

ГУМАНИТАРНЫЕ НАУКИ



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Social Networks as a Tool for Teaching English in Non-Linguistic Universities

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Abstract

The results of a survey on the use of social networks by students aged 17 to 20 have been studied, and the most popular messengers among respondents have been identified. The problem of insufficient interest of students of non-linguistic universities in studying English has been determined. By comparing the survey results with the problem, the possibility of integrating the social networks into the study process has been evaluated, namely, creation of a Telegram channel as an additional educational resource.

Keywords: social media, English, blog, learning, motivation, interactive communication

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Социальные сети как инструмент обучения английскому языку в неязыковых вузах

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Аннотация

Рассмотрены результаты опроса, проведенного среди обучающихся в возрасте от 17 до 20 лет, касающегося использования социальных сетей. Выявлены наиболее популярные мессенджеры среди респондентов. Также была определена проблема недостаточной заинтересованности студентов неязыкового вуза в изучении английского языка. Сопоставив результаты опроса с данной проблемой, была оценена возможность внедрения социальных сетей в образовательный процесс. В частности, предложено создать Telegram-канал как дополнительный образовательный ресурс для повышения интереса к изучению языка.

Ключевые слова: социальные сети, английский язык, блог, обучение, мотивация, интерактивное взаимодействие

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Introduction. Modern people live in a society of high technologies and can no longer imagine their lives without them. With the advent of the Internet, people have gained access to a huge information resource, at any time it is possible to find out the answer to the question, there is no need to memorize information — it's enough to know where to search for it.

Information technology is taking over public space these days. Social networks, applications, and various kinds of programs have become deeply rooted. Integral parts of a person's life are rapidly flowing into the Internet: communication, shopping, education, work and so on. "The information portal about communications in the digital environment Cossa.ru conducted a study of social networks in the Russian Federation. The results revealed the following: 90% of Internet users have at least one social media account" [1].

Digitalization of all public spheres is becoming global. In particular, reforms aimed at the transition to information society are underway in the field of education. Nowadays, the educational process is supported by the use of IT, as they make learning interactive, accessible and flexible. Therefore, the relevance of this topic is evident. In the article, the use of Internet resources, namely social networks, in the field of education will be investigated.

A.V. Khutorskoi writes about the penetration levels of network technologies: “The transfer of the educational process in a foreign language completely into a virtual environment is more appropriate in the conditions of distance learning in universities and advanced training courses, although successful distance learning programs for schoolchildren are also known” [2]. However, nowadays many teachers are already practicing the implementation of social networks and various computer programs in their classes.

Today, a large number of educational platforms has already been created. They are useful for both self-study and teaching. In the field of learning foreign languages, the use of IT significantly increases the efficiency of learning the material, since it allows including visual materials, listening to audio recordings, promoting gamification elements, using electronic textbooks, creating projects, and assessing students’ progress. For file exchange, as well as communication with students, many teachers choose social networks. They create group chats where they can discuss issues that arise during the learning process, as well as provide additional materials. The present research aims to evaluate the efficiency of using the Telegram social network as a tool for teaching English, as well as to assess the motivation and involvement of students and the possibility of creating an educational community.

Results. A survey on the use of social networks was conducted among DSTU students. It was found that 100% of respondents aged 17 to 20 use social media every day. VKontakte and Telegram turned out to be the most popular messengers among young people. In messengers, students exchange information with groupmates and teachers. Thus, it can be concluded that social networks are indirectly related to the educational process.

The study program implies learning general English course for one semester. Due to the fact that a foreign language is not a core subject for most directions of study and majors, there is a lack of interest in learning it among students. Since many teachers choose social media to communicate with students outside the learning process, the idea arises to combine these two factors. “In order for the student to be truly engaged in the work, it is necessary to make the tasks set during the learning activity not only understandable, but also internally accepted by him, i.e. they should acquire significance for the student and, thus, find a response and a reference point in his experience” [3].

Young people spend most of their free time online, therefore, integration of social media into the educational process can increase their motivation to learn English. Motivation simultaneously performs several tasks: it assigns individual significance to student’s activities in learning English, and also encourages him.

How can students’ motivation be improved? Many researchers have asked this question. The following solutions can be distinguished:

1. to involve the emotional sphere of a student in the learning process;
2. to use audio-visual media;
3. to foster individual approach [4].

In combination with traditional methods of teaching a foreign language, the use of Internet resources makes it possible to implement an educational model that enables creation of both educational and information environment for developing and improving students’ creative abilities [5].

It is necessary to understand the main concept of integrating a social network into the English language learning process. A teacher creates a Telegram channel as an additional educational resource, to which he invites his students. Students’ orientation towards blog interaction should begin with the first lesson. While getting to know the audience, the teacher encourages students to find the Telegram channel via a special invitation link. During the semester, the blog will feature educational content with mandatory interaction elements. The blog is updated daily, and new vocabulary is required to memorize. Students also need to listen to audio recordings, read texts, and complete related assignments. During a certain period, the teacher will monitor the activity and after this period will arrange the final assessment of the learned material. Blog posts with assignments are designed for extracurricular work and are a convenient way to gain new information and develop existing skills. The tasks will take no more than 10 minutes per day in total, which is an efficient method of mastering more material.

Before integrating a blog into the study process, it is necessary to find out the degree of using the social network among the students of the group. It is also necessary to make sure that all students have a Telegram account, as well as find out availability of the group shared chat for prompt dissemination of information.

The real situation suggests that 100% of the students surveyed have an account on the Telegram social network, and 25% even have their own blog on this platform. When all students are familiar with the specifics of additional training in the Telegram channel, a teacher sends an invitation. It is also necessary to specify that after a week (or other period) an assessment of the learned material will be carried out in the form of a mini-test or conversation.

The channel operation is based on daily updates. A teacher posts various vocabulary collections, short videos, interesting facts in English, as well as grammar exercises in the form of questionnaires with the opportunity to choose the correct answer. Thus, a teacher can track students’ learning in the channel by viewing the answers in the questionnaires, as well as evaluate the activity by analysing the number of reactions to the posts. A teacher can also create a special

system for a student to follow, which, gradually contributes to student's mastering a certain grammatical topic, while simultaneously replenishing the vocabulary with new words and phrases. Combining traditional methods of teaching English with the use of social networks, can provide the opportunity to create the educational and information environment, where students can develop and improve their skills.

Discussion and Conclusion. It is possible to conclude that social media is a powerful tool in English language teaching, offering a unique opportunity for practice, interaction and immersion in the language environment. Due to integrating the Telegram channel into the study process, students can learn English in an exciting, interactive way.

One of the key advantages of social media is accessibility. Using a smartphone, students can learn the English language program outside the classroom. This method is an excellent addition to traditional ones. In combination with textbooks and practice, it allows students to significantly increase the level of knowledge in the discipline.

Social media helps to open up new horizons for teaching, making the process more flexible, interesting and adapted to the interests of modern youth. The educational potential of media continues to grow, and perhaps in the future media will become a more significant part of language teaching.

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