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## USING FACEBOOK MOVIE CLUB TO DEVELOP 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY SKILLS

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*The article deals with the experience of using Facebook discussion group as a platform for the development of 21<sup>st</sup> century life skills, such as critical thinking, communicative, social and computer skills with University students. The choice of Facebook group as a learning tool is explained by its user-friendliness, multi-functional character and growing popularity with young people. The procedure of administering and monitoring Facebook Movie Club discussion is described. After getting registered in the closed discussion group, the students are supposed to upload their initial post, read and comment on at least two other posts, respond to the comments of instructors and group mates or start a new discussion thread. They are also introduced to the conditions of the discussion – to be open and friendly, polite and tolerant of other participants' opinions. Assessment criteria are provided in the Grading Rubric. The advantages of using Facebook discussion are specified, among which are its student-centeredness, real life character of learning and motivational potential. Problems arising in the process of the discussion are connected with the necessity of constant monitoring on the part of the instructors in order to exclude inappropriate content and to keep the track of the discussion. Qualitative analysis of the students' feedback proves positive results and effectiveness of the discussion.*

*Key words: Facebook Movie Club discussion, 21<sup>st</sup> century life skills, critical thinking, communicative skills, social skills, computer-based literacy*

*У статті розглядається досвід використання дискусійної групи Facebook як платформи для розвитку життєвих навичок 21<sup>го</sup> століття, таких як критичне мислення, комунікативні, соціальні та комп'ютерні навички студентів університету. Вибір групи Facebook як інструменту навчання пояснюється його зручним використанням, багатофункціональним характером та зростаючою популярністю серед молоді. Описано процедуру адміністрування та моніторингу дискусії Facebook Movie Club. Після реєстрації в закритій групі обговорень, студенти повинні завантажити свій початковий*

*пост, читати та коментувати принаймні дві публікації, відповідати на коментарі інструкторів та друзів, або розпочати нову дискусію. Вони також беруть участь в обговоренні, яке є відкритим та дружнім, ввічливим та толерантним до думки інших учасників. Критерії оцінки представлені в категорії «Оцінка». Викладені переваги обговорення в Facebook, серед яких студент перебуває в центрі уваги, представлений реальний життєвий характер навчання та мотиваційний потенціал. Проблеми, що виникають у процесі обговорення, пов'язані з необхідністю постійного моніторингу з боку інструкторів з метою виключення невідповідного вмісту та ведення дискусії. Якісний аналіз відгуків студентів свідчить про позитивні результати та ефективність дискусії.*

*Ключові слова: клуб для обговорення фільмів у Facebook, життєві навички 21<sup>го</sup> століття, критичне мислення, комунікативні навички, соціальні навички, комп'ютерна грамотність.*

### **Introduction**

According to the New National Curriculum, adopted in 2017, computer-based literacy and communication skills are among basic competencies which students of Ukrainian secondary schools have to acquire during the years of studying [2]. Using computer as an educational tool, students are supposed to develop communicative and social skills as well as autonomous learning. In view of these latest requirements, using Facebook discussion in teacher training seems to be one of the most effective ways of achieving the set goals. The choice of Facebook can be accounted for by its constantly growing popularity with Ukrainian youth. According to the latest statistics, there are over 9 million monthly active Facebook users in Ukraine. While this network is widely used for private communication and exchange of information, familiarity of students with its interface and multiple functions makes it suitable for academic use.

Some aspects of educational potential of Facebook have been recently studied. Thus, Blair and Serafini explored the role of Facebook in implementing social learning [3]; Bowman and Aksaoglu looked upon Facebook as a tool for supplementing cognitive and affective learning, promoting collaboration, communication and engagement in the classroom [4]; Hlazunov and Hlazunova studied academic potential of social networks and online resources for teaching writing [1]; Hewitt and Forte looked at the role of Facebook in changing the student-faculty relationship [6]; Cunga, Van Oer and Kantopodis regarded it as a platform for teacher communication [5]. At the same time, the potential of Facebook discussion in the format of a Movie Club hasn't been considered yet.

The aim of the article is to present qualitative analysis of the authors' experience of conducting a Facebook Movie Club discussion at the Mykhailo Kotsiubynsky Vinnytsia State Pedagogical University (VSPU) in order to find out advantages and drawbacks of the use of the social network as a discussion platform and point out directions for its improvement.

The idea of having an online class discussion with the participation of the 2<sup>nd</sup>-year students of VSPU was suggested by Dr. David Powell of Missouri State

Pedagogical University (USA) back in 2015, after his visit to Ukraine. He had already moderated many class discussion forums on his course web pages on Moodle, while for his Ukrainian colleagues, Olena Zmiyevska and Tamara Glazunova, it was new experience. Since VSPU did not have a university-sponsored discussion platform, it was decided to have the discussion in a closed group in Facebook. The choice of the movie for the discussion was prompted by the Curriculum of the Faculty of foreign languages. The movie under discussion was «Pay it Forward». It is a 2000 American drama-romance film set in Las Vegas in the present day, and it chronicles 12-year-old Trevor McKinney's who is going to change the world for the better.

The discussion started in May 19, 2015, and lasted for a week. The discussion group of 14 students and 3 moderators was created and clear ground rules were set up. Before the beginning of the discussion clear expectations were stated. All the students were supposed to write an initial post of 150–300 words about their impression of the movie in the form of a solid paragraph of informal English, using proper punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and reasonable spoken grammar. It was required that in their initial post the students should talk about one main point at a time. They were to stay focused, but illustrate their points with rich detail from the movie. They also had to post at least two replies, a bit shorter than 100 words, but still, quite substantive posts. They could also initiate a new discussion thread. They were to exchange ideas and discuss from their own perspective. Every new post was to carry the conversation forward with new examples, elaboration, or perspective – not just to be a string of «I agree with what she said». They had to specify what in particular prompted the agreement, how they had arrived at their conclusion or what they had experienced to support it. One of the main conditions was to be open and friendly, polite and tolerant of other students' opinions.

The students were also informed of the assessment criteria, worked out by Dr. Powell and presented in the form of the following rubric.

Table 1

### Grading Rubric for Facebook Discussion

<i>Standard</i>	<i>Does not address standard (0 pts)</i>	<i>Minimally addresses standard (5 points)</i>	<i>Meets or exceeds standard (10 points)</i>
<i>Quality of detail</i>	No post or post does not address topic	Original post on topic with <i>some</i> detail from relevant to topic, personal experience and/or class resources.	Original post on topic with <i>rich</i> detail relevant to topic, personal experience and/or class resources
<i>Language</i>	Serious problems with several categories of usage and composition	Intermittent problems with multiple categories of usage and composition <i>or</i> many repetitions of one or two problems	Minimal minor issues with usage and composition

Continuation table 1

<i>Length of post</i>	No post or post does not address topic	<i>Too short</i> ; Just a topic sentence or two <i>or</i> <i>Too long</i> : More than 400 words. Do not ramble.	<i>Starter post</i> : at least 6–8 sentences/100–300 words, good focus on topic <i>Follow-up Comment</i> : at least 4–5 sentences (50–60 words) – specific focus on one clear idea with detail
<i>Number of posts</i>	No post or post does not address topic	Fewer than minimum number of posts <i>or</i> Did not reply to direct question from instructor	One starter post, two replies to students, and one reply to <u>each</u> instructor post* If instructor asks you a question you must respond.
<i>New Contribution to Conversation</i>	Off task <i>or</i> Simple statement of agreement or disagreement	Post refers to new information or perspective but does not elaborate or explore the topic.	Post conveys a clear sense of new information or perspective with new details or examples to extend the conversation.
<i>Personal Point of View</i>	Unoriginal restatement of textbook or other’s points of view.	Simplistic statements of preference or uncritical, knee-jerk responses. Little real sense of authentic identification with viewpoint being described	Clear sense of authentic personal identification with viewpoints with details from personal experience, elaborating on personal values or perspectives.
Student’s initial post – 1–4 points; Student’s reply to Instructor A – 1–2 points; Student’s reply to Instructor B – 1–2points; Student’s reply to student 1 – 1 point; Student’s reply to student 2 – 1 point;			

Having started with the initial posts, the discussion drifted from American schools to drug/alcohol abuse, from teacher-parent to parent-child relations, from culture in its broader sense, to values, national cuisines etc.

Although the members of the discussion represented different cultures, they shared:

➤ *common humanistic values and culture:*

Lena: *One thing that I drew from the film was that anybody could change the world. You don't need to be an adult or rich. It can be anybody even a little kid, all it takes is one act*

of kindness and that's where the chain begins.

David: *I wonder when watching a movie with an ear to culture, how the amount of swearing in modern American movies compares across cultures. I was raised in a household with zero swearing. I have also worked in restaurants that make Hell's Kitchen's Chef Gordon Ramsey seem restrained. How does this compare to Ukrainian or Russian speech?*

Victoria: *...young people avoid swearing. I didn't hear swearing in Ukrainians movies too. I have never heard my parents using rude words...*

➤ **common family values:**

Helen: *I always try to believe in good things, like my grandmother, she is a great example of it. She does everything without expecting something in return.*

➤ **common problems - generation gap, neglected children, child abuse, alcoholism, homeless people:**

David: *Trevor was an example of what is known in America as a «latchkey child». According to a survey reported by Bloomberg, one American child out of nine comes home to an empty house.*

David: *Abused children are very likely to become abusive parents and spouses, who then continue the cycle generation after generation. This is not a uniquely American problem. It exists in all cultures and countries in roughly the same frequencies. It is a human problem.*

Tania: *Some parents can't accept any other ideas, opinions or values except theirs. On the other hand, children can't or don't want to understand their parents and as a result generational conflict arises.*

David: *Surprise, surprise, we turned out to be just as «stuck in our ways» and incomprehensible to our children and grandchildren as we thought our own parents were in our time. The solution to the generation gap is very simple: time marches on (generation gap).*

Sasha: *I think that people start to drink when they have problems, they are desperate and they do not know how to solve them. They want to cure everything with alcohol but in fact the situation only becomes worse.*

Ira: *In Ukraine there is a stereotype that all the homeless people drink alcohol or take drugs but this is not true. In Lviv the volunteers have discovered that one out of ten bums has a diploma of high education, but they can't find a job.*

David: *In 2013, there were more than 610,000 homeless people in the U.S. on any given night in January. About 2/3 of them were living in shelters that provided temporary nightly beds and sometimes one or two meals.*

When the discussion was driving to its close, the students were invited to answer the following questions by way of feedback:

1. What was different about the Facebook class, compared to «regular» classes?
2. Did you find the Facebook class instructive? In what particular way?
3. Would you like to have another Facebook class in this course or some future course?
4. What should be done the same or differently for a Facebook class in the future?
5. Did you find this format difficult to access or work with?

The feedback of the students was generally positive – all of the participants admitted it was a great and unforgettable communication experience. The students

found the Facebook discussion instructive as they improved their English language writing and discussion skills due to the extensive communication practice and the constructive feedback from the moderators. For many of them it was a unique opportunity to communicate with a native speaker and to learn about the American culture «first hand». They especially enjoyed free and relaxed mode of interaction, as they could visit and revisit the group page at any suitable time and work at their own pace. Accessibility of the Facebook discussion group page and availability of reference and assessment materials also contributed to the effectiveness of the discussion. The participants expressed their desire to take part in online discussions of the same kind in future.

Having analyzed the procedure of the Facebook discussion, we have arrived at the conclusion that it has the following advantages:

- Facebook discussion makes learning student-centered, as students are given a choice of topics for discussion, clear discussion guidance instructions and assessment criteria for self- and peer-assessment; the instructors' participation is minimized; students feel more responsible for the quality of their posts; students' needs and interests are taken into account.

- It caters for multiple intelligences (interpersonal, intrapersonal, verbal-linguistic, visual) as it promotes a stronger class community, develops trust between students; reduces anxiety with shy students; engages students in search of some extra materials due to the extra time they have to think over their initial post and responses; student-friendly interface of Facebook also attracts students.

- Facebook discussion develops critical thinking skills as students have to develop their writing logically, support their ideas with good arguments, reply to their peers' posts accordingly.

- It motivates students, making the process of learning interactive and engaging and giving the students a sense of achievement.

- The use of one of the most popular networks in the world gives the discussion a real life character.

Still, we also have to be aware of possible pitfalls connected with conducting the Facebook discussion:

- ✓ It is not always easy to keep the track of the discussion due to the format of the Facebook group; the discussion can go off topic.

- ✓ Some students with poor writing skills are too shy and are afraid of making mistakes.

- ✓ Some students tend to respond in an overall manner, without providing specific details or arguments.

- ✓ Students with lack of access to Internet or computers are disadvantaged;

- ✓ The discussion requires constant supervision on the part of the moderators for inappropriate content.

## **Conclusions**

As a result of the qualitative analysis of the procedure of the Movie Club

Discussion with the use of Facebook group as a discussion platform at the Foreign Languages Department of Mykhailo Kotsiubynsky Vinnytsia State Pedagogical University, we have arrived at the conclusion that Facebook discussion can be a powerful tool for developing English language writing and thinking skills due to its real life character, student-centered format and motivational potential. Still, some suggestions concerning its further improvement can be made. First of all, instructors' participation in the discussion should be minimized to increase the students' communication opportunities. Besides, students should be involved into the process of the selection of the movie, which could make them more engaged at the preparatory stage and motivated during the discussion. Finally, as this kind of discussion requires tolerance, tact and respect from its participants, development of emotional intelligence with students should be a priority. Conducting an online Movie Club discussion on a regular longer-term basis with quantitative analysis of its results can be performed in future.

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