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ΔΙΔΑΚΤΙΚΗ ΤΗΣ ΑΓΓΛΙΚΗΣ ΩΣ ΞΕΝΗΣ ΓΛΩΣΣΑΣ

Postgraduate Dissertation

The use of social media platforms in EFL teaching during the
pandemic of Covid-19

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Patras, Greece, May, 2023

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The use of social media platforms in EFL teaching during the pandemic of Covid-19

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This dissertation is dedicated to my professors and to my supervisor who helped and guided me throughout my studies in EAP. To my friend Kallia who supported me, stood by me the last two years and inspired me to move forward. Last but not least, this dissertation is dedicated to my husband and my two children. I want to teach them always to fight for their dreams and never give up no matter how hard their efforts will be.

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought significant disruptions to the traditional educational landscape, as well as in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching and learning. In this context, the integration of blogs and social media platforms has emerged as a promising approach to enhancing EFL instruction, fostering learner engagement, and facilitating effective communication and collaboration. This study explores the potential benefits, challenges, and strategies for integrating blogs and social media into the EFL teaching and learning procedure during the pandemic period. Drawing on existing research and pedagogical practices, this dissertation provides insights into how blogs and social media can be leveraged to improve various language skills, create interactive learning environments, and promote learner autonomy and creativity on a remote teaching context. Additionally, considerations related to privacy, digital literacy, and effective implementation are discussed.

The purpose of this research was to examine the experiences and perceptions of EFL teachers regarding the use of social media platforms, the benefits and challenges associated with their integration, and the effectiveness of such integration in improving students' English language skills.

The data obtained from the research conducted among 41 foreign language teachers of Primary and Secondary Education of Attica regarding the degree of utilization of social networks in their course, can be characterized as positive, as it turned out that the majority of respondents are familiar with the use of social networks both for teaching in the classroom and for the search of supportive educational material.

The findings indicate that the integration of social media in EFL classes during the pandemic period has brought about several benefits. The participants agreed that using social media platforms helped improve students' abilities in reading, writing, and speaking English, encouraged participation and collaboration, and increased students' interest in the English language. Moreover, many participants felt that using social media made English teaching and learning more effective and enhanced their productivity as teachers. However, the study also identified various challenges associated with the integration of social media platforms. These challenges include the lack of accessibility to social networking sites in schools, limited time to prepare materials based on social media, and the lack of technical support.

Some concerns were raised about students' attention and the need to cover a substantial amount of course material while incorporating social media into the curriculum.

Keywords

Social Media, Blogs, Communication, Teaching and Learning procedure, Pandemic

Η χρήση των κοινωνικών δικτύων στη διδασκαλία της Αγγλικής γλώσσας την περίοδο της πανδημίας του Covid-19

Περίληψη

Η πανδημία του COVID-19 έχει επέφερε σημαντικές αλλαγές στο παραδοσιακό εκπαιδευτικό τοπίο, όπως και στη διδασκαλία και εκμάθηση των Αγγλικών ως Ξένης Γλώσσας (EFL). Σε αυτό το πλαίσιο, η ενσωμάτωση ιστολογίων και πλατφορμών μέσων κοινωνικής δικτύωσης έχει αναδειχθεί ως μια πολλά υποσχόμενη προσέγγιση για τη βελτίωση της διδασκαλίας της Αγγλικής Γλώσσας, την προώθηση της συμμετοχής των μαθητών και τη διευκόλυνση της αποτελεσματικής επικοινωνίας και συνεργασίας. Αυτή η εργασία, διερευνά τα πιθανά οφέλη, τις προκλήσεις και τις στρατηγικές για την ενσωμάτωση ιστολογίων και μέσων κοινωνικής δικτύωσης στη διαδικασία διδασκαλίας και εκμάθησης της Αγγλικής Γλώσσας κατά την περίοδο της πανδημίας. Βασιζόμενη σε υπάρχουσες ερευνητικές και παιδαγωγικές πρακτικές, αυτή η διπλωματική εργασία παρέχει πληροφορίες για το πώς τα ιστολόγια και τα μέσα κοινωνικής δικτύωσης μπορούν να αξιοποιηθούν για τη βελτίωση των διαφόρων γλωσσικών δεξιοτήτων, τη δημιουργία διαδραστικών περιβαλλόντων μάθησης και την προώθηση της αυτονομίας και της δημιουργικότητας των μαθητών σε ένα απομακρυσμένο πλαίσιο διδασκαλίας. Επιπλέον, αναλύονται ζητήματα που σχετίζονται με την ιδιωτικότητα, τον ψηφιακό προγραμματισμό και την αποτελεσματική εφαρμογή.

Σκοπός της παρούσας έρευνας ήταν να εξετάσει τις αντιλήψεις των καθηγητών της Αγγλικής Γλώσσας σχετικά με τη χρήση των ιστολογίων και των μέσων κοινωνικής δικτύωσης στην διδασκαλία της Αγγλικής Γλώσσας ως δεύτερη ξένη γλώσσα. Τα στοιχεία που συλλέχθηκαν από την έρευνα που διεξάχθηκε μεταξύ 41 καθηγητών Αγγλικής Πρωτοβάθμιας και Δευτεροβάθμιας Εκπαίδευσης στην Αττική, σχετικά με τον βαθμό αξιοποίησης των κοινωνικών δικτύων στην πορεία τους, μπορούν να χαρακτηριστούν θετικά, καθώς προέκυψε ότι η πλειοψηφία των ερωτηθέντων είναι εξοικειωμένοι με τη χρήση των κοινωνικών δικτύων τόσο για διδασκαλία στην τάξη όσο και για αναζήτηση υποστηρικτικού εκπαιδευτικού υλικού.

Η μελέτη εξετάζει τις εμπειρίες και τις αντιλήψεις των καθηγητών Αγγλικής Γλώσσας σχετικά με τη χρήση των πλατφορμών κοινωνικής δικτύωσης, τα οφέλη και τις προκλήσεις

που συνδέονται με την ένταξή τους και την αποτελεσματικότητα αυτής της ένταξης στη βελτίωση των δεξιοτήτων Αγγλικής γλώσσας των μαθητών.

Τα ευρήματα δείχνουν ότι η ενσωμάτωση των μέσων κοινωνικής δικτύωσης στα μαθήματα Αγγλικής γλώσσας κατά την περίοδο της πανδημίας έχει επιφέρει πολλά οφέλη. Οι συμμετέχοντες συμφώνησαν ότι η χρήση πλατφορμών μέσων κοινωνικής δικτύωσης βοήθησε στη βελτίωση των ικανοτήτων των μαθητών στην ανάγνωση, γραφή και ομιλία, ενθάρρυνε τη συμμετοχή και τη συνεργασία και αύξησε το ενδιαφέρον των μαθητών για την Αγγλική γλώσσα. Επιπλέον, πολλοί συμμετέχοντες θεώρησαν ότι η χρήση των μέσων κοινωνικής δικτύωσης έκανε τη διδασκαλία και την εκμάθηση των Αγγλικών πιο αποτελεσματική και ενίσχυσε την παραγωγικότητά τους ως εκπαιδευτικοί.

Ωστόσο, η μελέτη εντόπισε επίσης διάφορες προκλήσεις που σχετίζονται με την ενοποίηση των πλατφορμών κοινωνικής δικτύωσης. Αυτές οι προκλήσεις περιλάμβαναν την έλλειψη πρόσβασης σε ιστότοπους κοινωνικής δικτύωσης στα σχολεία, τον περιορισμένο χρόνο προετοιμασίας υλικού με βάση τα μέσα κοινωνικής δικτύωσης και την έλλειψη τεχνικής υποστήριξης. Εκφράστηκαν, επίσης και ορισμένες ανησυχίες σχετικά με την προσοχή των μαθητών και την ανάγκη κάλυψης σημαντικού όγκου υλικού μαθήματος με ταυτόχρονη ενσωμάτωση των μέσων κοινωνικής δικτύωσης στο πρόγραμμα σπουδών.

Λέξεις – Κλειδιά

Μέσα Κοινωνικής Δικτύωσης, Ιστολόγια, Επικοινωνία, Διδασκαλία και Εκμάθηση, Πανδημία,

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on education systems worldwide. Traditional methods of teaching and learning have been disrupted, forcing educators to find innovative ways to continue providing quality education to students. In this context, the integration of social media platforms into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching and learning has gained significant attention. Social media platforms have become an integral part of our daily lives, offering opportunities for communication, collaboration, and knowledge sharing. Exploring how and to what extent social media can be integrated into the EFL teaching and learning procedure during a pandemic period is crucial for effective educational practices in the digital age.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced educational institutions to shift to remote or hybrid learning models, challenging educators to adapt their instructional strategies to the online environment. Traditional face-to-face interactions and classroom activities have been replaced by virtual platforms and digital tools. In this new educational landscape, the potential of social media platforms to support EFL teaching and learning deserves attention. However, the extent to which social media can be effectively integrated into the EFL teaching and learning procedure during a pandemic period remains an area of inquiry. Understanding the possibilities, challenges, and best practices associated with this integration is crucial for ensuring effective language learning outcomes.

1.3 Research Questions

To address the aforementioned problem, this dissertation aims to investigate the following research questions:

- How have traditional methods of EFL teaching and learning been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic?
- In what ways can social media platforms be integrated into the EFL teaching and learning procedure during a pandemic period?

- What are the potential benefits and challenges of integrating social media platforms into EFL teaching and learning during a pandemic period?
- What strategies and best practices can be employed to effectively integrate social media platforms into the EFL teaching and learning procedure during a pandemic period?

1.4 Objectives

The main objectives of this dissertation are as follows:

- To examine the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on traditional EFL teaching and learning methods.

To explore the potential of social media platforms for integration into the EFL teaching and learning procedure during a pandemic period.

- To identify the benefits and challenges associated with integrating social media platforms into EFL teaching and learning during a pandemic period.
- To propose strategies and best practices for effectively integrating social media platforms into the EFL teaching and learning procedure during a pandemic period.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study holds significance in several ways. Firstly, it addresses the need to adapt EFL teaching and learning approaches to the changing educational landscape brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. By exploring the integration of social media platforms, educators can make informed decisions about incorporating innovative technologies into their instructional practices. Secondly, the findings of this study will contribute to the existing literature on digital pedagogy and the use of social media in education. It will provide insights into the potential benefits, challenges, and strategies related to the integration of social media platforms into EFL teaching and learning during a pandemic period. Lastly, this study will provide practical implications and recommendations for educators, helping them navigate the complexities of online teaching and create engaging and effective learning experiences for EFL students.

1.6 Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation is organized into six chapters to address the research questions and objectives. Chapter 1 briefly introduces the reader to the aims and objectives of this dissertation. Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive literature review, exploring the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on traditional EFL teaching and learning and examining the theoretical foundations and research related to the integration of social media platforms in education. Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology, describing the research design, data collection methods, and analysis procedures employed in the study. Chapter 4 presents the findings and analysis of the study, while Chapter 5 discusses the implications of the findings. Finally, Chapter 6 provides a concise summary of the dissertation, concludes the study and provides possible implications of the study.

In summary, this introductory chapter sets the stage for the dissertation, highlighting the significance of exploring the integration of social media platforms into EFL teaching and learning during the pandemic period. The research questions and objectives are outlined, and the structure of the dissertation is presented. By investigating these aspects, this study aims to contribute to the body of knowledge surrounding digital pedagogy and provide practical insights for EFL educators navigating the challenges of remote teaching and learning during a pandemic period.¹

¹ This dissertation is an updated version of a study which started in 2021

2. Literature review

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought about unprecedented challenges to the field of education, requiring educators to adapt to remote and online teaching methods. Social media platforms have gained prominence as tools for communication, collaboration, and learning during this time. In the realm of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching, educators have turned to various social media platforms to facilitate language learning. This literature review aims to explore the teachers' views regarding the utilization of social media platforms in EFL teaching during the pandemic.

Throughout chapter 2, the author will try to analyze the terms “social media”, “blogs” and “You Tube”. It will be done by analyzing the advantages and disadvantages of them. Furthermore, the historical evolution of these terms will be researched, and the author will try to give a specific definition for them. At the end of the chapter, the remote status of teaching and learning in the Corona Virus era will be described and defined.

2.1 Definition and historical evolution of social media

This chapter presents a review of the literature on the integration of social media platforms into the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teaching and learning procedure during the COVID-19 pandemic. It examines the impact of the pandemic on traditional teaching methods, explores the theoretical foundations of social media integration, and discusses the benefits and challenges associated with incorporating social media platforms in EFL instruction.

The term “social media” refers to a digital communication platform or network that enables users to create, share, and interact with content, information, and other users. It allows individuals to connect with others, express themselves, and engage in various forms of online communication, such as text, images, videos, and links. Social media platforms facilitate both personal and professional interactions, enabling users to build relationships, exchange ideas, stay informed about current events, and participate in virtual communities based on shared interests or connections. These platforms have revolutionized the way people communicate, share information, and engage with each other on a global scale (Fuchs, C.

2014). According to Mandiberg (2012), the historical evolution of social media can be traced through several key phases:

- **Early Internet Forums and Bulletin Boards (1980s-1990s):** The concept of online communication and community-building began with early internet forums and bulletin boards. Users could engage in discussions on various topics, but interactions were relatively limited due to the text-based nature of these platforms.
- **Emergence of Social Networking Sites (2000s):** The early 2000s witnessed the rise of social networking sites like Friendster, MySpace, and LinkedIn. These platforms allowed users to create profiles, connect with friends, and share personal information. MySpace, in particular, gained immense popularity as users could customize their profiles with music and designs.
- **The Facebook Era (mid-2000s):** Facebook, launched in 2004, marked a turning point in the history of social media. It introduced a clean and user-friendly interface, enabling users to connect with friends, post updates, share photos, and join groups. The platform's success inspired the development of other social media platforms that aimed to replicate its features.
- **Microblogging and Real-Time Sharing (late 2000s-early 2010s):** Twitter, introduced in 2006, popularized microblogging—a format that allowed users to share short, real-time updates (tweets) with a global audience. This shift towards instant sharing of information contributed to the rapid dissemination of news and trends.
- **Visual Sharing and Mobile Domination (mid-2010s):** Platforms like Instagram and Snapchat emerged, emphasizing visual content. Instagram enabled users to share photos and short videos, while Snapchat introduced ephemeral messaging. Additionally, the widespread adoption of smartphones enabled users to access social media on the go, accelerating the growth of mobile-centric platforms.
- **Video Content and Live Streaming (late 2010s):** The late 2010s witnessed the rise of video-centric platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and live streaming on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitch. Video content became a dominant form of communication, enabling users to share their experiences, skills, and creativity in engaging ways.
- **Integration of Augmented Reality and AI (present):** Current social media trends include the integration of augmented reality (AR) and artificial intelligence (AI). AR

filters and effects on platforms like Instagram and Snapchat allow users to enhance their photos and videos creatively. AI is used for content recommendations, personalized feeds, and targeted advertising, enhancing user experiences.

Throughout its evolution, social media has transformed how people connect, share information, and engage in discussions. It has influenced various aspects of society, including communication, marketing, politics, and activism. While social media offers numerous benefits, it also raises concerns about privacy, online harassment, misinformation, and its impact on mental health. As technology continues to advance, the landscape of social media is likely to evolve further, shaping the way we interact and communicate in the future (Blood, R. 2000).

2.1.2 Social networks

While "social media" and "social networks" are related concepts and often used interchangeably in casual conversation, they do have distinct meanings.

Social Media is a broader term that encompasses all online platforms and websites that allow users to create and share content, engage with others, and participate in online communities. Social media includes various types of platforms, such as social networking sites (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn), microblogging platforms (e.g., Twitter), photo-sharing platforms (e.g., Instagram), video-sharing platforms (e.g., YouTube), and more. Social media is the overarching category, and it includes social networks. These are a specific type of social media platform that focuses on connecting people and facilitating interactions among individuals or groups. Social networks are often centered around user profiles, where users can add friends or followers and share updates, messages, and content with their network. Examples of social networks include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram.

Social networks are a subset of social media. While they share similarities, social media is a broader term that encompasses various types of online platforms, while social networks specifically refer to platforms designed for connecting and interacting with others. However, in everyday conversation, people may use these terms interchangeably because social networks are a dominant and well-known component of social media.

Social networks are online platforms that enable individuals to connect and interact with others virtually. These platforms facilitate the creation and sharing of user-generated content, such as text, photos, videos, and links. Social networks have become an integral part of people's personal and professional lives, transforming the way we communicate, collaborate, and engage with others. The term “social media” includes blogs and media sharing sites, and it is divided into categories (Morgan, 2003):

- Social news and recommendations (e.g. digg.com),
- Social book-marking sites (e.g. delicious.com),
- Micro blogging services (e.g., Twitter),
- Blogging systems (e.g. Blogger.com),
- Social Media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn),
- Social sharing (e.g. Youtube, Flickr)

Social networking is the gathering or participation of individuals in specific groups. According to Morgan (2003), social networks are defined as multidimensional communication and shaping systems of human practice and social identity. The sum of personal contacts through which the individuals maintain their social identity, receive emotional support, material support and participation in services, they have access to information and create new social contacts.

Social networks usually consist of family members, friends and acquaintances and include three critical concepts such as the size or range, which refers to the number of people participating in the network. The composition, i.e., the percentage of participation of members of the extended family or friends in the network, and the frequency, indicates how often members of a social network interact with each other.

When it comes to online social networking, websites used are known as social networking sites. Social networking sites operate as online communities of Internet users. Depending on the characteristics of each site, members of the online community have common interests such as a hobby, religion or politics. Registering and accessing a social networking site provides its members with immediate and ongoing socialization. This socialization may involve reading other members' profiles and often communicating with them.

Social networking sites, or electronic social networks, appeared in 2002 with Friendster. These sites allow people to introduce themselves, develop their social networking, and create or maintain links with other users. However, the social networking site that stood out among the others is Facebook. With 132 million users in June 2008, and an average annual growth rate of 200%, Facebook is arguably the most popular social networking site (Morgan, 2003). Today, there are many social networking sites. According to Morgan (2003), websites are divided into categories based on their object, how to register and participate in members, the way of communication between their members and the type of content. The most popular social networking sites today are Facebook, MySpace, Youtube, Blogger, Wordpress, Flickr, Twitter and LinkedIn.

2.1.3 Benefits of social networks

Using online social networks offers their users many benefits and advantages. In the case of social networking, the benefits are real. Based on Morgan's (2003) research, social networks offer numerous benefits to individuals, communities, and businesses.

Social networks provide a platform for people to connect and communicate with friends, family, and colleagues regardless of geographical barriers. They enable instant messaging, video calls, and the sharing of updates, photos, and videos, facilitating real-time interaction and fostering meaningful connections. They serve as valuable sources of information and news. Users can discover and share articles, blog posts, videos, and other forms of content, allowing for the dissemination of knowledge and the exploration of various topics of interest. Social networks can also act as platforms for crowdsourcing information and seeking recommendations (Christakis, N. A., & Fowler, J. H. 2011).

Social networks facilitate the formation of communities based on shared interests, hobbies, causes, or professions. They bring together like-minded individuals, allowing them to interact, collaborate, and support one another. Communities on social networks provide a sense of belonging, enable knowledge exchange, and foster personal and professional growth. Furthermore, social networks have become important tools for professional networking and career development. Platforms like LinkedIn provide opportunities for individuals to showcase their skills and accomplishments, connect with colleagues and industry professionals, and discover job opportunities. They serve as virtual resumes and

portfolios, enhancing professional visibility and networking prospects. (Collin, P., Rahilly, K., Richardson, I., & Third, A. (2021)

Social networks offer businesses and brands a powerful marketing and promotional platform. They enable targeted advertising, content marketing, and engagement with a wide audience. Businesses can leverage social networks to build brand awareness, connect with customers, receive feedback, and drive website traffic, ultimately boosting their growth and revenue. They facilitate collaboration and knowledge sharing among individuals and groups. They provide platforms for teamwork, project management, and document sharing, enabling remote collaboration and enhancing productivity. Social networks can also serve as knowledge hubs, allowing professionals to share insights, best practices, and industry trends (Hampton, K.N., Sessions, L.F., Her, E.J. and Rainie, L., 2009).

Additionally, they play a significant role in raising awareness and mobilizing communities for social causes. They have become platforms for activism, enabling individuals and organizations to advocate for change, promote social justice, and support charitable initiatives. Social networks amplify voices, facilitate organizing events, and create opportunities for collective action. They offer individuals a space for self-expression, creativity, and personal branding. Users can share their thoughts, ideas, talents, and artistic creations, gaining recognition and building an online presence. Social networks can serve as platforms for artists, writers, musicians, and content creators to showcase their work and connect with a wider audience. (Turkle, 2016)

It is important to note that while social networks offer numerous benefits, users should also be mindful of potential risks, such as privacy concerns, online harassment, and information overload. Responsible and mindful use of social networks can maximize the benefits and minimize the drawbacks.

2.1.4 Disadvantages of social networks

While social networks bring various benefits, they also come with certain disadvantages. First, according to Karampasis (2008) and Viegas (2005), social networks often require users to share personal information, which can raise privacy concerns. Users may inadvertently disclose sensitive information or become targets of data breaches, identity theft, or online

scams. Privacy settings and policies on social networks may be complex, leading to potential privacy violations. As a consequence, social networks can be platforms for cyberbullying, harassment, and online abuse. Users may experience offensive comments, trolling, or the spread of harmful rumors. The anonymity provided by social networks can embolden individuals to engage in negative behavior, leading to emotional distress and psychological harm for the victims (O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011).

Second, social networks can be highly addictive, leading to excessive use and time consumption. Users may find themselves spending significant amounts of time scrolling through feeds, engaging in endless discussions, or seeking validation through likes and comments. Excessive use of social networks can negatively impact productivity, relationships, and overall well-being.

Third, the abundance of information on social networks can lead to information overload, making it challenging to filter through the vast volume of content. Users may encounter false information, rumors, and misleading content, contributing to the spread of misinformation and the erosion of trust in reliable sources.

Another drawback is the fact that social networks can foster a culture of comparison, where users constantly compare their lives, appearance, and achievements to others. This can negatively impact self-esteem and contribute to feelings of inadequacy, as individuals may perceive others' lives as more glamorous or successful. Additionally, the constant stream of notifications, updates, and content on social networks can be highly distracting, making it difficult to concentrate and focus on important tasks. This can have detrimental effects on academic or professional performance, as well as overall cognitive abilities. Another disadvantage is that social networks can attract online predators who may target vulnerable users, especially children and teenagers. Users may also be susceptible to phishing attempts, malware, and other security risks when interacting with unknown individuals or clicking on suspicious links. Last, increased reliance on social networks for communication and social interaction can lead to a decline in face-to-face interactions and genuine connections. Over time, this dependence on digital connections may result in a lack of meaningful offline relationships and social isolation. (Turkle, 2016)

It's important for individuals to be aware of these disadvantages and exercise caution while using social networks. Being mindful of privacy settings, managing screen time, and

fostering a healthy balance between online and offline activities can help mitigate some of the drawbacks associated with social networks.

2.1.5 Education and social networks

Education and social networks have become increasingly intertwined in today's digital age. Here are some of the ways in which social networks impact education. Social networks provide students and educators with instant access to a vast amount of information and educational resources. Platforms like YouTube, blogs, and educational communities allow users to share and access a wide range of educational content, tutorials, and learning materials.

Social networks facilitate collaboration and communication among students, educators, and experts. Online platforms and discussion forums enable students to engage in group projects, share ideas, and seek help from their peers and teachers. This fosters a collaborative learning environment and enhances communication beyond the physical classroom.

Social networks are able to connect individuals from different parts of the world, allowing students and educators to interact with diverse perspectives and cultures. This global connectivity expands learning opportunities and promotes cross-cultural understanding.

Social networks can be used to tailor education to individual needs. Adaptive learning platforms and personalized learning networks leverage data and analytics to provide customized learning experiences for students. This helps address individual strengths, weaknesses, and learning styles.

They offer valuable opportunities for educators to engage in professional development. Online communities, webinars, and social media platforms provide a space for educators to share best practices, collaborate with colleagues, and stay updated with the latest trends and research in education.

Social networks can enhance student engagement and motivation by incorporating interactive and multimedia elements into the learning process. Gamification, social learning platforms, and educational apps leverage social dynamics to make learning more enjoyable and immersive.

They can bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world experiences. Students can connect with professionals, experts, and organizations through social media platforms, creating opportunities for mentorship, internships, and real-world applications of their knowledge.

Social networks provide an opportunity to teach students about digital citizenship, responsible online behavior, and online safety. Educators can address topics such as digital etiquette, privacy, and cyberbullying, promoting responsible and ethical use of social media. However, it's important to note that social networks also come with potential distractions, privacy concerns, and the need for digital literacy skills. Educators and institutions should establish guidelines and provide guidance on responsible social media use to ensure a safe and productive learning environment.

Overall, when used effectively and responsibly, social networks have the potential to enhance education by promoting collaboration, access to resources, global connections, and personalized learning experiences.

2.1.6 Teachers' attitude towards social media.

Teachers' attitude towards social media can vary depending on their personal beliefs, experiences, and the specific context in which they work. Some teachers embrace social media as a valuable tool for education. They see its potential for enhancing student engagement, promoting collaboration, and accessing a wealth of educational resources. These teachers actively incorporate social media platforms into their teaching practices and explore innovative ways to leverage their benefits.

Other teachers may approach social media with skepticism or concerns. They may worry about the potential distractions, privacy issues, and inappropriate content that can be found on social media platforms. These teachers may hesitate to incorporate social media into their teaching or may be cautious about how they use it, prioritizing other instructional methods. Many teachers fall into the middle ground, being open to exploring social media but cautious about its implementation. They recognize the potential benefits of social media for education but also acknowledge the need for careful planning, clear guidelines, and appropriate digital

citizenship education. These teachers may experiment with using social media selectively and evaluate its impact on student learning.

Teachers' attitudes towards social media can also differ based on whether they primarily view it as a personal or professional tool. Some teachers may be active social media users in their personal lives but may hesitate to bring it into their professional practice. Others may see social media primarily as a professional development tool, using it to connect with other educators, participate in educational communities, and access relevant resources.

Teachers' attitudes towards social media may also evolve over time. Those who initially had reservations or limited experience may become more comfortable and confident with social media through professional development opportunities, collaboration with colleagues, and positive experiences integrating it into their teaching.

It is important to recognize that teachers' attitudes towards social media are diverse and influenced by various factors. Professional development, support from school administrators, clear policies and guidelines, and a focus on digital literacy can play a significant role in shaping teachers' attitudes and helping them navigate the use of social media in education effectively. Especially students of higher education are the most recipients of new developments from their student years so it will be easier, but also pleasant to adapt to the new model of learning using social networks (Karampasis, 2008)

2.1.7 How the use of social networks benefits both teachers and learners

The use of social networks can bring several benefits to both teachers and learners in an educational context. As far as teachers are concerned, social networks provide opportunities for them to connect with other educators, join professional communities, and participate in discussions and share resources. This enables continuous professional development and fosters collaboration among teachers.

Social networks serve as platforms for teachers to discover and access a wide range of educational resources, including lesson plans, teaching strategies, educational articles, and multimedia materials. This access to a vast pool of resources can enhance instructional practices and save time in lesson planning.

They also facilitate collaboration and networking among teachers, allowing them to share ideas, experiences, and best practices. Collaborative projects and partnerships can be formed, leading to innovative teaching approaches and improved student outcomes.

By sharing their work and ideas on social networks, teachers can gain visibility and recognition within the education community. This can lead to new opportunities for professional growth, such as invitations to present at conferences or contribute to educational publications.

Social networks provide a familiar and interactive platform for learners, increasing their engagement with educational content. Multimedia elements, discussion forums, and interactive features can make learning more enjoyable and appealing to students.

Social networks enable students to collaborate with peers on group projects, share ideas, provide feedback, and engage in peer learning. This promotes teamwork, communication skills, and a sense of community among learners.

Through social networks, learners can connect with individuals from different backgrounds, cultures, and locations, allowing them to gain exposure to diverse perspectives and experiences. This fosters global awareness, cultural understanding, and empathy.

Furthermore, social networks can provide personalized learning opportunities through targeted recommendations, adaptive learning platforms, and customized content. Learners can explore their specific interests, access relevant resources, and receive personalized feedback and support.

The use of social networks in education offers an opportunity to educate students about digital citizenship, responsible online behavior, and online safety. Students can develop critical thinking skills and learn how to navigate and evaluate information in the digital age. Overall, the use of social networks in education can facilitate collaboration, knowledge sharing, and personalized learning experiences for both teachers and learners. It has the potential to enhance teaching practices, engage students, and foster a sense of connectedness and community in the learning process.

2.2 Blogs

2.2.1 Definition and historic evolution of Blogs

The term “blog”, short for “weblog,” is a type of website or online platform where individuals or groups regularly post content in a chronological manner. Blogs typically feature a series of posts, known as “blog posts,” that are organized in reverse chronological order, with the most recent post appearing at the top. Bloggers often use these platforms to share their

thoughts, opinions, experiences, expertise, and creative content with an online audience (Baxter et al., 2010).

The historical evolution of blogs can be outlined through the following key phases:

- **Emergence of Early Blogs (Late 1990s - Early 2000s):** The concept of blogging began in the late 1990s with the rise of personal websites and online diaries. Individuals started using simple HTML-based websites to share their personal experiences and thoughts. These early blogs were often text-heavy and focused on individual expression.
- **Introduction of User-Friendly Blogging Platforms (Mid-2000s):** The mid-2000s saw the emergence of user-friendly blogging platforms such as Blogger (previously known as Blogspot) and WordPress. These platforms provided easy-to-use tools that allowed individuals to create and manage their blogs without requiring extensive technical skills. This marked a significant shift in the accessibility and popularity of blogging.
- **Diverse Blogging Topics and Genres (Mid-2000s - Present):** As blogging platforms became more accessible, blogs started to cover a wide range of topics and genres. Blogs evolved beyond personal diaries to encompass areas such as travel, fashion, food, technology, lifestyle, health, and more. Niche blogging communities formed around specific interests.
- **Rise of Professional Blogging and Monetization (Late 2000s - Present):** In the late 2000s, blogging began to transition from a hobby to a profession for some individuals. Bloggers started to focus on creating high-quality content, building a loyal readership, and exploring ways to monetize their blogs through advertising, sponsorships, affiliate marketing, and other revenue streams.

Blogs began to have a significant impact on various fields, such as traditional journalism and media. Many bloggers started producing in-depth analysis, investigative reporting, and commentary on various subjects. Some blogs gained reputations as reliable sources of information, leading to collaboration and integration between traditional media outlets and bloggers.

With advancements in technology, blogs evolved to include multimedia elements such as images, videos, podcasts, and interactive content. Social media integration also became

crucial, allowing bloggers to promote their content and engage with readers on platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.

Blogs have continued to evolve in response to changes in technology and user preferences. Some traditional blogs have transitioned into online magazines, while microblogging platforms like Tumblr and Twitter have introduced shorter-form blogging. Additionally, video-focused platforms like YouTube and TikTok have expanded the definition of blogging to include video content.

The historic evolution of blogs showcases their transformation from personal diaries to versatile platforms for self-expression, information sharing, and professional pursuits. Blogs have played a significant role in shaping online culture, influencing media, and democratizing content creation and distribution.

2.2.2 Main Features of Blogs

Blog entries are made through dynamic web interfaces, which allow authors to upload their articles from any computer with an Internet connection. Although there are many different software applications that can be used to create blogs, most offer the same common features. Through studying the most popular blogs, we can distinguish some main features, as described by Myslihaka (2014). The most important feature of blogs that differentiates them from vignette columns in the press is the direct referencing of sources through hypertext links, a feature that allows the Internet to list sources and be controlled by the reader. Especially with regard to blogs that comment on news, linking to sources when referring to third party writings and citing the source when quoting excerpts is a journalistic, legal and academic obligation that increases the validity of the writings and the documentation of the research. After hyperlinks, another important element that makes blogs a dialogue tool, close to the spirit of the read-write web, is the ability for readers to comment.

Moreover, one of the peculiarities of blogs is that by using the so-called trackbacks they enable the reader to follow the reports made to them by other blogs. In this way, dynamic frameworks are created within the world wide web - networks of evolving discussions. Although conventional media serve free information, in practice, the immediate access of the citizen to them is limited by the cost, the ephemeral form of the form and the broadcast, as well as by the difficulty of organizing and retrieving the information they contain (Onyije & Opara, 2013).

These limitations, which arise from the nature of the print and electronic professional press, make it difficult to monitor and compare the coverage of an event by many media, to monitor the development of a story over time, and even to exercise criticism.

Unlike conventional media, but also online media that serve exclusively the information needs of a specific audience, such as subscription electronic editions of newspapers, a key parameter of the philosophy of blogs is free access. A number of mechanisms allow blog readers to keep track of their evolution over time.

By using the permalinks mechanism, which is a fixed web address for each article, which usually includes a brief description of the topic or the date, the need for accessibility and direct relevance to what is written is served. The recording of the exact time of each recording, either by the writer or the commentators, facilitates the historical citation of the interventions. Chronological records, the ability to search in terms, and even the use of categories and keywords to classify texts enable the researcher to instantly index the historical evolution of his or her perspective (Mathevula & Uwizeyimana, 2014).

These qualities promote access and transparency in information by making the blog an effective means of information. The news feeds that most blogs generate automatically and are frequently updated on a contract basis allow the reader, using a flow accumulator, to follow the topics of the blogs they are interested in and the evolution of the discussion of a topic from multiple sources at the same time.

In contrast to wider society, where the participation of the individual is mandatory, albeit formally, throughout their life, participation in the blogging community is optional. One can choose to join first by opening a blog and retaining the indefinite blogger title, regardless of the frequency of text and interventions. There is also a choice as to whether s/he allows comments on the blog, whether s/he engages in discussion with commenters responding to them, and whether s/he participates in discussions that take place on other blogs (Baxter et al., 2010).

Unlike other types of digital gatherings, such as forums, chatrooms, and mailing lists, each blog is a unit and a stand-alone entity. It has a personal and informal style as it is a place for recording personal opinions. According to the highly social conception of blogging, it does not mean a blog without citations with hyperlinks, without free comments, but also without the participation of the author in the discussions that take place in other blogs. Thus, the "blogosphere" is reduced to a wider and endless discussion. A blogger can stay away from any kind of digital socialization beyond posting his thoughts, avoiding links and citations to

third parties, banning comments and not commenting on other blogs. Such blogs, in terms of the writer's socialization, are more like books than voices in discussions (Blood, 2000).

The individuality of the writer is also expressed by the choice of the way of signing his writings: either by the choice of a fixed alias, under which he publishes his texts and comments on other blogs, or in rare cases, by the surname expression, the blogger is a self-existent and relatively permanent entity, more or less clearly defined. It should be noted here that anonymity, in the absolute sense of the word, is not an option for someone who chooses to publish their articles on blogs, except for commentators, under conditions, who do not have to be bloggers themselves. The social stigma of this entity lies in the fact that it has its headquarters (or blogs) and "neighborhood", in the sense of the blogs it watches most often (Moon & Lim, 2013).

2.2.3 Types of Blogs

There are many different types of blogs, which differ not only in the type of content, but also in the way the content is presented (Karampassis, 2008). Now, there are special categories of blogs depending on the function they perform. Some examples include vblogs (blogs used for videos), photoblogs (for photos), sketchblogs (for sketches) and artblogs (for the arts) (Izquierdo & Reyes, 2009).

There are various types of blogs that cater to different interests, niches, and styles of content. Here are some common types of blogs:

- **Personal Blogs:** These are online diaries or journals where individuals share their personal thoughts, experiences, and stories.
- **Lifestyle Blogs:** Lifestyle bloggers cover a wide range of topics related to their daily lives, including fashion, beauty, travel, fitness, and more.
- **Fashion Blogs:** Fashion bloggers focus on topics related to clothing, style, trends, and fashion advice.
- **Food Blogs:** Food bloggers share recipes, cooking tips, restaurant reviews, and culinary experiences.
- **Travel Blogs:** Travel bloggers document their journeys, share travel tips, reviews of destinations, and stories from their adventures.

- **Beauty Blogs:** Beauty bloggers provide information on skincare, makeup tutorials, product reviews, and beauty tips.
- **Health and Wellness Blogs:** These blogs cover topics related to physical and mental health, fitness routines, nutrition advice, and wellness tips.
- **Parenting Blogs:** Parenting bloggers share advice, tips, and stories about raising children, pregnancy, and family life.
- **DIY and Craft Blogs:** DIY bloggers offer tutorials, step-by-step guides, and inspiration for various do-it-yourself projects and crafts.
- **Tech and Gadgets Blogs:** Tech bloggers focus on the latest technology trends, gadget reviews, software updates, and tech news.
- **Finance and Money Blogs:** Finance bloggers provide insights on personal finance, budgeting, investing, saving, and financial planning.
- **Business and Entrepreneurship Blogs:** These blogs offer advice on starting and running a business, entrepreneurship, marketing strategies, and business trends.
- **Fitness and Wellness Blogs:** These blogs focus on fitness routines, workout tips, healthy living, and overall well-being.
- **Book Blogs:** Book bloggers review and discuss books, share reading recommendations, and engage in literary discussions.
- **Political and News Blogs:** Political bloggers analyze current events, share opinions on political matters, and discuss social issues.
- **Educational Blogs:** Educational bloggers create content related to learning, teaching methods, educational resources, and academic advice.
- **Gaming Blogs:** Gaming bloggers cover video games, gaming reviews, industry news, and gaming tips.
- **Photography Blogs:** Photography bloggers showcase their photography skills, share photography techniques, and discuss photography equipment.
- **Environmental and Sustainability Blogs:** These blogs focus on environmental issues, sustainable living, eco-friendly practices, and conservation efforts.
- **Art Blogs:** Art bloggers share their artwork, discuss art techniques, and delve into art history and inspiration.
- **Fitness and Nutrition Blogs:** These blogs offer guidance on fitness routines, nutritional information, healthy recipes, and wellness tips.

- **Music Blogs:** Music bloggers review albums, discuss music genres, share playlists, and explore the music industry.

These are just a few examples of the many types of blogs that exist. Each type serves a specific niche or interest and provides valuable information, entertainment, and engagement for their respective audiences.

2.2.4 The Development of Blogs in Greece

The development of blogs in Greece has followed a similar trajectory to that of other countries, with the rise of the internet and the popularity of online platforms for self-expression and content creation. While the exact timeline may vary, the overall pattern of blog development in Greece can be outlined as follows, according to Karampasis (2008):

- **Early Years (Late 1990s - Early 2000s):** Blogs first emerged in Greece in the late 1990s and early 2000s, parallel to the global blogosphere. They were initially a niche phenomenon, with a small number of tech-savvy individuals creating personal blogs as a means of self-expression. These early blogs often covered a range of topics, including personal experiences, hobbies, and interests.
- **Popularization and Diversification (Mid-2000s - Late 2000s):** As internet access became more widespread and user-friendly platforms for blogging emerged, the popularity of blogs in Greece started to grow. Blogging platforms such as Blogger and WordPress provide accessible tools for creating and managing blogs. This period saw an increase in the number of blogs covering diverse topics, including lifestyle, travel, fashion, food, and politics.
- **Professionalization and Specialization (2010s):** In the 2010s, Greek blogs began to evolve further, with some bloggers adopting a more professional approach. Many bloggers started to focus on specific niches and developed expertise in their chosen topics. This led to the emergence of specialized blogs covering areas such as beauty, parenting, fitness, finance, and technology. Some successful bloggers started collaborating with brands and monetizing their blogs through sponsorships and advertisements.
- **Integration with social media (2010s - Present):** With the increasing popularity of social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, Greek bloggers started to integrate their blogs with these platforms to reach a wider audience. Blogs were often used as a central hub for longer-form content, while social media channels were utilized for shorter updates and engagement with readers. This integration helped bloggers expand their reach and connect with their audience more effectively.

Alongside the growth of individual blogs, blogging communities and events also emerged in Greece. These communities provided opportunities for bloggers to network, collaborate, and

share knowledge and experiences. Blogging conferences, workshops, and meetups became common, allowing bloggers to connect face-to-face and exchange ideas.

Today, Greek blogs continue to flourish, with a diverse range of topics and voices represented. The blogosphere in Greece remains a vibrant space for self-expression, information sharing, and community building. While social media platforms have gained prominence, personal and professional blogs still hold their ground as platforms for in-depth content creation and storytelling.

2.2.5 Blogs in EFL teaching

Naturally, among the teachers who tried to take advantage of the blogs, are the foreign language teachers. In particular, blogs have been used in the foreign language learning context with the aim of not only improving or encouraging the production of written speech but also investigating the levels of cooperation among the students.

A study (Sawhill, 2008), which was conducted at a university in the United States, asked students who were taught Spanish as a foreign language to create their own personal blogs. It was found that taking advantage of the open nature of blogs, they were able to interact with native speakers of the language in writing, through comments, which enriched the learning process. Also, in this research, the blog was used as a collection of written texts of students (portfolio), which reflected their progress and effort in the process of mastering the language being learned.

In another study by Sercu (2013), students with Turkish as their mother tongue, who were taught English as a foreign language, created their own blogs and each week posted something related to the topics presented to them. The data showed that, in the students' judgment, the greatest benefit of blogs was the interactivity of the medium. The ability to express their opinions on topics that are not usually raised in the classroom, to read the posts and comments of their classmates and to know them better, led the students to perceive the whole process as an opportunity for expression in a foreign language and not as way of checking their writing ability. The result of the whole process was the students to be more motivated to participate more often during the lesson. The assignment of tasks became more interesting. The selection of topics and the addition of accompanying multimedia material played an important role in the degree of student involvement.

Blackstone et al. (2007) explored the use of blogs in the context of teaching English for academic purposes at a university in Japan. The students had to create a blog, the address of which had to be communicated to all their fellow students as well as to the teacher. For a period of time (at least for half a semester as it is described) two students of the "blogging buddy system" would have to work together, one of whom would read the posts and at his discretion edit them before the other published them, acting as a "peer reviewer". Also, each student was required to make a certain number of posts and comments. The data obtained showed the learners' ability to read the texts of their fellow students, their comments in their own texts and acting as a "peer reviewer" in order to promote participation. However, this study did not investigate whether the "blogging buddy system" ultimately led to the production of a text which was better.

Last, Rivens Mompean (2010) researched teaching English as a foreign language in France at postgraduate level. The subjects were invited to create a blog in groups of three or four people, which would be about a specific topic that interested them. As students would reach a wider audience, this would add to the authenticity of the whole process. The creation of the blog was of an evaluative nature and required a certain number of posts and comments. Although the degree of participation was considered satisfactory and allowed an exchange of views between the members, the postgraduate students in the end did not cooperate as, due to lack of time, each student worked independently. Also, the mandatory nature of the posts and comments negatively affected the authentic nature of such interaction.

2.3 YouTube

2.3.1 Features of YouTube

YouTube is a popular video-sharing platform that enables users to upload, share, and view videos. It offers a wide range of features that cater to creators, viewers, and advertisers alike. More specifically, YouTube supports a number of features, such as

- **Video Upload and Sharing:** Users can upload videos to their YouTube channels, making them accessible to a global audience. Videos can be public, unlisted (accessible via link), or private (only viewable by selected users).
- **Channel Creation:** Users can create their own YouTube channels to organize and showcase their videos. Channels can have unique names, logos, and cover images.
- **Content Discovery:** YouTube's search and recommendation algorithms help users discover videos based on their interests, viewing history, and trending topics. The "Home" page displays personalized video suggestions.
- **Subscription System:** Viewers can subscribe to channels they like, receiving notifications when new videos are uploaded. This helps creators build a loyal audience.
- **Monetization:** Eligible creators can monetize their videos through ads, channel memberships, Super Chat during live streams, and merchandise shelf integration.
- **Live Streaming:** Creators can broadcast live videos to engage with their audience in real-time. Live chats allow viewers to interact with the creator and each other.
- **Community Interaction:** Creators can interact with their audience through comments, likes, and shares. This fosters community engagement and feedback.
- **YouTube Shorts:** A short-form video format similar to TikTok, allowing users to create brief, catchy videos using their mobile devices.
- **YouTube Premium:** A subscription service that offers an ad-free experience, offline playback, background play (listen to audio while using other apps), and access to YouTube Originals.
- **Analytics:** Creators have access to detailed analytics, showing video performance, audience demographics, watch time, and engagement metrics.
- **Content Editing:** YouTube provides a built-in video editor called YouTube Studio, allowing creators to trim videos, add music, insert text, and make basic edits.

- **Playlists:** Creators and users can curate and organize videos into playlists, making it easier to share and watch related content.
- **Creator Studio:** A dashboard that offers insights, customization options, and settings for managing channel content.
- **Copyright Management:** YouTube's Content ID system helps copyright owners manage and protect their content by identifying and allowing them to manage the use of their copyrighted materials.
- **Accessibility Features:** YouTube offers features like automatic captions and subtitles, making videos more accessible to a wider audience.
- **Virtual Events:** Creators can host virtual events, premieres, and watch parties to engage with their audience in a shared viewing experience.

These features collectively contribute to YouTube's status as a versatile platform for content creators, businesses, educators, entertainers, and anyone looking to share and discover video content.

2.3.2 The use of YouTube in EFL teaching

YouTube has become a valuable tool in education, offering numerous benefits for both teachers and students. YouTube hosts an extensive collection of educational videos covering a wide range of subjects and topics. Teachers can leverage this vast library to supplement their lessons with engaging and informative videos that enhance students' understanding of complex concepts. Educators around the world have integrated YouTube into their teaching methods to enhance language learning and teaching experiences.

Visual and auditory learning experiences are provided that can be particularly effective for visual and auditory learners. Watching educational videos can help students grasp concepts more easily by presenting information in a dynamic and engaging format.

Students are allowed to access educational content at their own pace and convenience. They can watch videos anytime, anywhere, and even review them multiple times to reinforce learning. This flexibility accommodates different learning styles and individual preferences. Video content on YouTube has the potential to capture students' attention and make learning more enjoyable. Educational videos often incorporate visuals, animations, and real-life examples that can spark interest and curiosity, leading to increased engagement and motivation to learn. (Ramly et al., 2023)

YouTube is a valuable resource for demonstrating practical skills and techniques. It can provide step-by-step tutorials, demonstrations, and how-to videos that support hands-on learning in various subjects such as science experiments, art techniques, programming, and more.

Access to real-world content is offered through YouTube, including interviews, documentaries, speeches, and presentations. Students can gain exposure to diverse perspectives, cultural experiences, and current events, fostering a deeper understanding of the world around them. (Godwin-Jones, 2015). YouTube provides opportunities for collaborative learning² and content creation. Students can work together to create and upload their own videos, presentations, or projects, developing valuable digital and media literacy skills in the process.

YouTube offers a wealth of language learning resources, including language tutorials, pronunciation guides, and videos in different languages. Students can engage with authentic language content and immerse themselves in different cultures.

YouTube is not only a platform for students but also for teachers. Educators can access educational channels, webinars, and tutorials specifically designed for professional development, enhancing their teaching practices and expanding their knowledge.

However, it is important to note that YouTube should be used responsibly and with appropriate supervision. Teachers should ensure that the content they select is accurate, age-appropriate, and aligns with their educational objectives. Additionally, teachers and students should be mindful of online safety, digital citizenship, and copyright considerations when using YouTube in education.

2.4 Distance Learning in the Coronavirus COVID-19 era

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted educational systems worldwide, forcing a rapid shift from traditional face-to-face instruction to remote and online learning.

² According to Adams et al. (1990), collaborative learning refers to an instructional approach in which students work together in small groups or teams to achieve a common learning goal. It is based on the idea that students can actively construct knowledge through social interaction, discussion, and collaboration with their peers.

In collaborative learning, students are encouraged to actively engage with each other, share their ideas, perspectives, and experiences, and collectively solve problems or complete tasks. It promotes an environment of active participation, where students take on different roles, contribute their unique insights, and learn from one another.

This section explores the challenges and changes faced by EFL educators and students during the pandemic, such as limited access to resources, reduced social interaction, and the need for flexible and adaptable teaching approaches.

The new coronavirus COVID-19 has unexpectedly invaded the lives of millions of people around the world. Unfortunately, people experienced unprecedented situations which will have significant social, psychological and economic consequences, the extent, intensity and duration of which cannot be estimated yet.

At the same time that people tried to protect their lives and the lives of their fellow human beings, they were forced under conditions of confinement at home, to respond to the multiple roles they had in the context of their relationships and activities (family, work, education, etc.). All human activities were in "Safe Mode", or to be precise in "Emergency Mode" without the possibility of "recovery" in the foreseeable future. In the above context, the education systems were called upon to contribute, to the extent appropriate to them, in dealing with an unprecedented situation. In the first phase, the operation of schools and universities as well as other educational structures was suspended, in order to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 in response to the recommendations of experts. In the second phase, ways and forms of distance education were designed in order to respond to these unprecedented emergency conditions.

2.4.1 Teaching and learning procedure on a remote status

According to Keegan (1996), distance teaching and learning refer to a mode of education where the physical separation between teachers and learners is bridged through the use of technology and remote communication. It involves delivering educational content, instruction, and support to learners who are geographically dispersed from the educational institution or the teacher.

In distance teaching and learning, students and teachers interact and engage in the learning process through various technological means, such as social network platforms, video conferencing, email, discussion forums, and virtual classrooms. This approach allows for flexibility in terms of time, location, and pace of learning, as students can access educational materials and participate in learning activities from anywhere and at any time.

Distance teaching and learning can take different forms such as fully online courses where all instructional materials, assessments, and interactions occur through online platforms.

Students access course content, complete assignments, and participate in discussions and collaborative activities online.

It is a combination of face-to-face and online learning, where students attend some classes or activities in a physical classroom while also engaging in online learning components. This approach provides a mix of traditional instruction and digital resources.

Distance teaching and learning also refers to interactive online environments where teachers and students can meet in real-time through video conferencing tools. They can communicate, share screens, collaborate on projects, and engage in discussions as if they were physically present in a classroom.

Learning materials and resources are provided to students, allowing them to progress through the content at their own pace. Students have the flexibility to set their learning schedule and can access support from teachers or peers as needed.

Online courses are designed to accommodate a large number of participants from around the world. Distance teaching and learning procedures often involve the use of various digital tools and technologies, such as learning management systems, video conferencing software, online collaboration platforms, and multimedia resources. These tools enable teachers to deliver content, facilitate discussions, provide feedback, and assess student progress remotely.

It is important to note that while distance teaching and learning offer flexibility and access to education, they also require self-discipline, effective time management, and digital literacy skills from both teachers and learners. The success of distance teaching and learning depends on the effective use of technology, clear communication, and ongoing support for students to ensure meaningful engagement and learning outcomes (Hodges, C., Moore, S., Lockee, B., Trust, T., & Bond, A., 2020).

The characteristics of distance education according to Ματραλής & Λυκουργιώτης (1998: 46), are defined as a method that is applied at all levels of education. The learner is distant from his / her trainer but is guided and supported by him / her through various forms of communication. Specially designed educational material is used. There is systematic support for the trainee. New technologies and mass media are utilized both for the presentation of educational material and for certain forms of communication between the trainee and the trainer.

In the process of distance learning, the teacher is largely separated from the learner, so it is necessary to develop a teaching system compatible with this framework. The methodology

of distance education (Λιοναράκης, 2006), includes the development and application of teaching techniques and educational practices, which "replace the physical absence" of the teacher in order to limit the difficulties in the course of studies of the learner. According to Λιοναράκης (2001), "distance education teaches and activates the student how to learn on his own and how to function independently towards a heuristic course of self-learning and knowledge".

Thanks to the telecommunications revolution, distance learning is not the only activity of the past. The teacher-learner communication in distance education aims to support the learner in the solitary course of self-learning, in the heuristic course towards knowledge, so that he does not interrupt his studies but instead completes them successfully. The realization of this support is the guiding axis of the course of distance studies. Two-way communication between students and teachers and well-designed educational materials are the most important factors for the success of a distance education program. Through two-way communication, the teacher facilitates the interaction and active involvement of the learner with the educational material, he mobilizes his interest in deepening the study and contributes significantly to his effort to explore and build his knowledge (Papadimitriou, 2014).

2.4.2 Distance school education

The term "distance education" refers to flexible learning programs provided remotely by public and private educational organizations to primary and secondary school students, utilizing new technologies and supporting modern educational needs. According to Vassala (2005), to "children and adults who for various reasons (financial, professional, local traditions, health, etc.) are unable to attend classes in the conventional-traditional school, but also to people with special talents in various fields who want something different or something in addition to the massiveness of the school, distance education provides educational opportunities either independently of the conventional education (independent distance education) or in addition to and in parallel with it (supplementary distance education)".

According to literature, "the independent distance education provides integrated programs fully recognized and identical to conventional education with differences in the type of educational material and communication and the supplementary distance education works in support of the conventional school" (Miminou & Spanaka, 2013).

Since the beginning of the 20th century, distance education has emerged as a mail-order education in isolated rural areas of Australia, New Zealand, France, and the United Kingdom to meet the educational needs of students living in these areas (Vassala, 2005). The educational needs due to the sparsely populated geographical distribution in Australia are covered by HACCP programs utilizing modern technological means such as satellite connections or teleconferencing (Kokkali & Georgiadi, 2009). In Africa, the implementation of hexadecimal programs has the main goal of reducing illiteracy (Kokkali & Georgiadi, 2009). In France, distance education appeared in 1939 with correspondence courses and was officially established with the existence of the National Center for Distance Education (CNED) of the Ministry of Education and is addressed to all levels of education.

The differentiation of teaching in the classroom and its adaptation to the special educational needs and possibilities of each student, his special interests, his unique experiences, his personal pace of learning, his cultural background, require increased effort from the teacher, who is called upon to respond to new learning conditions and environments. Conventional education fails to meet the range of different learning needs (Kenelidou et al., 2017). People with special educational needs and people from socially vulnerable groups face difficulties in accessing conventional education. Rehabilitation teaching needs to be extended on a large scale to students who have difficulty in the traditional school or who want to acquire more knowledge than already provided (Papafilippou et al., 2016). Researching distance education, Miminou and Spanaka (2013) report its positive elements which are the promotion of collaborative learning, the interaction and communication of teachers-students-educational material and the achievement of learning goals. Kelenidou, Antoniou and Papadakis (2017) add to the advantages of distance education, the existence of immediate feedback on student performance (Anastasiou, Androutsou, Georgalas, 2015), the flexibility and freedom of choice of students (Zaka, 2013), and the importance of educational material (Kampilis, 2017). Some negative aspects of distance education are mainly the lack of live communication and the problems occurring because of the use of new technologies.

The geomorphology of Greece with many inaccessible island and mountainous areas creates opportunities for the development of distance education, given the problematic situations that are faced such as the lack of teachers of all specialties in remote schools (Anastasiou et al., 2015 ; Vyrinis, 2014), the difficult access and therefore the exclusion of students from school for many days a year (Kontogeorgakou & Georgiadi, 2016) and the lack of alternative

methods of teaching support resulting in students' cognitive gaps (Vyrinis, 2014). However, in the Greek educational system, autonomous school distance education has not been developed. However, supplementary distance learning programs have been implemented in primary and secondary schools as well as in teacher training. Among these programs are indicatively mentioned (Anastasiadis, 2014; Chondrogianni, 2015; Anastasiadis 2017; Miminou & Spanaka, 2013):

- The "e-omogeneia" program of EATI with the aim of establishing new, direct and efficient ways of communication and cooperation, information and feedback using New Technologies of the educational expatriate communities abroad both with each other and with the schools of the Greek territory, as well as with the competent organizational, administrative and scientific structure of the Ministry Of Education (Matos, 2005).
- The "OIKADE" program with the aim of cultivating spiritual and cultural ties between students from schools in Greece, Cyprus and Hellenes Abroad, as well as the exchange of knowledge and ideas.
- The programs of the European Union "e-Hermes", "SOCRATES".
- The Odysseas program "The teleconference in the Modern School" of the University of Crete.
- The long-term "eTwinning" program to promote cooperation between European schools through the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), from 2005 until today (eTwinning).
- The Scientix Science learning community in Europe (Scientix, n.d.).

In the context of formal education, projects have been developed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to support the development of educational material in schools and at the same time, distance teacher training programs have been carried out. Regarding the educational material, the project "Digital Educational Platform, Interactive Books and Repository of Learning Objects" of the Ministry of Education has been developed, in the axis of actions for Digital Educational Content (DEC) in the whole range of class subjects.

The additional distance training programs for teachers such as the "Major training program" have been conducted, as well as the "3rd training period for the acquisition of B1 level ICT skills". This gives the opportunity to teachers who did not previously have access to training, e.g., from island areas, areas with a lack of trainers, or Greek schools of the Greek community, to participate as it was not possible to implement programs in their place with the "traditional model". In addition, pilot applications have been carried out with the blended

learning methodology³, which is a mixed learning model, combining traditional and distance learning methods.

Many educators implement mixed complementary education programs combining traditional and distance learning, in which students collaborate within school communities/networks at national and European level. The majority of European school education programs now support distance learning through the development of digital learning materials, scenarios and learning environments for modern and / or asynchronous distance learning, online learning communities and assessment and self-assessment activities for active student participation.

Some of the advantages of Integrating Social Media Platforms in EFL teaching are analyzed below. Social media platforms offer interactive and dynamic environments that can enhance student engagement and motivation. This paper will explore how features like multimedia content, instant feedback, and gamification can capture students' interest and encourage active participation in EFL learning. Social media platforms provide opportunities for authentic language use and exposure. Students can engage in real-world communication, access to authentic resources, and develop their language skills in meaningful contexts. (Elola, I. & Oskoz, A., 2010) It discusses how social media platforms can bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-life language use. Social media and blogs facilitate collaboration and knowledge sharing among EFL learners. Features such as discussion boards, group projects, and peer feedback enable students to work together, share ideas, and develop a sense of community. The collaborative potential of social media platforms in EFL

³According to Beatty (2003), blended learning is an instructional approach that combines traditional face-to-face classroom teaching with online learning activities and resources. It integrates both physical and digital learning environments, leveraging the benefits of each to create a comprehensive and engaging learning experience.

In a blended learning model, students engage in a mix of in-person interactions with their teachers and peers, as well as online activities facilitated through digital platforms. The specific blend of face-to-face and online components can vary depending on the educational context and the goals of the learning experience. The online component of blended learning typically involves accessing digital resources, such as videos, interactive modules, and online assessments, through a learning management system or other online platforms. This allows students to access content at their own pace, review materials, and engage in self-directed learning. Online components may also include virtual discussions, collaborative projects, and online assessments.

The face-to-face component of blended learning provides opportunities for direct instruction, in-class discussions, hands-on activities, and teacher-guided interactions. This can take the form of classroom lectures, group work, demonstrations, experiments, or practical exercises. The face-to-face sessions are designed to complement and reinforce the online learning experiences and provide personalized support, feedback, and social interaction.

teaching procedure will be analyzed deeper in this paper. Social media platforms empower learners to take ownership of their learning journey. By utilizing social media tools, students can engage in self-directed learning, explore their interests, and personalize their learning experiences. This section examines how social media integration can foster learner autonomy in EFL classrooms.

Some challenges of using social media platforms and blogs in EFL teaching would be digital Literacy and Skills Gap that means that integrating social media platforms requires a certain level of digital literacy and technological skills. What are the challenges students and teachers may face in terms of digital literacy, access to technology, and the skills needed to navigate social media platforms effectively? Furthermore, social media integration raises concerns about privacy, online safety, and data protection. The challenges associated with maintaining student privacy, ensuring safe online interactions, and addressing ethical considerations in social media use will be examined. Careful consideration of pedagogical goals and alignment with the curriculum will be analyzed further in this dissertation.

To overcome the challenges and maximize the benefits of integrating social media platforms, educators can employ various strategies and best practices such as providing guidance and training, establishing clear guidelines and expectations, promoting digital citizenship and responsible online behavior, and fostering a supportive online learning community.

This literature review provided an overview of the research and theoretical perspectives related to the integration of social media platforms into EFL teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. It highlighted the impact of the pandemic on traditional teaching methods and presented the theoretical foundations, benefits, and challenges associated with social media integration. The findings from this review will inform the subsequent chapters of the dissertation and contribute to the understanding of social media's role in EFL education during a pandemic period.

The Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated the integration of social media platforms into EFL teaching, offering innovative ways to engage learners and promote language acquisition. As educators continue to explore the potential of social media, it is important to address challenges and design pedagogically sound approaches that align with educational goals.

3. Methodology

3.1. Significance of the research

From the literature presented earlier, it is evident that the popularity and usability of social networks are now being examined in the light of an innovative approach to teaching. In particular, the research presented in the previous chapters demonstrates significant benefits in the cases of the already recorded use of social media as teaching tools. The impetus for conducting this research was the fact that, although undoubtedly the role of social networks in the modern school reality is a field of research that needs further investigation.

The impetus for conducting this research was the fact that, although undoubtedly the role of social networks in the modern school reality is a field of research that needs further investigation, there exists a significant gap in our understanding of their multifaceted impact on both students and educators. In an era where digital technology and social media have become integral to the lives of young learners, it is imperative to explore how these platforms can be leveraged effectively for educational purposes while also addressing potential challenges and risks.

This study seeks to delve into the nuances of social network usage within the educational context, aiming to provide valuable insights into how these platforms can enhance or hinder learning outcomes, student engagement, and overall educational experiences. By examining the experiences and perceptions of students, teachers, and administrators, we aim to shed light on the evolving dynamics of education in the digital age and contribute to the development of informed strategies for integrating social networks into educational practices.

Through this research, we hope to offer practical recommendations for educators and policymakers, grounded in empirical evidence, that can guide the thoughtful and responsible incorporation of social networks into the educational landscape. Furthermore, we aim to encourage ongoing dialogue and exploration in this area to ensure that our educational systems remain responsive to the evolving needs and preferences of today's students while upholding principles of pedagogical effectiveness and digital citizenship.

The constant modernization of educational technology has always been a source of inspiration, creation and experimentation in the field of foreign language teaching. Therefore, conducting relevant research is of particular scientific interest, as, on the one hand, it allows the determination of the percentage of foreign language teachers who have made educational use of social networks and, on the other hand, it records the reasons why some of them say they are reluctant to do so.

The research, however, is not only aimed at capturing the current situation but also at documenting the initial assumptions that adequate information, training and teacher attitudes are the key components of success for the smooth integration of social networks in the teaching and learning process. Finally, an attempt is made to investigate the extent to which the above factors are either responsible for hindering the processes of integration of social networks in the teaching practice or contributing to the utilization of their potential.

3.2. Research purpose

The purpose of this research is to examine teachers' perceptions regarding the use of social networks in EFL teaching in a remote context during the Corona Virus era. The author aimed at exploring the effectiveness, challenges, or pedagogical strategies related to using social media platforms in EFL teaching during the pandemic.

3.3. Research design

In order to collect the data, the method of the questionnaire was chosen. For reasons related to the ease of access to the sample, the acceleration of procedures, but also the subsequent processing of data, it was decided to use an online questionnaire. An online survey questionnaire was administered to EFL educators to gather quantitative data on their usage of social media platforms in their teaching practices. The questionnaire included items related to the frequency of social media usage, specific platforms utilized, activities conducted, and perceived effectiveness. The survey was distributed electronically using online survey tools, more specifically, it was designed with the use of Google Forms and distributed electronically ensuring confidentiality and ease of response. (see Appendix I)

3.4. Design of the questionnaire

The online questionnaire was tested and scrutinized in detail to identify technical difficulties that could complicate the research process and to avoid any misunderstandings as far as the questions concerned.

The questionnaire in its final form includes 23 questions (dichotomous questions and multiple-choice questions). The flow of questions was adjusted to vary according to the participants' answers. Therefore, participants who stated that they do not use social networks in the educational practice were asked to answer significantly fewer questions. Closed-ended questions were preferred because the subjects of research are more willing to answer such questionnaires

Finally, it is worth emphasizing that in case any question or need for clarification or ever problem related to the technical completeness of the questionnaire arose, the possibility of communication - by telephone or in writing - of the research subjects with the researcher was provided. The quantitative data obtained from the survey questionnaire will be analyzed using descriptive statistics. Frequency distributions, percentages, and means will be calculated to provide an overview of EFL educators' usage of social media platforms in their teaching practices. Statistical analysis, such as correlation analysis, was conducted to explore relationships between variables.

The questions of the online research tool are mainly aimed at determining the degree of utilization of social networks for the promotion and provision of digital educational material. The author documented the social media platforms incorporated into the foreign language curriculum and the standards guiding their selection by instructors. This involved not only uncovering factors motivating some participants to incorporate social media into teaching but also exploring barriers preventing its use in foreign language education. Moreover, the study aimed to identify the advantages, as perceived by teachers, arising from the integration of social media into the learning process (Appendix I).

3.5. The sample

The research was addressed to foreign language teachers, who at the time of its conduct served in Primary and Secondary Education. The final number of participants was 41 teachers.

The teachers-subjects of the research were informed through an e-mail about the link (https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1v_0hrr9CDd9qfPhXPvHrycm9k3KiDRpaabRYY1ITtdE/edit?pli=1) where the questionnaire was available and a letter from the researcher was included as well in order to thank them. The letter, which was addressed to the principals of the school units, presented the purpose and the way of conducting the research, stressed the

need to encourage the participation of teachers in the research process, pointed out that the research is carried out for academic purposes and stressed that confidentiality and the anonymity of the answers is guaranteed.

The recipients of the e-mail, who we assume to be the principals of the schools, were asked to contribute to the procedural part of the research, by forwarding the attached files to the language teachers. The specific procedure, that of indirectly informing the subjects of the research, was a forced choice, as the direct contact with them became impossible since their emails are considered personal data and therefore the principals of the schools do not have the authority to grant them.

It is therefore obvious that due to the chosen procedure, the promotion of the information letter to the teachers, was at the discretion of the principals. As a result, it becomes impossible to determine exactly the number of teachers who were ultimately informed about this survey.

3.6. Time period

The survey was conducted during the period 1-28/2/2023. As the data collection tool favored the approach of the whole population, this decision was deemed the best. As Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2008: 157), point out, "it is better to try to have a larger sample size than a small one, which could ultimately prove to be insufficient." In case the first indications of participation were discouraging, alternative ways of increasing its percentages were foreseen, in order to avoid a repeat survey (follow-up survey).

However, it should be noted that, following a discussion on the subject, the vast majority of school principals showed interest in conducting the research and were willing to pass the letters directly to the teachers of their school, while at the same time pledging to inform those who were absent. Finally, in the second week of the survey, a reminder letter was sent via e-mail to the entire statistical population as it has been shown that such an action usually increases the participation rate (Kelpandis, 1999). In this letter, the objectives of the research and the importance of teachers' participation were reiterated.

3.7. Management and protection of personal data

The anonymity and confidentiality of the teachers' answers was a precondition for their participation. Therefore, questions that could be asked by schools or teachers were not included.

Also, through the data collection tool used, the confidentiality of the answers was ensured by definition, as the teachers were not asked for any personal information, while the online questionnaire and the software that supports it did not record any information related to the origin of the answer.

The partially completed questionnaires were not taken into account in the quantification of the responses. Furthermore, the fact that only the final results of the investigation are published removes any doubt about the non-observance of all the rules of confidentiality.

Ethical guidelines were followed throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained from participants, ensuring their voluntary participation and confidentiality. Participants' identities were anonymized in the reporting of the findings to protect their privacy. The study adheres to ethical principles of data collection, storage, and analysis.

This chapter has outlined the research design, research questions, data collection methods, data analysis techniques, and ethical considerations for the study. This research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the integration of social media platforms in EFL teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings from this study will contribute to the existing knowledge base and inform recommendations for effective social media integration in EFL instruction.

4. Results

4.1. Demographic Information

The 41 participants of the research were all women, aged from 26 to 57 years old (average age 39.32 years).

Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	41	100,0	100,0	100,0

Age

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age	41	26	57	39,32	6,559
Valid N (listwise)	41				

51.2% of the respondents had a Bachelor's degree, 39% had a Master's degree, 7.3% had a certificate of proficiency in English and 2.4% had a Med in TESOL.

Highest degree earned:

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Bachelor degree	21	51,2	51,2	51,2
	Master degree	16	39,0	39,0	90,2
	Med TESOL	1	2,4	2,4	92,7
	Proficiency	3	7,3	7,3	100,0
	Total	41	100,0	100,0	

Regarding the grade level they are teaching, 56.1% said that they teach all levels, 24.4% teach in primary school, 7.3% teach in secondary school, 4.9% teach in C2 class and 2.4% teach in B2 class, upper-intermediate levels and preA1-B2.

Grade level you are teaching:

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	All levels	23	56,1	56,1	56,1
	B2	1	2,4	2,4	58,5
	C2	2	4,9	4,9	63,4
	PreA1-B2	1	2,4	2,4	65,9
	Primary school	10	24,4	24,4	90,2
	Secondary	3	7,3	7,3	97,6
	Upper-Intermediate	1	2,4	2,4	100,0
	Total	41	100,0	100,0	

Social Media Use

As for the years the participants had been teaching English as a foreign language (EFL), 56.1% said that they had been teaching for more than 15 years, 34.1% for 10-15 years, 7.3% for 5-10 years and 2.4% for 1-5 years.

1. How many years have you been teaching English as a foreign language (EFL)?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1-5 years	1	2,4	2,4	2,4

10-15 years	14	34,1	34,1	36,6
5-10 years	3	7,3	7,3	43,9
More than 15 year	23	56,1	56,1	100,0
Total	41	100,0	100,0	

2. Do you use social media platforms for pedagogical reasons (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram) when teaching English?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	NO	5	12,2	12,2	12,2
	YES	36	87,8	87,8	100,0
	Total	41	100,0	100,0	

87.8% claimed that they use social media platforms for pedagogical reasons (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram) when teaching English. Among them, 85.4% use YouTube and 2.4% use Facebook, Google, Instagram, Skype and Viber.

3. If yes, which social networking website do you usually use when teaching English?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Facebook	1	2,4	2,4	2,4
	Google	1	2,4	2,4	4,9
	I don't use them	1	2,4	2,4	7,3
	Instagram	1	2,4	2,4	9,8
	Skype	1	2,4	2,4	12,2
	Viber	1	2,4	2,4	14,6
	YouTube	35	85,4	85,4	100,0
	Total	41	100,0	100,0	

4. How often do you use social media platform(s) during EFL classes?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Daily	3	7,3	7,3	7,3
	Never	2	4,9	4,9	12,2
	Often	18	43,9	43,9	56,1
	Sometimes	12	29,3	29,3	85,4
	Weekly	6	14,6	14,6	100,0
	Total	41	100,0	100,0	

Asked about the English language skills they target when using social networking sites/applications in EFL classes, 82.9% said that they target Speaking/Listening, 7.3% target grammar, 4.9% target writing and 2.4% target reading and vocabulary

5. What English language skills do you target when using social networking sites/applications in EFL classes?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Grammar	3	7,3	7,3	7,3
	Reading	1	2,4	2,4	9,8
	Speaking/Listening	34	82,9	82,9	92,7
	Vocabulary	1	2,4	2,4	95,1
	Writing	2	4,9	4,9	100,0
	Total	41	100,0	100,0	

Asked about the English language skills they target when using social networking sites/applications in EFL classes, 82.9% said that they target Speaking/Listening, 7.3% target grammar, 4.9% target writing and 2.4% target reading and vocabulary.

6. What instructional strategies do you use to integrate social media in EFL classes?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Assessment	1	2,4	2,4	2,4
	Collaborative learning activities	14	34,1	34,1	36,6
	Communicating with students	17	41,5	41,5	78,0
	Individual learning activities	5	12,2	12,2	90,2
	Lesson planning	4	9,8	9,8	100,0
	Total	41	100,0	100,0	

As for the instructional strategies they use to integrate social media in EFL classes, 41.5% use Communication with students, 34.1% use Collaborative learning activities, 12.2% use Individual learning activities, 9.8% use Lesson planning and 2.4% use assessment.

Perceptions about the benefits/challenges of using social media

The last part of the questionnaire was about the benefits/challenges of using social media. 85.4% agreed that using social media in EFL classes helps to improve students' ability in reading, writing and speaking English, 85.4% that using social media in EFL classes

encourages students' participation and collaboration, 85.4% that using social media in EFL classes increases the interest of students toward English language, 71.4% that using social media makes English teaching and learning more effective and 58.6% that using social media makes me more productive as a teacher.

Furthermore, 21.9% said that there is lack of accessibility to social networking sites in their school, 41.5% that there is lack of time to prepare materials based on social media and 39% that there is lack of technical support that helps them.

Finally, 9.8% agreed that students pay less attention when social media are used in teaching, 41.4% that there is too much course materials to cover to make room for social media use, 78.1% that they are confident in using social media to teach English, 41.5% that they have had adequate support for using technology (e.g. social media) in EFL classes and 39% that they had adequate training on using technology (e.g. social media) in EFL classes.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
7. Using social media in EFL classes helps to improve students' ability in reading, writing and speaking English			14,6%	58,5%	26,8%
8. Using social media in EFL classes encourages students' participation and collaboration	2,4%		12,2%	53,7%	31,7%
9. Using social media in EFL classes increases the interest of students toward English language			14,6%	48,8%	36,6%
10. using social media makes English teaching and learning more effective			26,8%	51,2%	22,2%
11. Using social media makes me more productive as a teacher.		7,3%	34,1%	41,5%	17,1%
12. There is lack of accessibility to social networking sites in my school	17,1%	36,6%	24,4%	19,5%	2,4%

13. There is lack of time to prepare materials based on social media	7,3%	22%	29,3%	36,6%	4,9%
14. There is lack of technical support that helps me use social media use	14,6%	24,4%	22%	31,7%	7,3%
15. Students' pay less attention when social media are used in teaching	24,4%	51,2%	14,6%	4,9%	4,9%
16. There is too much course materials to cover to make room for social media use	4,9%	41,5%	12,2%	34,1%	7,3%
17. I am confident in using social media to teach English		4,9%	17,1%	53,7%	24,4%
18. I have had adequate support for using technology (e.g. social media) in EFL	2,4%	24,4%	31,7%	36,6%	4,9%
19. I have had adequate training on using technology (e.g. social media) in EFL	7,3%	36,6%	17,1%	36,6%	2,4%

5. Findings, analysis of the study and a summary

All 41 participants of the research were women, aged from 26 to 57 years old, with an average age of 39.32 years. In terms of educational qualifications, 51.2% of the respondents had a bachelor's degree, 39% had a master's degree, 7.3% had a proficiency in English, and 2.4% had a Med TESOL. Regarding the grade level they are teaching, 56.1% teach all levels, 24.4% teach in primary school, 7.3% teach in secondary school, and 12.2% teach in higher levels (B2 and C2).

The 87.8% of the respondents claimed that they use social media platforms for pedagogical reasons when teaching English. Among those who use social media, 85.4% use YouTube, 2.4% use Facebook, Google, Instagram, Skype, and Viber. The 56.1% of the participants had been teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) for more than 15 years, 34.1% for 10-15 years, 7.3% for 5-10 years, and 2.4% for 1-5 years.

In the question about how often teachers use the social networks the 43.9% of the participants use social media platforms often during EFL classes, 29.3% use them sometimes, 14.6% use them weekly, 7.3% use them daily, and 4.9% don't use them at all.

When using social media in EFL classes, 82.9% of the participants target Speaking/Listening skills, 7.3% target grammar, 4.9% target writing, and 2.4% target reading and vocabulary.

The instructional strategies used to integrate social media in EFL classes include Communication with students (41.5%), Collaborative learning activities (34.1%), Individual learning activities (12.2%), and Lesson planning (9.8%).

The majority of participants agreed that using social media in EFL classes helps improve students' abilities in reading, writing, and speaking English (85.4%), encourages students' participation and collaboration (85.4%), and increases students' interest in the English language (85.4%).

Some challenges identified include lack of accessibility to social networking sites in schools (21.9%), lack of time to prepare materials based on social media (41.5%), lack of technical

support (39%), and concerns about students' attention (9.8%) and course material coverage (41.4%).

However, a significant number of participants expressed confidence in using social media to teach English (78.1%) and reported having adequate support (41.5%) and training (39%) in using technology, including social media, in EFL classes.

These findings indicate that the majority of participants, who are experienced EFL teachers, recognize the benefits of integrating social media in EFL classes and actively use various platforms, predominantly YouTube. However, challenges related to accessibility, time constraints, and technical support still exist. The results also highlight the importance of providing adequate support and training to teachers in utilizing social media effectively for teaching English during a pandemic period.

From the presentation and analysis of the results of the present research, with the central theme to be investigated the utilization of social networks in foreign language teaching, important aspects of the Greek school reality emerged. The research concerned Primary and Secondary Education. However, the general conclusions that have been drawn and which are presented below, although they cannot be arbitrarily generalized for the whole of Greece, were the first impression of the situation that occurred during the Covid era.

First of all, it is worth noting that more than 80% of the teachers of all foreign languages taught seek support material on social networks for the needs of their course.

According to the statistical analysis, the social network that is preferred by the vast majority of research subjects is YouTube. It should be noted that, as the data indicate, a large proportion of respondents do not use exclusively a social network but seem to adopt them in combination. It is also pointed out that the above-mentioned top choices in this question are common to all three industries.

According to the research, the integration of social networks in the educational process has a number of advantages, among which, statistically, in this research, prevail the improvement of students' ability in reading, writing and speaking English, the encouragement of students' participation and collaboration, the increase of the interest of students toward English language, the fact that using social media makes English teaching and learning more effective and the fact that using social media makes teachers more productive.

Based on what has been presented in the previous chapters, one could conclude that the integration of web 2.0 tools in teaching practice does not automatically translate into more effective teaching, especially if it is not accompanied by the application of appropriate teaching approaches to highlight their pedagogical value. Also, from the recording and study of bibliographic data it is concluded that the integration of web 2.0 tools, and especially social networks, in an educational context is not always associated with success or the absence of challenges and problems.

Indeed, the success of an innovative tool is the result of many components. In this case, social networks, having dominated the daily lives of young people, have already gained the preference and attention of students, which is the first and most important step in accepting any new teaching tool. Of course, the degree of their effectiveness as digital media that facilitate the learning process, depends directly on the teacher, who is the most competent to judge and choose the appropriate for the respective teaching goal social network. However, before making such a choice, it is important for the teacher to consider the students' preferences and to include in their criteria the protection of their personal data, for which there is a strong bibliographic concern.

The data obtained from the research conducted among the foreign language teachers of Primary and Secondary Education of Attica, regarding the degree of utilization of social networks in their course, can be characterized as positive, as it turned out that the majority of respondents are familiar with the use of social networks both for teaching in the classroom and for the search for supportive educational material. More specifically, EFL teachers show a particular preference for YouTube. Considering the numerous international bibliographic references for its use in teaching practice, the almost complete absence of Twitter from the choices of the teachers of the sample is remarkable.

Regarding the benefits from the use of social networks in the educational process, which is also the subject of this work, the formation of a positive climate, the increase of students' interest and participation in language teaching and the ease of providing are statistically more important. digital support material. The aforementioned positive elements of social networks are confirmed by a number of other studies mentioned in the literature review. It is also worth noting that, although a small number of respondents have created a special page for the needs of their course, the processing of the results shows that an initiative like this is essential and leads to maximizing the benefits.

6. Conclusion

As a conclusion, it should be noted that the research conducted was not nationwide and, therefore, the results do not necessarily represent all foreign language teachers in Greece. There is, therefore, a need to conduct similar surveys, in a larger population with an emphasis on aspects that could not be examined in detail in the context of this research.

The elaboration of the present work attempted to capture the general picture that prevails around the value of non-formal learning as it is manifested by the use of web 2.0 tools, and especially social networking services. In combination with the conduct of the relevant research, which aimed at capturing the current situation in the field of utilization of social networks in the foreign language course in Greek Secondary Education, showed that these new teaching tools can contribute to increasing interest and more active participation of students in the foreign language lesson, which is a starting point for achieving most of the teaching objectives.

In conclusion, the use of social media platforms in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic has proven to be a multifaceted and transformative experience for both educators and learners. As the world faced the unprecedented challenges of remote learning and social distancing, the integration of social media tools into EFL instruction emerged as a vital lifeline for maintaining continuity in education.

Throughout this period, social media platforms served as dynamic virtual classrooms where educators could engage students in innovative and interactive ways. The advantages were evident, with features such as multimedia content, instant feedback, and gamification capturing students' interest and fostering active participation. These platforms offered a bridge between physical and virtual classrooms, enabling teachers to adapt their teaching methods and create a sense of community despite physical separation.

Moreover, social media platforms facilitated authentic language use and exposure, aligning with the principles of communicative language teaching. Students had the opportunity to engage in real-world communication, access authentic resources, and develop language skills in meaningful contexts. These experiences went beyond the confines of traditional

textbooks, allowing learners to connect with global communities and cultures, thereby enriching their language proficiency.

However, challenges also emerged, including concerns about digital equity, privacy, and the need for digital literacy skills. It became apparent that effective implementation of social media in EFL teaching requires careful planning, training, and consideration of individual students' needs and circumstances.

As we move forward beyond the pandemic, the lessons learned from the use of social media in EFL teaching can continue to inform educational practices. The experience has highlighted the importance of flexibility and adaptability in education, as well as the potential for technology to enhance language learning. Educators are now better equipped to blend traditional and digital pedagogies, offering students a broader spectrum of learning opportunities.

In closing, the incorporation of social media platforms in EFL teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic was a response to a crisis, but it also opened doors to new possibilities in language education. As we navigate the post-pandemic landscape, the insights gained from this experience can contribute to more dynamic, engaging, and inclusive EFL instruction, benefiting both educators and learners in the years to come.

This study can have several possible implications for various stakeholders involved in education. The study can inform educators about the effectiveness of using social media platforms for EFL teaching during emergencies like the COVID-19 pandemic. It may encourage educators to adapt their teaching methods to incorporate online platforms even in traditional classroom settings, enhancing engagement and flexibility. The findings may promote the integration of blended learning approaches in EFL education, combining face-to-face instruction with online resources. Educators may incorporate social media platforms as a complementary tool in their teaching toolkit. The study highlights the importance of digital literacy skills for both educators and students. Institutions may need to provide training and support to ensure that all stakeholders are proficient in using social media platforms effectively for educational purposes. The study may underscore the importance of addressing issues of digital equity and access, especially for students who lack reliable internet access or devices. Policymakers and institutions may need to develop strategies to bridge the digital divide. The study emphasizes the value of authentic language use and exposure. Educators can continue to incorporate real-world communication and authentic

resources into their EFL teaching to enhance language skills. The study's implications suggest that educators can leverage social media platforms to connect students with global learning communities. This can promote intercultural understanding, global collaboration, and enhance language proficiency. The study's findings may encourage institutions and policymakers to develop contingency plans for future crises that involve the seamless integration of technology in education. Preparedness for rapid transitions to online learning can help mitigate disruptions. The study highlights the importance of using engaging features like multimedia content and gamification to maintain student engagement, even in online environments. Educators can consider these strategies in their teaching to enhance motivation and participation. The study may raise concerns about student privacy and data security on social media platforms. Institutions may need to establish clear guidelines and protocols for safeguarding student information when using these platforms for educational purposes.

The study can inspire further research into the specific strategies, tools, and best practices for integrating social media into EFL teaching during emergencies. Researchers can explore in-depth the nuances of this approach and its long-term effects on learning outcomes.

In conclusion, the study on the use of social media platforms in EFL teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic has implications that extend beyond the immediate crisis. It offers insights into the potential of technology-enhanced language education and prompts stakeholders to consider digital literacy, equity, engagement, and preparedness in the evolving landscape of language instruction during emergencies.

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Appendix I

Questionnaire

I. Demographic Information

Age:

Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female

Highest degree earned:

Grade level you are teaching:

II. Social Media Use

1. How many years have you been teaching English as a foreign language (EFL)?

- 1-5 years
- 5-10 years
- 10-15 years
- More than 15 years

2. Do you use social media platforms (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram) when teaching English?

- Yes
- No

3. Which social networking website do you usually use when teaching English? (Choose all that apply)

- Facebook
- Twitter
- YouTube
- Instagram
- Other:

4. How often do you use social media platform(s) during EFL classes?

- Daily
- Weekly
- Often
- Sometimes
- Never

5. What English language skills do you target when using social networking sites/applications in EFL classes? (Choose all that apply)

- Reading
- Speaking/Listening
- Writing
- Grammar
- Vocabulary

6. What instructional strategies do you use to integrate social media in EFL classes? (Choose all that apply)

- Lesson planning
- Individual learning activities
- Collaborative learning activities
- Assessment
- Communicating with students
- Other:

III. Perceptions about the benefits/challenges of using social media

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
7. Using social media in EFL classes helps to improve students' ability in reading, writing and speaking English					
8. Using social media in EFL classes encourages students' participation and collaboration					
9. Using social media in EFL classes increases the interest of students toward English language					
10. using social media makes English teaching and learning more effective					
11. Using social media makes me more productive as a teacher.					

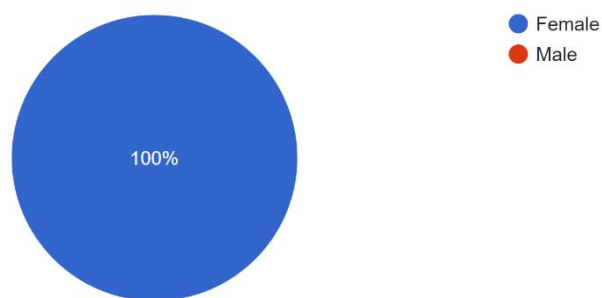
12. There is lack of accessibility to social networking sites in my school					
13. There is lack of time to prepare materials based on social media					
14. There is lack of technical support that helps me use social media use					
15. Students' pay less attention when social media are used in teaching					
16. There is too much course materials to cover to make room for social media use					
17. I am confident in using social media to teach English					
18. I have had adequate support for using technology (e.g. social media) in EFL classes					
19. I have had adequate training on using technology (e.g. social media) in EFL classes					

Appendix II

DATA

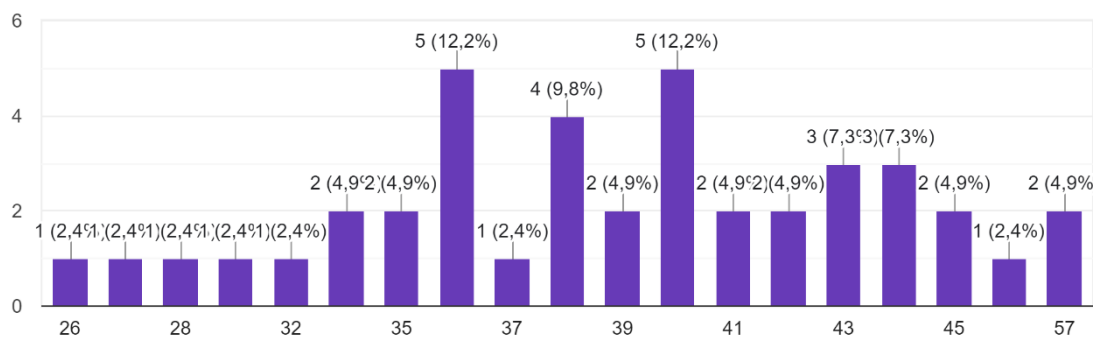
1. Demographic Information

41 απαντήσεις



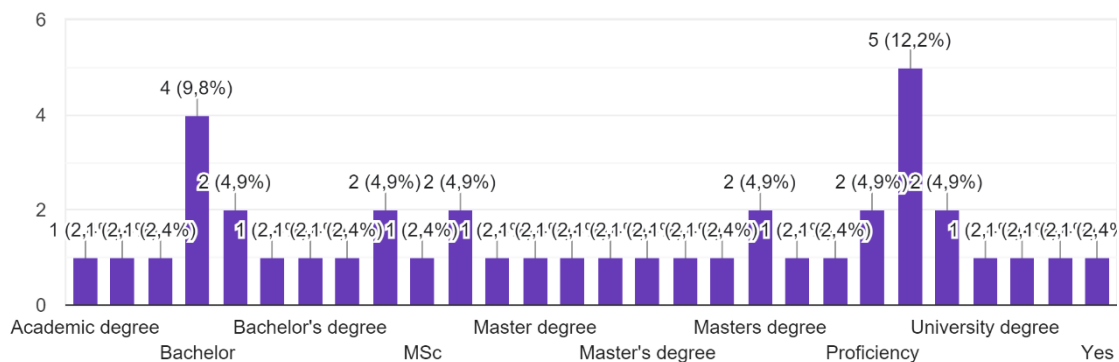
Age

41 απαντήσεις



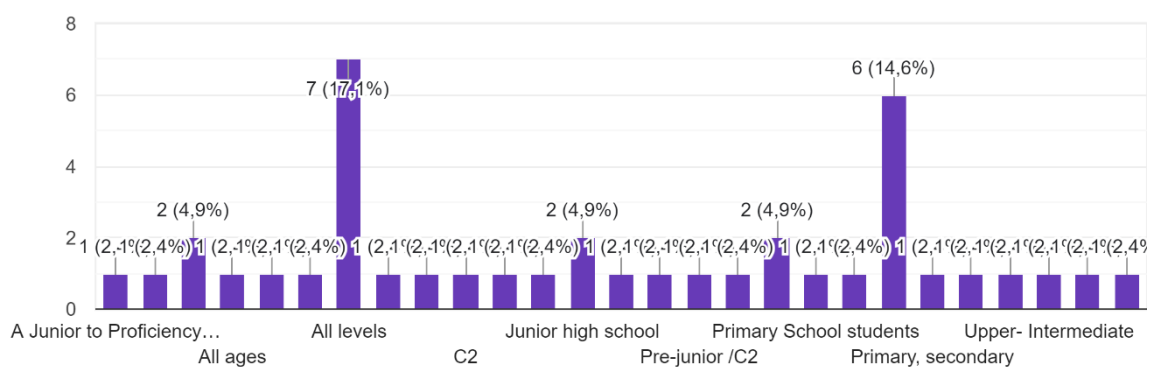
Highest degree earned:

41 απαντήσεις



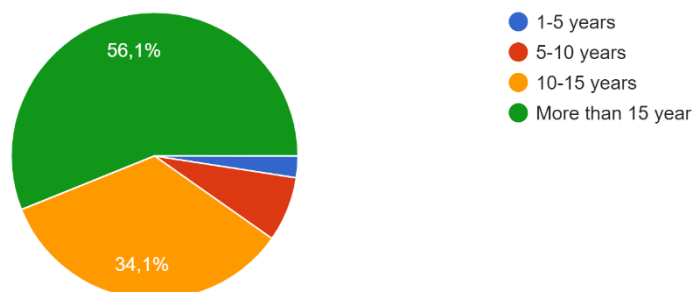
Grade level you are teaching:

41 απαντήσεις



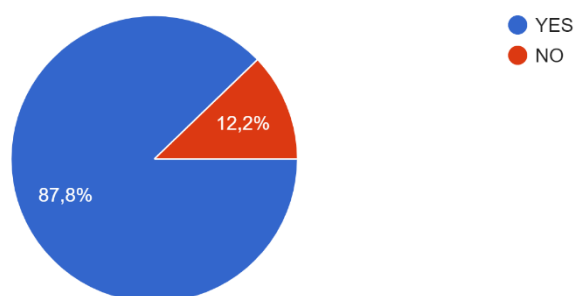
How many years have you been teaching English as a foreign language (EFL)?

41 απαντήσεις



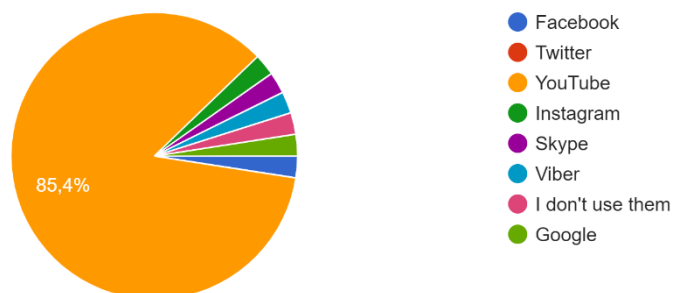
2. Do you use social media platforms for pedagogical reasons (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram) when teaching English?

41 απαντήσεις



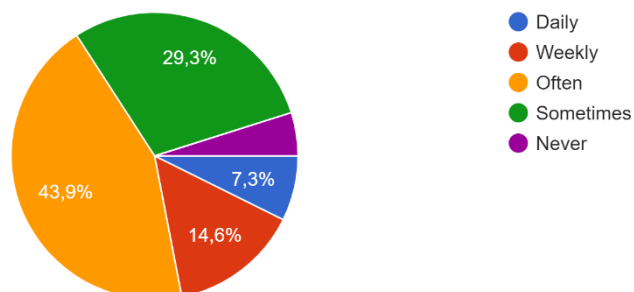
3. If yes, which social networking website do you usually use when teaching English? (Choose all that apply)

41 απαντήσεις



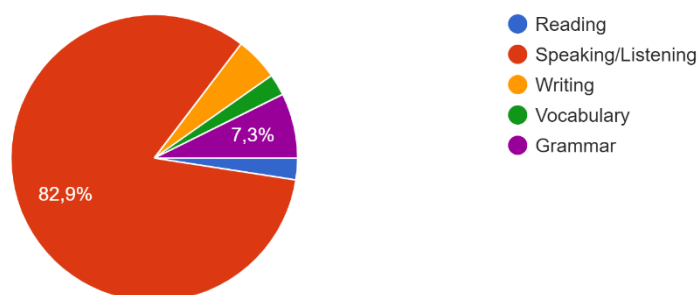
4. How often do you use social media platform(s) during EFL classes?

41 απαντήσεις



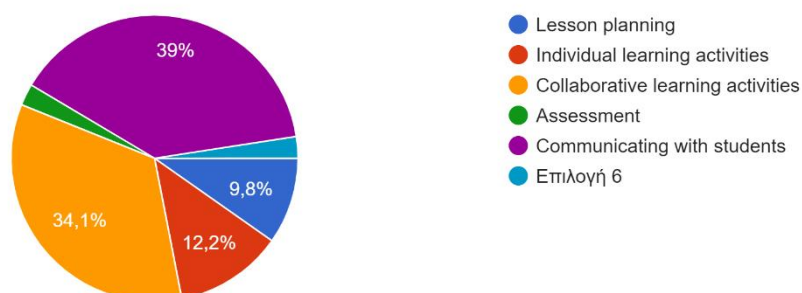
5. What English language skills do you target when using social networking sites/applications in EFL classes? (Choose all that apply)

41 απαντήσεις



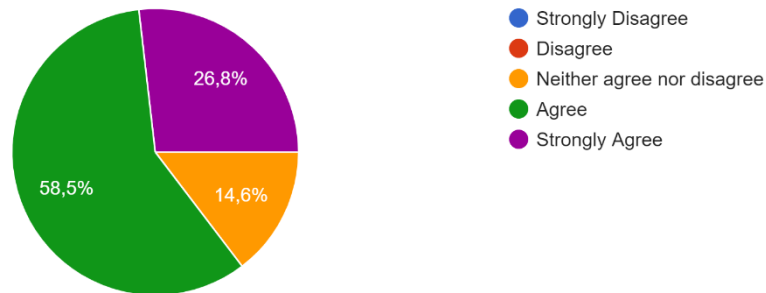
6. What instructional strategies do you use to integrate social media in EFL classes?

41 απαντήσεις



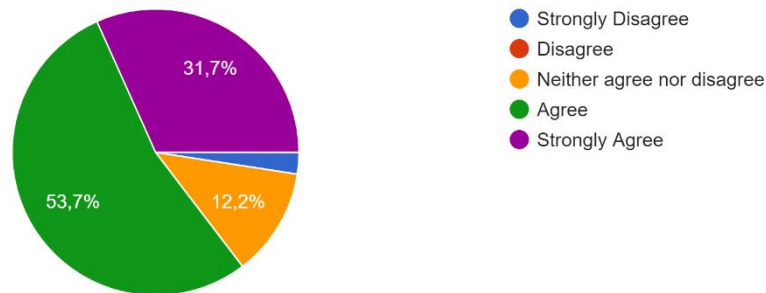
7. Using social media in EFL classes helps to improve students' ability in reading, writing and speaking English

41 απαντήσεις



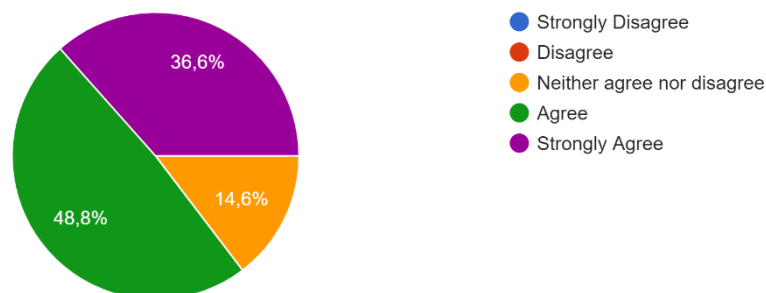
8. Using social media in EFL classes encourages students' participation and collaboration.

41 απαντήσεις



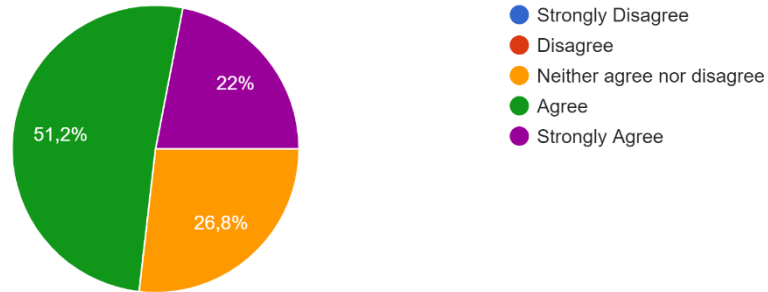
9. Using social media in EFL classes increases the interest of students towards English language

41 απαντήσεις



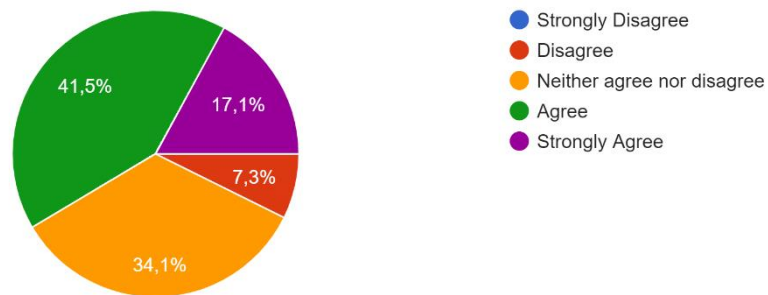
10. Using social media makes English teaching and learning more effective

41 απαντήσεις



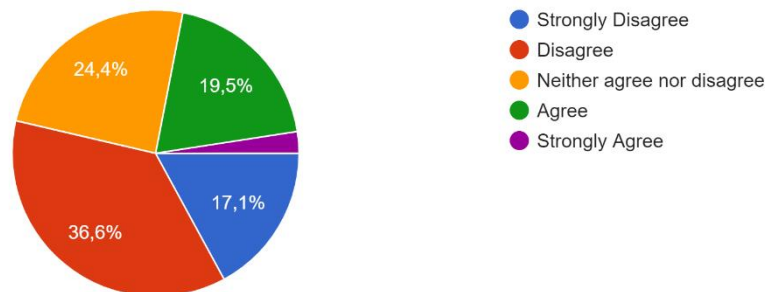
11. Using social media makes me more productive as a teacher.

41 απαντήσεις



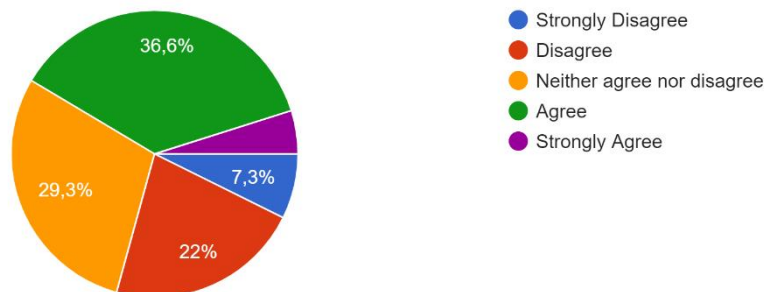
12. There is lack of accessibility to social networking sites in my school

41 απαντήσεις



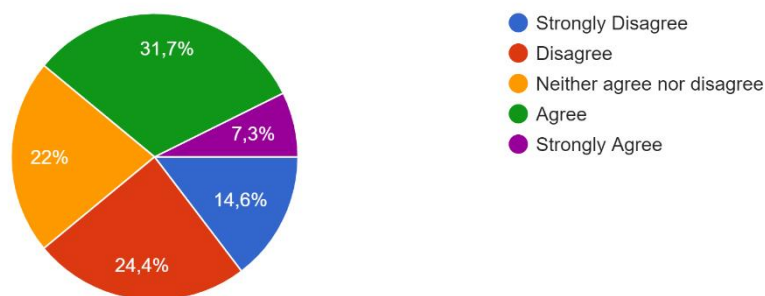
13. There is lack of time to prepare materials based on social media

41 απαντήσεις



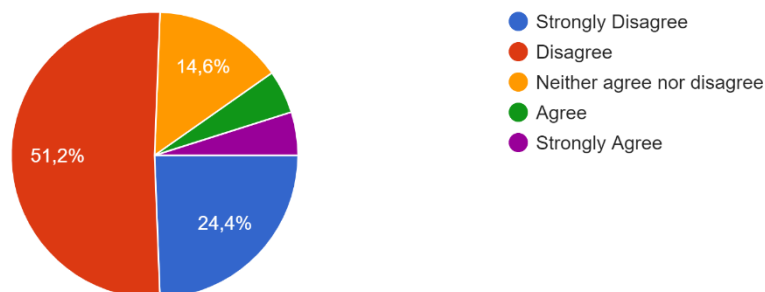
14. There is lack of technical support that helps me use social media use

41 απαντήσεις



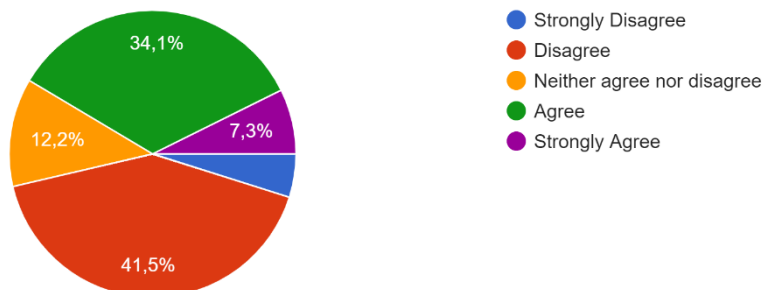
15. Students' pay less attention when social media are used in teaching

41 απαντήσεις



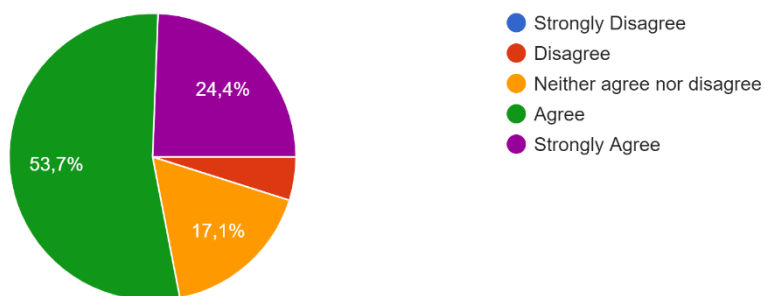
16. There is too much course material to cover to have enough time to use social media

41 απαντήσεις



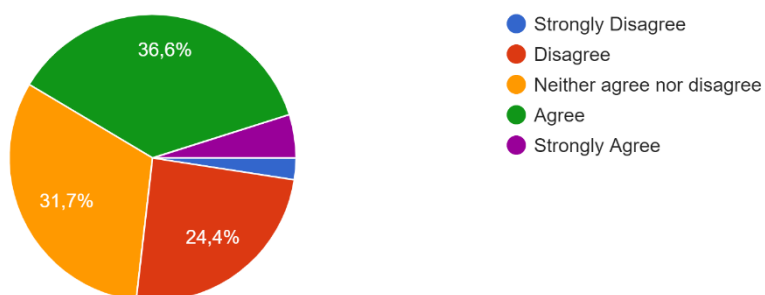
17. I am confident to use social media to teach English

41 απαντήσεις



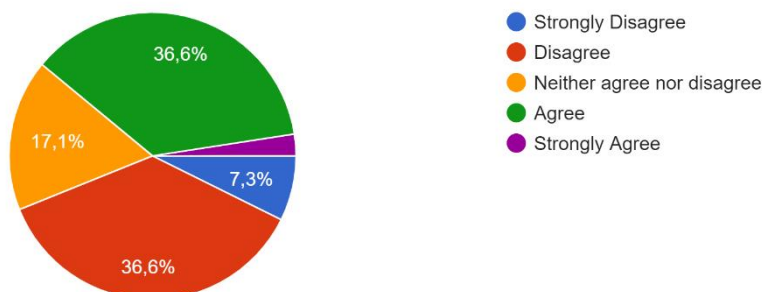
18. I have had adequate support for using technology (e.g. social media) in EFL classes

41 απαντήσεις



19. I have had adequate training on using technology (e.g. social media) in EFL classes

41 απαντήσεις



Author's Statement:

I hereby expressly declare that, according to the article 8 of Law 1559/1986, this dissertation is solely the product of my personal work, does not infringe any intellectual property, personality and personal data rights of third parties, does not contain works/contributions from third parties for which the permission of the authors/beneficiaries is required, is not the product of partial or total plagiarism, and that the sources used are limited to the literature references alone and meet the rules of scientific citations.