



RESEARCH PAPER

Impact of Social Media on EFL Writing Learning

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ABSTRACT

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Writing is an important skill in language learning, which needs careful attention and planning to attain mastery and desired proficiency. The development of technology has altered the ways of language instruction. People's interactions have become so close as a result of social media that it appears we have become socially interconnected. The purpose of the present study was to explore the impact of Facebook on the development of the writing skill of EFL learners. The study used a quasi-experimental design to gather the data from control and experimental group. 42 EFL learners were the participants of the study. Preformed intact groups were assigned to control and experimental group. Data was collected through a writing paragraph and scoring was done using rubrics to quantify the results. SPSS 22 was used to analyze the data. The findings of the research indicated that Facebook has developed writing competence. They study suggest that the use of social media can foster learners' writing skill.

Introduction

Our world has gone global. Social media has made interactions between people so close that it seems we have become interwoven socially (Carr & Hayes, 2015). We are living in the era of big data. With millions of individuals expending huge amounts of time on social media sharing, communicating, interacting, creating, and producing customer content at an extraordinary speed, social media has now become a one-of-a-kind source of big data. This unique supply of huge amounts of data offers unrivaled opportunities and has enormous promise for research and advancement. (Zafarani et al., 2014). The importance of the English language in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere in the world is well accepted (Khan et al., 2020). However, despite its importance in social, economic, educational, and even political settings, and

being a medium of instruction from grade one in private schools and grade 6 in government institutions, it remains a problem for most Saudi students. Studying English for almost 15 years does not seem to solve the problem, and learners still lack the abilities to communicate in most native and non-native settings (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). In the current global scenario where English has become a must (Kralova & Dolezelova, 2021), this low-level communicative competence creates serious hurdles for Saudi speakers of English in local and international contexts.

Researchers in second language acquisition (SLA) and social media studies (Allam & Elyas, 2016; Hamadeh et al., 2020; Namaziandost & Nasri, 2019) believe that learning a second language (L2) is quite different from learning other abilities in academic settings like science and mathematics. This demands a change in the behavior of learners and the construction of a new identity which, at times, appear relatively different from their identity in the local environment. So, it is vital to figure out the reasons that keep people motivated to learn a second or foreign language and how the L2 learners keep using it for a long time process of second language learning.

Language learning cannot avoid the impact of technology and information flow (AlKhunzain & Khan, 2021; Shahbaz & Khan, 2017). Students are now motivated for different reasons to learn a target language compared to what used to encourage them half a century ago when there were no real advancements in technology and social media. Recent advances in computer and mobile technology have called for a new educational vision. Being current with computer technology is critical to all students and educational institutions (Alhujaylan, 2019). With the growth of technology, the internet, and information proficient students, referred to by some educational demographers as the information generation (I-generation), the need for digital pedagogies in the classroom is growing particularly in writing abilities (Bal, 2018).

Literature Review

Teachers and researchers accept the role played by social media in the learning process. "Social media is often seen as the key learner variable because without it nothing happens." (Schmidt & Wiegand, 2017). Social media integration is a dynamic process, and learners can vary its implementation in different situations and settings. As the acquisition of a second language is a long and continuous process, it is really of great significance to realize what keep the learners moved for this extended period and how they manage the process like goal setting, time management, learning strategies, self-evaluations, self-attributions, seeking help or information and related application (Zimmerman & McMeekin, 2019) in this age of information and technology.

The use of computer technology has grown in education, but perhaps more important is the evolution in use. Educators in the 1960s focused on drill and practice, whereas in the 1980s, computer literacy became the trend (Davies, 2016). Each day, in newspaper articles, magazines, and journals, references made by teachers, business

personnel, students, and parents echoed a need for computer literacy. The use of E-learning or learning through distant application has become ubiquitous around the globe (AlKhunzain & Khan, 2021).

The use of modern technology has become part and parcel of contemporary learning, and it is challenging to motivate most learners, if not all, to learn writing skill in the absence of technology and social media (Joseph & Khan, 2020). Simple usage of books and notes will do no real favor to a teacher in achieving the goals of target language learning. Therefore, it is significant to study the impact of social media and technology and how this can bring positive changes in the writing motivation of ESL learners. Thus, this study attempts to explore the effects of social media on the writing skills of Saudi learners.

With expanding domains of knowledge-based economies, globalization of the world, and increasing use of English in all spheres of life; today's postmodern world demands to improve the learning and teaching situation for English (Denisar, 2021). As Gillani et al. (2010) asserts, "To remain in step with the expanding frontiers of knowledge, the use of English needs to be actively sponsored by the educated and patronized by the policymakers." The use of social media is, without question, the most complex and challenging issue facing teachers today (Dendo, 2016). At the same time, the importance of English in the everyday lives of people in Saudi Arabia provides a solid basis for intrinsic and extrinsic use of social media; however, social media (especially Facebook and WhatsApp) is changing the lives of people and how they look at a surrounding phenomenon like the use of social media (Khan et al., 2018). Several types of research available looked at the impact of social media on writing skills in the Saudi context, and still, there is a big gap that needs to be filled. Therefore, this research can significantly help develop our understanding of the role of social media in fostering language skills. This will be useful for improving the learning and teaching practices of English learning in writing and vocabulary in academic and non-academic settings of Saudi Arabia.

Little has been done on technology, social media (Facebook), and L2 learning writing in the Saudi context (Almakrami, 2015). In comparison, there is a good deal of research about motivation and technology in education and second language learning, adopting many existing theoretical frameworks in Europe and the USA, and East Asia. So, the researcher feels this gap and wants to take on this responsibility. Zheng et al. (2018) also advocates for the same views as he suggests "research ought to be judged not only by internal criteria of methodological rigor but also ultimately based on its potential for positive impact on societal and educational problems."

The importance of the use of social media cannot be overlooked in educational settings. Writing skill an essential skill, it has got the status of 'biological language' (Virdyna, 2016). Many students are afraid of English as it is a compulsory subject from schools to universities. Many of them lack the initiative that can motivate them. Most researchers (Bakeer, 2018; Zheng et al., 2018) considered social media tools to be beneficial and practical in increasing language skills particularly in writing skill. Such

research discovered that collaborative language activities, conversations, interaction, and instructional approaches, rather than the social media medium, had a favorable effect on language acquisition. The research found evidence that online platforms were optimized to enhance, encourage, and appreciate language educational experiences.

Yadegarfar and (Galvin & Greenhow, 2020) observed that social media can foster the EFL learners' writing abilities. It also impacted their concentration on patterns of interaction and language information. According to (Al-Ali, 2014), learners were more involved in performing the English learning assignments assigned to them, and they used images from personal Instagram accounts as the content. Participants were willing to concentrate on building the language utilized in their writing activities more effectively than those who could not use Instagram in their study because the images were associated with their learning context.

Research, which focused on Facebook as an appropriate learning language tool for learners, discovered that Facebook increased students' writing level and quality (Wang & Vásquez, 2014). They observed that students using Facebook while pursuing Chinese as a second language produced more words than individuals who did not integrate Facebook. Researchers did not, however, keep an equivalent improvement in terms of student writing quality. More recently, Khan et al. (2021) conducted a study to analyze learners' perceptions of the integration of WhatsApp in fostering speaking abilities. Their research indicated that almost all participants admired the integration of WhatsApp in promoting their learning. However, English is necessary today for all subjects as it is a medium of instruction in higher education. The problem further complicates where the medium of instruction is not English at the school level. Those who are not good at English will have little understanding of mathematics and other subjects. This, in turn, will affect their learning at school and their prospective future. So, English language learning and language learning within and out of L2 classrooms are of greater significance in the current international scenario (Muñoz et al., 2018).

As a result, adopting Facebook or WhatsApp as a tool for collaborative writing practice would allow students to generate ideas, produce independently, and evaluate their peers' creative texts. Instructors can present a debate on a subject and add images for visual stimuli to stimulate students' conceptual frameworks (Rokhmah, 2020). Learners can enhance their interpersonal abilities and communicate better by drafting group assessments. The social media platform also provides a more pleasant learning environment in which learners could improve their overall writing ability and share with others (Fithriani et al., 2019). Thus, using Facebook or other social media to establish a forum for the writing process may address finding a foundation for academic tasks. Since the advent of these media, many educational experts have debated and examined the influence of social media in the educational field. Although we can benefit from international research on social media and social media to some extent, every society has its local norms, and research done elsewhere might not work well in the Saudi context. So, the study hopes to bring positive insights to enhance

students' use of social media to learn English. Further, theories about social media and technology in education and L2 learning context have been developed and validated in language learning (Tin et al., 2018). Gass and Madden (1985) points out that in , individuals are focused, and a crucial element of progress is the movement toward an ever more towards input. So, we need to verify those theories before making them a part of our system.

Material and Methods

There are different research traditions to adopt and analyze the existing beliefs. Two frequently adopted approaches are quantitative and qualitative methods. Researches in social media and technology have greatly benefitted social and educational psychologists, and it is no surprise that quantitative methods extensively opt for research. Quantitative methods study has developed into 'methodologically fashionable' (Sandelowski et al., 2007). Keeping with this research tradition, the current research adopted a quasi-experimental method approach to analyze Saudi students' writing skills by using social media and their social media use in this process. All the moral and ethical issues were considered, and participants were informed about the research procedure.

The current study population were 42 undergraduate students undertaking the Preparatory Year Program (PYP) at the Majmaah University, Saudi Arabia, where learning English as a foreign language is compulsory. Sampling of the participants was done using different procedures. They represent the population under study with average results and cover a wide range of geographical areas for generalizing the study results. Students were already divided into groups by the administration. Two groups were then categorized into control and experimental group. A writing test was used to collect the data. The test was a writing paragraph selected from the topics of each unit from the coursebook. Participants in the experimental group were trained to use Facebook as an intervention procedure of the study. The researcher, who was the instructor of the writing skill of the control and experimental group, had to post a situation on Facebook 3 times a week. All the participants from the experimental group had to post a comment on the given situation to the post and other students. This process continued for six weeks. Control group participants were given a handout to read and discuss a similar situation presented to the Experimental group. After six weeks of following this norm, the posttest was administrated. Writing scoring was done based on content, vocabulary use, grammatical accuracy, and paragraph organization. The researcher and another instructor did scoring to keep the consistency of the marking.

Results and Discussion

The present investigation used a quasi-experimental pretest and posttest paradigm. As a result, respondents in the groups underwent a pretest before the initiation of the treatment. Table 1 shows the descriptive information for the

experimental and control groups' pretest scores. The data were confirmed to be expected after a test of normality.

Table 1
Analysis of the pretest of writing

Pretest	Group	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error
Writing paragraph	Experimental	22	18.99	3.235	1.0131
	Control	20	19.5	3.561	1.0012

In the pretest, an independent-sample t-test was used to assess the writing scores of the experimental and control groups. The t-test results showed that there had been no notable difference in scores between the experimental (M=18.99, SD=3.23) and control groups (M=19.5, SD=3.56). In terms of writing ability, both groups are reasonably homogeneous. Table 2 describes the results of the posttest on the writing skill of both groups.

Table 2
Posttest Analysis

Posttest	Group	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error
Writing paragraph	Experimental	22	26.89	1.891	.5230
	Control	20	22.53	1.52	.4123

Table 2 displays the posttest mean scores for the experimental and control groups. The mean experimental score (N = 22) was 26.89 (M = 26.89), which is 68 percent of the total marks of 40 marks. It demonstrates that the average score of the experimental group is greater on the posttest than that of the control group (N = 20). (M= 22.53). The intervention group's standard deviation was (SD =1.89), and the control group's standard deviation was (SD=1.52). The description posttest analysis reveals a substantial effect on the overall outcomes of the experimental and control groups. It is possible to conclude that the experimental group enhanced the quality of writing skills compared to its equivalent due to widespread social penetration of social media. The use of Facebook can be ascribed to a substantial difference in the scores of the experimental group and control groups in writing skills. As a result, the posttest inferential data support the hypothesis that social media instruction can enhance EFL learners' writing competence. Table 3 shows the analysis of paired t-test.

Table 3
Paired t-test of Pre and Post

Group		N	Mean	SD	Std. Error	t	df	sig
Experimental	Pre	22	18.99	3.235	1.0131	-3.147	21	0.007
	Post	22	26.89	1.891	.5230			
Control	Pre	20	19.5	3.561	1.0012	-1.036	19	0.129
	Post	20	22.53	1.52	.4123			

Paired T-tests and descriptive analysis were used to see any differences between the groups on the pretest and posttest findings for both groups. As demonstrated in Table 3, the experimental group improved significantly in post-intervention writing performance ($M= 27$ $SE=.0.5230$), $t(22)= - 3.147$, $p < .05$. Media platforms can relate to the considerable variation in the respondents' posttest writing abilities. Nevertheless, analysis of the paired sample t-test revealed a discrepancy in posttest scores of the control group; it was not statistically relevant ($M= 22.53$, $t(20)=1.52$, $p > .05$). The outcome demonstrates that the p-value ($p=.127$) is greater than $p>.05$. As a result, we may infer that the difference in the average score of posttest writing performance in the control group is statistically negligible.

Discussion

According to the findings, as a part of language learning, Facebook significantly improved EFL learners' writing capabilities. In the posttest, the participants had significantly higher scores. After six weeks of being provided incentives of using Facebook for conversations, the participants' writing skills have developed. In the grammatical section of the writing paragraph, a more significant number of learners had better posttest outcomes. In the posttest, they produced more relevant text within a well-structured paragraph. It made it easier and more convenient for individuals to strengthen their writing skills. They conquered their anxiety and tried to ask other classmates various questions on Facebook questions. They could text the teacher or other Facebook participants. Before completing the writing test, participants could rehearse their Writing ability. Furthermore, these findings are in accordance with earlier research indicating that Facebook is an efficient model for language education (Bakeer, 2018; Bal, 2018; Fithriani et al., 2019; Zheng et al., 2018). Shi (2011) indicated that students have developed in paragraph structure, information, lexicon, grammar, and punctuation after receiving Facebook embedded flipped classroom.

According to the participants, Facebook allowed participant observation and inspired them to engage more in their writing development. According to Tomas and Dulin (2021), Facebook provides a robust environment where learners can synthesize ideas and information from different types of information. The present and earlier studies' findings confirm Facebook's effectiveness as a tool for language acquisition. The reported favorable impacts in the present research arose from the opportunity to have writing conversations on Facebook. The current study noticed that many of the participants had dialogues about sentence construction on Facebook, which could become one of the explanations of their writing skills. This is attributable to the reality that sentence form is a crucial component of good writing, which is also one of the additional elements necessary for the growth of writing ability (Al-Naibi et al., 2018). Furthermore, sentence structure precision is focused on creating diverse types of sentences (Oshima & Hogue, 2007). The experts suggest that learners' use of social networks can improve writing proficiency, and this theory has indeed been confirmed correct precisely as the study's findings indicate elevated levels of writing

components. Much previous research, like this one, found that grammatical training benefited learners to enhance their writing talents. Ting et al. (2010) revealed that grammar training students produced fewer mistakes in written work. They discovered that concentrating on different aspects of writing had a considerable impact on the learners' success.

Each of these findings appears to emphasize the value of writing pedagogy, as the elimination of inaccuracies and the capacity to recognize grammar structure can lead to improved writing proficiency. According to the study results, numerous Facebook capabilities that empower students to communicate, discuss, interact, and express their opinions with the instructor, their classmates, or even other Facebook friends enhanced the learners' writing competency. From this point of view, it is possible to say that this learning style is connected to Social Constructivist theory (Liu & Chen, 2010). Facebook can serve as a community of inquiry where learners can share their English vocabulary and grammar problems with their instructor or even other members. Throughout this procedure, the instructor or other participants can function as being more informed scaffolders, guiding students from their initial level of development to their prospective development stage, the stance in which they build new understanding after particular negotiation, cooperation, and guidance from more domain experts (Vygotsky, 1978).

Conclusion

According to the findings, Facebook would create a feeling of anonymity in interaction. When addressing questions with the instructor on Facebook, some learners adopted various techniques in writing sentences in given situations. This lowered anxiety, leading to greater motivation, a strong sense of self, and risk-taking capability. Consequently, the learners had a better understanding of English grammar, arrangement of the content that led to enhanced writing capabilities. In conclusion, Facebook is an Online communication technology that should be encouraged and used as an online group for learners to explore English grammar and writing problems. Facebook provides learners with a variety of choices for interacting with the instructor or other individuals.

The findings and conclusions drawn from this study might be applied to Majmmah University Preparatory Year students and at the regional level. The investigation shed light on elements essential to motivating the students to learn English through social media in and outside the classroom settings. This may help understand the changes required in our system to sustain EFL learning the use of social media for an extended period. As research is absent about social media and technology in the classroom and L2 learning context, the current study might work as an igniting force for researchers and scholars to focus on the issue and pay due attention to the topic better learning outcomes.

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