USING FACEBOOK TO TEACH ENGLISH REMOTELY
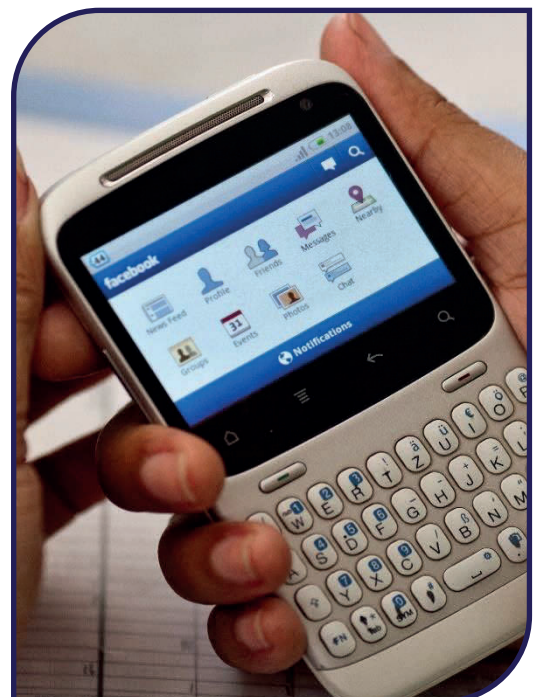Radhika Gholkar

Introduction

Facebook is a widely used social media platform. In places where teachers and their learners may not have access to advanced digital tools or infrastructure for learning, Facebook is a quick and readily available platform. Learning through Facebook is also likely to build learners' digital skills.

Getting set up

- You will need to help learners create their own Facebook accounts, if they don't have one already. You may want to encourage learners to create a new account, specially meant for your lessons. This way learners won't be distracted by posts or messages coming from their friends or family members.
- Create a separate Facebook account for yourself too. This is highly recommended and will help you protect your own privacy.
- Once the accounts are ready, you will need to create a 'closed' group which is just for your lessons. You may want to further divide the class into smaller groups and create separate Facebook groups for your learners. This way, you will have one main group to upload all the common content and sub-groups where you can post specific tasks and activities suitable for each group. Every learner will then have access to two groups each.
  You will need to plan how you will use the platform, for what, at what times. You may want to make a short video introducing yourself and explaining exactly how the lessons will take place and communicate what you expect from your learners.

Providing input

- To provide information, explain concepts or set tasks you can use the feature called *Facebook Live*. If all your learners can't be present for the live session, they will still be able to watch the recording later.
- You can also upload things like recorded stories, listening texts or videos explaining concepts or pronunciation and then set tasks based on these.
- If you want to help learners with their reading, you can simply post text for them to read or
- share links to other reading texts or sources for your learners to access. You will have to keep copyright restrictions in mind while identifying sources.

Setting practice tasks and activities

- If you have ready tasks in your textbooks, you can simply refer to those or scan those to upload on the group.
- You may want to plan a series of posts with tasks and activities and keep posting one task daily to keep learners engaged and motivated.
- You can also set up quizzes at the end of every week to check learning.
- You can post pictures and videos to help learners initiate discussions, set tasks around these.
- If you want to get learners to do some speaking practice, you can get them to upload recorded audio files. Learners need to be comfortable with this as their audio files can be accessed by other learners.

Receiving work from students and giving feedback

- You can set deadlines for learners to comment on or do the tasks you have set up. You can also set some time aside during the week to conduct a live session for questions.
- Depending on how many learners you are working with, you may want to allow learners to send in responses for select tasks directly in your messenger. They may feel more comfortable doing this than posting their work for everyone to see.
- For longer written tasks, learners can upload images of their written tasks for you to assess.
- Encourage learners to maintain a notebook to record their learning.

Things to consider

- **Access, permission and privacy**: You will need to find out how many of your learners have access to Facebook either using their own device or one belonging to their parents. You will also need to seek permission from parents for learners to use Facebook at dedicated times.
- **Group rules:** It's a good idea to agree a few 'do's and don'ts' for the group – agree what behaviour is and isn't acceptable.
- **Safeguarding:** Facebook recommends that only people over the age of 13 set up their own accounts. In some countries the recommended age may be higher. Don't ask learners to post pictures or videos of themselves. You will need to make sure that both the parents and their children understand how to set privacy filters. Make sure you make the groups private too.

Useful links

- 100 ideas for using Facebook with your students: https://tinyurl.com/yaj9lwjf
- A lesson plan all about Facebook and social media: https://tinyurl.com/yb7ch6ua