

## Exploring Learners' Attitude toward Facebook as a Medium of Learners' Engagement during Covid-19 Quarantine

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### Abstract

The rapid transition to online teaching because of the global disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic exclaimed all the educators on finding the most efficient ways to teach in the presence of all rampant limitations caused in both social and academic lives. Facebook, as one of the favorite social networks, having hundreds of millions of users, is an enticing way for the teachers and students to form an online community. With this regard, the purpose of the present study is to explore the attitude and viewpoints of language learners toward implementing Facebook as a peripheral medium, besides the formal e-learning platform used in the classroom, to engage learners in language learning and explore its effectiveness in the process of teaching. Moreover, this study aims to explore learners' attitudes through the lens of the sociocultural theory. To this end, participants were chosen based on availability sampling, and the online versions of two surveys, Facebook Online Survey and Usefulness and Effectiveness Survey were shared with them through Facebook wall posts and Google Drive. The quantitative and qualitative analyses of their responses are examined and the results are analyzed based on the sociocultural perspective. This study implied that Facebook can be employed as a motivating technology to engage learners and an effective tool besides the other online medium used during the global lockdown.

**Keywords:** Facebook, learners' attitude, sociocultural theory, web 2.0 technology, engagement, language learning

### Introduction

The flourishing innovative technologies and learning management systems, as Anca and Cosmina (2015) declared, have been employed by educators for the sake of teaching and assessment for recent years. The omnipresence of the internet and its potentiality to keep the people in touch anywhere and anytime was proven as a utilizable solution during the quarantine days caused by the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.

While a drastic change in all arenas was caused by this pandemic, it signifies new prospects for all to adapt and be resilient. From the very first days in which the officials of the ministry of health in Iran announced the number of few infected people, academia including universities, schools, and educational institutes inevitably revived the need to explore online teaching and learning opportunities. Hence, the complete lockdown ignited new challenges, while new horizons are illuminated. While health officials are trying to control the detriments caused by the pandemic, the educational experts are doing their best to provide on line education. However, in the current situation in language learning classes, the students were witnessed not responding well enough to online learning. For instance, in a cross-sectional study, Baloran (2020) reported the students' unwillingness with the online-blended learning approach. Moreover, in a descriptive cross-sectional study at Liaquat College of Medicine and Dentistry, Abbasi et al. (2020) perceived that students did not prefer e-teaching over face-to-face teaching during the lockdown situation. They recommended taking necessary measures for improving e-teaching for better learning during the lockdown.

Similarly, in the context of the present study, it was seen that learners were not interested and motivated to follow the online learning procedure. As most of them asserted, in the virtual environment, there was not a friendly and attractive atmosphere in comparison to the face-to-face classes; therefore, it lacks the motivating factors they crave in face-to-face classes, the students had the chance to get together before and after the class hour and during the break, talk to each other and have fun.

To involve and motivate the learners in online learning through more interesting alternatives, the researchers of the present study decided to make use of Facebook to involve learners in the learning process to move forward language teaching to be effective and lead to learners' learning and satisfaction.

Facebook, as one of the most favorite social networking sites, has been reported by Connolly et al. (2019) and Chen (2018) as one of the effective and favorable learning tools. Besides its feasibility to share favorite photos and videos and communicate through wall posts and stories, as Mazer et al. (2007) denoted, Facebook has applications useful for teaching and learning which can nurture the student-teacher relationship by creating positive learning experiences for both parties.

According to VanDoorn and Eklund (2013), Facebook as an open and synchronous internet platform is a form of computer-mediated communication (CMC) which has different possibilities to meet the specific learning needs for distance students. This medium, as Ryan and Xenos (2011) reported, opened a new arena for educators to use social media to enhance learning outcomes. In the same way, there are several studies exploring the learners' attitude and satisfaction toward using Facebook as a medium of learning.

In an experimental study employing questionnaire and semi-structured interview, Eren (2012) found that students have a very positive attitude towards the use of Facebook activity as a supplement to the language classroom. However, it was reported that traditional classroom-based language learning had been a backbone for language education.

Furthermore, Akbari et al. (2012) investigated Iranian Ph.D. students' attitudes enrolled in an online English course via Facebook. The results indicated students' positive attitude toward Facebook and regarded it as an effective formal education tool.

In another study, Bsharah et al. (2014) explored Jordanian university students' use of Facebook and their perceptions of their social intelligence employing a cross-sectional survey design on 282 students. They found that the use of Facebook might benefit students' social competencies and intelligence.

Considering the use of other learning applications, Amry (2014) and Maniar and Modi (2014) sought to explore the impact of using WhatsApp mobile learning activities on the achievement and attitudes of online students and reported positive achievements and attitudes of students towards this application.

Cheta and Yinka (2016) examined the position of students on the use of social media for educational purposes by conducting a study at the University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria. They found that students are highly motivated by the need to find and bound with new peers and potential social groups. Furthermore, the study found that respondents' preference for social media was in the following ranked order: Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Skype, YouTube, Opera Mini, and WeChat. In terms of the attitude of students, respondents generally have a favorable attitude towards the use of social media. In the same line and a similar study in terms of the design and the context of the study, Williams and Adesope (2017) concluded learners' positive attitudes towards the use of social media for educational purposes.

Goel and Singh (2016) explored the relationship between student's beliefs and attitudes towards social media use in education on their academic performance. The results gleaned from a self-designed questionnaire scattered over a sample of management students from 3 private colleges and 2 private universities of Delhi NCR region. The study reported students' positive beliefs and attitudes towards social media for exchanging academic activities and academic performance. The students used social media mainly for sharing their assignments, projects, and learning experiences.

Al-Qaysi et al. (2019) investigated the students' attitudes towards using social media from the lenses of several attributes, including gender, age, governorate, year of study, social media application, experience, and interest. A total of 1307 students from eight different universities and colleges in Oman took part in the study through an online survey. The results showed that the study years and social media applications did not expose any significant effect on learners' attitudes. In the mentioned context, WhatsApp was reported as the most predominant application used for educational purposes.

Considering the research objective on exploring the role of Facebook in boosting learners' engagement, several studies have been conducted which indicated that using social media as an educational tool can lead to increased student engagement (Annetta et al., 2009; Chen et al., 2010; Dunne et al., 2012; Junco, 2012; Patera et al., 2008).

In the same line, Akbari et al. (2016) investigated the influences that using social networks for educational purposes have on learners' engagement, motivation, and learning. Implementing an experimental design by making a comparison between a control group using face to face education and an experimental group using the social network Facebook, this study found that the Facebook group had significantly higher levels of engagement and motivation after the course than the face-to-face group.

In Turkey, Elverici and Karadeniz (2018) explored the effects of using social media on social presence in foreign language teaching. They made use of Facebook to teach English lessons to 8th grade students. Employing a mixed research design, they concluded that students who were taught with Facebook had higher social presence in their foreign language lessons.

With respect to the current situation, Nadeak (2020) analyzed the effectiveness of distance learning using social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube at Indonesian Christian University during the Covid-19 Pandemic. The results indicated that distance learning using social media is only effective for theoretical and theoretical practical courses, whereas in practice courses and field courses, using social media is felt to be less effective.

Based on the researchers' viewpoints and observations, in the context of Iran, the administrators of language centers seem reluctant in exploring the use of various social media tools for education. Therefore, a need is felt to identify and understand students' attitudes towards the use of social networks for language learning during the current lockdown situation. Moreover, as it was mentioned, a bulk of research examined the role and effectiveness of Facebook in language learning and learners' engagement; however, there is a dearth of studies which investigate the current issue in the context of Iran through the lens of sociocultural perspective.

With this regard, the current study aims to explore the learners' attitudes toward using these tools, specifically the Facebook website, for language learning and the effectiveness of them in engaging the learners in the teaching process besides the other tools implemented by the researchers. Furthermore, learners' attitudes are analyzed based on sociocultural perspectives. Based on the mentioned objectives, the following research questions are posed.

### *Research Questions*

1. What are the learners' attitudes toward implementing Facebook and its effectiveness as the medium of instruction?
2. How can the members' attitudes be analyzed from a Sociocultural perspective?

## **Method**

### *Participants*

The purpose and the topic of the study were shared with learners in the What's App chat group which was created to be in close contact with the learners. The participants include 87 language learners, between 18 to 41 years old, at a language center for the college students in Fasa in Iran, who were learning English for conversation using Big Blue Button software in five online classes supervised by the researchers. Sixty four of these learners including 42 male and 22 female learners participated in the study and filled out the questionnaires and responded to the interview questions. They were the students of intermediate classes with an approximately homogenous level of proficiency.

### *Research design*

The present study enjoys a mixed quantitative-qualitative design to analyze learners' attitudes and viewpoints considering Facebook as a supplementary resource. As mentioned, the researchers' purpose was to make use of this tool to engage learners in the process of learning in the current quarantine situation in which there is no room to interact personally. Besides the language learning classes which were administered based on BigBlue platform, Facebook was used as a supplementary resource to engage learners and consolidate the points discussed in the classes.

To this end, learners were prompted to subscribe to the pages administered by some official institutes such as British Counsel to practice English and learn the points and hints in those pages and a specific page administered by the researchers to engage the learners in a stress-free environment to share their knowledge and discuss the points and topics previously mentioned in the virtual class. This page shares wall posts on grammatical points and vocabulary, provides topics for discussion and poses some mini-quizzes.

Different activities are provided by the administrators which cover different aspects of language learning form vocabulary training, checking grammatical structures of sentences to supplementary activities in order to consolidate the content provided in the e-learning classes which were provided under the title of the tutorial. Moreover, there was a section under the title of language reminders, comprised some tasks which ask the learners about the prepositions and basic sentence structures.

After a period of fifteen sessions of interaction with the learners through the BigBlue platform and subsidiary interactions through Facebook, an online version of the Facebook Online survey which was adopted from the Online Survey created and validated by Stevenson and Liu (2010) was shared with the users to seek their feedback on the process of their language learning concerning the content of the page. The survey seeks the respondents' views about the usability, advantages, and disadvantages of these webpages. Moreover, to probe students' reactions to Facebook and to find out about its benefits and limitations, the Effectiveness and Usefulness Survey, implemented by VanDoorn and Eklund (2013), was applied.

Since the questionnaires contained both the Likert scale items and open-ended questions, qualitative and quantitative data analysis were employed to explore the participants' responses. SPSS statistical package is used to calculate the frequency and chi-square and theme analysis as a form of content analysis is employed to analyze the qualitative data. To consolidate the quantitative findings and to elicit some other information necessary for data interpretation based on the sociocultural framework, an online semi-structured interview was conducted randomly with fifteen volunteers.

Throughout the semi-structured in-depth interviews, the participants were allowed sufficient time and opportunity to think and respond to the questions in detail fully and freely. In this way, the researchers could go beyond their viewpoints and learn about their typical language learning practices and move forward to form the subsequent questions. Their responses were recorded and transcribed for further data analysis.

In addition, the extensive field notes taken during the interaction with learners through Facebook and during the class time. In the interview sessions, the data obtained from the questionnaires and field notes were used to stimulate learners' recall of their ideas regarding their attitudes toward Facebook. This was used to help cross-check the in-depth interview and questionnaire data. In this way, to check the validity of the data and to prevent any misinterpretation, triangulation of the data was employed using multiple sources of data.

The data obtained from the interviews and field notes during the class time were coded and condensed into categories through several iterations, as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994). Data generated in each phase through interviews, observations, or notes taken during the discussion sessions resulted in tentative findings, caused some minor changes to the subsequent interviews and data generation. Therefore, the obtained data were adjusted as the new data were generated and tested against the emerging themes.

In this study, the role of the researchers was that of a participant as the observer, which was characterized by a period of intense social interaction with the participants. During this period of interaction data were collected by the researchers in the form of field notes, questionnaire items, and a verbatim transcription of the interviews recorded from the participants.

## Results

### *Phase I: Analysis of Current Users' Use of Facebook*

The purpose of the first questionnaire was to evaluate how the current user population used Facebook for language learning. This survey aimed to seek anonymous feedback from the users on their use of Facebook for language learning and revealed how and for what purposes users used Facebook. The questions focused on the areas, users visited most frequently, how often they interacted with other users in a nonnative language, and how this site affected their language learning.

Sixty-two users filled out the questionnaire, and their consent was taken to keep their answers confidential and use for the sake of a research paper. The summary of the questions and the descriptive analysis of their answers are illustrated in table 1. For each question the respondents are allowed to choose more than one answer; therefore, the total percentages of some questions are more than 100. Some of the questions which were not relevant to our analysis are omitted from the table.



**Table 1: The summary of the questionnaire items and the frequency of the responses**

Question content	Options and its frequency	Options and its frequency	Options and its frequency	Options and its frequency	Options and its frequency
Amount of time they were using Facebook	more than 6 months	3–6 months	1–3 months	less than 1 month	
	<b>64%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>13%</b>	
How they first hear about lg learning groups	friend/classmate	Teacher	search engine	Blog	read about it in a newspaper/ magazine
	<b>45%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>3%</b>
Reason to learn English	Business	For fun	Travel	For a class	
	<b>40%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>38%</b>	
major goals for coming to Facebook	learning vocabulary	share my interest	finding native speakers	accessing multimedia content	developing a social group
	<b>32%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>51%</b>
Most helpful areas of site	Vocabulary Training	Tutorials	L Reminder	People (chat)	Discussion Board
	<b>46%</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>21%</b>
Chatting with others of your TL	Always	Mostly	Rarely	with L1 speakers	
	<b>55%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>35%</b>	
Impact of using Facebook on daily use of TL	Being more confident to speak in L2	Being more confident to read in L2	Frequent use of new vocab.	No impact	
	<b>35%</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>26%</b>	

It seems that most of the participants are familiar with the Facebook environment for more than 6 months and this implies that they know the different applications and the facilities they are provided with. Since, there is a facility on Facebook which makes the members know about their friends' information, the pages each member liked or subscribed were suggested automatically to others. Therefore, the members became familiar with the pages on language learning through their friends' profiles.

The participants learn English for different reasons such as business, class, travel, and fun. Their main purposes to use Facebook is to share their interests with their friends, develop their social group relationship, find native speakers for chatting purposes, download multimedia contents, and learn English vocabularies.

The learners favor the chatting section, which provides them the means to interact with other users. Tutorial, vocabulary training, and language reminder were the other activities the learners' vote for. As it was shown in table 1, the learners preferred using the foreign language while chatting with others (55% of the respondents). 35% of the respondents believe that after joining these English

learning groups they became more confident to speak English, 47% to read in English and 63% of participants felt more confident to use the new vocabulary presented in Facebook activities.

### **Phase II: Effectiveness and Usefulness Survey**

In order to explore the students' perception of the effectiveness and usefulness of the Facebook language learning group, the online version of the Effectiveness and Usefulness Survey was shared and emailed to participants. The questions concerned user familiarity, communication, quality of the interactions, quality of feedback from the group administrators, and usefulness. Moreover, the educational use of these types of activities and communications are explored. The users were required to answer a 9-item questionnaire contained five Likert-scale questions and four short answer questions. The responses to the 5-point Likert-scale questions are summarized in the table 2.

**Table 2: The summary of the quantitative part of the usefulness and effectiveness questionnaire**

Question content	Extremely	Very	Somewhat	Only a little	Not at all
<b>Familiarity with Facebook features</b>	46%	34%	12%	8%	
<b>Reliability of Facebook</b>	22%	37%	19%	10%	12%
<b>Helpfulness</b>	52%	37%	6%	3%	2%
	<b>Every day</b>	<b>Every few days</b>	<b>Once a week</b>	<b>Once a month</b>	<b>Less than once a month</b>
<b>Amount of using Facebook</b>	46%	24%	23%	5%	2%
<b>Contacting the admin</b>	72%	14%	4%	6%	4%

As it can be inferred, totally 80% of the respondents declared that they are highly familiar with different features and applications of Facebook. 46% of them used this website every day and 24% visit the website every few days; while, there were different viewpoints with regard to their perception about Facebook as a reliable website. 89% of respondents considered these groups as helpful and 72% of the participants were in close contact and interaction with the administrators every day which reveal a high amount of engagement.

About 26% of the respondents used chat boxes to have an interaction with other members. Based on the interview with some of the respondents they noted that they preferred chat boxes when they wanted to interact with the members in a dialectic way. The other alternative they favor were wall posts, photos, messages, notifications, and status updates. This kind of interaction was in the form of the members' comments given on the status provided by the administrator.

Through open-ended questions, the users are required to explain the way the administrator was able to provide an adequate response to their questions. Analyzing the main themes of the respondents' comments, it was seen that the comments were in the form of immediate feedback provided by the administrators through directly commenting on the users' answers, not providing any prompt or notice to guide the users to give the correct answer by themselves.

With respect to this type of feedback, the respondents were satisfied; since they could find the answers very quickly; however, some of them believed that the direct and immediate answers may

not lead to learning. For example, one of the respondents declared that, "... *The answers to the tasks provided are sort of one-shot game, if you cannot give the right choice the admin or the others provide the correct response.*"

Another learner favors this type of feedback, declaring that "*finding the answer immediately is timesaving thanks to the admin reply*"; while, on the other hand, another learner declared that, "... *the quick correction by the admin deters me from thinking about the response of searching to find the correct choice*".

Besides learners' dissatisfaction with the explicit responses in the form of corrective feedback, the interaction between the admin and the users created an environment through which learners were in contact anywhere, anytime which they lack the formality available in formal face to face classroom interactions. Through the open-ended questions, learners posed some suggestions. The main points extracted from these suggestions implied the following points:

- The tasks and the contents should be provided based on a specific difficulty level, mainly in line with the contents provided in the classroom.
- The admin is suggested to collect the responses, provide prompts in the form of direct interactions, then wrap up the whole comments for the final answer.
- The authentic materials provided in the form of video clips and listening tasks were very alluring and conducive to learning. This type of task should be presented more than other forms of tasks.

With regard to the last point which required the participants to evaluate Facebook as an appropriate teaching tool, most of the respondents were in line with the proposed teaching procedure and voted positively. The first and foremost benefit of Facebook as a teaching tool that the learners recurrently referred to is the interaction among the learners and the administrator. The natural interaction is a distinctive feature of Facebook making it an appropriate teaching tool. These interactions are in the form of a text-based communication tool or the chat between the members.

## Discussion

This semester has been exceptional concerning learning and teaching remotely using online tools. The educators had to make new arrangements almost overnight to move all communication and interaction with parents, students, and colleagues into virtual platforms. According to a recent report by Lessila and Kairikko (2020), teachers experienced the transition to online teaching in rather different ways, depending on how familiar the teacher was with online learning. They reported that only 32% of the teachers considered themselves as experienced online teachers already before the transition and the rest learned by doing as there was no other alternative all over the 186 countries affected by school closures due to the pandemic.

According to Li and Lalani (2020), the head and the community curator of Media, interviewed at World Economic Forum, in some contexts the unplanned and rapid move to online learning, with no training, insufficient bandwidth, and little preparation resulted in self-guided online pedagogy which needs evaluation and inspection. As an innovative self-directed teaching plan, applying Facebook as a supplementary tool to engage learners in the current study seems a successful experience, concerning the learners' attitudes.

The results of the present study indicated that learners' viewed Facebook as an effective learning tool and took a positive attitude toward it. The results shed light on the bulk of research done before the pandemic on using Web.2 technology in language learning –Connolly et al., 2019; Chen, 2018;



McCarthy, 2010; and Bosch, 2009, as some examples—. Furthermore, concerning the current situation, the results are discordant with those indicated by Abbasi et al. (2020), favoring face to face interaction because of the lack of learners' interest in online learning.

Wang and Vásquez (2012) denoted that

... second language learning/acquisition research has been experiencing a paradigm shift, moving from a cognitive orientation to social orientation, from classroom contexts to naturalistic settings, from an acquisition metaphor to a participation metaphor, and from L2 learning to L2 use (Block, 2003; Firth & Wagner, 1997). Interestingly, this paradigm shift in SLA research seems to be in alignment with many of the fundamental attributes of Web 2.0 technology (such as ease of participation, communication, information sharing, and collaboration). (p. 413)

In line with the results of the present study, Al-Shehri (2011) mentioned that social networking sites have the potential to make learning more student-centered by providing room for students' interactions. As it was seen, implementing Facebook actualized the notion of "community" among language learners, as denoted by Mills (2011), by improving the relationship among individual learners. In line with what observed in the present study, Sun et al. (2008) and Naibaho (2019) asserted that students feel more comfortable to ask questions and express opinions through social media. Moreover, Nadeak and Naibaho (2020) stated that online learning eliminates awkward feelings so students can express their thoughts and ask questions freely. This is in line with the Vygotskian Sociocultural theory, which states that social interaction and cultural artifacts within one's environment play a fundamental role in the process of L2 cognitive development. According to Lantolf (2000) and Lantolf and Thorne (2006), social interaction is considered as an integral process in language learning. The Vygotskian Sociocultural theory, as Cheon (2008) cited, claims that human cognition is formed through social activity and learning a second language is understood "as a semiotic process attributable to participation in social activities rather than internal mental processes solely by the individual" (p. 1).

As it was observed, through Facebook interactions, the social interaction is broadened to communication among the members' different social background and socioeconomic status. The interactions were not confined to face to face interactions in the classroom; however, Facebook provided an opportunity for diverse learners to join and participate in the class discussion on different topics without any spatial and temporal limitations. The form of learners' engagement sets the context for the learners to negotiate and construct meaning based on their identity and prior knowledge. This led to self-initiated learning, as Yu et al. (2010) noted, in which "individuals create a system of information and support by building and nurturing personal links" (p. 1494).

Moreover, in the present study, based on the researchers' class observations, learning took place when there was an interaction between the learner and the teachers and in cooperation with peers. This interaction mostly took the form of novice-expert interaction or the instruction from a more knowledgeable peer. According to Akbari et al. (2016) students' engagement and motivation can increase while they are involved through social networks which can lead to more fruitful and practical language learning experiences. In the same line, Rosenshine (1982) argued that learning occurs when there is a learning environment which is designed to encourages students' active participation and interaction.

Furthermore, Facebook interactions provided a means for mediating learning as a social activity. This point was observed when a status or a new remark was posted on the wall of any group members, different types of interactions took place which enabled the learners to construct meaning.

The interactions and form of engagement are in line with the notion of the zone of proximal development developed by Vygotsky (1978), since learners' interaction either initiated by the

administrator as the expert and the group members as the novice or the peers, in general, formed means of moving the learners toward their potential capability. VanDoorn and Eklund (2013) referred to Facebook as a learning tool and a learning environment to offer a win-win which allows “institutions to offer dual-mode courses across on-and-off campus cohorts and develop learning communities that facilitate positive learning outcomes (p. 1).

In the engagement activities and consolidating tasks provided by the teachers as the more knowledgeable and significant others through Facebook wall posts, they scaffolded the learners’ learning process by creating an atmosphere in which the teacher provide the means for the students’ higher engagement in classroom tasks which can be conducive to better achievement in terms of skills and knowledge. The scaffolding, as Donato (1994) denoted, forms an instructional structure whereby the teacher models the desired learning strategy or task then gradually shifts responsibility to the students.

In this study, scaffolding through the collaborative form of learners’ engagement, as Cheon (2008) mentioned, acknowledges the benefits of peer interaction for L2 development by supporting the idea that expertise may be distributed among individuals rather than residing in one individual. The instructions employed dialogically constituted an inter-psychological mechanism that promotes the learners’ internalization of the knowledge which was co-constructed in a shared activity.

Therefore, it can be inferred that Facebook offers language learners the potential for a collaboration-oriented and community-based learning environment. This is in line with the results achieved by Antenos-Conforti (2009), Dippold (2009), Kessler (2009), Ducate and Lomicka (2005), Tu et al. (2008). Facebook can be deemed as an effective tool for learners’ engagement because its structure lies in the nature of the social interaction between two or more people with different levels of skills and knowledge. Teachers can use this tool to help learners to move into and through the next layer of knowledge or understanding, as Vygotsky (1978) mentioned. Moreover, according to Roblyer et al. (2010), Facebook can improve social connectedness with learners.

According to Akbari et al. (2016), because of the learners’ engagements in different types of activities posed by social networks, “it may be expected that students become more connected to the world outside their classroom, which promotes more genuine interaction with various resources, coaches, peers and experts” (p. 3).

In line with what was observed in the current study, As Woo et al. (2007) stated, Facebook can promote constructivist learning through authentic activities related to the vast amount of information available on the Internet. Instructors can provide students with access to a substantial variety of tasks available in a combination of formats, such as text, graphics, audio, and video. Moreover, these multimedia resources can contribute to an increase in students’ motivation.

The way Facebook was employed in the current study can be assumed as an example of “online collaborative space” also known as “computer-supported collaborative learning (CSCL)” (Resta & Laferriere, 2007) which provides learners the chance to work together in an interactive, flexible online environment and align to sociocultural perspective. As it was seen, Facebook set the context for communication using a variety of ways, including text, speech, and multimedia contents which is in line with the Vygotsky’s theory of the importance of language use for learning as the main principle of sociocultural theory.

In this study, Facebook was a platform to feed learners with tasks based on their interests and needs, and provide opportunities for their interactions and collaboration in a reflective way and as Bonk and Cunningham (1998) mentioned, it facilitates authentic experiences and learning communities for learners in the so-called online spaces.

## Conclusions, implications and limitations

The current study explored the Facebook users' attitudes toward using this tool for language learning and tried to analyze the usefulness of this medium as an engagement technique besides the other educational means implemented during the Covid-19 quarantine. Based on the qualitative data gleaned from the learners' self-reports throughout the semi-structured interviews, field notes and the researchers' observations and the quantitative results of the questionnaires, it was concluded that using Facebook as a medium for language learning was very effective in increasing the confidence of the participants of the study engaging them in a motivating way, and consolidating the points discussed previously in the class sessions. The learners favored the chatting section, which provides them the means to interact with other users. Tutorial, vocabulary training, and language reminder were the other activities the learners used frequently to boost their knowledge of the language.

In conclusion, it was revealed that Facebook provided an interpersonal and interactive environment through which learners can interact naturally. It works as a way of fostering social interaction between the learners. In line with the sociocultural perspective, Facebook, as a powerful mediating learning tool, is regarded as an affordance of opportunities for students to collaborate and share knowledge. The interactions between the learners and the teacher were regarded as scaffolding by a significant other which occurred in an online collaborative learning space.

Based on the results, it is suggested that the educational actors including the teachers, tutors, administrators make use of social networking media such as Facebook, as an efficient and promising medium for the educational process and self-development. Moreover, Facebook can have a potential role in promoting L2 teaching and learning thanks to its popularity and prevalence in students' lives. During the current situation of virtual education because of the pandemic lockdown, this medium can serve as an effective solution to engage the learners in a motivating and entertaining environment that help learners interact naturally and lessen their quarantine anxiety.

The main limitations of our research were that it was carried out on a small scale and used a limited population which may deter a strong generalization of the results of the study. Another obstacle in conducting this research was that in Iran Facebook is filtered and the learners had to use anti-filter applications to use this website which was a burden and decreased their net speed.

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