

## **Facebook as a Flexible Ubiquitous Learning Space for Developing Speaking Skills**

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### Abstract

The research studied the effectiveness of the integration of Facebook as a flexible ubiquitous learning space into the educational process for speaking skills development of undergraduate students learning English as a second language. For this purpose teaching was organised via a specially created and moderated Facebook group where various media resources, uploaded materials, links to different applications and other social networking opportunities were accumulated. It was designed to achieve the educational programme objectives and address the specifics of digital age learning. A set of specially designed materials posted on the Facebook platform for language input, structured output, and communicative output activities was applied in experimental teaching to develop talk as transition, talk as interaction and mediation, and talk as performance. The results of the quasi-experiment (students' speaking performance) were assessed in the form of the post-test with the data being analysed and interpreted based on descriptive and inferential statistics (independent samples t-test) by means of SPSS. The results revealed higher achievement scores of the experimental group in comparison to the control group in terms of expanding vocabulary, increasing English grammar literacy, developing interactive skills, discourse management, and pronunciation. The survey administered to find out the learners' impressions of the successfulness of the FB-assisted activities revealed their overall positive attitude to the new methodology and usefulness for the development of all speaking qualifications checked.

*Keywords:* Facebook, interactive communication, speaking skills development, ubiquitous learning

The COVID-19 pandemic that societies and members of the educational community have experienced blurred the lines between formal and informal education making educationalists find productive ways of combining virtual and physical learning environments (Ng, 2021), providing educational content that should be easily accessible for learners (Bygstad, Øvrelid, Ludvigsen, & Dæhlen, 2022), boosting students' motivation and engagement and improving their performance in the altered reality (Oberländer & Bipp, 2021; Wang, Cao, Gong, Wang, Li, & Ai, 2022). Modern digital learners surrounded by digital communication technology that they use for social and entertainment purposes have developed new learning styles. They actively use various devices to study and prefer engaging, interactive, on-demand learning materials accessible anytime and anywhere (Gallardo-Echenique, 2015). The fact that learning in the new digital age is conditioned socially and digitally by various technologies has stimulated the researchers to consider students' customary ways of life and information perception. Special attention has been paid to popular social media providing numerous ways to communicate, convey, share, and generate content. Their potentials to support collaborative learning (Zheng, Niiya, & Warschauer 2015), provide learner-centred environments (Liburd and Christensen, 2013), facilitate student engagement, boost students' attention to content, access outside resources, expose students to practice (Gruzd, Haythornthwaite, Paulin, Gilbert, & Del Valle, 2018) have also been studied. In addition, social media's ability to make users connected and how the ubiquitous nature of this type of media makes them valuable tools for education have been considered. In this context, the use of social networks in e-learning or blended learning considering all the difficulties that arise nowadays in the learning environment can help adapt to the changed conditions and devise innovative methodology.

The educational potential of social networking sites, namely Facebook, for foreign language acquisition, has been analysed in numerous research studies (Lampe, Wohn, Vitak, Ellison & Wash, 2011; Kabilan & Zahar, 2016; Hamidah, 2017; Slisko, 2021). In this study, the researchers investigated the effectiveness of the incorporation of the Facebook environment into the educational process for speaking skills development. The researchers utilised Facebook as a flexible ubiquitous learning space. First, Facebook was seen as a learning environment employed for teaching and learning. Second, in alignment with the traditional understanding of ubiquitous learning, learning via the Facebook group was organised with the support of mobile or embedded computers and wireless networks (Ogata, Matsuka, El-Bishouty & Yano, 2009) to provide content and interaction anytime and anywhere (Hwang, Tsai, & Yang, 2008). The following principles of ever-present learning such as permanent access to the target material, the ability to find information immediately, interaction in the educational network and practice in real-life situations have been exploited. Third, flexibility – the ability to adapt the learning content to the programme objectives and students' needs – was achieved by employing various applications and multimedia materials and uploading specially generated or carefully selected materials. All the mentioned materials and activities facilitated organising task-oriented and contextual activities and encouraged user-created content and peer feedback. Thus, the research was designed to answer two research questions:

**RQ1:** Can the use of FB as a flexible ubiquitous learning space be an effective technique for developing speaking skills of undergraduate students studying English as a second language?

**RQ2:** What are the learners' impressions of the successfulness of the use of FB activities for developing their speaking skills?

## Literature Review

### Connectivism Principles in the Digital Age

Connectivism, which in modern research is frequently associated with the use of social networks for educational purposes, is a relatively new phenomenon that appeared as a response to the intense use of technology in education. Although its position in science is disputable, as Siemens (2005) introduced it as a new learning theory, while other scholars define it as the third generation of pedagogy of distance education (Anderson & Dron, 2012), it addresses the specifics of the new digital age learning that experienced the tectonic shift from internal, individualised activity to the interaction of the individual on networks (Siemens, 2005).

According to connectivists, knowledge nowadays is distributed through a network of connections and requires the ability to construct and traverse those networks (Downes, 2012). Modern learning is not a process that is completely under the control of the individual. It is not just knowledge transferring, it requires active communication of learners through networks with the learning sources (Kop, 2011). Al Dahdouh, Osório and Caires (2015) consider that learning today is what learners can reach in the external network: other people, organisations, databases, and other artefacts. Learning is now not a self-directed process, it is a network-directed one, and social media play a significant role in this process helping learners interact and learn actively.

Connectivism outlines the four key principles for learning: autonomy, connectedness, diversity, and openness (Downes, 2010). Ally (2008) stressed the importance of the application of these ideas in the process of designing learning materials and instructions. The researcher highlighted the significance of autonomous and independent learning for students. They should be allowed to access and research information preferably in a networked learning environment. The learners should update knowledge by active networked participation which means that they should be able to connect with each other and express and share information. Diversity of sources for information obtaining and diversity of technology interfaces for information delivery should be provided. Authentic and experiential learning should be organised by continuous information finding and research.

### E-learning and Speaking Skills Development

The effectiveness of e-learning and digital-language teaching is noted by various researchers, especially in the era of the pandemic. Zakarneh (2018) considers an electronic platform more acceptable than a traditional classroom not only for acquiring knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, reading and writing skills but also for developing speaking skills.

Some research investigates specifics of speaking skills development in the e-learning process (Rodrigues & Vethamani, 2015). Lamy & Hampel (2007) consider that online learning has expanded in oral discourse. This communication can be established via the Internet between learners and native speakers (Tudini, 2003) and between learners themselves (Yilmaz & Granena, 2010). Online communication gives the possibility to talk with expert speakers and allows shy students to express themselves more freely as there is less teacher control and more authentic tasks (Rodrigues & Vethamani, 2015; Holubnycha, 2019). Egbert (2005) explains that online communication provides learners with opportunities to communicate orally with other people in an environment that is conducive to learning. Abrams (2003) puts forward the idea that online communication enables language learners to have oral communication with

real audiences and provides them with authentic language experiences. Robin (2016) emphasises the importance of digital storytelling as a special activity that may improve oral proficiency. It involves telling stories using blended digital media elements which may include text, pictures, audio narration, music and video. Ajayi (2008) also puts forward the idea that the use of e-learning facilities, which involves various tools and techniques from feedback systems to video and audio conferencing, may increase opportunities for lifelong learning.

### **Challenges in the Development of Speaking Skills**

An analysis of the studies on the issue of difficulties in teaching speaking displays several factors which make a significant impact on learners' speaking skills. Scholars commonly divide the factors that contribute to speaking problems into two classes – linguistic and non-linguistic (Horwitz, 2001; Susilawati, 2017). Linguistic difficulties are connected with the lack of vocabulary (Adam, 2016) as a significant component of foreign language proficiency (Cook, 2013), grammar rules, poor knowledge, and incorrect pronunciation. Non-linguistic or psychological problems are usually caused by a lack of learner's confidence leading to fear of making a mistake which results in learners' low perception abilities and difficulties in processing language output (Susilawati, 2017). Hosni (2014) and Rahayu (2015) singled out the factors which influence the problems in speaking activity, namely: 1) inhibition 2) nothing to say 3) low participation 4) mother tongue use 5) low motivation 6) environment factors 7) lack of confidence.

The term “inhibition”, regarding foreign language speaking performance, has recently become an object of scholars' concern and extensive research (Abedini & Chalak, 2017; Loan & Tuyen, 2020). Inhibition is viewed as an obstacle for effective communication making learners hesitant, anxious and passive during their speaking performance (Rumiyati & Seftika, 2018). In addition, Megawati and Mandaran (2016) stress that low or uneven participation can be a problem in a large speaking class when not every student can have enough time for speaking and other students fear being heard by other communication participants, some of which may tend to dominate.

### **Methodology**

For the profound investigation of the research problem, the theoretical methods of conceptual and comparative analysis and synthesis were used while studying the systematic review of social media integration for teaching speaking (John & Yunus, 2021). The works analyzed in this and other research and the applied methods of quasi-experiment (Marleni & Asilestari, 2018; Saputra, 2018), pre-post testing (Minalla, 2018; AlSaleem, 2018), observation (Hamad, 2017) and survey (Fowler, 2013; Nadeem, 2020; Quadi, 2021; Malik, 2021) made the authors devise their own research design and use the empirical methods such as testing, observation, quasi-experiment and survey to investigate the impact of Facebook learning opportunities for speaking skills development in the experimental group. The statistical methods, descriptive and inferential statistics as well as independent samples t-test, were utilised for the evaluation of the quasi-experiment results.

### **Participants**

The research was carried out during the first semester of the 2020-2021 academic year at Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University. The participants (N=116) were the first-year undergraduate students who attended the compulsory academic course “Foreign Language”

(Introduction to Legal English). The permission to conduct the study was obtained from the University. All the students were informed about the nature of the research and participated voluntarily.

### **Instruments and Research Procedure**

The research was carried out in three main stages: *pre-experimental stage*, *experimental teaching and experimental assessment*. During the *pre-experimental stage*, the researchers made the sampling of participants. All the first-year students taking the course completed a uniform English language proficiency test (pre-test) consisting of two parts: 1) assessing language knowledge of vocabulary and grammar, reading, listening and writing and 2) speaking skills. The approximate equality of all the developed general English skills applied at groups selection was vitally essential for the accuracy of the quasi-experiment prospective results assessment. Based on the test results, 6 academic groups with approximately equal proficiency level were selected out of total 12. The selected 6 groups were randomly divided into the control group (3 academic groups; N=58) and experimental group (3 academic groups; N=58).

At the stage of *experimental teaching*, students of the experimental and control groups learnt the same academic material and were to develop the same speaking competencies determined in the syllabus of the academic course. The traditional education techniques were used to teach the control group, while the students of the experimental group were exposed to the learning materials posted on the Facebook platform. The aim was to develop their skills in talk as transition, talk as interaction and mediation, and talk as performance. For this reason there were no risks for students to participate in the experimental teaching. The materials were uploaded on FB in advance and were previously selected and adapted. The quasi-experiment was focused on four aspects of developing speaking skills: vocabulary and grammar, discourse management, interactive communication, and pronunciation. That is why teaching via the Facebook group was carried out during one semester, a four-month period, and sometimes several activities were applied depending on the teaching goals. Some FB-related assignments were given as home tasks. Thus, experimenters applied some principles of the flipped classroom model. Understanding and remembering as the lowest level of Bloom's taxonomy at times took place before a lesson. For example, the introduction of new vocabulary as well as exposure to the target material to boost students' interest or make them find additional information would be taught at the lower levels of the taxonomy. It resulted in the more efficient upper level application and analysis during the lesson. Continuous assessment of students' speaking performance progress in various forms depending on the competencies and objectives took place throughout the semester.

*The experimental assessment* consisted of several steps. 1) At the end of the semester after the experimental treatment, the researchers assessed speaking performance of the experimental group and control group students in the form of the post-test which included two sections: monologic and dialogic. The first section was taken individually and required a one-minute talk on one of the programme topics, such as main modern legal systems and their basic characteristics or responsibilities of legal professionals in the United States and the UK. The second was performed in groups of three where students were to discuss some programme-related controversial issues such as the use of capital punishment or false forced confession. Cambridge English (B2) assessment scales divided into six bands from 0 to 5 for each criterion (vocabulary and grammar, discourse management, interactive communication, and pronunciation) and descriptors were applied by the researchers. The data was collected,

analysed and interpreted based on descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, and inferential statistics such as independent samples t-test by means of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) The comparison between the post test results obtained in control and experimental groups was made to answer the first research question (RQ1) and verify the authors' hypothesis that a Facebook group can be productively used as a ubiquitous learning space for speaking skills development. 2) All students of the experimental group completed a survey that was designed to answer the second research question (RQ2). An initial questionnaire was created after reviewing relevant literature and based on the principles of reliability (Fowler, 2013). Respondents were asked to answer 5 questions concerning their general perception and feelings about the use of FB for developing speaking (Q1), increasing knowledge of legal vocabulary and grammar (Q2), more effective discourse management (Q3), progressing interactive abilities (Q4), and improving pronunciation (Q5). All items included in the questionnaire were compiled following the objectives of the research and adopted in similar previous studies (Rajagopal & Shah, 2021; Qadi, 2021; Kojo, Agyekum & Arthur, 2018). However, in this study, questioning items explored the five categories of speaking abilities and certain questions were constructed to cover new opportunities of Facebook that had not been included in previous research.

In designing and creating the questionnaire, the researchers used a model based on a 5-point Likert type scale. A pilot testing was conducted on 10 participants to check the questionnaire's clarity. To obtain validity, the questionnaire was presented to a group of university professors from the Department of Foreign Languages of Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University to get their comments and suggestions. When the original questionnaire was amended and the modifications made, the final questionnaire was presented. The responses were obtained and analysed, and the number of answers given to each statement was converted to percentages and presented in the pie charts.

## Research Material

To conduct the research the authors designed a set of learning materials aimed at speaking skills development which included the development of *talk as transition*, *talk as interaction and mediation*, and *talk as performance*. The new tendencies in EL teaching summarised in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment – Companion volume (2020) were taken into account. Assignments for *talk as transition* practice concentrated on the ability to convey clear and accurate messages to others with the aim to inform, describe, confirm, make suggestions, justify an opinion and so forth. *Talk as interaction* was developed as a discourse co-constructed by two or more interlocutors aimed at fulfilling the interpersonal and evaluative functions. Among those functions were understanding an interlocutor, information exchange, maintaining a topic-related conversation, participation in formal/informal discussions, debates, interviews, and goal-oriented co-operations. The work with *talk as mediation* focused on the students' abilities to mediate legal concepts and texts. It involved the ability to construct new meanings, to adapt new or complex notions and pass on information in an appropriate and comprehensible form as well as the ability to mediate communication (to act as an intermediary in disagreements or facilitate oral interaction in delicate situations). The tasks for *talk as performance* centred on the oral report, presentation-making, and digital storytelling skills. The activities utilised for these objectives were divided into three main groups.

## Language Input Activities

Due to the specific features of Legal English grammar and vocabulary, the researchers first concentrated on the development of linguistic competence by employing *form-oriented input activities* for both intentional and incidental vocabulary and grammar learning. Visual displays of the vocabulary and grammar rules (ready-made or specially created charts, wordlists, infographics as well as word clouds) were applied. In addition, quizzes, interactive tests, links to online vocabulary games and different multimedia format materials were posted on the Facebook group. A detailed description of this material and used applications was given by the authors in the previous article (Mykytiuk, Lysytska, & Melnikova, 2020).

Secondly, the attention was paid to the discourse competence which included: 1) the development of knowledge and skills connected with the use of cohesion devices, 2) coherence devices such as conjunctive adverbs and transitional expressions to show logical relationships, or to contrast, to compare, to exemplify, to expand and 3) genres specifics like oral report, lawyer-client interview. Sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence, for example, to encourage, to agree or disagree, to criticise) were also focused on. The researchers supposed that information visualisation (charts, infographics, diagrams, descriptive texts) would help to deliver relevant material effectively to facilitate understanding, to perceive patterns easier, to improve retention, and make the work faster and more productive.

*Content-oriented input activities* were utilised to introduce the new topic, to provide additional information, to present opposite viewpoints and to give thought-provoking. Speaking activities were organised with the posts on the FB group containing topic-related latest news, reference information, fragments of articles as well as listening and video chunks. For example, a *picture/ infographic narrating activity*. Several sequential pictures or infographics were typically used for this activity. The teacher provided information on the ways of using the pictures /infographics to create a story, which could be posted as a comment to the post. This comment could include the necessary vocabulary or grammar structures to use while narrating. The screenshot of the infographic posted on the Facebook platform for the narrating activity is shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

*The Screenshot of the Infographic Posted on the Facebook Platform for the Infographic Narrating Activity*





Special emphasis was put on the ready-made educational video materials taken from different sources (Learn Business English, Study Legal English, engVid, Cambridge Law Studio and so forth). Some parts of TV programmes, lectures taken from a number of websites, including YouTube, TED, Vimeo, Veritasium, as well as official promotional videos of international, EU and European organisations were used to create interactive materials. Sometimes open-ended or multiple-choice questions and comments on videos were embedded with the EdPuzzle tool. They were productively exploited to present topic-related information and to send the video assignments to students. It helped to provide asynchronous communication and assess their understanding of the material or progress and finally to organise oral practice. The screenshot of the interactive video with the embedded test prepared on the EdPuzzle platform is shown in Figure 2.

### Figure 2

*An Interactive Video with the Embedded Test Prepared on Edpuzzle Platform*



To work with the topic related content and to practice pronunciation, word stress, intonation, rhythm, fluency and connected utterances the *speech shadowing activity* was organised with the posted authentic short video and listening materials. This technique included active listening to comprehend the speech and repeating what was heard in real-time. The researchers supposed that this technique would be beneficial for developing listening comprehension, the ability to produce speech, to learn new vocabulary, and practice metacognitive monitoring skills. It was employed both as an in-class and out-class assignment. Special attention was given to it when practising talk as performance.

*Structured Output Activities.* These were partly authentic and partly artificial activities aimed for the initial stage of spoken production development. The materials posted on the FB platform provided access to forms or structures that students had to use to practice particular language or terminology, to obtain missing information, to exchange necessary information and so on. Primarily talk as transition was practised.

The researchers applied the *information gap* technique taking into consideration that a need for meaningful communication gives the learners a genuine motivation to speak which usually results in learning the language more effectively. Information gap activity raised motivation

for speaking due to real communication and developed learners' sub-skills such as paraphrasing and clarifying meaning. While performing this activity the learners activated their previous knowledge of the topical vocabulary, and acquired new lexical units which they lacked while making questions. Hence, their speaking skills focused on communication achievements rather developed.

Students were also asked to use posted tables, Freya models, grids or comparison charts to fill in the gaps basing on what was said by their group mates or read information. In addition, they created their charts using different applications (Visme, amCharts, Canva) and posted them on the FB group for their group mates to complete. The screenshot of the comparison chart posted on the FB group is shown in Figure 3.

**Figure 3**

*A Comparison Chart Posted on the FB Group for the Information Gap Activity*

	PROCEDURAL LAW	SUBSTANTIVE LAW
Definition	DEALS WITH AND LAYS DOWN THE WAYS AND MEANS BY WHICH SUBSTANTIVE LAW CAN BE ENFORCED	
Powers	NO INDEPENDENT POWERS	
Application	CAN BE APPLIED IN NON LEGAL CONTEXTS	
Regulation	BY STATUTORY LAW	

The *scriptorium technique* closely related to the shadowing activity was also applied as class and home assignments. In addition to repeating the information heard from the posted video and audio materials students were required to write it down. The researchers believed that the use of more than one sensory organ would help to remember better the pronunciation and the structure of sentences. Then students were asked to analyse, make a plan of the received information and create their own reports/utterances following the written examples.

The posted messages, narrated stories, news bulletins, interviews and parts of documentaries were used to organise such activities as *note taking* and *summarising* information orally. Students indicated agreement or disagreement, responded, and evaluated the information using provided structures or scales. In addition, they made a list of interview questions, and created a new one according to examples.

In *jigsaw activities* students could share their knowledge with groupmates. Firstly, students were divided into small groups that discussed and studied the posted material on a particular topic and then they were re-shuffled into new groups with representatives from each previous

group where they shared the information of their original discussion. New groups had to synthesise and present all the discussed ideas.

### ***Communicative Output Activities***

Talk as interaction, mediation and performance were practised using these activities which helped to progress from reactive to proactive participation. Different communicative language competences from linguistic to pragmatic and sociolinguistic were developed. Among them the ability to take the discourse initiative, to intervene politely, to facilitate and manage collaborative interaction were trained.

*Brainstorming* was one of these activities which is traditionally based on learners' contributing to the free flow of ideas and performed by each learner individually. The researchers posted a debatable topic Capital Punishment: Pros and Contras for brainstorming. It was important for the researchers to be sure that every learner realised the essence of the topic so it was accompanied with some prompts and explanations. The list of relevant lexical units was added. This type of activity facilitated learners' acquiring new vocabulary and information and activating passive vocabulary. It provided a link between new and existing knowledge, making intelligent guesses and motivated students to communicate by allowing them to express ideas freely without the risk of being criticised, which formed a productive basis for further discussion of the topic in class.

*Expressing opinions / ideas activities* were organised with the posted videos or texts on controversial topics. For example: Come out with your opinions on the following statement: "The incidence of crime is due to the general state of culture". Sometimes students were provided with a link to Pear Deck or Padlet where they could write their ideas and then comment on them. The more complicated tasks related to this activity were *perspective-taking*. Students were asked to support a standpoint even if it was different from their own. They used the brainstormed ideas or posted materials, expressed a personal response to the posted texts with controversial ideas as well as analysed and criticised argumentative texts. *Social media bubble analysis* was also employed to explain a writer's or speaker's ideas or viewpoints.

The Facebook group provided the area to discuss and exchange ideas on topics of general and special interest. A *discussion* was held to conclude or just to summarise the existing ideas. The researchers employed different in-class discussion activities from developmental discussion to panel discussion and Socratic seminars. The screenshot of the video unit "Prisoners during Covid: There is not much hope" posted on the FB group for discussion activity is shown in Figure 4. After viewing the video unit (as a home task assignment) students made the list of the problems the prisoners mentioned, were asked to find any other problems in various resources, in comments wrote possible solutions and discussed them in the class.

#### Figure 4

*A Screenshot of the Video Unit Posted on the FB Group for Discussion Activity*



*Role-play / interview* activities were also utilised in the process of ubiquitous FB-mediated learning. A teacher provided a theme to students and with the help of a Facebook link they were redirected to the quiz which presented the ideas and brief information with possible questions to the interviewee. The link to the video sample of an interview with a famous defence lawyer also helped the students to realise not only the content but the style, language, and life hacks they should use. Interview techniques allowed stimulating the students to be active and communicate freely taking the roles of an interviewer and interviewee.

*Story completion* as a free-speaking and creative activity was organised by researchers by posting on the Facebook group a text on committing a certain crime. The text contained several initial sentences aimed to picture the basic circumstances of an event. The individual pre-class task for the learners was to predict the possible sequence of further events. Learners were to post the essential vocabulary of their story development in a group for everybody's access. Such actions gave other students a possibility to be acquainted with potentially unknown lexical units. Completing this task helped the learners enhance their speaking skills through activating topical and new vocabulary. In addition, the students trained grammar patterns application, as well as demonstrated creativity.

*Digital story narrating* was a group assignment when students were to write scripts and present ideas orally in short video units. This activity not only improved students' language and communicative competences but also helped to develop their digital literacy as they used different film-making applications and posted their videos. It promoted autonomous learning and made education student-centred and collaborative. The best works participated in the annual digital story contest at the University. A screenshot about this event posted on the FB group is shown in Figure 5.

**Figure 5**

*A Screenshot of the Post about the Digital Story Contest Posted on the FB Group*



## Results

### The Effectiveness of FB as a Flexible Ubiquitous Learning Space for Developing Speaking Skills

The employed independent-samples t-test revealed the following results shown in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Independent-Samples T-Test Results of the Achievement Scores of the Experimental and Control Groups on the Speaking Post Test*

<i>Speaking assessment criteria</i>	<i>EG Mean/SD (n=58)</i>	<i>CG Mean/SD (n=58)</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>p-value</i>
Vocabulary and grammar	4.241±0.709	3.793±0.744	-3.324	<0,001
Discourse management	4.086±0.732	3.638±0.693	-3.385	<0,001
Interactive communication	4.224±0.702	3.776±0.702	-3.439	<0,001
Pronunciation	4.19±0.736	3.845±0.745	-2.508	<0,014

As it is represented in Table I, there is a significant difference between the test achievement scores of control and experimental groups according to all four checked criteria. According to the “vocabulary and grammar knowledge” criterion  $t = -3.324$ ,  $p < 0,001$ ; mean score of the experimental group achievement (= 4.241) is higher than the control group’s achievement (= 3.793) score. The outperformance of the experimental group could be attributed to the frequent exposure to the target vocabulary and grammar rules and patterns in different contexts. It contributed to intentional and incidental learning. The visual nature of material presentation possibly was productive for information processing, retention, and retrieval. The uploaded materials helped to organise real-life context interactional practice in which students were able to generate the target material performing various assignments.



According to “discourse management” criterion  $t = -3.385$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; mean score of experimental group achievement (= 4.086) is better than the control group’s achievement (=3.638) score. More effective discourse management of the experimental group supposedly was achieved by explicit visualised teaching of cohesion and coherence devices and exemplified teaching of different genres specifics, conversational principles, paralinguistic features, and linguistic means of conversational functions. Provision with a wide authentic context could help expand knowledge on the topic, produce topic-related extended utterances and practice accomplishment of various strategic and other functions important for talk as transition, interaction, mediation, and performance in organised guided and free speaking activities.

According to “interactive communication” criterion  $t = -3.439$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; mean score of experimental group achievement (= 4.224) is higher than the control group’s achievement (=3.776) score. It may be suggested that exposure to authentic and educational video and audio conversations for both in-class and out-class activities might have resulted in better reception of interaction patterns and subsequent more productive practice of interpersonal and evaluative functions in talks as interaction and mediation by the experimental group.

According to “pronunciation” criterion  $t = -2.508$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; mean score of the experimental group achievement (= 4.19) is better than the control group’s achievement (=3.845) score. Listening to authentic English in posted real world audios and videos provided students with natural sound pronunciation, word stress, intonation, and rhythm which they could imitate later in oral practice. Probably it led to better achievement.

The researchers suppose that the method and materials applied in the quasi-experiment facilitated the elimination of the usually emerging difficulties in teaching speaking. Speaking activities organised with the posts on the FB group aimed to smooth the learners’ possible speaking problems. Language input activities – form-oriented and content-oriented – concentrated on one of the main causes of speaking difficulties which is lack of grammar and vocabulary knowledge. Structured and communicative output activities were intended to develop the learners’ skills to produce utterances and progress from reactive to proactive discourse participation. As p-values according to all assessment criteria were less than the value of probability (0.05), it could be stated that the treatment used on the experimental group enhanced students’ achievement, which supports our hypothesis about the effectiveness of the suggested methodology.

### **Learners’ Impressions of the Successfulness of the Use of FB Activities for Developing Their Speaking Skills**

The survey addressed to 58 students of the experimental group aimed at finding out the impression of students about the effectiveness of FB work for shaping speaking skills showed the following results. The first descriptive question (“Has Facebook activity helped to improve your speaking skills?”) was asked about students’ general acceptance and perceptions on the use of FB in developing speaking skills. The research demonstrates that a rather big quantity of students (60%: 40% – Agree and 20% – Strongly agree) considered that FB helped them to improve speaking skills. Only 3% of students strongly rejected the benefits, 10% express disagreement to the efficiency of FB work. 27% of respondents hesitated about the advantages or disadvantages of FB activity for improving speaking skills.

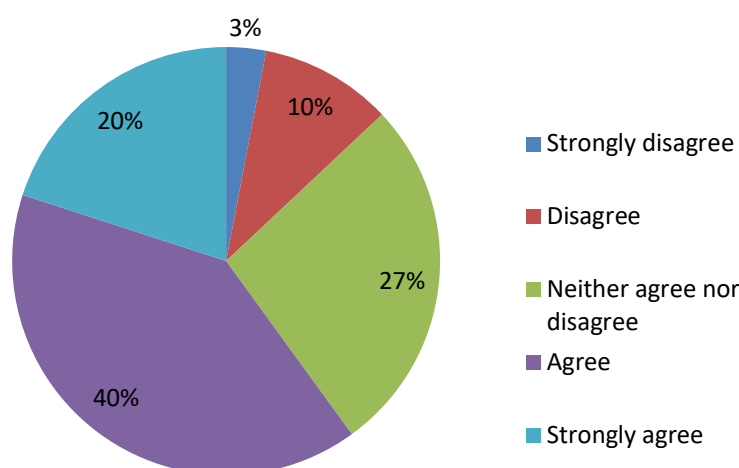
The participants indicated that learning via FB is more motivating. One student commented,

*I liked the topic and the task we performed. It made me think and argue with the group.*  
(S1)

The students highlighted the convenience and easy access to materials, expressing the overall positive impression of the learning by FB but some of them found the speed of the studying process too high, stating *“I tried to make notes of all unknown words, but I didn’t manage. It’s difficult to watch the video, make notes, learn new words to perform the task.”* (S2)

**Figure 6**

*Has Facebook Activity Helped to Improve Your Speaking Skills?*

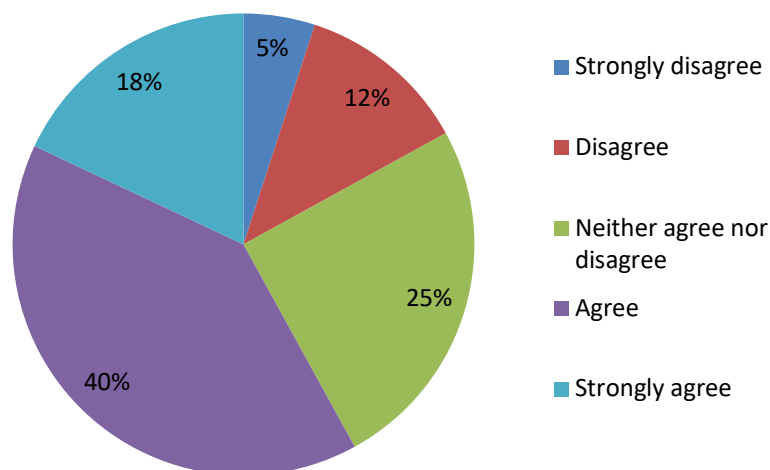


Questions 2-5 were aimed at investigating if separate English-speaking skills were successfully developed via the use of FB, according to the students’ opinion. These English speaking skills correspond to the basic speaking qualifications according to the CEFR and are the descriptors of evaluation of students’ strengths and weaknesses in speaking activities.

Question 2 (Have you increased your knowledge and skills of using legal vocabulary on familiar topics and specific grammar with the use of Facebook activity?) corresponded to the Grammar and Vocabulary Qualification. The result showed that 58 per cent of respondents (40% – Agree and 18% – Strongly agree) confirmed that they gained more knowledge in legal terminology and its use. The answers concerning this question revealed that although most students saw the benefits of FB use to achieve educational goals, 5% strongly disagreed to the increasing knowledge of vocabulary and grammar, while 25% were not sure about it. One participant commented that *“during the class we had the opportunity to increase our vocabulary with specific terms. If I didn’t know some expression I could immediately click on the word and look it up, and when I heard it several times, I already knew it.”* (S3). Another stated, *“I heard and tried to learn some words, but after the lesson, I had to work on my own to remember it. Otherwise, I forgot all of them.”* (S4)

**Figure 7**

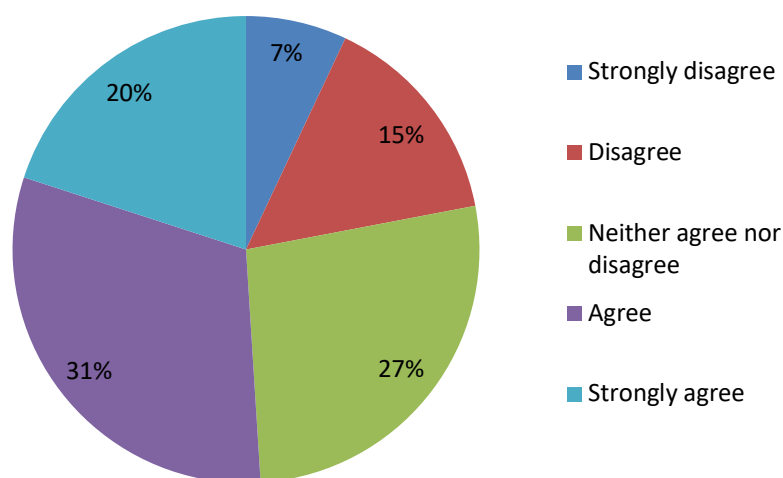
*Have You Increased Your Knowledge and Skills of Using Legal Vocabulary on Familiar Topics and Specific Grammar with the Use of Facebook Activity?*



Question 3 (Can you more easily produce extended spoken texts and contribute new information due to the use of FB activity? Can you more freely express your ideas?) corresponds to the Discourse Management Qualification. The rationale of this question was to figure out if students benefit from FB activities for better discourse management. The findings of this question revealed that 51% of the students approved that the FB tasks were likely to be efficient for developing production skills while 7% expressed the ineffectiveness. Fifteen % of the respondents also disagreed that they gained new skills due to the use of FB.

**Figure 8**

*Can You More Easily Produce Extended Spoken Texts and Contribute New Information due to the Use of FB Activity?*



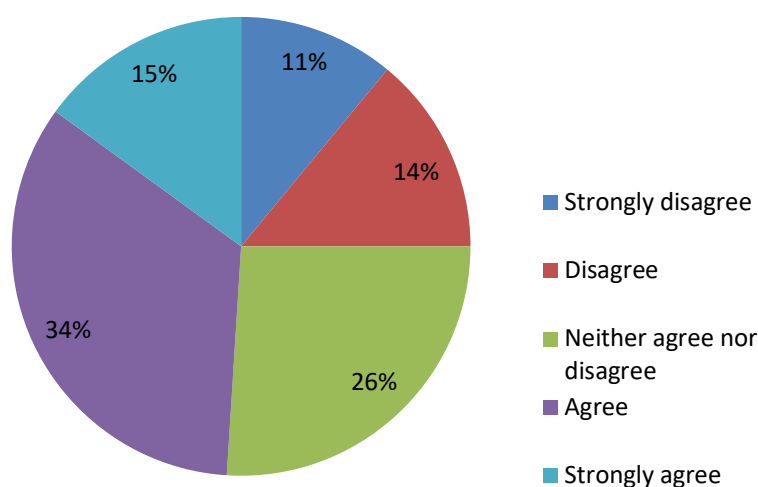


The interviewees expressed a preference of learning by means of FB, commenting that a more natural language environment made them learn faster, comprehend and remember various useful cohesion devices for more relevant and long speech, *“I isolated some ideas, tried to memorise the wording, and when I saw how I can comment and quickly respond to the replicas of others, I felt like a part of the discussion! I did it» (S4)*

Question 4 (Can you receive and more easily exchange the information, communicate actively with others with the constant use of FB activity? Can you participate in spontaneous conversations on specific topics?) corresponded to the Interactive Communication Qualification. The results showed that 52% (34% – Agree and 18% – Strongly agree) believed that FB had a big impact on the students’ level of speaking. As the results displayed, 25% (11% – Strongly disagree and 14% – Disagree) of students indicated that FB activity had not helped them in developing interactive speaking abilities. The remaining 26% were not certain about the effectiveness of the work. The participants reported that they became more engaged, which made them participate in communication more freely, *“I found it really great to have the opportunity to discuss with friends about the topics that concern all of us. We use the net, we can learn and chat at the same time.” (S5)*

### Figure 9

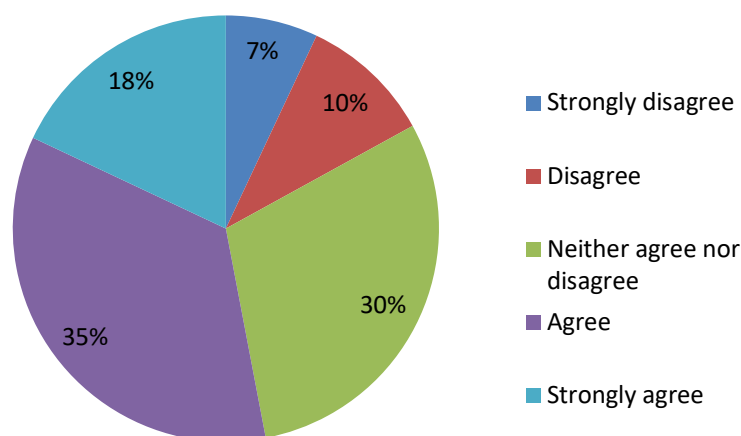
*Can You Receive and More Easily Exchange the Information, Communicate Actively with Others with the Constant Use of FB Activity? Can You Participate in Spontaneous Conversations on Specific Topics?*



Question 5 (Have you improved your pronunciation using FB tasks?) corresponded to the Pronunciation Qualification. It was designed to find out the students’ point of view about the connection between FB work and the improvement of pronunciation. The research showed that only 18% of the respondents definitely admitted the better results, 35% accepted the influence. The answers concerning this question revealed that not so many respondents – 7% strongly rejected the improvement in their pronunciation while 30% of them were uncertain about the impact.

**Figure 10**

*Have You Improved Your Pronunciation Using FB Tasks?*



The research showed that most students considered FB activity useful for the development of all four speaking qualifications. The increasing vocabulary and grammar knowledge for communication was indicated by the majority of informants. The more uncertain respondents were about the FB effectiveness for pronunciation. The students indicated that they could imitate the pronunciation of speakers and remember the intonation, *“It’s great to memorise the pronunciation when I hear it naturally in speech. I even can remember the voice!”* (S6)

### Discussion and Limitations

This experiment-based research contributes to ascertaining the hypothesis on the usefulness of the FB environment as a flexible ubiquitous learning space for foreign language speaking skills development which is proved by the results. In this research, the authors are in alignment with the results of the recent research conducted by a number of scholars who verified the advantages of social media for ubiquitous learning mentioning that social media are “socially and participatory Web, in which users are not just content consumers but also content generators, often in a collaborative manner” (Li et al., 2016). Social media together with mobile learning provide learners with constant connectivity, foster collaborative learning, and enable authentic learning on the move (Gikas & Grant, 2013). Hasnine et al. (2020) stated that smartly generated learning contexts are significant for an intelligent ubiquitous learning environment. The importance of adaptation of a ubiquitous learning space employing its “plasticity” (flexibility) capacity by content and application filtering, polymorphic presentation, and content ranking was underlined by Bomsdorf (2005).

The significance of the networked nature of learning for the modern generation when students develop their personal learning network of human and academic resources stressed by the supporters of connectivism was taken into account in this study. Montebello and Camilleri (2018) stated that social media give the opportunity to connect, communicate, participate, and be productive and experience satisfaction from accomplishments in a highly accessible way. In higher education, the experience and maturity of students help to take better advantage of these possibilities. The findings of this research are also consistent with the studies of the positive effect of Facebook activities on enhancing oral communication skills by AlSaleem

(2018) and Barbosa (2017). During the preparation for the study, a large number of scientific studies were analysed that provided data on the effective use of Facebook for educational purposes, but there are also some works that demonstrate the shortcomings of using this platform. The negative aspects of the use of FB are the addiction and distraction of students' attention to the virtual content of social media. Some researchers also highlight the fact that students and pupils spend more time in the virtual world, and this negatively affects both learning and health behaviour (Lau, 2017; Singh, 2014; Abbasi et al, 2021) Summarising the negative impacts of Facebook use for education identified by various researchers, Nadeem (Nadeem, 2020) mentions Facebook addiction and lack of concentration in studies. The shortcomings of Facebook as a learning tool found by the scholars, present mostly psychological aspects, while only a few researches have been found to indicate the disadvantages of FB use for developing speaking skills. Namely, Kabilan et al. (2010), Omer et al. (2012), and Selwyn (2007) state that Facebook does not provide an acceptable environment for academic language teaching and learning, confusing those learners who are not mature enough to be aware of the difference between formal and informal language. Although some research cautions that students can employ unconventional language codes from Facebook (Nwala & Tamunobelema, 2019), this fact does not detract from the benefits of using this platform to develop speaking skills, as the current study shows.

Notwithstanding the merits of this study, some limitations must be identified. This study is limited by the implementation period (one semester). The research was conducted on the first-year students of the National Law University of Ukraine, thus the experiment does not present the results of all the population of the University.

### **Recommendations**

Promotion of using the Facebook social network for academic purposes and scientific research can be useful in higher education. Educators should comprehend how students use social media technologies and then integrate them into students' lives concerning the matter of overcoming educational anxiety and assisting students facing challenges. The use of FB provides a unique perspective for ubiquitous learning and teaching outside the classroom as well, but the role of the teacher remains necessary for continuous instruction, explanation, commenting, and ratings. This issue should be further explained and investigated in terms of the amount of time necessary for such a project and how reasonable another investigation might be. Furthermore, the research could also be completed on how certain speaking activities could be performed with the use of Facebook. Another potential research study could pertain to how the other language skills such as reading, listening, and writing might be gained with the use of Facebook, and for which of them the use of social media is more beneficial. Future inquiry can also focus on the relationship between Facebook use and blended learning during pandemics and crises by applying the suggested model.

### **Conclusions**

The present research shows that the Facebook group may be considered an effective learning space for speaking skills development. The suggested technique which employs the form of education that covers the principles of ubiquitous learning is quite efficacious, which is confirmed by statistical data obtained during the quasi-experiment and the survey of students. The achievement scores of the post-test assessing students' speaking skills showed a greater success of the experimental group in comparison with the control one in terms of expanding vocabulary, increasing English language grammar literacy, developing interactive skills,

discourse management and pronunciation. The authors suppose it can be explained by the permanent and immediate access to a variety of contexts and resources enriching learners with linguistic and contextual knowledge. Such a result can also be determined by a living authentic environment that makes it possible to organise task-oriented and contextual activities that stimulate students to research various problems, to express oneself more freely and creatively and to encourage communication. Also, Facebook space is used as a flexible learning environment that provides learners with different media resources, uploaded materials, links to various applications, and other social networking opportunities that help to correlate educational programme objectives with digital age learners' interests.

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