Social Networks (Lesson Plan)

Peter Zolczer
J. Selye University
Faculty of Education
Department of Modern Philology

■ **Topic:** The advantages and disadvantages of using social networks
■ **Level:** Upper-Intermediate
■ **Time:** 45 minutes

Overview

The aim of this lesson is to practice and improve students' conversational skills by having multiple perspective discussions on using social networks. The subject matter of the lesson provides a very wide range of topics on a scale from rather general to more specific depending on the varying circumstances (e.g. not standardized level of proficiency, number of students etc.). Social networks are highly up-to-date phenomena to consider. Besides receiving a useful feedback from the students on the matter according to their perspective, it is presumable that the topic will engage and enable them to create meaningful and enjoyable conversations.

Objectives for the students

■ Students should be able to come up with colorful ideas about social networking.
■ They should be able to present their ideas in a coherent form in front of the other students/groups.
■ They should be able to evaluate the previously presented ideas and, if needed, alter them in order to make them consistent with the expectations of the class.
■ Students should be able to argue about the advantages and disadvantages if using social networks.

Prerequisites (optional; might be attached to the warm up activity, but in that case the teacher should pay attention to the timing)

As for homework to this lesson the teacher asks the students to think about the funniest and the saddest post they have ever seen/read/experienced and to describe both in 5-5 sentences.

Warm-up (5-10)

During the warm-up activity the teacher asks for volunteers who would then read/present their homework. Since the lessons objectives focus on the communications skills, during correction the teacher should concentrate on fluency over accuracy, however it is highly recommended to note down the errors (they might become a helpful resource in the future). After each post is presented the teacher asks the other students for comments (Who has chosen a similar post? Do you agree that it could make you laugh/sad?).

Activity 1 (10-25)

Depending on the number of students the teacher forms groups of 3 to 5. Before the activity begins the teacher starts a brief discussion on the nature and types of social networks (complex online websites with a wide range of user-side input data [posts, pictures, videos etc.]; facebook, twitter, instagram, google+). Each group's task is to come up with at least 6-6 advantages and disadvantages of using social networks and write them down on a separate piece of paper (the pros and cons can be connected to any of the above mentioned networks). Around the 18th minute the teacher asks about the pros and cons from the groups, 1-2 from each. After each group reads an item from their lists the teacher starts a conversation by asking the other groups whether or not they agree with the previous statement(s) and in either way, why do they think so. A final question might be the following: Do you find using social networks dangerous? or Would you allow for your own child to use social networks?

Examples for advantages and disadvantages of using social networks:
■ **Pros:** Easy way to be in touch with your friends and relatives; possibility to keep an online album of your whole life; the option of instant messaging (IM/chat).
■ **Cons:** Security issues considering personal data; receiving spam posts; identity fraud; addiction.

Activity 2 (25-40)

Before starting the next task the groups exchange their lists of pros and cons of using a social network so that each group gets another group's list (this step is also optional). The task is to create a perfect social network which does not have the disadvantages mentioned in the previous task and might even have improved advantages than stated before. The groups brainstorm, note down their ideas and after 5 minutes of preparation, they present their perfect social network in front of the class. It is essential for each member of every group to participate in the presentation (they can use the black/whiteboard, or if available, even a computer with a projector or an interactive board; drama techniques can be used as well).

Examples for a perfect social network:
■ increased personal data security,
■ ability to create own friend circles,
■ option for filtering inappropriate posts,
■ parental control,
■ optional time limit.

Feedback (40-45)

Together with the teacher the students briefly reflect on the lesson, evaluating their own performance as a whole class. Ending the lesson on a positive note is essential.