

Technologies for Enhancing Pedagogy, Engagement and Empowerment in Education: Creating Learning-Friendly Environments

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Published in the United States of America by
Information Science Reference (an imprint of IGI Global)
701 E. Chocolate Avenue
Hershey PA 17033
Tel: 717-533-8845
Fax: 717-533-8661
E-mail: cust@igi-global.com
Web site: <http://www.igi-global.com>

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Technologies for enhancing pedagogy, engagement and empowerment in education: creating learning-friendly environments / Thao Le and Quynh Le, Editors.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

Summary: "This book explores how technology-based learning can enhance student engagement, performance, and empowerment, offering insights from educational programs, classroom teaching, and theory-into-practice research, and places educational technologies appropriately in their social and cultural contexts"--Provided by publisher.

ISBN 978-1-61350-074-3 (hardcover) -- ISBN 978-1-61350-075-0 (ebook) -- ISBN 978-1-61350-076-7 (print & perpetual access) 1. Education--Effect of technological innovations on. 2. Educational technology. 3. Internet in education. I. Le, Thao, 1948- II. Lj, Quynh, 1962-

LB1028.3.T39663 2012

004.67'8071--dc23

2011019981

British Cataloguing in Publication Data

A Cataloguing in Publication record for this book is available from the British Library.

All work contributed to this book is new, previously-unpublished material. The views expressed in this book are those of the authors, but not necessarily of the publisher.

Chapter 12

Privacy Concerns in Social Network Sites

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ABSTRACT

In countries where English is not widely and socially used, prospective foreign language teachers cannot functionally use the language they are going to teach in their social environment. This makes social network sites (SNS) symbolically important. However, there are various reasons for these future teachers not fully participating in social networking. The main concern is about privacy. A study was conducted to examine this aspect. One hundred fourteen prospective teachers of English responded to questionnaire about their opinions on privacy issues. Results suggested that gender was a significant factor. Similarly, other factors include: place of residence and the information presented in their SNS pages.

INTRODUCTION

In second or foreign language education, new technologies become very important as prospective teachers can develop their language skills. This is especially important in the case of those countries where the target language of is not widely used in the location where the prospective teacher strives both for learning the target language which

he or she is to teach and also for developing their content or professional knowledge. According to Hwang (2005), foreign language teachers should make use of popular materials that are within easy access to their students. Among many other popular materials currently used in English as a Foreign Language (hereafter EFL) classrooms, the Internet-based resources are the most widely used in the world today. As suggested by Boyd & Ellison (2007), social-network sites (hereafter SNS) such as Facebook have received world-

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-61350-074-3.ch012

wide recognition and have now become a part of people's daily lives. The Internet also makes individuals' private data accessible to millions of other users. As Berson and Berson (2006) identify, students' protection in the digital space is emerging as a key public concern while as Sklar and Pollack (2000) articulates, particular attention should be paid to privacy of users especially when school children's access to the Internet is a growing concern. However, in contrast to the need of investigating aspects of user privacy at all levels of education, research on user privacy has received little attention, especially in the educational context.

Although Tapscott (1999) argued that the next generation gives up their privacy on the Internet, Andergassen and others (2009) found that one of the two main reasons for students not to keep a weblog is their concerns about the loss of privacy through blogging. Similarly, Kane and Baggaley (2002) found that the most important feature desired by university students in the online world was their privacy followed by file-sharing. These dissimilar positions show the need for further research on how university students view their privacy on the Internet since they continue expressing their opinions and identities in Web logs or blogs, e-journals, digital photos, Web pages, SNS, and online profiles. This need is especially pressing in English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts where prospective foreign language teachers cannot use the language they are going to teach in their social environment.

BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Using SNS does not come without serious concerns for users. Research has articulated that one's involvement in SNS translates into disclosure of one's identity (Ellison, Steinfeld, & Lampe 2007; Kolek & Saunders, 2008; Mazer, Murphy, & Simonds, 2007). Hence, it can be assumed

that if there are concerns, hesitations, or deeply rooted fear in one's mental set about using SNS as for disclosing one's identity, this feeling may most probably result in the person's lessening of involvement in SNS. Hence, this paper aims to find out prospective English language teachers' opinions on their online privacy with some selected variables to understand to what extent some selected variables relate to one's feeling of disclosure in SNS. It is believed that because SNS are especially important for the language development of the prospective foreign language teachers, studying their privacy concerns can help teacher educators to make these future teachers more open to using SNS. Two main research questions guided this research study in addition to the third one which sought to find whether or not there exists significant relationship between participants' opinions and some selected variables:

1. How do the participants feel about the possibility that other users read their SNS activity?
2. How do the participants feel about the possibility that other people use their personal information against them?
3. Is there significant relationship between participants' opinions in relation to some selected variables?

METHODS

The participants of this study were 114 prospective English language teachers currently enrolled at a state university in Turkey. A Likert-type questionnaire with 4 choices (Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly disagree) was used to collect data on prospective EL teachers' opinions. In calculating the results, SPSS 16.0 was used. In calculating and presenting the results 'strongly agree' and 'agree' were grouped together and counted as 'agree' whereas 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' were grouped as 'disagree'.

Table 1. Students' opinions in relation to the place raised

Opinion	Place raised			
	Village	Town	City	Abroad
Agree	66.7 (4)	34.8 (8)	44.4 (35)	25 (1)
Disagree	33.3 (2)	65.2 (15)	55.6 (45)	75 (3)

Students' opinions on their privacy concerns are cross-tabulated with the variables including the place lived, gender, father's job, income, fathers' and mothers' education, and length and frequency of SNS use. In giving the results, frequencies (given in parentheses) and percentages are used. In measuring the correlation between the variables, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation is used.

FINDINGS

The results of this study are given under three headings each of which responds to one of the research questions.

Theme 1: Uneasiness about Sharing SNS activity

Findings indicate that hesitancy in the possibility that another user may read one's information is much higher among those who were raised in villages. Those who were raised abroad are the least hesitant group in contrast to those raised in villages. As these results suggest, feeling of uneasiness toward one's personal info would be read decreases from the village to bigger living places (see Table 1).

Gender

In terms of gender, as these results show that males (22.6% feeling hesitant) feel less hesitant in contrast to females (49.4% feeling hesitant) in relation to the possibility that others read their SNS activity (see Table 2).

Fathers' Job

Findings show that siblings of the unemployed (100% feeling hesitant) and the farmer (75% feeling hesitant) are the ones who feel uneasy most followed by those of the officials' (44% feeling hesitant). Those who are raised by self-employed (29% feeling hesitant) are the least uneasy (see Table 3).

Income

Findings show that those with a monthly family income of less than 999 liras per month (52.6% feeling hesitant) are the ones who feel most hesitant followed by those earning between 1000-1999 liras (46.9% feeling hesitant). The economically wealthiest group is the least hesitant (23.5% feeling hesitant). These results suggest that those with smaller income are more concerned (see Table 4).

Table 2. Students' opinions in relation to their gender

Opinion	Gender	
	Female	Male
Agree	49.4 (43)	22.2 (6)
Disagree	50.6 (44)	77.8 (21)

Table 3. Students' opinions in relation to their fathers' jobs

Opinion	Father's job				
	farmer	self-employed	worker	unemployed	official
Agree	75 (3)	29 (9)	50 (14)	100 (1)	44 (22)
Disagree	25 (1)	71 (22)	50 (14)	- (0)	56 (28)

Table 4. Students' opinions in relation to their income

Opinion	Income			
	0-999	1000-1999	2000-2999	+3000
Agree	52.6 (10)	46.9 (23)	41.4 (12)	23.5 (4)
Disagree	47.4 (9)	53.1 (26)	58.6 (17)	76.5 (13)

Fathers' Education

Findings show that siblings of those fathers who are graduates of primary (35% feeling hesitant) and secondary schools (36.8% feeling hesitant) are the ones who feel least hesitant. Those who are raised by fathers with university degree (44.7% feeling hesitant) high school degrees (50% feeling hesitant) are the most hesitant (see Table 5).

Mothers' Education

Findings show that among those siblings whose mothers are graduates of secondary schools (52.6% feeling hesitant) and universities (52.6% feeling hesitant) are the ones who feel most hesitant. Those who are raised by mothers with high school degrees (30.8% feeling hesitant) are the least hesitant (see Table 6).

Table 5. Students' opinions in relation to their fathers' education

Opinion	Father's education			
	Primary	Secondary	High school	University
Agree	35 (7)	36.8 (7)	50 (14)	44.7 (21)
Disagree	65 (13)	63.2 (12)	50 (14)	55.3 (26)

Table 6. Students' opinions in relation to their mothers' education

Opinion	Mothers' education			
	Primary	Secondary	High school	University
Agree	43.2 (16)	52.6 (10)	30.8 (12)	52.6 (10)
Disagree	56.8 (21)	47.4 (9)	68.9 (27)	47.4 (9)

Table 7. Students' opinions in relation to the place raised

Opinion	Place raised			
	Village	Town	City	Abroad
Agree	66.7 (4)	39.1 (9)	33.3 (27)	- (0)
Disagree	33.3 (2)	60.9 (14)	66.7 (54)	100 (4)

Table 8. Students' opinions in relation to their gender

Opinion	Gender	
	Female	Male
Agree	36.8 (32)	29.6 (8)
Disagree	63.2 (55)	70.4 (19)

Theme 2: Harmful Use of Personal Information

Place Raised

Findings indicate that those who were raised abroad are the least hesitant group in contrast to those raised in villages (see Table 7). As these results suggest, feeling of uneasiness toward one's personal info would be used against someone decreases from the village (66.7% feeling hesitant) to bigger living places such as the town (39.1% feeling hesitant), the city (33.3% feeling hesitant), and the abroad (0% feeling hesitant). The statistical analysis revealed that this finding is significant ($p=0184$).

Gender

As these results in Table 8 show, females (36.8% feeling hesitant) feel more hesitant in contrast to males (29.6% feeling hesitant).

Fathers' Job

Findings show that siblings of the unemployed (100% feeling hesitant) and the farmer (75% feeling hesitant) are the ones who feel uneasy most followed by those of the officials' (36% feeling hesitant). Those who are raised by the self-employed (32.3% feeling hesitant) and the workers (28.6% feeling hesitant) are the least uneasy (see Table 9).

Income

Findings presented in Table 10 show that those with a monthly family income of less than 999 liras per month (47.4% feeling hesitant) are the ones who feel uneasy most followed by those earning more than 3000 liras (35.3% feeling hesitant).

Table 9. Students' opinions in relation to their fathers' jobs

Opinion	Father's job				
	farmer	self-employed	worker	unemployed	Official
Agree	75 (3)	32.3 (10)	28.6 (8)	100 (1)	36 (18)
Disagree	25 (1)	67.7 (21)	71.4 (20)	- (0)	64 (32)

Table 10. Students' opinions in relation to their income

Opinion	Income			
	0-999	1000-1999	2000-2999	+3000
Agree	47.4 (9)	34.7 (17)	27.6 (8)	35.3 (6)
Disagree	52.6 (10)	65.3 (32)	72.4 (21)	64.7 (11)

Table 11. Students' opinions in relation to their fathers' education

Opinion	Father's education			
	Primary	Secondary	High school	University
Agree	25 (5)	47.4 (9)	39.3 (11)	31.9 (15)
Disagree	75 (15)	52.6 (10)	60.7 (17)	68.1 (32)

Fathers' Education

Findings presented in Table 11 show that siblings of those fathers who are graduates of primary schools (25% feeling hesitant) and universities (31.9% feeling hesitant) are the ones who feel least hesitant. Those who are raised by fathers with secondary school degrees (47.4% feeling hesitant) are the most hesitant.

Mothers' Education

Findings presented in Table 12 show that siblings of those mothers who are graduates of primary schools (37.8% feeling hesitant) are the ones who feel most hesitant. Those who are raised by mothers with high school degrees are the least hesitant (30.8% feeling hesitant).

Theme 3: The Relationship between Participants' Opinions and Selected Variables

In terms of the first research question, only gender was found to be significant at $p=0.208$. As this result suggests, males tend to be less worried about the idea that others may access their personal information. Hence, in terms of privacy concerns, males are different from females who seem to feel pressured about the nature of the information they are broadcasting through the SNS being used. This finding also suggests that females tend to monitor their own online activity in SNS while keeping a body of personal information to themselves more than males do.

In terms of the second research question, there is significant relationship between place of residence and prospective teachers' opinions that the information they presented in their SNS

Table 12. Students' opinions in relation to their mothers' education

Opinion	Mothers' education			
	primary	secondary	High school	University
Agree	37.8 (14)	36.8 (7)	30.8 (12)	36.8 (7)
Disagree	62.2 (23)	63.2 (12)	69.2 (27)	63.2 (12)

pages may be used against them at the p-value of 0.0184. As this finding suggests, in contrast to those who were raised abroad, those who were raised in villages were hesitant that their identity is open to others' viewing in SNS. This can be explained by the traditional view that villages are composed of small communities whose members know much about each other. In that sense, it can be suggested that the smaller the community is, the more likely that one keeps information to her or himself in the cyberspace. Hence, we cannot claim that SNS users feel themselves detached from their real-life environment while working in the virtual world. In short, users' geographical background limits their activity in the cyberspace.

CONCLUSION

As these results suggest, gender and place where participants were raised have significant relationship with how they see themselves in the virtual world. These results may help us explain why females are less involved with the Internet applications such as SNS. Thus, females seem to be disadvantaged in the cyberspace in contacting others to practice the language by making friends globally. This study has several limitations particularly the relatively low number of the participants (N=114). Furthermore, another research instrument with a more comprehensive data analysis would give comprehensive results.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Data Analysis: Task of analyzing data in a project.

Digital Photos: Electronic photo.

Identity: Personal characteristic of a person.

Real-Life Environment: Authentic social context.

Research Questions: Questions raised in a research project.

Social Network Site: On-line site for social interaction.

Target Language: The language to be learned as an added language.