

EDUCATIONAL USE OF FACEBOOK PLATFORM AND COLLABORATIVE LEARNING OF SPOKEN FRENCH (FRENCH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the impact of integrating Facebook, as a social digital network, into the educational process, particularly in the teaching of French as a foreign language (FFL), with a specific focus on developing the oral skills of 9th grade students (age means = 15years). Adopting a mixed approach articulated in two phases, the research combines online observation of a public educational Facebook page ("French with teacher Salma", n = 9,700 subscribers) and experimentation with a collaborative activity entitled "My job in video" within a closed Facebook group ("Let's learn together", n = 20 students). Data were collected through online participant observation, diagnostic and summative assessment grids based on the official Tunisian program, and semi-structured post-experimentation interviews. The results indicate that the educational, safe and scripted use of Facebook promotes learner engagement, reduces language anxiety and significantly improves oral fluency and phonetic accuracy.

Keywords: Collaborative Learning - Social Networks - Facebook - Oral Skills – FLE.

1. INTRODUCTION

Today, digital social networks (DSN) occupy an important place in communication practices, facilitating the rapid circulation of user-created content around the world (Badoui, 2022). The multitude of electronic social networks, such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, and Snapchat, has targeted the entirety of society and has taken root there at a very rapid pace. In 2020, Facebook was affirmed as the most widely used social network (Martín Del Campo Fernández-Paniagua, 2020).

The educational system is no exception to this communicational influence, and all school stakeholders have been defined as users of these communication tools. DSN are now an integral part of the educational system in schools, training centers, colleges, and universities (Vahdat et al., 2020; St-Pierre, 2021).

In the educational field, they constitute not only a tool for exchange, but also a working environment conducive to collaboration, highlighting pedagogical interactions. They

represent a didactic support for both learners and teachers. Indeed, DSN, considered as educational environments, provide an interactive framework that piques learners' interest. In addition, they offer a varied space, rich in resources from the Internet, allowing different activities to be proposed. This diversity helps to strengthen learner engagement and promote active learning (Kellil, 2017). Furthermore, the use of DSN for educational purposes helps create a dynamic environment for discussions related to the topics covered.

These tools contribute to the development of multiple skills. This involves not only acquiring linguistic knowledge (vocabulary, grammar, conjugation, etc.), but also developing communication, intercultural, and techno-discursive skills through collaborative work. The use of DSN in learning French as a foreign language (FFL) thus promotes new forms of collaboration and group work (Livingstone, 2015).

In teaching French as a foreign language via the social network Facebook, a special place is given to closed groups that are created around a theme or module and to which learners can be invited. These are virtual spaces that serve to raise awareness among both teachers and learners about online training.

The experience of private Facebook groups for the development of oral and written French (FFL) skills has been adopted by several teachers at schools, colleges and universities. This research aims to address gaps in oral skills by answering the following question: To what extent does the structured pedagogical integration of a Facebook page and group promote the development of oral skills and collaborative learning among 9th-grade students learning French as a foreign language?

2. THE STUDY DESIGN AND METHODS

This study took place in two stages. The first stage was devoted to the case study. The case study was a Facebook page created for collaborative development of students' oral and written skills. The second stage consisted of leading activity (My Job in One Video) designed to develop the oral skills of students who were members of a closed Facebook group created by their French language teacher.

The online observation is the method adopted during both parts of this study. It is an observation adapted by researchers to digital research objects (Héas & Poutrain, 2003; Snee et al., 2015).

2.1 First Phase: Study Case (Pedagogical Facebook Page: French With Teacher Salma)

In order to analyze the interactive dynamics between educational actors (teachers, parents, learners), the public Facebook page named "Le français avec maîtresse Salma" (6,400 "likes", 9,700 subscribers, located in Gabès, Tunisia) was the subject of systematic observation from December 15, 2024 to February 20, 2025.

Table 1: Facebook Page Observation Criteria

Quantitative analysis	Qualitative analysis
Number of followers and number of likes on the page.	Nature and purpose of the page
Posting frequency	Nature and purpose of the content posted.
Engagement rate (frequency of interactions by type).	Nature of interactions and involvement of the page admin in discussions.
	Conclusion of the type of relationships between the different members subscribed to this page.

The purpose of this online observation was to measure the effectiveness of pedagogical exchanges between teachers and between teachers and parents, and to understand how these interactions contribute to the teaching process.

2.2 Second Phase: Educational Experiment (Closed Facebook Group)

The experiment involved a sample of 20 ninth-grade students from Khaznadar Middle School (Denden, Manouba, Tunisia; average age = 15 years). A closed group called "Let's Learn Together" was created and moderated by their French teacher. Due to technical/connectivity constraints, 18 students fully participated in the entire protocol (95% participation rate).

Project Description (One Activity): "My Job in Video"

To carry out this activity, the French teacher followed the necessary steps:

1. Framing and Digital Literacy: Two awareness sessions on the ethical/safe use of social media and a quick technical tutorial (planned and led by their teacher).
2. Production and Interaction: These are tasks carried out by the students, including individual research, scriptwriting, recording a short video presenting their future career project, posting in a closed group, and peer-to-peer interaction (comments, replies, constructive feedback).

Oral Skills Assessment

The assessment was based on an official rubric from the Tunisian Ministry of Education (20 points) applied in the pre-test (diagnostic assessment) and post-test (summative assessment).

Table 2: The Criteria Evaluation and Their Indicators (According to the Official Tunisian Program)

Criteria	Criterion title	Indicators Each criterion is met for any statement in which the student:	Grading scale
Minimum criteria	C1: Adequacy	The criterion is met if the student understands the instructions and carries out what is requested using appropriate vocabulary.	/4
	C2: Phonetic Correction	The criterion is met if the student speaks with correct intonation, liaisons, and pronunciation of phonemes.	/3.5

Improvement criteria	C3: Linguistic correctness	The criterion is met if the student uses correct verb forms.	/4.5
	C4: Consistency of the statement	The criterion is met if the student correctly and logically justifies his opinion.	/3
	C5: Originality of ideas	The criterion is met if the student demonstrates creativity in his speech.	/2.5
	C6: Fluency of expression	The criterion is met if the student expresses himself easily, accompanying his statement with appropriate gestures.	/2.5
Total . /20			

2.3 Semi-Structured Interview

To further understand the students' perspectives, we conducted semi-structured interview after the completion of the experiments. This interview, held anonymously, provided valuable feedback from 9th-graders students on their experiences, thoughts, and attitudes regarding the use of social media in language learning (specifically facebook platform). The interview guide consists of 7 questions divided into two sections. The first section consists of 3 questions. It focuses on the use of digital social networks and its contribution to the development of communication skills in French (foreign language) of 9th grade students (14 to 15 years old). The second section includes 4 questions describing the use of Facebook and its contribution to the development of the same students' oral and written skills in French (foreign language).

3. RESULTS

3.1 Educational Interactions between Subscribers of Facebook Page (French with Teacher Salma)

The analysis of the Facebook page “French with teacher Salma “(Le français avec maîtresse *Salma*), created in September 2023 by a Tunisian teacher, highlights the active role social media can play in the dissemination of educational resources. The page, followed by nearly 9,700 subscribers, features a variety of pedagogical content such as lesson plans, teaching tools, module breakdowns, and multimedia showcasing classroom activities. Although the page’s purpose is not explicitly stated, the shared content clearly aims to support teachers especially beginners by offering practical resources, also allowing parents to follow and reinforce their children's learning. While not primarily commercial, the teacher monetizes some documents as a way to compensate for her effort and time.

Table 3: Presentation of Facebook page

Author name	According to the page the author is a French teacher named « Salma ».	
Creation date	18 September 2023	
Residence of facebook page manager	Gabès, Tunisie	
Identity of Facebook page	Page name	« French with teacher Salma »
	Number of likes on the page	6400 likes

Over the observation period (10 weeks), 29 posts were recorded (an average of 3 posts per week). The content shared (lesson plans, modular breakdowns, multimedia resources) primarily addresses the need for collaboration among beginning teachers and for parental support. The response rate from the teacher-administrator is particularly high, fostering a supportive community of practice.

3.2 Educational Interactions between Subscribers during the Online Learning Activity

During the activity, students produced 23 posts: 17 video clips, 5 written paragraphs, and 1 handwritten image. The interactions generated 101 "likes" and 14 comments. The video format captured almost all of the engagement (98 likes and 100% of the comments), confirming the appeal of the multimodal format for oral expression.

3.3 Evaluation of Oral Competence For 9th-Grade Students

To assess the effectiveness of using digital platforms, especially Facebook, in the French language learning process, particularly regarding oral competence, both diagnostic and summative evaluations were conducted. These assessments aimed to measure learners' acquisition of appropriate vocabulary and their overall oral performance. The evaluation followed official curriculum-based criteria, focusing on communication adequacy, phonetic accuracy, linguistic correctness, coherence of speech, originality of ideas, and fluency. Each criterion contributed to a total score out of 20 points.

Table 5: Pre- and Post-Evaluation of Students' Oral Skills

Grade ranges	Pre-Evaluation Students number	Post-Evaluation Students number	Percentage of grade changes
[0 - 5]	0	0	0%
[5 - 10]	4	2	-50,0%
[10 - 15]	11	9	-18,2%
[15 - 20]	3	7	+133,3%

Before initiating the learning activities on Facebook, a diagnostic test was administered to evaluate the learners' initial oral competence. The results showed that none of the students scored below 5, four students scored between 5 and less than 10, eleven scored between 10 and less than 15, and three obtained scores between 15 and 20. These results indicated a generally moderate level of oral proficiency at the outset, with room for improvement.

At the end of the experimental period, a summative evaluation was carried out to determine students' progress. In this assessment, each learner was asked to orally present their dream profession, demonstrating their ability to understand instructions and speak fluently using correct grammatical structures. The results showed clear progress: while no students scored below 5, only two scored between 5 and less than 10, nine were in the 10–15 (less than 15) range, and seven students achieved scores between 15 and 20. Compared to the diagnostic results, this indicates a significant improvement, particularly in the highest performance bracket, where the number of students nearly doubled.

These findings suggest that integrating Facebook into French language instruction had a positive impact on the learners' oral performance. The improvement in scores demonstrates that exposure to and interaction through social media platforms can enhance competence of students in using spoken French.

3.4 Semi-Directed Interview for 9th-Grade Students

To complement the evaluation results, a structured interview was conducted with the 9th-grade students at the end of the experiment. The goal was to gather their perceptions and attitudes regarding the use of DSN in general and especially Facebook as a learning tool. The interview took the form of closed-ended questions, answered anonymously.

When asked about their regular use of social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter, the majority of students (81%) reported using them daily, 12% several times per week, and only one student said they used them once per week. None of the participants reported never using social media. These responses highlight that all learners were already familiar with digital platforms, a factor that likely contributed to the smooth integration of these tools in their learning experience.

Regarding the perceived benefits of DSN for learning French, particularly oral skills, 93% of the students felt that the use of these platforms facilitated their learning process. Only one student disagreed. These results support the idea that social media tools can positively influence language acquisition, especially in promoting vocabulary use and oral fluency. However, the variation in responses suggests that individual differences such as learning styles, age, or personal preferences may affect how students respond to digital learning methods.

On the question of whether DSN made learning more interactive and engaging, 100% of the students responded positively. This unanimous result confirms the motivational potential of social media platforms. Their dynamic and participatory nature appears to stimulate student involvement and create a collaborative atmosphere that fosters responsibility and a sense of ownership in the learning process.

When asked whether social media interactions specifically helped improve their oral French skills, 75% of the students responded affirmatively, while 25% said no. This indicates that most learners recognized the value of peer interaction and real-life context in enhancing their speaking abilities, though a minority may have found the format less beneficial again highlighting the importance of differentiated instruction.

Interestingly, none of the participants reported encountering technical difficulties during the experiment. This is likely due to their pre-existing familiarity with digital tools, confirming that technical fluency is a prerequisite for successful learning through DSN.

As for the perceived advantages of using DSN for language learning, 68% of students cited improved oral comprehension, 93% emphasized increased motivation and engagement, and 87% highlighted the value of interaction and collaborative work. These findings suggest that SNS not only support linguistic development but also enhance student motivation and social engagement key factors in successful language acquisition.

Finally, when asked if they would recommend the use of DSN for learning French to other students, all respondents (100%) answered “yes.” This result underlines the overall satisfaction with this approach. The learners found DSN to be effective and enjoyable tools for language practice, especially because they allowed for interaction, flexibility in time and space, and collaborative work. For them, learning through DSN offered a more dynamic, connected, and socially meaningful experience.

In conclusion, the 9th-grade students viewed the integration of social media into their French learning process very positively. Most demonstrated improved oral skills and expressed enthusiasm for this modern, interactive pedagogical approach. While some individual differences affected the perceived usefulness of the method, the overall feedback confirms that DSN can serve as powerful tools to enhance oral proficiency and learner engagement in FLE classrooms.

4. DISCUSSION

The results of the online observation of the Facebook page, recruited as a case study, proved to us that using Facebook as a favorable educational and interactional space is a very beneficial experience for our students Ben Abdallah and Boukthir (2015). First of all, a Facebook page managed by an admin gives students the opportunity to co-develop their knowledge and oral skills in French (foreign language) with their teachers and parents. Observations of Facebook page revealed that Facebook offers a space for participants to interact in various ways. This platform foster collaboration among students, enabling them to use private messaging to work on projects or answer questions in private groups. They also allow parents to monitor instructions, teacher feedback, and shared student work, promoting transparency and strengthening relationships between parents, teachers, and students. Teachers can also leverage social media to share educational resources and teaching tools, benefiting from mutual experiences.

The findings of this study underscore the effectiveness of social media in promoting collaborative learning (Ben Abdallah and Boukthir, 2015) in their research on social media in higher education for sharing and coordination. Additionally, social media positively impacts student engagement, motivation (Aubry, 2013), autonomy, and the development of pedagogical and technical skills, as demonstrated by Kellil (2017) in his study on integrating social media into FFL classrooms. Indeed, learning through collaborative processes of co-construction of meaning provides learners (students or pupils) with the opportunity to develop high-level skills(Lampe et al., 2011).

The creation of a private Facebook group for 9th-grade students to propose activities for developing students' oral skills was undoubtedly a favorable situation for them. The 9th-grade students created, independently, videos outside of their French lessons. Such activities foster daily use of the French language, which helps improve language acquisition. Furthermore, when students know their work will be shared, they feel a sense of responsibility and are motivated to present their best work. Grassin (2013) showed that while social media such as Facebook is beneficial, it cannot replace traditional teaching.

Returning to the evaluations of the 9th-grade students' oral skills; the grades assigned showed us a notable improvement in the communication abilities of the students who participated in the activity "my job in a video". The same students showed motivation and commitment towards the use of facebook (Aubry, 2013), in particular, and digital social networks, in general, during a semi-structured interview. In short, they were aware of the benefits of this interactive and educational space and recommended the perpetual use of digital social networks in the classroom to develop their pedagogical and technical skills.

Educational use of Facebook groups motivates Tunisian students to learn French, especially oral skills, by encouraging active participation in learning activities, particularly those that promote collaboration. The results from the experiment show that social media does indeed foster engagement and motivation, but this depends on specific conditions. The 9th-grade students were more familiar with these tools, demonstrated higher engagement and motivation, completing their tasks successfully. Therefore, social media helps engage and motivate middle school students (around 14 years old). The level of familiarity with these tools and the students' maturity play significant roles in their engagement. However, social media can be integrated into primary education if students are guided and supported by a teacher or parent.

Social media provides a platform for students, teachers, and parents to interact and create a small, interactive community, enhancing social competences (Martínez Lirola, M., 2022) learning through enriching exchanges. Observations from the Facebook page and results from the experiments revealed that social media offers a space for participants to interact in various ways. These platforms foster collaboration among students, enabling them to use private messaging to work on projects or answer questions in private groups. They also allow parents to monitor instructions, teacher feedback, and shared student work, promoting transparency and strengthening relationships between parents, teachers, and students. Teachers can also leverage social media to share educational resources and teaching tools, benefiting from mutual experiences.

The findings of this study underscore the effectiveness of closed facebook group in promoting collaborative learning (Ben Abdallah and Boukthir, 2015). Additionally, this experience positively impacts student engagement, motivation, autonomy, and the development of pedagogical and technical skills, as demonstrated by Kellil (2017) in his study on integrating social media into FLE classrooms. Furthermore, Grassin (2013) showed that while social media is beneficial, it cannot replace traditional teaching. However, none of these studies specifically focused on young learners aged 11 to 15. Most research on social media pertains to adult users, despite the fact that children also have access to these tools today. Our study specifically targets this age group, revealing that digital interactions are effective for 6th-grade students, although they still need guidance to use these tools independently. In contrast, 9th-grade students are more capable of using these tools independently, as long as they receive proper training to ensure safe and effective use.

5. CONCLUSION

The experiences of creating a Facebook page or a Facebook group with well-defined privacy settings motivate Tunisian students aged 14 to 15 and facilitate the development of their oral skills in French as a foreign language. At the same time, the learning activity through Facebook group of 9th grade students was an opportunity to teach safe, responsible and critical use of social and educational platforms, in order to prevent the risks associated with cyber bullying and to ensure a healthy learning environment.

In an educational setting, the impact of Facebook usage, in particular, is not limited to student learning: these tools also have positive repercussions on teachers' professional practices. Indeed, they encourage the pooling of teaching resources, the sharing of teaching methods, and collaboration between peers. This contributes to the enrichment of teaching practices and innovation in teaching approaches.

Although this teaching methodology has proven effective, its implementation requires a number of conditions to ensure an environment conducive to learning. First, it is necessary to provide the essential equipment (computer, smartphone, internet connection, etc.). Then, teachers must be trained in the pedagogical use of digital tools, as they will in turn provide support to the students. Furthermore, the involvement of parents is essential: a preliminary meeting will allow them to understand the modalities of this new approach and to actively engage in it.

Finally, the educational use of Facebook pages and Facebook groups as a means of developing language skills for students in disadvantaged countries or regions lacking educational technologies represents a beneficial choice to ensure more structured learning and complementarity between formal and non-formal schooling.

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