

Teaching and Learning Arabic in the Context of Digital Transformation: Social Media as a Model

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Abstract:

In light of technological development, social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube have become accessible tools and educational environments that can contribute to improving the quality of education. It is noticeable that many Arab schools and universities, in particular, have begun to use these networks for educational purposes because of their effective role in facilitating the exchange and dissemination of information, including files, images, and videos. These networks can also contribute to improving the teaching and learning of the Arabic language, developing learners' skills for integration into society, and helping educational institutions keep pace with countries that have achieved high levels of educational development.

Keywords: YouTube, Arabic language, Facebook, social networking sites, education.

Introduction:

In this research, we seek to shed light on the role of social networking tools in meeting learners' needs in Arabic language learning. The main objectives of this research are as follows:

- Determining the effectiveness of social networks in the acquisition and learning of the Arabic language.
- Guiding learners toward the use of these tools for learning and teaching the Arabic language.

The research attempts to answer the following questions:

- 1- What are social networks?
- 2- What are their types?
- 3- What is the role of social networks in learning and teaching Arabic?
- 4- What proposals can be made for employing social networking sites to serve and develop the Arabic language?
- 5- What is the reality of using social networks in teaching and learning Arabic?

Identifying Terms

Here, we present the conceptual meanings of the main terms to the extent relevant to the present research.

1- Education (Enseignement):

1-A- Language Education:

The Arabic word for education is derived from the linguistic root "...".

It is stated in the Glossary of Educational Terms, in both its lexical and terminological senses: "He taught someone something: he made him learn it; he learned the thing, knew it, and mastered it..." (Filia & Al-Zaki, 2004, p. 106).

Through examining modern dictionaries, we find that the meanings associated with the linguistic material related to "teaching" include indication, attribution, mastery, and knowledge. This is because there is a close relationship among these meanings.

1-B- Education in Terminological Terms:

Modern philosophical, psychological, and pedagogical studies have given considerable attention to this concept, and its meanings have varied across these fields.

For the purposes of this study, its concept can be simplified according to the following definition provided by educational scholars:

It means: "An act by which a student is informed of a set of public and private knowledge, forms and means of thinking, and makes him acquire, learn and assimilate them, using methods prepared for this purpose, and depending on his own abilities" (Al-Farabi et al., 1994, p. 102).

As for educational technology, it means "the application of scientific principles in the educational process with a focus on the learner and not on placement and the wide use of audiovisual aids, learning laboratories, programmed education and educational machines" (Filia & Al-Zaki, 2004, p. 106).

Education is a set of activities carried out by the teacher to develop learners within a pedagogical space. It provides them with knowledge, ideas, contents, experiences, and skills that fall within a didactic relationship.

Second: Definition of E-Learning:

The term e-learning is one of the most commonly used terms in contemporary education. It refers to: "A method of education using modern communication mechanisms such as a computer, networks and its multiple media of sound, image, graphics, research mechanisms and electronic libraries, as well as Internet portals, whether in the classroom or remotely. What is important is the use of technology of all kinds in delivering information to the learner in the shortest time, the least effort and the greatest benefit" (Rabiei, 2010–2011, p. 50).

It also refers to "the use of modern multimedia technologies with the Internet to enhance the quality of learning by facilitating dealing with knowledge sources and network services and supporting cooperation, information exchange and remote participation" (Azmi, 2008, pp. 94–95).

From the above, we conclude that:

The educational process in our time has begun to employ electronic innovations in order to achieve greater educational efficiency and effectiveness.

Perhaps the most prominent consequences of adopting the Internet and technological innovations in order to advance the educational and learning process are the following (Abdullah, 2008, p. 23 et seq.):

- Knowledge integration and breadth.
- Knowledge acquisition.
- Intellectual skills.
- Personalization.
- Developing the capacity for judgment.
- Developing a sense of responsibility.

E-learning is one of the methods of education that contributes to and facilitates the delivery of information. It is based on modern computer technologies, including the World Wide Web (WWW) and its various media, such as electronic programs, CDs, e-mail services (Yahoo, Gmail, Hotmail, and Live), and electronic libraries. It helps reduce effort, time, and cost while keeping pace with technological development.

Third: The Concept of Social Networks:

The subject of electronic media is associated with many terms, including Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Defining these concepts helps clarify what is meant by them and the nature of the relationship among them. The following definitions explain these terms:

The definition provided by Boyd and Ellison states that: "Social networking sites on the Internet allow individuals to draw a general or semi-public picture within a specific system, and control the list of users they communicate with...." (Oguz et al., 2010, p. 22).

Social networks are also defined as "social websites on the Internet and are considered the main pillar of the new or alternative media, which allows individuals and groups to communicate with each other through this virtual space" (Sadiq, 2008, p. 218).

They are also known as interactive social networks that allow their users to communicate at any time and from anywhere in the world. They have existed on the Internet for years and enable users to communicate visually and audibly, exchange images, and use other functions that strengthen social relationships among them (Al-Dulaimi, 2011, p. 183).

Through these definitions, we find that:

Social networks play a prominent role in serving and developing the educational process. They also have particular advantages in facilitating communication among learners, enhancing educational opportunities, and developing learners' intellectual and linguistic skills and competencies. According to researchers in this field, there is a need to benefit from communication networks in the learning process.

Fourth: Types of Social Networks (Social Networks):

Among the most widely used social networks are Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. These platforms employ Web 2.0 technologies to facilitate communication between teachers and

learners and to take advantage of the ability of the Web to overcome the barriers of time and space.

3.a. Facebook:

3.a.1. Definition:

Facebook is a social networking website that allows individuals and legal entities, such as companies, to present themselves and enhance their presence through the site's tools. It enables them to communicate with other users within the site, interact with other communication platforms, and establish connections with others (Nasr, 2010, p. 10).

This can be represented by the following diagram:

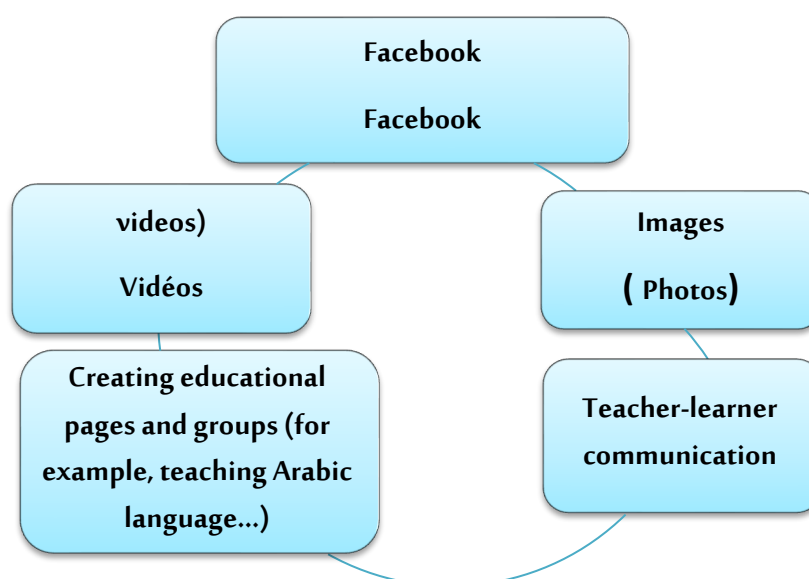


Figure 1. A sample diagram illustrating Facebook's role in the educational process

Accordingly, it can be said that Facebook is an educational tool that can be used to provide educational content and communicate skills and concepts to learners through information and communication technologies and their multimedia. It allows learners to interact actively with the content, the teacher, and their peers, both simultaneously and asynchronously, at a time, place, and pace that suit their circumstances and abilities.

3.b. Twitter:

3.b.1. Definition:

It is "one of the social media networks that has spread in recent years, and played a major role in political events in many countries, especially the Middle East. Twitter took its name from the term 'Twitter,' which means 'tweet' and took the bird as its symbol. It is a mini service that allows Twitter users to send short text messages not exceeding 140 characters per message. One may call it a condensed text of many details. Those who have a Twitter account can exchange those tweets with their friends by appearing on their personal pages or by entering the user's page. Twitter provides a micro-blogging service, and the possibility of replies and updates via e-mail, as well as the most important events through the 'RSS' service via SMS" (Rabhi, 2012).

We explain its role in educational science through the following diagram:

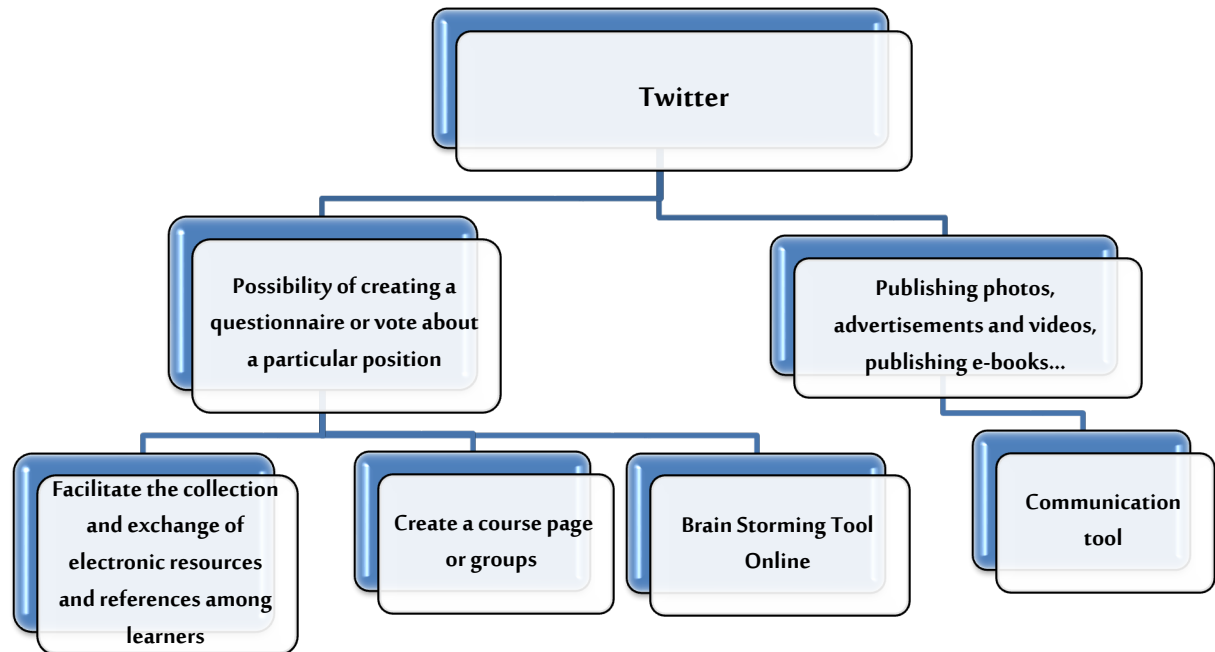


Figure 2. A sample diagram showing the role of Twitter in the educational process

Accordingly, Twitter has become important in the professional lives of teachers because it can be used as a communicative educational tool. Researchers have therefore considered it one of the prominent forms of modern educational technology.

3-C- YouTube:

3.c.1. Definition:

It is "a website that allows and supports the activity of uploading, downloading, and sharing films in general and free of charge. It allows the gradual uploading and display of short films, ranging from public films that everyone can watch to private films that only a specific group is permitted to watch" (Sari, 2005, p. 307).

The use of video in education varies considerably. It is one of the most important means of direct and indirect interaction and includes fixed forms, such as slides, and moving forms, such as films and videos. It also includes real-time forms that can be combined with audio conferences through video, used in one or two directions with accompanying audio (Al-Hadi, 2005, p. 96).

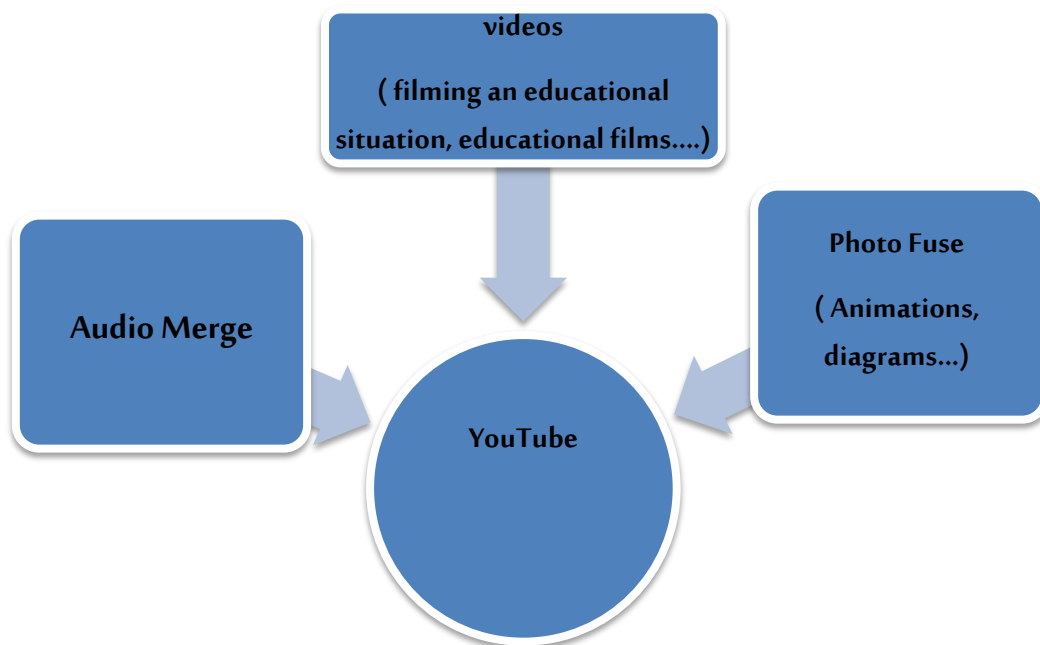


Figure 3. Typical diagram showing YouTube as a learning medium

From the above definitions, it can be said that:

Social networks of all kinds constitute modern online educational platforms. They enable information, news, articles, e-books, photographs, and videos to be exchanged with learners and the wider audience.

IV. The Role of Social Networks in Learning and Teaching the Arabic Language:

Given the importance of social networking sites (SNSs), their widespread use among learners, and the findings of studies conducted by researchers in this field, which have demonstrated their active role in the educational process, it can be argued that these networks have considerable educational potential. Studies have shown that learners who study through multimedia develop more positive academic attitudes than students who study through traditional methods. The most important roles of social networks in education include the following:

- Providing learners with opportunities for active and positive engagement.
- Providing flexibility in interaction with the various participants in the learning process and enabling the use of social networks such as Facebook in the classroom.
- Allowing teachers greater autonomy in selecting teaching aids and media according to their circumstances and educational needs.
- Review tool: adding notes or reviews after each session or lecture to summarize the most important points.
- Bulletin board: posting announcements for learners, such as distributing printed materials or changing the class schedule in response to an emergency.
- Brainstorming tool: creating accounts on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube and using them as tools for brainstorming with learners about specific educational topics, such as Arabic grammar.

- Sharing tool: using social networks such as Facebook and Twitter to share useful websites or e-books that can enhance learners' knowledge.
- A tool for learning new languages: creating a page or group on Facebook and using interaction with speakers of other languages to develop learners' speaking, reading, and writing skills, including in the teaching of Arabic to non-native speakers.
- Study group: creating a group for each class or learning group, following up on discussions, and encouraging learners to continue participating.
- A tool for communicating with parents: opening a page or group where information related to educational activities is published, particularly at the primary education stage. This facilitates parents' follow-up of their children's activities within the school environment.
- A tool for information sharing: facilitating collaboration and the exchange of information among teachers.

We also note that many educational and university institutions in various countries around the world have been working to broadcast lessons on the Internet for the benefit of students. For example, the National Archives and Records Administration in the United States of America integrated nine lessons into the digital network to teach secondary school students history and civic education. These lessons attracted considerable interest. Some American universities, such as New York University and the University of Phoenix, adopted a similar approach, enabling students to access their lessons online (Al-Dulajj, 2011, p. 48).

4- Pros and Cons of Multimedia Education:

E-learning has multiple advantages and disadvantages. Among its main advantages are the following (Odeh, 2017, pp. 2–3):

- Teaching the largest possible number of learners without being constrained by time and space.
- Renewing and modernizing teaching methods in order to reduce learners' boredom and monotony resulting from the continued use of traditional methods and inherited teaching practices.
- Encouraging education and learning.
- Promoting the exchange of ideas and the acquisition of new experiences. This contributes to enhancing learners' innovation and creativity.
- Ease of using social media.
- Developing better communication skills among learners.
- The effectiveness of social networks in the educational field by providing constructive educational experiences at relatively low cost and with limited time and effort.
- Social networks such as Facebook and Twitter provide an appropriate educational environment that differs from and can extend beyond traditional education.
- Opening education to communication and participation as foundations of the educational process, as an alternative to teacher-centered instruction and rote learning.
- Making the learning process more enjoyable and engaging.

- Changing the teacher's role from that of a transmitter of knowledge to that of a facilitator of the learning process.

The most prominent disadvantages include:

- Difficulty in adapting to e-learning, particularly when it depends heavily on the use of social media platforms.
- Difficulty in maintaining effective communication between teachers and learners.
- Lack of adequate e-learning resources and access to social media among some learners.

5- Electronic Educational Methods:

As a result of the technological explosion, modern educational technologies have become increasingly accessible to learners. These include social networks, which have characteristics that can support the educational process. Among the most important methods are the following (Odeh, 2017, pp. 2–3):

1- Opening an educational blog or page on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, or similar platforms containing explanations of educational materials, such as grammar, morphology, and Arabic rhetoric, with the possibility of integrating additional links as external references that broaden learners' horizons.

2- Using closed groups or educational pages, which Facebook provides as one of the effective means of supporting and promoting education.

3- Twitter is an appropriate platform for education. Once the teacher joins Twitter and encourages learners to follow the account, they can obtain knowledge beyond the limits of the curriculum. This facilitates interaction and cooperation among learners, while the teacher's role becomes that of a guide rather than a transmitter of knowledge.

4- YouTube is a modern technology that can contribute to activating the educational process through audio and video technologies. The teacher can ask learners to create videos about the scientific material being studied, such as Arabic rhetoric, presentations, or theories of Arabic grammar, and share them with other learners through YouTube. One of the outcomes of this activity is the enhancement of learners' media skills, particularly in rhetoric and the arts of persuasion.

Therefore, social networking sites can be considered electronic media that contribute to advancing the educational process, especially in Arab countries where traditional methods of education are still widely used. These social media platforms can serve as alternative or complementary educational tools to traditional educational programs.

6- Proposals to Employ Social Media Networks to Serve and Develop the Arabic Language:

- Expanding awareness among various educational institutions of the need to use social networks.
- Evaluating the quality of the use of e-learning media in their various fields and preparing qualitative reports that demonstrate mechanisms for employing multimedia in teaching the Arabic language.

- Conducting applied studies that examine the impact of using e-learning media on learners' acquisition of scientific concepts and culture.
- Conducting further studies to evaluate the e-learning media used in learning different branches of knowledge.
- Developing standards for the design and evaluation of e-learning media.
- Developing linguistic policy and language planning and investing in the findings of competent researchers, particularly the data presented at seminars and forums in Arab and Western universities alike.
- Promoting openness to others in order to broaden the scope of learning.
- Including selected electronic media in curricula and textbooks to encourage teachers to use electronic teaching tools.

Conclusion

The research, entitled "Teaching and Learning Arabic in the Light of Digital Transformation and Social Media as a Model," reached the following results:

There are many electronic educational media that can be used in teaching the Arabic language, including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and many others. However, they share a common objective: to enhance the role of learners within the educational community by using electronic educational media in Arabic language teaching and learning. These tools can contribute to advancing Arabic language education and promoting openness to e-learning technologies, as well as supporting the processes of planning, organizing, coordinating, directing, and evaluating the educational process.

Recommendations

- 1- Mainstreaming educational strategies for teaching and learning across educational and scientific institutions in the Arab world.
 - 2- Providing continuous training for teachers and developing their ability to use modern electronic media.
 - 3- Establishing or expanding academic and scientific institutions and incorporating e-learning curricula and courses into their educational programs.
 - 4- Investing in academic research in the field of electronic educational media.
 - 5- Applying modern educational strategies so that all learners can successfully pursue their studies through these technologies.
 - 6- Holding international scientific conferences in the Arab world, particularly on electronic educational media, in order to review and improve scientific research.
 - 7- Preparing a unified lexicon or encyclopedic dictionary for e-learning in accordance with standardized, objective, and scientifically established methodological standards.
 - 8- Establishing and providing the necessary capabilities and infrastructure required to adopt modern educational strategies.
- Establishing electronic schools and universities to facilitate learning for non-Arabic speakers.
- 9- Unifying the efforts of institutions seeking to adopt the use of multimedia in teaching the Arabic language.

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