on numerous websites which are definitely useful and helpful for experts and scholars who are working in various fields of science (Qarajeh & Abdolmanafi, 2015). According to Srinivas (2010), social networking is one tool which can assist teachers and learners to access information and facilitate the learning of English.

It seems that since the education world is moving toward the use of social networking in education, Instructors can no longer feel shy of the digital world. Education and teaching through the Internet is being more vivid and generic in the world. In many developing countries as well as in Iran, Universities are becoming interested in online education. They are encouraging students to use the Internet in their teaching programme. Hence, the Iranian academic organizations need to improvise appropriate policies and strategies on how they can apply social networking sites to support education and learning beyond the classroom.

In this regard, Telegram is one of the web applications serving a large online community which was launched in 2013 by two Russian brothers, Pavel and Nikolai Durov, an entrepreneur and a computer programmer, and is based in Berlin. Telegram can also be used on all devices at the same time — individuals' messages sync seamlessly across any number of their phones, tablets or computers. With Telegram, people can create groups for up to 5000 people for broadcasting to infinite audiences (Vivienne, 2016). Based on Niayesh (2015), number of Iranians who have adopted to Telegram, a mobile social networks application has witnessed a huge boom recently. Currently some five million Iranians use Telegram, Iran's ISNA news agency reported May 23. Presumably the huge adoption wave came after Iranian users experienced various problems in access to other popular social networks applications, in particular Viber or Whats up in recent month.

Online channels in Telegram are becoming popular among both academics and the general population. Telegram in education and training, are relatively innovative concept has been the central concern of many academics, instructors, teachers and parents. Moreover, Telegram channels can provide opportunities for us to easily display our research studies.

According to Baran (2013), university students have embraced the capabilities of social media channels. He clarifies that based on the statistics a major part of students' energy and time is devoted to reading formal and informal online texts on various social media channels, watching the videos and following the tweets and updates

related to the course content. Telegram has many channels to educate English. Some channels improve English vocabulary learning. Learning vocabulary often seems to be of essential importance to the typical language learner (Zimmeman, 2001).

Learning new vocabularies improves learning a foreign language. According to Nation (2006) learners should know at least 5000 lexical items to understand non-technical English texts. Because of the limited class hours, students do not have opportunity to speak and use all of the vocabularies in class. This leads to some problems for language teachers and learners. Nation (2005) believed that teachers can teach individual words explicitly, but deliberately teaching vocabulary is one of the least efficient ways of developing learners' vocabulary knowledge. This urges language teachers and researchers to look for alternative ways to traditional classroom teaching of vocabulary. One of the ways that can help teachers in teaching vocabulary is using different technologies available to students. Cognitive and socio-cognitive approaches have implication of how to integrate technology in teaching in the communicative trend (Laufer, 1988). One of the technologies that can be used to help learner in learning a foreign language is Telegram which is dominating in most of students' life. It is not just communication device anymore. In other words, this technology has brought about a new type of language learning.

The present study aims to investigate whether Telegram would be an effective vocabulary learning tool in EFL classrooms in Payam Noor University or not? In other words, the main goal of this study was to find the social impact of Telegram on English vocabulary learning.

2. Background of the study

Telegram as a social network is becoming one of the major tools for education, and entertainment. Mazman (2010) asserts that the rapid development and enormous advancement in computer technologies have been affecting all aspects of life for more than three decades. Moreover, many researchers found a positive association between use of internet and social networking sites (SNS) and academic performance of the students. Students using internet frequently, scored higher grades in reading skills test and higher grades in other subjects as well (Flad, 2010). One of the problems that students encounter in learning language is the lack of opportunities for authentic communication due to non-personalized course content, and complains about being forced to follow a strict curriculum (Barlett & Bragg, 2006; Donmus, 2010). Integrating Telegram channels into existing learning practices can provide informal learning contexts and create new opportunities for English learning. Thus,

academic institutions and faculties are increasingly using social networking sites (Paul, Baker, Cochran, 2012). However, American Educational Research Association conducted a research and it was declared on its annual conference in San Diego, California (2009) that SNSs users studied less and obtained lower grades eventually. Similarly, Banquil et al., (2009) found a continuing drop of grades among student users of social networking sites.

As Stockwell (2007) stated, vocabulary has been one of the most commonly taught language areas through technology in recent years (Dodigovic, 2005; Yoshii, 2003; Yoshii & Flatiz, 2002). Gorjian et al., (2012) states that language teaching has not remained inflexible towards the profound changes taking place in other areas of knowledge and advances in network technologies which have resulted in the emergence of virtual worlds to facilitate online versus an offline communication among users. We can use technology to help EFL learners and teachers learn and teach better and more effectively. Zhao (2004) state a common belief that technology is just a tool, a means to an end in education.

The study looks at Telegram in relation to its social impact on academic needs and English vocabulary learning. Telegram in studies with an educational context; is a part of a virtual learning environment. The university classroom is changing time and space with e-learning. The rampant use of Telegram channels for learning purposes by students makes this study imperative.

3. Research Question

Given the importance of the vocabulary learning in learning a new language and the opportunities that Telegram provides, the present study addresses the following question:

"Does the use of Telegram have any significant effect on EFL intermediate level learners' vocabulary learning?"

4. Methodology

4.1. Participants

In the current study, the participants were 50 female students intermediate level learners, ranging from 18-28 years old, learning English as a foreign language (studying at Payam e Noor University, Babol, Iran). 100 university students were randomly selected. The participants were divided into control and experimental groups (25 subjects per group). In order to homogenize the participants upon their level of

proficiency, first OPT (described earlier) was administered to all the 50 available students.

4.2. Instrumentation

4.2.1. Oxford Placement Test

An Oxford Placement Test (OPT) was administered to all the selected students to show that the students in both groups are homogeneous or not. But, there are 11 items in this test which assess the level of vocabulary proficiency at intermediate level. Based on one-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test all of these 50 students as the participants were at the normal level in this study.

4.2.2. Pre-test

It was a self-administered vocabulary test comprising of 20 multiple choice items based on the frequency of occurrence from three Telegram channels. Accordingly, in this research, to ensure that the self-administered vocabulary test was satisfactorily conducted in a small group of (n=20) Payam Noor students who were selected randomly. Before piloting the vocabulary test, the students were given an orientation for the main research study and were asked to give responses and comments which will help us in improving the vocabulary test. By using SPSS software, the 'Cronbach alpha' was applied to check the reliability of the self-administered vocabulary test. The estimated alpha among the variables was 92% proving to be highly reliable in measuring the effectiveness of Telegram in vocabulary learning.

4.2.3. Post-test

A vocabulary test presented to the students. This posttest were similar to the pretest.

4.3. Procedure

As it was mentioned earlier, the experimental and control groups, were selected from group of students whose proficiency level was same. However, since the study concentrated on vocabulary, a vocabulary test, taken from three Telegram channels, their aim was learning vocabulary, was presented to both experimental and control groups to ensure that they were also homogeneous in terms knowledge.

In order to apply the treatment on the experimental group, the university students joined three social channels of Telegram which were the most operative channels for learning vocabulary. Students in the experimental group became a member of these three channels at the beginning of the study session (four weeks). During the instruction, the participants in the experimental group received 60 general vocabulary along with their definitions and statements. These sessions were conducted on a

regular basis for four weeks (12 sessions and 20 minutes per a session) outside of the classroom. It should be mentioned, during this session, the university instructors did not teach anything to the control group and they were not permitted to use the Telegram at all. The students in experimental and control group were not allowed to share their information with other group. After four weeks of vocabulary learning in Telegram, a vocabulary posttest was conducted for both experimental and control groups as a final examination. It is worth mentioning here that the vocabulary posttest was exactly similar to vocabulary pretest.

5. Results

After administrating the OPT for 50 students, as shown in Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of language proficiency test that was used for the homogenization of the participants in this study. They were then randomly divided into experimental and control groups.

Table 1. The Descriptive Statistics of the Homogeneity Test

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Mean. Error	Std. Deviation
Q 1	49	1	4	2.94	.079	.556
Q2	50	1	4	2.18	.068	.482
Q3	50	2	4	3.04	.057	.402
Q4	50	1	4	3.84	.072	.510
Q5	50	1	3	2.94	.044	.314
Q6	48	1	4	3.79	.089	.617
Q7	49	2	4	3.02	.046	.322
Q8	46	1	4	1.15	.093	.631
Q9	50	1	3	1.08	.056	.396
Q10	50	1	4	2.02	.045	.319
Q11	50	1	4	1.38	.117	.830

Table 2. Normality of Test Distribution

		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11
Normal Parameters ^a	Mean	2.94	2.18	3.04	3.84	2.94	3.79	3.02	1.15	1.08	2.02	1.38
	Std. Deviation	.556	.482	.402	.510	.314	.617	.322	.631	.396	.319	.830
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.401	.466	.440	.503	.536	.507	.464	.530	.540	.505	.476
	Positive	.354	.466	.440	.377	.424	.368	.464	.5130	.540	.505	.476
	Negative	-.401	-.334	-.400	-.503	-.536	-.507	-.434	-.405	-.420	-.455	-.324
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		2.807	3.292	3.109	3.559	3.789	3.513	3.248	3.595	3.819	3.571	3.369
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.080	.210	.073	.260	.370	.440	.079	.285	.125	.480	.089

a. Test distribution is Normal.

Based on Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z, since Sig is more than 0/05, it can be concluded that test distribution is normal, because the study concentrated on vocabulary learning, and to check the homogeneity of the experimental and control groups at the beginning of the experimentation, a vocabulary test was conducted for both groups as a pre-test, including 20 vocabulary-based items showing that there was no significant difference between the control and experimental groups confirming their similarity. Table 3 summarizes the descriptive statistics of control group as follows:

Table 3. Paired Samples Statistics

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Control pre test	2.3020	25	.35779	.07156
Control post test	2.2220	25	.11733	.02347

In order to answer the research question, a paired sample of t-test was conducted compare the mean scores of pretest and posttest of the control group.

Table 4. Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences							
		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Lower	Upper				
Control pretest -	.080	.35795	.07159	-.06775	.22775	1.117	24	.275	
Control post test									

As it has been shown in table 4, the observation for the comparison of the means of two groups was 1.117 at 24 degrees of freedom and Significant 275, Since Significant is more than 0/05 (.275>0/05), there is no meaningful difference between scores of these two tests and hence both groups were in similar status.

After four weeks of instruction, both experimental and control groups were given a similar post-test. The questions of posttest were the same as the pretest.

Table 5 summarizes the descriptive statistics of experimental groups:

Table 5 .Paired test

N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
25	1.9340	.57549	.11510
25	2.6000	.39184	.07837

In order to compare the mean scores of pretest and posttest for the experimental group another paired sample t-test was conducted as shown in Table 6, the *t*-observed for the comparison of the means both groups was - 4.133 (24 degrees of freedom and Sig is 0.0000. Since Sig is less than 0/05(.000< 0/05), there is a meaningful difference between scores of these two tests (pretest and posttest of the experimental group).

Table 6. Meaningful difference between scores of pretest and posttest

	Paired Differences				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
	Std. Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower				Upper
experimental pre test	-.666	.80580	.16116	-.99862	-.33338	-4.133	24	.000
experimental post test								

Then to see whether the treatment was effective or not, the means of two groups were compared through an independent sample t-test (see table 7).

Table 7. Group Statistics

GROUP	N	Mean	Std.Deviation	Std. Error Mean
VAR00001 control post test	25	2.6000	.39184	.07837
experimental post test	25	2.2220	.11733	.02347

As shown in Table 8, in order to answer the research question and show effectiveness of the treatment through independent sample t-test, the scores of posttests in the experimental and control groups were analyzed.

Since Sig is less than 0/05 ($.000 < 0/05$), there is a meaningful difference between scores of these two tests. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected and we showed that Telegram has significant effect on EFL intermediate level learners' vocabulary learning.

Table 8. Comparison of the scores of posttests in the experimental and control groups

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances				t-test for Equality of Means				
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95 % Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
VAR00001	18.863	.000	4.621	48	.000	.3780	.08181	.21352	.54248
Equal variances assumed			4.621	28.269	.000	.3780	.08181	.21050	.54550
Equal variances not assumed									

6. Discussion

Vocabulary has a key role in English learning, and English learners should know a large number of words to be successful in English learning. Hence, this study aimed to investigate the effect of using Telegram on EFL students' vocabulary learning. The findings of this study approved the usefulness of Telegram. The participants in the experimental group improved significantly in the posttest. In other words, this study indicated that according to the social theories the Telegram offered interesting advantages to the experimental group as compared with the control group. However there are some applied concepts about the effect of Telegram, as socializing language learning. The finding of this study can be in line with the results achieved by Rambe (2011), who worked more specifically on the influence of social networking services on empowering lectures. This study was engaged more with the influence of SNS (Social Networking Sites) on a language learning techniques. More consistency, Qarajeh and Abdolmanafi (2015) obtained the same results as the above mentioned study. They claimed that using social networks is one of the effective ways to enhance the oral performance of EFL learners. The results of this study are the same with the research by Kirschner and Karpinski (2010). Their experiment indicated that there is a direct relationship between social networks usage and progress in academic performance of students. Further, a research conducted by Tess (2013) illustrated the

social networks as an alternative environment in which the students at higher levels of education develop their social knowledge. The same results were also conducted by the present research.

In fact, this paper was generally an attempt to assess the effectiveness of using Telegram in vocabulary learning of a group of Iranian EFL learners at intermediate level at Payam Noor University. The first part of the paper dealt with reviewing the related literature on hypothesis using social networks. The second part was an attempt to elaborate on the experiment and the results. It was finally concluded that due to significant difference between mean scores of two groups, the treatment showed a successful group in fostering the vocabulary knowledge of the learners. The main goal of this study was to find the impact of Telegram on English vocabulary learning. Although the findings of the study are encouraging, the mere readiness of students to exploit Telegram pedagogically does not guarantee the successful integration of social networks such as Telegram in Iranian language environment.

7. Conclusion

The result from this study indicated that social network such as Telegram can affect significantly on English vocabulary learning. Generally speaking, this study has some implications. First, this study revealed that teachers can use Telegram as a complementary device to face to face instruction and assessment. Then people in the society use Telegram positively. It goes without saying that every research faces a number of limitations which cannot be avoided.

Another limitation of this research refers to the term of generalizability. Since the researchers had access to a limited number of female participants may decrease the generalizability of the findings.

In fact factors such as gender, race and age are limited due to our small group. Payam Noor University students are 18 to 30 of age. Having small group is one of the setbacks for this study which was considered as a limitation. Since few researchers have studied about Telegram technology as a study device for language learning and teaching. There are so many works left to be done.

But also the following implications can be made according to the findings of this study:

1. The Ministry of Education in Iran can provide such opportunity to engage at least students' free time so that they can use of most of their time spending on their improving English vocabulary learning.

2. EFL learners can use telegram for their self-assessment and improve their self-autonomy and self-assurance outside the classroom to improve their skills and using it can decrease the anxiety of the learners in an EFL classroom.

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