Twitter in Teaching Languages: Students' Perspectives

Mahammed Bouabdallah
Lecturer in Arabic
University of Westminster
@mahammedb
About Myself and my Courses

• Lecturer of Arabic
• General Arabic
• Arabic for Specific purposes
  ▶ Arabic for Media
  ▶ Arabic for Business
The purpose of this presentation

• Twitter can be best used for students’ learning.
• To take away something practical with you and try it with your students/learners.
• to share my experience with you, and get your opinion about it
The Rational

- Will Twitter improve the learning experience?
- Will Twitter be good for all/some students?
- How it defer from VLE (Blackboard/Moodle...)?
- What researchers said about it?
- It would be difficult for any educator now to argue against the fact that the vast majority of students use SNT of some fashion.
- Twitter is helpful for students in pursuing immediate feedback. Dunlap & Lowenthal (2009)
- Twitter is helpful as an aid for peer tutoring and social interaction that revolved around academic issues. List & Brynat (2009).
How I started Twitter in my Arabic classes?

• A trip to the British Museum
Our Twitter Account

• Arabicwestminster @arabicwestmin
• Protected account
• At the end of the year, students will
• We don’t delete the tweets.
The activities

• Comment on a statement/piece of news

05/03/2016, 16:24

VIEW TWEET ACTIVITY

Sumayh @Sumzyxxx · 05/03/2016
نعم أني اتفق مع ميركل.
تعد أنه وسيلة ممتازة لنحّل اللاجئين الفرصة.
ندمج مع المجتمع الآلماني.

Ahmed H @Wall-Hikma · 09/03/2016
الرياضة تمكن أن تدمج让人们 لم يجد اللغة بشكل دقيق.
فلا علم عن حجة الناقة لأن عوامل الفريق.
وأضافت ميركل أن هذه العوامل
تمنح شعوراً بالقوة والثقة في النفس وهي عوامل تعد شرطاً
للانخراط في المجتمع الآلماني.

Arabicwestminster @arabicwestmin
هل تنافق مع مبادرة ميركل أم تختلف معها، ولماذا؟
The Activities

• Your opinion about something (related to the topics of the syllabus)
The Activities

• Comment on a picture
The activities

• Writing a list of vocabulary of a given topic
The activities

• Comment/correct the auto translation
The activities

- Twitter polls (discussion)
Students’ Perceptions
What do you think of the way how Twitter has been used in class?
Did Twitter helped you to learn more in class?
How?

• Yes, weekly questions/responses which would traditionally have been written on paper and unseen by the rest of the class are now available online. This really improves student engagement as they can instantly compare and contrast their work with colleagues. This improves grammar, boosts vocabulary and encourages creativity (especially in the small word count). “Student’s answer”
In your opinion, what are the advantages of using Twitter in Arabic class?

- Useful for digital native students such as myself, making use of technology was advantageous in learning Arabic especially because most of the media is read through apps such as Twitter. Also I did not know about the auto translation, this was helpful in gaining an overall idea of the tweet. “Student’s answer”
In your opinion, what are the disadvantages of using Twitter in Arabic class?

• Can be distract
• Could take long time to write something 2
• Very limited in what to say 2
• Typing in Arabic takes me a long
• I don’t know how to use the application
• I have enough SN platforms, and I don’t want new one.
Correction of tweets

Before tweeting

7. when you tweeted, have you checked your tweets before you tweeted them?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Skipped: 0</th>
<th>Answered: 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After tweeting

8. Have you checked your tweets after you tweeted them?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Skipped: 0</th>
<th>Answered: 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Self correction/ Peer correction
Which activity helped you more?

- Comment on a picture: 21%
- Write vocabulary on a given topic: 12%
- Correction of the auto translation: 13%
- Polls: 4%
- Comment on a statement: 25%
- Your opinion: 25%
Is it worth doing it?

Allow more shy students to learn

Bridge the gap between formal and informal learning

Practice the language through guided activities

It can be used as “writing” portfolio

Blended learning community
Students’ suggestions

• A tool of communication
• Tweets needs to be corrected
• Using the feature “Moments” in Twitter
• Have at least one class using Twitter only (to create an entire session around the use of social media, with Twitter being the primary focus).
Bett: Points

• The one thing to remember? *Pedagogy before Technology*

• The one thing to do? *Go ahead and tweet with L2*
• Shukran, Thank you

• Any questions or comments?