

Social Media and Language Learning: How: EFL Students Use Online Platforms for Language Learning at the College of Basic Education in Kuwait

Basemah Al-Senafi^{1,*}, Sarah AlSabbagh², Badria Alhaji¹ & Maha Alghasab¹

¹The English Language Department, College of Basic Education, Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET), Kuwait

²The Language Centre, Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET), Kuwait

*Correspondence: The English Language Department, College of Basic Education, Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET), Kuwait

Received: September 18, 2024

Accepted: October 28, 2024

Online Published: November 11, 2024

doi:10.5430/wje.v14n4p1

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5430/wje.v14n4p1>

Abstract

This study explores the role of social media platforms in facilitating both academic and social interactions among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students at the College of Basic Education in Kuwait. The main aim of this study is to investigate EFL students' perceptions of this use of social media and thus to determine how it can be used to facilitate language learning. A qualitative analysis approach was used, based on semi-structured interviews with 60 college students, to explore how these learners use platforms such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter) Instagram, and WhatsApp as tools for language learning. Understanding the use of social media for language learning has relevance in the modern world in terms of it enriching EFL learners' experiences by bridging the gap between formal education and practical language use, highlighting the need to integrate these digital tools into language learning. The findings in this case reveal that social media is a significant tool for facilitating language learning practice, peer collaboration, and access to educational resources, acting as a critical tool for language learning by offering students opportunities to engage in authentic communication, access to diverse linguistic resources, and chances to participate in online communities that foster collaborative learning.

Keywords: EFL, language learning, social media, college students, Kuwait, technology

1. Introduction

The role of social media has recently been extended such that it has become a venue for academic learning, offering a dynamic learning environment that exceeds traditional classroom teaching and learning practices. The use of social media has evolved from simple social interaction to the provision of powerful tools for academic engagement, particularly in terms of language learning. EFL students thus find themselves navigating through social media platforms such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp seeking language learning support and social interaction.

This integration of social media into language learning for EFL students offers students opportunities that conventional educational methods cannot (Alqasham, 2018). Traditional classroom settings restrict interaction to a few hours per week, limiting student exposure to language as well as reducing opportunities for practice. In contrast, social media platforms provide continuous access to English as used in real world contexts through posts, comments, and direct messages; this process also ensures that students are exposed to colloquial expressions, which is critical for achieving fluency, as well as using language and materials simply not available in the classroom. In this way, as students participate in discussions on various topics related to current events rather than prescribed by their academic studies, they not only develop their language skills but also build their confidence in using English in diverse settings.

Social media can also serve as a bank for more formal educational resources. There are many YouTube channels

dedicated to English language learning, and these range from tutorials on grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation to discussions of different learning styles and levels of proficiency. Social media has thus become deeply integrated into the daily lives of college students for both social and academic purposes, and a growing body of research has explored how students are using social media in terms of the impacts this has on their college experience (Rahman et al., 2020; Alenezi & Brinthaupt, 2022). Hence, this study seeks to investigate the ways in which social media contributes to the language learning experiences of EFL students by examining how it can enhance their academic and social engagement with the language.

2. Literature Review

The practice of using social media platforms to learn a language has been extensively studied, as such platforms are widely available (Barrot, 2022). There are now more than 2.9 billion active social network users globally, and using social media is both accessible and appealing, particularly for younger people (Pikhart & Botezat, 2021). Social media platforms are seen as a primary means of keeping in touch with people and sustaining social lives (Lupinacci, 2021).

Language-learning social networking sites thus consist of a wide range of social media services and platforms primarily created for the specialised learning of foreign languages.

The extent of learners' engagement with social media platforms can influence their literacy habits, and, as such, social media platforms are increasingly being used in academia for educational purposes such as facilitating communication between students and their professors, sharing academic resources, enhancing collaborative learning as well as providing a platform for academic networking. Social media is also being adopted within academic settings; Baquee et al. (2024) explored the use of academic social networking sites, determining that they enhance research communication and collaboration, noting that websites such as ResearchGate.com allow researchers to ask questions, share publications, and find collaborators. Al Badi and Rasmussen McAdie (2024) also applied the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) framework to predict researcher adoption of platforms such as X (formerly Twitter) and Academia.edu, based on performance expectations, effort expectations, and social influence, and they found that connecting with peers and staying up to date on research trends were the key factors driving uptake.

Social media usage patterns amongst college students are thus emerging as a significant factor influencing academic performance and social interactions (Al Arif, 2019; Alrasheedi, 2019; Amin et al., 2020). Buarki and Sung (2024) conducted a comparative study of social media use among Library and Information Science (LIS) students in Kuwait and Taiwan. They found that WhatsApp was the most commonly used platform in both countries due to its messaging and file-sharing capabilities, while Instagram and Snapchat were popular for socialising and staying connected with friends and family. Al Shuraiaan et al. (2024) surveyed students in Kuwaiti higher education institutions, determining that Facebook remained the dominant social platform, followed by Instagram, YouTube, and X (formerly Twitter). Of these, YouTube was most commonly used for educational purposes such as language learning.

In terms of motivations for use, college students report engaging with social media to stay connected with friends, family, access information and express themselves creatively. Al-Kahlan and Khasawneh (2024) administered a survey to university students in Jordan that suggested that keeping in touch with friends and family, alongside seeking entertainment and passing time were the most potent motivators for social media use. Other motivations included sharing photos and videos, following news and events, discussing study topics, and completing assignments. Hu and Jabor (2024) similarly studied vocational college students in China; they found that the most common motivations for social media use were gaining knowledge, communicating with others, and seeking job opportunities.

Online collaboration can assist L2 speakers with producing meaningful exchanges while utilising the target language in practical ways (Xuan et al., 2020). Social networking also helps people feel less anxious when communicating. Due to the anonymity facilitated in such circumstances, people more frequently interact and share information on social media, creating new linguistic and personal identities that allow them to feel comfortable disclosing personal factors (Yeni, 2022). L2 learners can thus create anxiety-free environments where they can express themselves freely and creatively by combining reduced anxiety in online contexts with the increased motivation and self-assurance of social interaction (Selvi, 2022).

Social networking sites such as Facebook and X (formerly Twitter) can thus help students learn languages more effectively (Manca, 2020). According to some research, using social media improves students' vocabulary acquisition

and learning, as well as their grammar in relation to specific language skills (Milan & Barbosa, 2020). Manca (2020) also observed that social media vocabularies have become a significant trend, with terms such as Facebooking and Instagram-ready being created through strategies such as compounding and coining.

According to Wu (2020), this also means that writing has become more accessible and faster, as well as being free of the typical limitations of traditional writing based on the usage of logograms, acronyms, abbreviations, and paralinguistic elements. However, Yeni (2022) stated that employing abbreviations and logograms excessively can have a negative impact on spelling. Nevertheless, a considerable improvement in oral proficiency has been shown in longitudinal investigations, with benefits in both speaking and listening (Muftah, 2022). Pikhart and Botezat (2021) note, however, learners still require well-thought-out instructional supervision and customised exercises before they can effectively use social media to support their language learning process.

Godwin-Jones (2021) and Wu (2020) have suggested that modern technology has introduced complicated mixed systems that place new demands on writing and reading, viewing, communication, and social exchange skills. Facebook, as an example a social network site, requires the use of a variety of methods, often permitting words and text from other sites to be embedded and combined. According to Milan and Barbosa (2020), WhatsApp has a similar polluting effect on learners' writing skills. Social media is based on "dialogue" and the production of "means [of] engaging with people" in this sense, rather than a formal learning tool.

English is an official language in more than half of all countries, and it has been suggested that English is on its way to becoming the first actual global language. According to Pereltsvaig (2020), English is one of the few languages spoken throughout the world, and among these it is the most prominent. Research by Bouvier and Machin (2020) also indicates that social media greatly influences non-native English speakers' language output. According to Xuan et al. (2020), as a person's contemporaries change, so does their language, which is why it inevitably and organically alters continuously, transforming and becoming more adapted to its users. The seemingly instantaneous arrival and quick rise to prominence of social media networking sites have thus produced a unique linguistic system of everyday communication (Bouvier & Machin, 2020).

The use of social media may also have a negative effect of students by distracting them from their studies. Sakhieva et al. (2024) analysed survey data from Russian university students and found that social media had no significant influence on GPA overall; however, students who spent more time on social media reported lower subjective well-being. Canlas and Perez (2024) similarly surveyed undergraduates in the Philippines and found that social media had both opportunities, such as access to online learning resources, and threats, such as distraction from overuse. Their conclusion was that moderation was crucial for achieving academic benefits without harm. Overall, impact depth and direction depend on how social media is used rather than on frequency alone, however, the distancing precautions taken during the COVID-19 epidemic significantly impacted the social and academic elements of many students' lives. In Saudi educational institutes, students during the COVID-19 period thus encountered many shocking and unexpected experiences (Alghamdi, 2021). Given the recent shift toward distance learning related to the pandemic, examining social media's impact in relation to learning a foreign language is thus crucial, particularly as the use of social media has increased significantly (Muftah, 2022). Social alienation from scenarios such as pandemic restrictions enhances social media impact, based on rapid shifts to online and remote learning, with heavier reliance on technology. The use of social media nevertheless played a crucial role in maintaining educational continuity through the provision of virtual classrooms and support networks for students and educators. Alkhaldi et al. (2024) conducted a study in Kuwait evaluating post-COVID resilience strategies. They recommended integrating social media platforms such as Facebook groups, WhatsApp, and YouTube into blended and flipped learning models to facilitate asynchronous access to lectures and resources while maintaining the social connections meaningful for well-being and motivation (Alkhaldi et al., 2024). Such models demonstrate how social media can be used to complement traditional methods to create flexible, engaging education.

Research on social media use patterns, motivations and impacts among college students, both generally and with a focus on Kuwait, has thus produced findings that indicated that social media plays a vital role in both social interaction and academia. While overuse can be distracting, informed integration has many potential benefits based on facilitating collaboration, online learning, and connectivity. Future research should thus continue exploring the practical educational applications of social media as well as cultural differences in usage, particularly within the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region.

3. Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research methodology to explore the ways in which college students use social media for language learning, improved academic achievement, and social interaction. Qualitative research was deemed the most suitable approach for this study, due to the fact that it sought to gain an in-depth understanding of students' perspectives, experiences, and behaviours regarding social media use in an open-ended manner. This allowed the nuances of their personal narratives as well as insights into the contextual intricacies of individual experiences to emerge more effectively (Takona, 2024).

The qualitative research paradigm enabled an inductive and evolving approach with a study design that evolved in response to themes uncovered from within the data (Dehalwar & Sharma, 2024). Using this approach, the researchers did not begin with a predetermined hypothesis but instead allowed findings to emerge from participant responses. This offered the flexibility to explore unanticipated issues raised by students; however, to achieve the goals of the study, the following research questions were asked to all participants:

1. What are the primary social media platforms that you use for academic and social interaction?
2. How do you use social media for language learning?
3. What are the benefits of using social media for language learning?

3.1 Participants

A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants for this study most relevant to the research topic. The target participants were thus undergraduate college students enrolled in the English Language Department at the College of Basic Education (CBE) in Kuwait. In total, 60 college students studying English participated in this research, all of whom gave informed consent in accordance with the ethics guidelines for research using human participants. The purposive technique was used because of the need to consider the perspectives of the student demographic most directly affected by the issue of interest (Obilor, 2023). English language majors were seen as particularly suited to this study, as social media use is likely to be extremely impactful regarding their language development and focus. To obtain diverse viewpoints and to incorporate potential gender differences within the examined experiences, both male and female participants were questioned.

Ensuring adequate representation across genders and academic levels amongst participants allowed for rich cross-comparisons to emerge in the data regarding how student characteristics intersect with social media engagement (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021). These selective criteria generated illuminating qualitative data regarding the population most pertinent to the research objectives.

3.2 Data Collection

For this qualitative study, semi-structured interviews were employed as the primary method for data collection. These facilitated the collection of rich qualitative data directly from the student participants. An interview guide was prepared in advance, along with a list of open-ended questions and follow-up prompts, which focused on the critical research objectives (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021). Open-ended questions were mainly used in order to achieve detailed answers rather than permitting yes/no responses. Participants thus volunteered topics ranging from first-person experiences to experiences of others on social media, and interviewer reactions such as "Tell me more regarding that" and "What exactly did you mean by...?" helped target responses towards more detailed descriptions.

Interviews are one of the most common approaches used in qualitative research, as they provide rich insights drawn directly from participants in their own words (Robson, 2024; Nair, 2024). Using an interview guide with open-ended questions and prompts helped guide this research; however, it was the conversational format that allowed many points of interest to develop during the interviews.

The transcription of data took place soon after each interview, as transcribing data into its written form is invaluable in terms of retracing themes and exploring their consequences. It also allowed for an in-depth examination of how data was expressed, revealing multiple layers of meaning not necessarily apparent to surface-level interpretation.

4. Analysis and Discussion

Three major themes emerged from the interview data. The first major theme considered the platforms used in terms of their purposes, including language learning, academic benefits, and social use amongst students. The second theme was more specifically regarding purposes of use, including social platform interactions. The final theme was the perceived benefits of language learning and social use of social media in students' studies and lives. Table 1

shows the sample coding used for the interview transcripts.

Table 1. Sample Coding Scheme for Interview Transcripts

Themes	Main Codes	Description
Platforms Used	Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), WhatsApp, YouTube, Teams	Social media platform for a specific purpose
Purposes of Use	Academic communication with classmates and professors Collaboration on assignments Research/finding information Organization/time management Social Staying updated Sharing resources/ideas Personal connection	Reason for using social media platforms in an academic or social context, communication, collaboration, research, information, social, sharing, connection
Perceived Benefits	Access to educational resources/materials Convenience/ease of use Facilitates learning Networking/finding help	Positive aspects of using social media for academic or social purposes, access, information, communication, learning, collaboration, help

4.1 Theme 1: Social Media Platforms Used

This theme reflected the different social media platforms used by students at CBE. It also identified the specific ways students integrate such tools into their language learning and academic goals. By focusing on this theme, insights into the intersection of social media and education emerged, allowing exploration of how these platforms are reshaping traditional learning environments.

Lulwah stated:

Yes, I have used social media accounts for my studies at the College of Basic Education. These accounts included Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, and I used them to connect with my classmates, professors, and other academic communities. For instance, I created a Facebook group to help me collaborate with one my fellow students to discuss course material and share resources about learning English. This was particularly helpful for my classes.

This response directly related to the theme of academic social media use. Lulwah named three platforms, X (formerly Twitter) Facebook, and Instagram, which she uses for her studies at college. As well as identifying the types of social media used, Lulwah explained her purpose in such use, discussing the need to connect with classmates, professors, and other academic communities. This demonstrates that applying social media specifically to facilitate educational networking and collaboration can improve academic performance (Al Badi & McAdie, 2024). By connecting with others for academic-focused reasons rather than social purposes, Lulwah provides an example of the academic utilisation of platforms such as X (formerly Twitter) and Facebook to achieve study-related aims by fostering interaction and supporting effective coursework completion. Furthermore, she created a Facebook account to share course material for learning English, creating language learning material outside the scope of her course. Pursuing language learning outside the course material and college highlights students' independent efforts to explore more language learning material. This response thereby offers vital details regarding different kinds of social media platforms and the academic applications they support.

Shaikha provides another example of utilising the educational application of social media by researching professors to strategically further academic goals within the context of this theme.

I used them for only one purpose, which was asking about the professor's name to learn about their curriculum and grading system. It eased the way for me to pass subjects with a great grade and gain knowledge about what I'm studying. It makes it easy to memorize information when you have a great professor who knows what he is doing and how to teach you well.

Shaikha's response thus similarly relates to the theme of academic social media use. She stated that her sole purpose for using social media was to ask about professors in order to know more about their curriculum and grading systems.

This analysis demonstrates that applying social media to obtain instructive information can aid students academically by facilitating them passing subjects with higher grades (Sakhieva et al., 2024). Shaikha further explained how being aware of a professor's teaching style and course coverage helped her memorise the necessary material more effectively, as well as implying that searching for such instructor information helped inform her class selections and personal study.

Bibi and Mashael both also specified the social media accounts they use for their studies:

I use social media by Teams—Instagram—Twitter—WhatsApp. It's very useful for students. I use it for assignments, communicating, and researching. I can also keep in touch with my professors and classmates if I forget or ask about something I missed. -Bibi

Yes, I did use social media accounts for my studies at the College of Basic Education. I used Instagram to learn about college updates. It was so useful because I go back to Instagram every time I want to check on college updates. It was easier for me because everything was in one account, and I didn't have to go around asking for anything about college. Social media is useful for the learning English process because it makes us in contact with each other to exchange knowledge and information and keep us updated on everything that is happening in college. -Mashael

Bibi outlined the use of several specific platforms, including Teams, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), and WhatsApp, discussing how these could be helpful for tasks such as assignments, communicating, research and contacting professors and classmates. She identified the academic purposes of collaboration, networking, and staying informed about her studies in her use. Similarly, Algasham (2018) explored how EFL learners might use WhatsApp for language learning.

Mashael similarly addressed the theme, mentioning using Instagram to check college updates, facilitating ease and convenience by having information centralised. Keeping up to date on announcements through social media supported her managing her academic responsibilities and progression. Collectively, these responses demonstrate that students are utilising platforms such as Teams, Instagram, and WhatsApp as helpful educational tools. These students' responses give examples of social media enhancing academic experiences via networking, sharing work, information, and maintaining awareness of essential updates as well as managing deadlines (Buarki & Sung, 2024). Their perspectives offer varied instances that align with the exploration of how college learners apply selected social platforms in academic ways.

Mashael stated that exchanging recent information with others at college helps learning English in more updated use of the material, while Abdullah noted that teachers now engage with students through social media. He also highlighted that platforms such as YouTube offer practical language learning tools that are both free and accessible anywhere thanks to the use of user-generated content. The underlying issue here is that English centers are seen as providing less language learning than YouTube in some cases.

Some teachers even communicate with their students through these platforms. Nowadays, a lot of people use social media to learn more languages. It is easy to learn a new language and save money. I will give you an example: many children can speak English or French. They learn through YouTube. Children nowadays are smart and geniuses. They can learn anything, anywhere, and anytime. - Abdullah

Fares also conveyed his positive experience with learning through online platforms.

Yes, I study linguistics, English grammar and pronunciation by watching (Sbeata Academy and ZAmericanEnglish) on YouTube, and of course I benefited a lot.

This reflects the ways that learning English, specifically grammar and pronunciation, through YouTube channels has effectively supported his learning.

4.2 Theme 2: Social Media Purposes of Use

This theme explores the various purposes for which social media platforms are utilised by EFL students at CBE, particularly in the context of language learning, academic achievement and social interaction. It also investigates how these platforms help EFL students enhance their language skills, share information, achieve their academic goals, and connect with other students. It further recognises the diverse ways in which EFL students use social media to engage with instructors to support their language acquisition and academic progress.

Fudha stated:

I created a Facebook group to help me collaborate with one of my fellow students to discuss course material and share resources. It was conducive for online classes where I did not have the opportunity to meet in person with other students.

While Wadha noted:

We have groups for each core to help each other by reminding students to solve assignments or if any students have problems with specific lessons. Sometimes, we discuss what the questions will be on the exam. Also, in registration, we ask about the cores and the best doctors. And yes it was extremely helpful for me and other.

Fudha explained that using Facebook to create a student group facilitated online collaboration and resource sharing, as well as the discussion of course material when in-person meetings were not possible. This demonstrates how social media features can enable valuable academic interactions and facilitate support among peers. Wadha noted that WhatsApp groups were created for each subject, allowing reminders to be shared, assignment help to be offered, and exam preparation discussions to occur between students facing similar issues. Such communities also foster informative academic and social connections through mobile messaging.

Collectively, these responses indicate that Facebook, WhatsApp, and YouTube serve as viable means of enabling helpful discussions, issuing reminders, and fostering teacher-student relations to enrich academic experiences. The students provided examples of harnessing communication channels and learning resources across various networks to benefit both their studies and peer interactions (Hu & Jabor, 2024).

4.3 Perceived Benefits of Social Media Use

This theme explores the positive impacts that students perceive arise from their social media use for both educational and social purposes. It identifies the academic advantages offered, including access to resources, opportunities for collaboration, and improved language learning outcomes. Furthermore, it also highlights the practical benefits of social media use, including the convenience of accessing information anytime, anywhere; the ability to stay updated with new language learning content; and the increased ease of connecting with other students and instructors. Finally, it explores how social media fosters a sense of community and facilitates the development of social skills through online interaction.

Three students in particular shared how social media benefits them. Abrar outlined the statistical and opinion polling advantages of social media as applied to her study topics, acknowledging the usefulness of social media in terms of gathering data. This recognises the academic usefulness of such platforms in term of sourcing diverse views and materials.

...of course, it is useful in terms of statistics. We can extract it from social media, analyze people's opinions through it, or even find new topics to study. In the end, social media is extremely useful. - Abrar

Reem highlights the ease and speed of obtaining answers to questions using social media. By facilitating convenient fact-finding, this significantly supports the academic process (Canlas & Gayas Perez, 2024).

Social media is one of the easiest ways to get information and answers to all your questions. That is why most people use social media nowadays more than reading and searching for answers. On social media You can get your question answered in minutes.

Ziad provided examples of applying use of platforms both socially and academically through professorial contact, assignment submissions, exam taking, and peer and instructional communication, identifying clear, practical educational merits:

I use social media to contact my professors in college, to send assignments and submit exams, and to contact my classmates. The professors might also send us instructions. It is beneficial for us to use social media in our studies.

Similarly, Naser suggests that social media plays a multifaceted role in supporting his academic experience, offering both social and practical benefits:

Yes, I have been using it since I started studying, and these are the things that I benefited from during my studies. First, connecting with classmates and teachers, social media can help us to connect with our classmates and teachers, share information, ask questions, and collaborate on we have projects. Second, accessing educational resources such as videos, articles, and online

courses. Third, time management and organization Some social media platforms offer features like calendars and to-do lists that can help us manage their time and stay organized.

Collectively, the students perceive social networking as a valuable academic resource offering access to topic inputs, responsive information, and functional tools for collaboration and assignment management. Their perspectives illustrate various strengths regarding the ways in which social media augments both learning and social interaction experiences. These insights also reflect how social media serves as versatile tool for enhancing academic achievement and language learning as well as fostering a more structured and collaborative learning environment.

5. Discussion

The qualitative findings from the interview transcripts revealed several prominent themes regarding the ways in which EFL college students use social media for language learning, supporting their academic studies, and social interactions. Three overarching themes emerged from the data. The first focused on the specific social media platforms used and how these platforms were co-opted for general academic use as well as language learning. The second investigated the purposes of the social media platforms used and the interactions carried out on them. Finally, the perceived benefits of academic and social use of social media platforms for language learning at the College of Basic Education were investigated.

In relation to the first theme, several specific social media networks, including Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and X (formerly Twitter), were identified as being used for communication among peers and with faculty members, particularly in terms of collaboration on assignments. This aligns with previous research highlighting the role of academic social networking sites in facilitating research communication and collaboration (Baquee et al., 2024). Another subtheme reflected students utilising platforms such as Instagram, and social media more generally, to stay informed about college updates and programme alterations; this is consistent with previous findings that connectivity and knowledge-sharing drive academic social media adoption (Al Badi & McAdie, 2024).

Regarding the second theme, which involved the purposes of social media use, this included the use of Facebook groups and WhatsApp channels to foster the types of online collaboration and discussions that are especially vital to support the move to e-learning (Alkhaldi et al., 2024). YouTube in particular emerged as a platform facilitating language learning through the publication of user-generated content, a trend observed cross-culturally (Al Shuraiaan et al., 2024). Scholarly communications theory in particular notes the importance of online communities for networking, interaction, and knowledge-building among students and instructors.

Finally, the third theme regarding perceived benefits focused on the ease of accessing educational resources, collaborating, and contacting other students and instructors (Canlas & Perez, 2024). Other studies have also shown multi-dimensional effects dependent on how much rather than how often people use social media platforms, suggesting that social networks can act as a positive source of information and emotional support, thus in turn positively affecting functioning, motivation, and performance, if they are utilised strategically (Sakhieva et al., 2024; Alkhaldi et al., 2024).

The benefits of social media use in education were evident in the results of this study, particularly in terms of its conveniences such as easy access to study materials and the ability for students to seek assistance from friends. Students make use of many social media platforms, however, and these are not only used for academic purposes such as collaborative assignments but also for social interaction through group chats on WhatsApp and in YouTube communities. Nevertheless, online education also faces significant challenges, many related to distractions and the difficulty of verifying the quality of information found online.

Overall, the results support previous studies that have highlighted the ways in which social media can be used as an effective tool for learning and the improvement of academic performance. Furthermore, this research highlights the importance of recognising accurate, reliable and credible sources and verifying information found through social platforms (Al-Kahlan & Khasawneh, 2024). It is crucial for users to evaluate the trustworthiness of any such information to avoid misinformation and its potential negative impacts. This cannot be overstressed when understanding the benefits and drawbacks of social media use.

6. Conclusion

This qualitative study aimed to explore how EFL college students utilise social media platforms for language learning, supporting academic achievement, and driving social interaction. In-depth semi-structured interviews with

60 undergraduates were used to gather valuable information about their experiences and the views they had on this subject. The thematic analysis in this work found three main themes emerging, reflecting concerns around social media types and their use purposes, and benefits from the perspective of EFL students at CBE in Kuwait. The data revealed that platforms for collaboration, communication, resource-sharing and relationship-building are being skilfully employed in various academic domains. The students highlighted issues of accessibility, distraction, and credibility while also looking at issues such as networking, and convenience.

While the academic benefits of using social media for language learning are numerous and multifaceted, the study also revealed potential risks that merit further exploration. Many students noted challenges related to distraction, which can impact focus and time management. Issues of credibility and misinformation were also highlighted. Additionally, overreliance on social media platforms for studying might interfere with academic or professional language standards.

Overall, social media has significantly enriched the landscape of EFL learning by providing continuous, authentic, interactive language exposure. It thus bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, offering students a holistic and immersive learning experience. As EFL students leverage these online platforms for academic and social interaction, they not only improve their language proficiencies but also develop essential skills for global citizenship. This implies that the strategic use of social media in language learning represents a promising frontier in education, allowing a harnessing of the power of connectivity and technology to transform language acquisition while being mindful to the associated challenges and areas for future investigation. Future research should delve deeper into these risks to understand their long-term impact on EFL students' academic progress and language proficiency. Studies could examine strategies to mitigate distractions, improve information literacy, and establish clear boundaries between formal and informal language use. Research could also focus on evaluating the role of privacy awareness and digital etiquette among EFL students in online learning environments. By addressing these areas, future studies can help educators and policymakers create guidelines for the effective and safe use of social media in language learning.

References

- Adeoye-Olatunde, O. A., & Olenik, N. L. (2021). *Research and scholarly methods: Semi-structured interviews*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jac5.1441>
- Al Badi, A., & Rasmussen McAdie, D. (2024). Researchers and social networking sites usage: The application of UTAUT theory. *Global Knowledge, Memory and Communication*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/GKMC-10-2023-0394>
- Al Shuraiaan, A., Al Bloushi, B., & Al Bloushi, L. (2024). The double-edged sword: Analyzing the influence of technology on English language learning in Kuwait higher education institutions (HEIs). *International Journal of Middle Eastern Research*, 3(1), 15-23. <https://doi.org/10.32996/ijmer.2024.3.1.3>
- Alenezi, W., & Brinthaup, T. M. (2022). The use of social media as a tool for learning: Perspectives of students in the Faculty of Education at Kuwait University. *Contemporary Educational Technology*, 14(1), ep340. <https://doi.org/10.30935/cedtech/11476>
- Alghamdi, A. A. (2021). Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the social and educational aspects of Saudi university students' lives. *PLoS ONE*, 16(4), e0250026. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0250026>
- Al-Kahlan, T., & Khasawneh, M. (2024). Motivations for using social media among university students. *Kurdish Studies*, 12(1).
- Alkhalidi, A., Malik, S., Alhaimer, R., Alshaheen, A., & Lytras, M. D. (2024). Translating a value-based framework for resilient e-learning impact in post COVID-19 times: Research-based evidence from higher education in Kuwait. *Heliyon*, 10(2), e24271. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e24271>
- Alqasham, F. H. (2018). Exploring Saudi EFL learners' agency toward the use of WhatsApp for English Learning at Qassim University. *International Journal of Linguistics*, 10(6), 10-43. <https://doi.org/10.5296/ijl.v10i6.13857>
- Alrasheedi, S. (2019). The effect of social media networking use in EFL classrooms in Saudi Arabia: An argumentative review. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 10(1), 241-254. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v10n1p241>
- Amin, B., Rafiq, R., & Mehmood, N. (2020). The impact of social media in English language learning. *Critical*

Review, 7(10), 3126–3135.

- Baquee, A., Sevukan, R., & Gul, S. (2024). Use behaviour of academic social networking sites in research communication: A structural equation model. *Online Information Review*, 48(6), 1159-1176. <https://doi.org/10.1108/OIR-10-2022-0588>
- Barrot, J. S. (2022). Social media as a language learning environment: A systematic review of the literature (2008–2019). *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 35(9), 2534-2562. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2021.1883673>
- Bouvier, G., & Machin, D. (2018). Critical Discourse Analysis and the challenges and opportunities of social media. *Review of Communication*, 18(3), 178-192. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15358593.2018.1479881>.
- Buarki, H., & Sung, H. (2024). Use of social media by LIS students in Kuwait and Taiwan: A comparative analysis. *Information Services and Use* [Preprint], 1-13.
- Canlas, I. P., & Gayas Perez, M. (2024). *Undergraduate students' perception of social media use: Opportunities and threats*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02704676241242686>
- Dehalwar, K., & Sharma, S. (2024). Exploring the distinctions between quantitative and qualitative research methods. *Think India Journal*, 27(1), 7-15.
- Godwin-Jones, R. (2021). *Evolving technologies for language learning*. <http://hdl.handle.net/10125/73443>
- Hu, S., & Jabor, J. (2024). Impact of social media for digital entrepreneurs among vocational students in Hebei colleges. *Educational Administration. Theory into Practice*, 30(4), 7260-7264.
- Lupinacci, L. (2021). *Absentmindedly scrolling through nothing*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443720939454>
- Manca, S. (2020). Snapping, pinning, liking or texting: Investigating social media in higher education beyond Facebook. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 44. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iheduc.2019.100707>
- Milan, S., & Barbosa, S. (2020). Enter the WhatsApp: Reinventing digital activism at the time of chat apps. *First Monday*, 25(12). <https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v25i12.10414>
- Muftah, M. (2022). Impact of social media on learning English language during the COVID-19 pandemic. *PSU Research Review*, 8(1). <https://doi.org/10.1108/PRR-10-2021-0060>
- Nair, L. (2024). Conducting qualitative management research with semi-structured interviews: From planning to interpretation. In *Researching and analysing business* (pp. 115-129). Routledge.
- Obilor, E. (2023). Convenience and purposive sampling techniques: Are they the same? *International Journal of Innovative Social & Science Education Research*, 11(1), 1-7.
- Pereltsvaig, A. (2020). *Languages of the world*. Cambridge University Press.
- Pikhart, M., & Botezat, O. (2021). The impact of the use of social media on second language acquisition. *Procedia Computer Science*, 192, 1621-1628. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.procs.2021.08.166>
- Rahman, S., Ramakrishnan, T., & Ngamassi, L. (2020). Impact of social media use on student satisfaction in Higher Education. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 74(3), 304-319. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hequ.12228>
- Robson, C. (2024). *Real world research*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Sakhieva, R. G. et al. (2024). Exploring the relationship between social media use and academic performance. *Online Journal of Communication and Media Technologies*, 14(1), e202408. <https://doi.org/10.30935/ojcm/14133>
- Selvi, A. F. (2022). Resisting English medium instruction through digital grassroots activism. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 43(2), 81-97. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2020.1724120>
- Takona, J. P. (2024). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches. *Qual Quant*, 58, 1011-1013. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-023-01798-2>
- Wu, Z. (2020). Tracing EFL writers' digital literacy practices in asynchronous communication: A multiple-case study. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 50, 100754. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2020.100754>
- Xuan, D., Ismail, W., & Zailani, M. (2020). Non-Native Arabic learners' social media usage and motivation influencing learning of Arabic language in Malaysian public Universities. *International Journal of Language Education*, 4(2), 258-275.

- Yeni, G. (2022). *The effect of 21st century skills training on foreign language teachers' perceptions regarding their educational technology and materials development competencies*. <https://doi.org/10.14686/buefad.777974>
- Zam Zam Al Arif, T. (2019). *The use of social media for English language learning: An exploratory study of EFL university students*. <https://doi.org/10.31002/metathesis.v3i2.1921>

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank the students who made this research possible.

Authors contributions

Dr. Basemah Al-Senafi and Dr. Badria Alhaji were responsible for conducting the study design, the research problems, the research methods and data collection. Dr. Sarah Alsabbagh summarized the results. And Dr. Maha Alghasab drafted the manuscript and revised it. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Funding

Not applicable.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Informed consent

Obtained.

Ethics approval

The Publication Ethics Committee of the Sciedu Press.

The journal's policies adhere to the Core Practices established by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

Provenance and peer review

Not commissioned; externally double-blind peer reviewed.

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

Open access

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.