

## ***USING SOCIAL NETWORKING SERVICES IN ELT***

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Nowadays a lot of people throughout the world use so-called social networking services. Social networking services (SNS) can be broadly defined as Internet- or mobile-device-based social spaces designed to facilitate communication, collaboration and content sharing across networks of contacts. SNS can be divided into two main groups: profile-based SNS and content-based SNS. Profile-based SNS are primarily organized around members' profile pages that mainly consist of information about an individual member, including the person's photos, details of interests, likes and dislikes (for example, "Facebook", "MySpace", "Bebo"). In content-based SNS the user's profile remains an important way of organizing connections, but plays a secondary role to the posting of content. Such sites are focused on sharing information and can be book-focused, audio-focused, video-focused, etc. (for example, "YouTube", "Flickr", "Shelfari")[1]. Among other popular SNS one can mention "Twitter", "Open Diary" (worldwide), "LinkedIn" (North America), "Faceparty" (UK), "Friendster", "Cyworld" (Asia), "Vkontakte", "Odnoklassniki", "LiveJournal" (Russia, Ukraine and other former Soviet republics) and many other communities that can be either of general use or have some restrictions in age, social status or interests [2].

If so many people including school and university students visit SNS, the question arises: can a teacher (and an EL teacher in particular) use the opportunities of these sites for educational purposes? Certainly. Teachers may be interested in:

- staff development and digital literacy, for example, to understand sites that are popular with learners, or to be able to deliver some information in electronic form;
- engaging with students and other members of the school, college or university who are using services, for example, by setting up a school profile;
- using SNS for e-learning, for example, working with learners or supporting their collaboration on a particular class, topic or project;
- ICT provision planning, for example, exploring services because they are considering hosting or running services for their communities, etc. [1].

The activities based on the usage of SNS in ELT are in many ways similar to the ones that can be suggested while using ELT web-sites, chats, forums, blogs, wikis, online reference tools, online courses, E-mail, etc., such as various communicative activities, analytical reading activities, vocabulary and grammar work, individual and collaborative writing projects, listening comprehension activities, playing educational online games, organizing competitions, etc. [3]. But the main advantage of SNS (especially profile-based SNS, which are usually multifunctional) is that they suggest wide opportunities for various activities including communication, searching and sharing information, entertainment and creative work. The majority of SNS support multimedia technologies and allow working with all types of information: text, audio, video, graphic, etc.; so they enable to gather students and teachers on one platform and organize their collaborative work without the necessity to register somewhere else.

Here is the example of the activity “Forum Music Club Eurovision Contest”, based on the SNS “Vkontakte”, which can be held while studying topic “Music”.

The image shows two screenshots from the VKontakte social network. The left screenshot is a forum post titled "Eurovision #1" with details about the contest rules and participants. The right screenshot is a scoreboard for the "Forum Music Club Eurovision Song Contest #1" showing points and places for various countries.

**Forum Post Details:**

**Eurovision #1**  
 Елена Зинковец 5 октября 2010 в 0:34

Welcome to the Forum Music Club Eurovision #1!  
 Topic: "Songs Released in the Period of 2000-2010."  
 Rules: The Rules of Forum Music Club Eurovision  
 Dates:  
 1) 16.10 - 24.10 (9 p.m.) - choosing the songs and sending them to the organizer;  
 2) 24.10 (9p.m.) - 29.10 (9 p.m.) - listening/watching the songs and voting;  
 3) 30.10 - announcing the results of Eurovision #1!

**Participants:**

- Great Britain: Story of the Year - The Children Sing ♪ (2010)
- Finland: Nightwish - Amaranth ♪ (2007)
- France: 30 Seconds to Mars - Buddha For Mary ♪ (2002)
- Slovakia: James Blunt - You Are Beautiful ♪ (2004)
- Spain: The Rasmus - Living In A World Without You ♪ (2008)
- Poland: Muse - Supermassive Black Hole ♪ (2006)
- Ukraine: Scorpions - Lorelei ♪ (2010)
- Sweden: Hurts - Wonderful Life ♪ (2010)

**Scoreboard: Forum Music Club Eurovision Song Contest #1**

	Organizer	Zlata	Yulia	Andrew	Vitalik	Marianna	Marina	Sveta	Lena	Vika	Points	Places	
1. Great Britain	12		12	1		4	10	3	5	7	54	4	
2. Finland		2		5	8	1	12	4	3	11	46	9	
3. France	3		5				5				13	20	
4. Slovakia		8	3	9		12	9	10	6		57	3	
5. Spain	2	5	6	4	7		6				30	14	
6. Poland	5	10	7	11	6	11	4	5			59	2	
7. Ukraine	11		8		10	2	8	9	9	12	69	1	
8. Sweden	1	9	11	2	3	7		6	12	3	54	5	
9. Belarus	7	11		3	6	6			4		36	13	
10. Germany		4	4						1	10	19	15	
11. Russia			9		9		11	2	11		42	11	
12. Italy		12								1	4	17	17
13. Moldova		3		6	1	3					6	19	16
14. Greece	6		1	10	12		7	8	7		51	7	
15. Croatia	10		2	7	11		3	7	8		48	8	
16. Belgium	8	6	10		4		2			8	38	12	
17. Hungary		9			8		8		11		9	45	10
18. Denmark	4			12		10		12	10	5	53	6	
19. Turkey			1		2	9				1	13	19	
20. Lithuania			7			5	1		2	2	17	18	

The students choose some European country and the song according to the topic, find this song on “YouTube” and send the link to the organizer (teacher). Then they listen to all the compositions published in the current Eurovision contest and give them points from 12 to 1. The organizer counts the points and announces the results online. The students can leave their comments on the forum or discuss the results later in class.

## References:

1. Digizen: <http://www.digizen.org/socialnetworking/>
2. Wikipedia: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_social\\_networking\\_websites](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_social_networking_websites)
3. Gavin Dudeney, Nicky Hockly. How to Teach English with Technology. – Pearson Education Limited, 2007. – 192 p.