

Influence of Social Networking Sites on Undergraduate Saudi EFL Learners: A Study at Ha'il University

Fahad Aljabr

Department of English, College of Arts, University of Ha'il, KSA

Arif Ahmed Mohammed Hassan Al-Ahdal

Department of English and Translation, College of Sciences and Arts in Methnab, Qassim University, Saudi Arabia

Rashed Daghamin

Department of English, College of Arts, University of Ha'il, KSA

Abstract—Smart usage of social networking sites can make them useful instruments for communication, learning, and teaching purposes. Owing to rising demand for it, digital technology, particularly social networking sites are finding a place in the universities. The purpose of this study is to look into the influence of using social networking sites in the teaching of English at tertiary level. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with twenty-five lecturers and fifty undergraduate students from the first year of the academic calendar year 2020-2021 in the University of Ha'il, Saudi Arabia. The findings of the study revealed that SNSs may be a double-edged sword, as they may have both favourable as well as detrimental impacts on the development and improvement of EFL learners' speaking and writing abilities. The study highlights the necessity for the proper usage of social networking sites (SNSs) in academic contexts. It also suggests that social networking sites (SNSs) if appropriately used, can be incorporated into the undergraduate teaching system to improve EFL proficiency and competence.

Index Terms—adult learning, EFL education, Saudi Arabia, social media, teaching

I. INTRODUCTION

In the past several years, the institutions in Saudi Arabia have undergone/experienced a significant transition and improvement. The purchasing and utilisation of information and communication technology (ICT) resources, for instance, are some of the clearest indications that these changes are taking place, and they may be used to detect this. The institution has made great strides in encouraging and educating its teaching staff and students to embrace technology to enhance content delivery and the learning process, respectively. Even though this innovation process occurred for a variety of reasons, little research was conducted to determine how it influenced the students. Surprisingly, there is a lack of research on how students use technology and engage with Social Networking Sites (hereafter SNSs) in particular in Saudi higher education. The researchers hardly found a study on the usage of social networking sites (SNSs) and their influence on EFL learners in this situation as consequence, particularly in the context of the University of Ha'il. The current paper attempts to address this gap in the literature.

SNSs have changed gradually and progressively. According to Arroyo (2019), the emergence of social media created a new medium for communication based on shared objectives, beliefs, and even hobbies. To stay up with the rapid digital revolution, people constantly embracing new social practices and social networking to fit their demands. For individuals in general and undergraduate students in particular, SNSs have turned into a double-edged sword. According to studies, the usage of SNSs like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and others is directly connected to users' and EFL students' English proficiency.

According to McLuhan's (2003), "All media exist to fill our lives with arbitrary perceptions and attitudes" (p. 199). The social media revolution is significant as a new tool for students and instructors to form solid social bonds. According to Anderson (2008), "access to an educational experience that is, at the very least, more flexible in time and location than campus-based education has always been the concern of online learning, as a subset of all distant education" (p. 53). Social media has been shown to have a significant impact on our mental processes, routine behaviours, responses, and attitudes, which has a significant impact on how we communicate. At the same time, our talks expose us to fresh linguistic idioms regularly.

Internet slang, which refers to a collection of short forms and language use adopted by internet users, such as LOL, ASAP, and so forth, is becoming more and more popular in the technological era, keeping up with the rapid expansion and growth of SNSs (Kay et al., 2014). Some academics, linguists, and professionals in the English language are concerned that the usage of online slang would negatively impact the standard English lexicon. However, there are

academics who support online slang. As Crystal argues over at BBC News: "Language itself evolves slowly, but the internet has sped up the process of those changes so you see them more rapidly" (cited in Kay et al., 2104, p. 5). Some common acronyms, short forms, and abbreviations used on social media, such as LOL, BTW, BF, GF, JK, etc., have evolved into distinct words that EFL users use formally in their writing and speaking situations. However, this intrusion has a detrimental effect on the linguistic competence of EFL learners as well as their English speaking and writing abilities.

Therefore, EFL students often unintentionally overuse Internet slang in formal writing and speaking contexts, including letter homophones (*abbreviations and acronyms*), incorrect capitalization and punctuation (!!!!), onomatopoeia and stylized spellings (*hahahaha*), keyboard-generated emoticons and smileys (.) (smiling face), T.T (*crying face*), leet (a colloquial language or code used on the internet, in which standard letters are frequently replaced by symbols, numerals, or special characters, such as *10V3* (love), 4 (for), and many other short forms of words, inappropriate or non-standard grammar, and sentence structures.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *The Impact of SNSs on Language Learning*

Facebook is one of the most well-known SNSs, with more than 1.32 billion registered members (Prigg, 2014). Furthermore, Barón (2012) argues that Facebook, which was founded in 2004 and is now among the most widely used SNSs worldwide, acts as a bridge for meeting new people and maintaining connections with those you already know. Almost all of your personal information, including your interests, hobbies, favourite movies and music, political and religious beliefs, relationship status, age, gender, and more, is available to the public (Hargittai, 2011). The latest data, however, shows the record breaking usage of Facebook at almost 3 billion users in March 2022 as per Globaldata.com.

SNSs can be a tremendous tool for teaching or studying English, particularly for developing students' writing and speaking abilities. There is sufficient prior research that shows a significant correlation between the use of SNSs and a learner's English competence (Al-Ahdal & Alharbi, 2021; Al-Ahdal & Shariq, 2019). However, some of the results of this research demonstrated a favourable association between the two, whilst other results revealed a detrimental effect of SNSs on the speaking and writing abilities of EFL learners.

One of the most increasingly powerful breakthroughs of the modern period has been the internet. The entire planet has become a global village as a result of the emergence of social media and the internet. By connecting people from all over the world, social networks and the internet have significantly reduced the gaps and distances between nations and continents. Particularly social networking websites provide a shortcut for nearly instantaneous connection between people throughout the globe. Social networking sites (SNSs), as described by Kay et al. (2014), are "web-based platforms that enable individuals to construct their profiles in a secured system, together with other users that share a centralised link" (p. 14).

Users of SNSs, particularly students may post any type of content, including photos, videos, check-ins for places they've been, and more. This is a key factor in the remarkable development of SNSs. According to Alassiri et al. (2014), social networking sites (SNSs) offer an interactive platform that enables users to interact with one another to build social connections and exchange knowledge and information about everyday activities and personal experiences. SNSs have been utilized as an exceptional educational and learning tool by EFL teachers and educators throughout the world to deliver relevant teaching materials and knowledge for their students, particularly in the aftermath of the pandemic. However, rather than benefiting users and learners, the lack of language regulation on SNSs has done more harm than good. Consequently, they are a two-edged sword (Kay et al., 2014).

The vast majority of SNSs, including Facebook and Twitter, might be useful instructional tools for improving students' English reading, speaking, listening, and writing abilities, according to previous studies. However, to guarantee successful outcomes, EFL instructors, educators, and teachers must incorporate these as a project with clear learning objectives. Numerous studies have demonstrated that students who spend a significant amount of time on social networking websites are unable to focus on their language sessions. These groups of EFL students tend to be far more easily distracted in class and have significantly lower attention spans than other groups. In addition, pupils disregard the value of direct, face-to-face engagement, direct experience, and real-world application (Bloxham, 2010). As a result, if students spend a lot of time on SNSs, numerous negative impacts might manifest and be seen, such as poor concentration in class and trouble interacting with peers and teachers.

Facebook also causes significant changes in linguistic ability. When people utilise Facebook or another SNS as tools for English language learning, they may have a lot of opportunities to study with millions of other users at the same time (Educause Learning Initiative, 2006). Additionally, students may utilise Facebook to strengthen their language skills while indirectly learning through varied interactions with other users. Furthermore, students' real identities are not required while participating in debates on Facebook, which can promote a more laid-back mindset that facilitates interactions without any fear of making mistakes. When problems are made public, EFL instructors may identify and fix them, which is beneficial for the students (Murphy, 2009). The Affective Filter may be eliminated by this learning technique in the long run, which will increase motivation and encourage taking risks when learning a language (Krashen, 1988). Teachers may use Facebook to share instructional resources, tasks, materials, upcoming events, helpful links, and more (Kay et al., 2014).

B. *The Social Learning Theory*

One of the most important theories of growth and learning is the social learning theory, which Albert Bandura (1997) first presented. Bandura contends that all forms of learning cannot be explained by direct reinforcement alone. He goes on to say that through seeing, copying, and modelling new information behaviour, individuals may pick it up (Belal, 2014). In addition, there are three key ideas to keep in mind: behaviour change is not a natural result of learning; observation can be a method of learning; and mental health is a crucial component of learning (Bandura, 1977; cited in Belal, 2014, p. 10). According to Bandura (1977), "In the social learning system, new patterns of behaviour can be acquired through direct experience or by observing the behaviour of others" (p. 20). Bandura also adds that learners cannot learn much by observation if they do not attend to, or recognize the basic features of the model's behaviour.

Observing other people's behaviour or having first-hand experience are both effective ways to learn new behavioural patterns. Furthermore, if a learner does not pay attention to or understand the fundamental characteristics of the model's behaviour, they will not be able to learn very much via observation (Bandura, 1977). He also argues that certain SNS users often remain active online and leave comments on other user's status updates and postings, which encourages other users to interact with the SNSs and discover fresh information and material. This informational cycle encourages more people to adopt optimistic viewpoints toward their accomplishments (Belal, 2014).

Nowadays, the majority of students use social media and spend the majority of their time exploring and surfing these social networking sites. Undergraduate students were more likely to access SNSs online at colleges and universities than anyplace else, according to research by Boyd (2008). Therefore, it is evident that SNSs have an informal impact on the speaking and writing abilities of EFL students at the college level (Bin-Hady & Al-Tamimi, 2021). Online social networks, as defined by Tyson (2009), refer to both the method and the platform that individuals use to connect online (p. 10). Therefore, social networking technologies provide a venue for EFL students to hone their productive English speaking and writing skills.

C. *Research Objectives*

This study aims to investigate how English major students at the University of Ha'il in Saudi Arabia perceive the influence of social networking sites (SNSs) on their speaking and writing abilities. It is important to note that English is taught and utilised as a foreign language in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Social networking sites (SNSs) are used by many EFL students both as a communication and educational tool. Social networking sites (SNSs) have a significant impact on how well EFL students learn English. Younger generations frequently use SNSs because of how addicting and popular they are. Social networking technologies have made it possible for people to communicate with one another in current culture, and as a result, the language used in these media has a direct and indirect impact on people, especially the younger generations. As a result, social media has a significant impact on the language acquisition of EFL learners, while it is still up for debate and more study to distinguish between the good and bad effects is needed.

The study also investigates how SNSs motivate and help EFL students improve their English writing and speaking skills as well as their English proficiency. The study examines the relationship between the use of SNSs and English proficiency. One of the components of the Internet is the social network that links people together on this planet. These internet relationships have surely made our lives easier and benefited us all. Facebook, which has about more than 1.2 billion active members in 2014, is one of the most widely used social network tools. Along with Facebook, there are other digital SNSs with unique features and applications, like Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and many more. SNS use can be beneficial for a variety of purposes, but it can also be harmful at times. The language used in SNSs may not always be appropriate, according to some earlier research, which may have an impact on EFL students' language ability and academic results. There are many possible possibilities, however, this study aims to offer a solution to such a contentious issue.

SNSs are not just for socialising; they may also be used for education and learning. They provide a way to exchange information or expertise with the globe while also bringing individuals from all corners of the world together. For instance, the social networking site Facebook has a function called "Pages" that allows anybody to create a page and exchange knowledge and information as well as advertise news, websites and links. It has been observed that English majors at the undergraduate level at Ha'il University often employ Internet slang, grammatical errors, and ungrammatical structures and phrases in their exams, quizzes, homework assignments, and papers. Numerous academics and experts in education at universities and colleges have noted this issue, particularly in the English department at Ha'il University. The EFL Learners and users will instinctively utilise such informal English in their formal English speaking and writing situations once they are familiar with social media lingo, jumbled sentence structures, incorrect punctuation, and spelling errors.

D. *Research Questions*

The manner that EFL students speak and write has been evolving continually with the advent of the Internet and SNSs. The primary text language that EFL learners utilise for communicating on SNSs is the speech they produce. Tyson stated:

The networks normally contain a relationship between the entities in it, an association such as a shared value, kinship, friendship, business transaction or other systems. The networking that occurs influences an individual's thoughts, feelings and ideas and is an essential element of human interaction. (Tyson, 2009, p. 10)

This study demonstrates that social networking sites have an influence on both our writing and speaking abilities in addition to our thoughts and feelings. This study aims to determine how social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram may affect the writing abilities of English majors at the undergraduate level at Ha'il University in Saudi Arabia.

The questions that this study tries to investigate and examine are as follows:

1. What are the positive or negative influences of using SNSs on the English writing and speaking skills of the undergraduate FEL learners of Ha'il University?
2. To what extent do SNSs motivate EFL learners at Ha'il University to improve their English writing and speaking skills?
3. What are the SNSs' detrimental or useful influences on EFL learners as recognised by the instructors at Ha'il University?

III. METHODOLOGY

This is a purely qualitative study. Public invitation for an interview as a research instrument was posted at the university PR board to invite voluntary participation from the interested EFL teachers and learners who were teaching and learning in the first and second semesters of the academic year 2019-2020 at Ha'il University, Saudi Arabia. Out of the 25 teachers and 50 students that comprised the population, only two teachers and seven students volunteered for sharing their views and perspectives. This was a study based on convenience sampling method. All data were recorded both manually and electronically, transcribed, and content analysis was performed to identify major themes. The interview questions were semi-structured but broadly stayed close to the positive and negative influences of using SNSs on the English language skills of the undergraduate students at hand. The interviews were conducted face-to-face with the teachers, and via Zoom with the students, the former being mixed genders while the latter was exclusively male participants. Gender-based analysis was not part of this study.

Data analysis

Some extremely intriguing perspectives were revealed by the data. There was a consistent understanding among instructors and students of the advantages and disadvantages of incorporating SNSs into the educational process. The difference was in how much the two participant groups supported using SNSs for educational purposes. Teachers were more worried about the distracting nature of SNSs, but students preferred the ease of access and interaction these sites provide with their classmates and teachers. The benefits and downsides are discussed separately in the sections that follow. The themes dominant in the responses were identified and systematically analysed.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. *Social Networking Sites: A Sword of Two- Edges*

SNSs have merged seamlessly into our lives as electronic and digital media like computers, tablets, and cell phones have grown in popularity. Whether these behaviours are good or bad for EFL learners is still controversial. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to clarify the connection between SNS usage and English proficiency.

Following are the key themes in the interviews which the student participants revealed:

- i. All students have personal mobile devices, and the accessibility of high-speed, reasonably priced Wi-Fi allows them to always be "in contact" with their friends and instructors.
- ii. Learning is the easiest when connected with technology.
- iii. Teachers may not always view language learned through SNS communications as a formal language.
- iv. SNSs give significantly more language exposure than any instructor or institution has ever offered in a regular classroom.

The teachers, on the other hand, presented their views along the following themes:

- i. It is hard to completely cut students off of their smartphones since they are drawn to technology in both their academic and social lives.
- ii. It is an unspoken practice among users to utilise the specific registers that each SNS provides.
- iii. Students usually encounter idioms, slang, and neologisms that are not a part of the grammar or vocabulary that is commonly used.
- iv. It might be difficult for teachers to encourage their learners to "unlearn" the language they prefer to use on SNSs and "relearn" the normative language. The students may eventually withdraw or lose interest in the learning environment as a result.

B. *Positive Influence of SNSs*

SNSs may be an excellent teaching and learning tool, particularly for improving student's speaking and writing abilities. According to the student's responses, a few of the constructive attitudes are: "i. *All youngsters have personal mobile devices and the availability of high-speed affordable wi-fi enables them to stay 'in touch' with peers and teachers at all times*". "ii. *Learning is the easiest when connected with technology*". According to Asad et al. (2014), when social learning outcomes are improved, academic learning results for EFL learners also improve. However,

students are eager to utilise SNSs for academic purposes, and this offers an opportunity to involve them in informal learning by researching, exploring, and testing ideas with other students inside their social networks (Gremu & Halse, 2012). Livingstone (2008) also demonstrates how having a friend on an SNS provides you access to a variety of free and simple communication channels, including the ability to reply to journal entries, send public or private messages, play online games, comment on uploaded photos, share movie and music preferences, and more.

Furthermore, an attitude was brought from teacher 1 *"It is impossible to wean the students away from their devices as nothing appeals to them like technological tools, whether in academic or social life."* This point of view is shared by teachers and learners alike. Eastment, (2007) mentions that social media like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, "are impacting upon education far more dramatically than the conventional word-filled web page" (p. 11). Likely, Boyd (2007) believes that both adults and teens use SNSs to easily connect with friends and peers, share knowledge, rediscover their personalities, and exhibit their social life. Flad (2010) asserts that since children and teens now possess their mobile phones and can easily access SNSs, communication has become instantaneous in modern society. So, another summarized point of view: *"iv. The language exposure gained over SNSs far exceeds any exposure that the teacher or institution has ever provided in traditional learning"*. Since communication is frequently intentional and meaningful and because learners have options about language grammar and functions, this type of knowledge is considered real and thorough. This point of view has been emphasized by Krashen's (1981) hypothesis that comprehensible input is a necessary, yet insufficient condition for language learning. Theoretical treatments and several investigations on the topic were also examined by Ellis (1985), who concluded that input and interaction can affect the learning of a second language.

Blackstone and Harwood (2012) indicate that teachers may show that they are engaged in their students' Facebook learning by liking a link they post, leaving motivating comments on their posts, or bringing up a debatable topic that has previously come up on their page. Furthermore, according to Blackstone and Harwood, SNSs signal to students that the instructor is aware of and interested in what is occurring online and that he or she values their involvement and contributions. Additionally, according to Harwood and Blackstone, this form of assistance can enlist the participation of students who are less self-assured in the learning process and class discussions. Additionally, students are encouraged to write more creatively and professionally, since they are aware that their professors are watching them and will either appreciate or reply to their remarks if they are noteworthy and creative.

Any learning environment where students actively participate in their learning is supported by Vygotsky's (1978) social development theory. Vygotsky advises that the conventional roles of the student and the teacher be transformed to allow the teacher to work with students to make the process of meaning construction simpler. Additionally, Greenfield and Subrahmanyam (2003) claim that online chat offers a novel venue for communication that might prompt changes in students' language use. According to Greenfield (1972), "One dimension that separates spoken from written language is explicitness—spoken language is more implicit since it requires both verbal and nonverbal settings to complete its meanings, whereas written language is more explicit" (p. 12) and context-independent.

Bunce (2010) adds that "SNSs provide conditions for language use, through which language acquisition processes, via exposure, production, and collaboration, are thought to occur" (p. 426). Bunce also states that this interaction encourages comprehensible input through pushed output, interactional modification, corrective and remedial feedback, and collaborative conversation. Kern (1995) argues that online interaction helps learners reduce their anxiety and feel free to participate and improve their language proficiency. Using SNSs as a learning tool has become popular among adult learners as they boost motivation, increase participation and reduce the learner's anxiety (Pellettieri, 2000). SNSs can create corrective feedback, "negotiation of meaning and form, self-correction, and output pushed towards target-like language," (Toyoda & Harrison, 2002, p. 82) since the learners are aware of their position in the world of SNSs.

C. Negative Influence of SNSs

However, some unfavourable opinions on social networking sites were also documented. Firstly, the negative attitudes received from the students are: *"iii. Sometimes the language learnt in communications over the SNSs is not considered formal by the teachers."* This is supported by teacher 2: *"iii. Students often come up with expressions, slangs, and neologisms which are not a part of the standard lexicon or grammar."* previous studies have been done, and they all support these sentiments. Learners practise using communication standards and tools, some of which are inappropriate for an online educational setting (Anderson, 2008). Approximately, 80% of the utterances in published log data, according to Crystal (2001), were five words or fewer in length. According to Hezili (2010), SNSs' users frequently remove copulas, articles, and subject pronouns. When writing academic tasks, articles, and essays, learners are less able to connect and communicate effectively since they are frequently substituting misspelt words and spellings for common words and concepts in the language (Hezili, 2010).

The language that students use in online chat is also regarded as irregular. There is an unspoken norm among the users that the SNSs always adopt their unique specific registers. Face-to-face spoken communication, according to Bunce (2010), is more successful than online chat because "slow typing can greatly hamper language production, negotiation, [and] collaboration" (p. 12). Chat rooms are inherently visual, and chat dialogues incorporate elements of both spoken and written language (Freiermuth, 2002). Herring (1996) contends that spoken language, which is primarily spontaneous speech, is made up of incomplete, inaccurate, or fragmented sentences that are riddled with

grammatical and typographical errors. The chat takes place in the written medium, where words are typed on a keyboard and read from a screen.

SNSs have a significant influence on EFL students' English speaking and writing abilities. In formal writing and speaking environments, learners are influenced by such social tools and represent their ideas through the use of acronyms, bad grammar, and fragmented sentences. Despite these drawbacks, social networking sites can aid EFL students in strengthening their language skills and inspiring them to study English from reliable sources.

English majors at Ha'il University may find it difficult to compete in the job market if they are unable to effectively communicate in written and spoken English. The findings of this study may also indirectly help EFL teachers plan and provide successful courses and assistance to their students as they improve their speaking and writing English. For instance, instructors can deliver classes and lectures on how to employ appropriate online chitchat techniques.

V. CONCLUSION

Social networking sites (SNSs) have grown in popularity as a kind of media with several benefits for learning. The use of SNSs is aggressively growing in today's world due to their enormous success. In this space, students may electronically interact with their classmates and instructors and discuss problems relating to the teaching and learning process.

Social media has been instrumental in bringing together and bridging the gap between individuals from various parts of the world. SNSs like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube may be very effective learning and teaching tools in addition to being incredible communication tools. This study paves the way for future research by giving important details on how SNSs may affect the English speaking and writing abilities of undergraduate English majors at the University of Ha'il in Saudi Arabia.

The findings demonstrate the mixed effects of social media on the growth of English speaking and writing abilities of undergraduate English majors at Ha'il University in Saudi Arabia. This study's findings imply that social networking sites are a double-edged sword that, when utilised wisely, may be an excellent academic tool for enhancing students' writing and speaking. The study demonstrates that SNSs have been adopted by Ha'il University's English major undergraduate students as well as their EFL instructors for academic and communicative objectives. For the best results, teachers should encourage their students to use social media as a language learning tool. The study also emphasises the need for EFL teachers in helping their students make the most of SNSs' advantages to advance their proficiency and competence in English.

The students' routines and preferences are mostly responsible for influencing how much they are engaged with various social media sites. Numerous studies demonstrated that social networking sites alone should not be held accountable; rather, how students utilise them is the key element. According to the study's findings, students should exercise caution since using the same social media sites for an extended period may harm their English language skills. To avoid using SNSs' slang without considering its appropriateness, students should learn to distinguish between using it in formal and informal settings.

The study concludes that social media use affects the growth of English major students' speaking and writing abilities in both positive and negative ways. The same social networking sites can prove to be very beneficial educational tools that might improve students' speaking and writing abilities if used wisely. The study demonstrates how social media platforms may both constructively and unfavourably affect EFL students' learning, including how they can inspire them to improve and enhance their speaking, writing, and other productive abilities in English. Previous research suggested that students majoring in English could lower their language competence levels by using social media as a learning aid. The use of such jargon, particularly Internet slang, has negatively affected EFL students. Students' obsession with the Internet and social media may have a considerable impact on their writing and speaking abilities as EFL learners. Some neologisms, acronyms, and abbreviations that students use when interacting with one another online have crept into their writing and speaking.

In light of the results of the study, the researchers recommend the need for further studies on similar variables, as well as the necessity for the proper use of social networking sites in an academic context. It is recommended that SNSs be made a part of the EFL learning machine but under the careful and guided direction of the teachers if the media is to be kept useful and not a mere source of distraction for the learners. Thus, detailed, scientific studies need to be undertaken in the short and long terms, concerning the pros and cons of integrating SNSs into the EFL classroom practices.

It is worth noting the view that SNSs are posing a threat to Standard English language acquisition and usage as students take the writing of Standard English with levity. The social media language is different from the Standard English language. While Standard English is subject to concord or grammatical rules, language use on SNSs does not stick to any grammatical rules or concord. Social media language is gradually eroding students' writing and speaking skills. Daily exposure to social media language makes students overlook mistakes whatsoever. It is noted that students addicted to the use of SNSs tend to transfer social media abbreviations, misspellings, and grammatical mistakes into their writing and academic life. Instructors must strive to increase their students' awareness regarding the dark side of SNSs.

It is therefore recommended that:

1-Students should be motivated to adhere to the standard use of English; also, they should be reminded to avoid substandard and unacceptable English usage.

2-Teachers should identify the use of social media errors, misspelt words, contractions, abbreviations, and acronyms in students' writing and correct them instantly.

The study made a unique effort to gather qualitative data on the efficacy of SNSs in enhancing the speaking and writing skills of EFL undergraduate students at the University of Ha'il. However, certain limitations were perceptible along the way. The purely qualitative data could be enhanced with quantitative results with the merging of the survey method to gather wider and more bulky data. Gender too can be a factor in the learning environment and one whose role needs careful evaluation; future studies can consider this as a plausible variable. Lastly, the duration of the interviews could be longer to delve deeper into how SNSs work in the lives of the EFL teachers and learners at the University of Ha'il.

What this paper adds

- 1- To build a thorough understanding of the issues involved in integrating social networking technologies and guaranteeing their sustainability at an institution considering the need of EFL learners.
- 2- This study fills a research gap about the issues associated with EFL learners' preferences for the use of social networking technology in higher education institutions.
- 3- Previous literature has not adequately examined the influence of this SNSs on EFL learners. This research provides a detailed examination of SNSs on EFL by stating the fact that there are both negative and positive impacts on the learner. It requires constant observation of whether they are learning or surfing.

Implications for practice and/or policy

- 1- Teachers should guide learners on the effective usage of SNSs technology while learning a language while making them aware of the damaging effects of these sites on their English proficiency and academic performance.
- 2- The proper use of English should be encouraged among students, and they should be warned against using it in inappropriate or substandard ways.
- 3- Teachers should be involved in their student's learning through SNSs so they can monitor how much time they spend using them, spot social media mistakes in their writing, such as misspelt words, contractions, abbreviations, and acronyms, and fix them right away.

REFERENCES

- [1] Al-Ahdal, A. A. M. H., & Alharbi, M. A. (2021). MALL in collaborative learning as a vocabulary-enhancing tool for EFL learners: A study across two Universities in Saudi Arabia. *SAGE Open*, 11(1), 2158244021999062. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244021999062>
- [2] Al-Ahdal, A. A. M. H., & Shariq, M. (2019). MALL: Resorting to Mobiles in the EFL Classroom. *The Journal of Social Sciences Research*, 14, 90-96.
- [3] Alassiri, A. A., Muda, M. B., Ghazali, R. B., & Ahamefula, U. C. (2014). Usage of social networking sites and technological impact on the interaction-enabling features. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 4(4), 46-61.
- [4] Anderson, T. (2008). *The theory and practice of online learning* (2nd ed.). Edmonton.
- [5] Arroyo, K. (2019). Mobile minds: culture, knowledge and change. *8th World Summit on Arts & Culture, 2019, International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies*, Sydney, NSW.
- [6] Asad, S., Mamun, M. A., & Clement, C. K. (2014). The effect of social networking sites to the lifestyles of teachers and students in higher educational institutions. *International Journal of Basic and Applied Science*, 1(4), 498- 510 <https://doi.org/10.14419/ijbas.v1i4.374>
- [7] Bandura, A. (1977). *Social Learning Theory*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice-Hall.
- [8] Barón, L. F. (2012). More than a Facebook revolution: Social movements and social media in the Egyptian Arab Spring. <https://doi.org/10.29173/irie306>
- [9] Belal, A. (2014). *Influence of digital social media in writing and speaking of tertiary level student*. (MA Thesis). Brac University, Bangladesh. Retrieved from <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/a5da/007d8fd8b787bb8345dfb0b2226e0a7d8338>.
- [10] Bin-Hady, W. R. A., & Al-Tamimi, N. O. M. (2021). The use of technology in informal English language learning: evidence from Yemeni undergraduate students. *Learning and Teaching in Higher Education: Gulf Perspectives*, 17(2), 107-120. <https://doi.org/10.1108/LTHE-09-2020-0037>
- [11] Bloxham, K. T. (2010). *Using formative student feedback: A continuous quality improvement approach for online course development*. Utah State University.
- [12] Boyd, D. M., & Ellison, N. B. (2007). Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship. *Journal of computer-mediated Communication*, 13(1), 210-230. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00393.x>
- [13] Bunce, D. H. (2010). *Talk or chat? Chatroom and spoken interaction in a language Canada*: AU Press.
- [14] Chopra, K. (2013). *The Effects of Social Media on How We Speak and classroom*. *ELT Journal*, 64(4), 426- 436.
- [15] Crystal, D. (2001). *Language play*. University of Chicago Press.
- [16] Eastment, D. (2007). How do you keep up-to-date? *ELT Journal*, 61(2), 187- 189. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccm016>
- [17] Education Learning Initiative. (2006). *7 things you should know about Facebook*. Retrieved on Sep. 15, 2023, from <http://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ELI7017.pdf>
- [18] Ellis, R. (1985). *Understanding second language acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- [19] Flad, K. (2010). *The influence of social networking participation on student academic performance across gender lines* (Unpublished Master thesis). Fashion Institute of Technology.
- [20] Freiermuth, M. R. (2001). *Features of electronic synchronous communication: a comparative analysis of online chat, spoken and written texts*. Oklahoma State University.
- [21] Greenfield, P. M. (1972). Oral or written language: The consequences for cognitive development in Africa, the United States and England. *Language and speech*, 15(2), 169-178. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002383097201500207>
- [22] Greenfield, P. M., & Subrahmanyam, K. (2003). Online discourse in a teen chatroom: New codes and new modes of coherence in a visual medium. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 24(6), 713-738. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appdev.2003.09.005>
- [23] Gremu, C., & Halse, M. (2012). *The educational value of integrating a social networking platform and a learning management system*. South Africa: Rhodes University.
- [24] Hargittai, E. & Hsieh, Y. (2011). "From Dabblers to Omnivores". In Papacharissi, Zizi (ed.) *A Networked Self: Identity, Community, and Culture in Social Network Sites* (pp. 146–168). New York/London: Routledge.
- [25] Harwood, C., & Blackstone, B. (2012). Using Facebook to extend learning into students' digital lives. *ELT World Online.com*, 4, 1-22.
- [26] Herring, S. C. (Ed.). (1996). *Computer-mediated communication: Linguistic, social, and cross-cultural perspectives* (Vol. 39). John Benjamins Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1075/pbns.39>
- [27] Hezili, A., (2010). *Communication from formal written interaction to media written interaction chat* (Doctoral dissertation), Université Mentouri Constantine.
- [28] Kay, C., Kai, F, Jun, G & Hor, W. (2014). *The Impact of Social Network on English Proficiency among Students in University Tunku Abdul Rahman (utar) Sungai long, Malaysia* (research project). University Tunku Abdul Rahman. Malaysia. Retrieved September 12, 2023, from http://eprints.utar.edu.my/1684/1/FYP_Social_Network_Sites_%26_English_Proficiency.pdf
- [29] Kern, R. G. (1995). Restructuring classroom interaction with networked computers: Effects on quantity and characteristics of language production. *The Modern language journal*, 79(4), 457-476. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.1995.tb05445.x>
- [30] Krashen, S. D. (1981). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. Oxford: Pergamon Press Inc.
- [31] Krashen, S. D. (1988). *Second language acquisition and second language learning*. New York: Prentice-Hall International.
- [32] Livingstone, S. (2008). Taking risky opportunities in youthful content creation: Teenagers' use of social networking sites for intimacy, privacy and self-expression. *New Media Society*, 10, 393-411. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444808089415>
- [33] McLuhan, M. (2003). Media ecology. In *A first look at communication theory* (pp. 312-322). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- [34] McLuhan, M., Carson, D., McLuhan, E., Kuhns, W., & Cohen, M. (2003). The book of grammatical competence. In M. Warschauer and R. Kern (eds.). *Network based language teaching: concepts and practice* (pp. 64-92). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- [35] Murphy, E. (2009). Online synchronous communication in the second-language classroom. *Canadian Journal of Learning and Technology*, 35(3). Retrieved from <http://www.cjlt.ca/index.php/cjlt/article/view/539/262> <https://doi.org/10.21432/T2KG6C>
- [36] Pellettieri, J. (2000). *Negotiation in cyberspace. The role of chatting in the development performance across gender lines*. (MA Thesis). Retrieved September 12, 2023, from <http://blog.nus.edu.sg/eltwo/2012/03/03/using-facebook-to-extend-learning-into-students%E2%80%99-digital-lives/>
- [37] Prigg, M. (2014). *The ambulance drone that could save your life: Flying defibrillator can reach speeds of 60mph*. Daily Mail.
- [38] Toyoda, E., & Harrison, R. (2002). Categorization of text chat communication between learners and native speakers of Japanese. *Language Learning & Technology*, 6(1), 82-99.
- [39] Tyson, J. (2009). *Connecting through Facebook: The influence of social networking on communication*. (MA thesis). Winston-Salem, North Carolina, USA. Retrieved September 12, 2023, from https://wakespace.lib.wfu.edu/bitstream/handle/10339/14774/jtyson_Thesis.pdf?seque
- [40] Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind and society: The development of higher mental processes*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.



Fahad Aljabr is an assistant professor in the English department at the University of Ha'il, Saudi Arabia. Dr. Aljabr has a master's degree in Applied Linguistics from the University of Adelaide 2011 and a PhD in Applied Linguistics from the University of Birmingham, 2018. His research interests include: (written) discourse analysis, evaluative language, ESL/EFL teaching and learning.

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4395-1060>

Email: f.aljaber@uoh.edu.sa



Arif Ahmed Al-Ahdal is a Professor of Applied Linguistics in the Department of English and Translation, College of Sciences and Arts, Methnab, Qassim University, Saudi Arabia. Though his vocation is teaching, Dr. Al-Ahdal is an established poet and writer. He has to his credit two bi-lingual poetry collections, *To Yemen with Love and Joys and Sorrows*, published in Yemen in 2010 and a reference book, *Preparing EFL Teachers for Tomorrow: Opening New Vistas in Teacher Development with INSET*, published in Germany in 2015. He is also credited with nearly 60 research papers published in internationally indexed journals. Apart from this contribution to research, he has examined many PhD theses for many American, Malaysian, Indian, Saudi and Yemeni Universities, and is presently writing two books on Literary Translation and Applied Linguistics. With a vast cross-cultural teaching experience and diverse exposure gained across three countries: Yemen,

India and Saudi Arabia, he is now Editor-in-Chief of both, Journal of Translation and Language Studies, Kuwait, and International Journal of Language and Literary Studies, Italy; Monograph Editor, Sage Open Journals, America; Distinguished and Honoured Advisor, Middle East Journal of TEFL, Philippines; Board Member of ELT Journal, Canada; Arab World English Journal, Malaysia; International Journal of English and Literary Studies, Australia; Journal of ELT and Applied Linguistics, India, among others. He is also a freelance language trainer and an IELTS Examiner, certified by Cambridge University, UK.

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6747-0897>

Email: aa.alahdal@qu.edu.sa



Rashed Daghamin holds a PhD in English Literature from the University of Allahabad, India. He currently serves as an Associate Professor of English, University of Ha'il, Saudi Arabia; he formerly served the same post at Hebron University and Al-Quds University, Palestine. Daghamin teaches a wide spectrum of literature courses mainly courses on 19th century poetry and fiction, modern drama, and modern poetry. His research interests lie primarily in the area of poetry, Contemporary Literary Theory, Palestinian literature, Black Literature, Creative Writing, Postcolonial Literature, and African American Studies.

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7331-6012>

Email: rdaghameen@yahoo.com