Saudi EFL Students' Attitudes Towards Using Facebook and Discussion Forums for Writing and Communication in English

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate the extent to which computer-mediated communication (CMC) is used in language learning. The main focus is on the attitudes and motivation of Saudi EFL students towards using Facebook and discussion forums in language learning. The research method used in this study is a mixed-method approach, which involves questionnaire and interview. The questionnaires were collected from 65 participants, while the interviews were conducted with five participants. From the analysis of both the quantitative and the qualitative data, the participants appear to use computer applications, in general, such as word processing, emails and blogging. As for Saudi EFL students, using Facebook and discussion forums, the results reveal that Facebook is used more than discussion forums for language learning purposes among Saudi EFL students. From such findings, certain pedagogical implications are proposed for both language teaching and, in particular, the teaching of English in the context of Saudi Arabia.

Keywords: computer-mediated communication (CMC), Saudi EFL, computer applications, Facebook, discussion forums

1. Introduction

Over the last three decades, computer-assisted language learning (CALL) has become a central part of language education. A vital component of CALL is computer-mediated communication (CMC), which provides many benefits for English language acquisition. Research suggests that educational CMC can help English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students develop English language skills, such as speaking, listening, reading and writing.

In addition to the benefits of CMC, motivation has a powerful impact on second language acquisition. According to Crookes and Schmidt (1991) and Dörnyei (1994), a student's motivation to learn a second language (L2 motivation) significantly affects learning outcomes. Several theories, such as expectancy-value theories, achievement motivation theory, goal-setting theory, and self-determination theory, explore different aspects of L2 motivation (Dörnyei, 2001). EFL teachers should ensure that students have high motivation levels, as Dörnyei (2005) asserts: "Without sufficient motivation, even individuals with the most remarkable abilities cannot accomplish long-term goals, and neither are appropriate curricula and good teaching enough on their own to ensure students' achievement" (p. 65).

Building on these discussions, this research study explores Saudi EFL students' attitudes towards using Facebook and discussion forums for writing and communication. It will also investigate the influence of Facebook and discussion forums on their motivation and attitudes towards learning English. The findings of this study may provide insights into the importance of using CMC in language learning and teaching, particularly in the Saudi Arabian context. Additionally, the study's results hope to shed light on the use of CMC in language learning and teaching and help both EFL teachers and designers of language courses to understand the significance of using CMC.

This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent do Saudi EFL students make use of Facebook and discussion forums to learn or improve their English?

2. What aspects of Facebook and discussion forums do Saudi EFL students find motivating and useful for language learning?

3. What are the effects of using Facebook and discussion forums on developing writing and enhancing Saudi EFL students' attitudes towards learning English?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC)

The use of computer-mediated communication (CMC) refers to communication facilitated by computers. It includes a type of digital interaction through electronic devices to collaborative learning environments. Higgins (1991) defines it as "human communication via computer", while Herring (1996) expands on this, describing it as "communication that takes place between human beings via the instrumentality of computers" (p. 1). Walther (1992) points out

that the meaning of CMC is "synchronous or asynchronous electronic mail and computer conferencing." Zourou and Lamy (2015) highlight its role within computer-assisted language learning (CALL), providing insights into how technology enhances communication in language learning.

CMC can be divided primarily into two types: synchronous and asynchronous communication. Synchronous communication, such as instant messaging, occurs in real interactions, including telephone conversations, video and audio conferencing and chat software. In contrast, asynchronous CMC enables communication at different times, such as emails, discussion boards, social networking sites (e.g., Facebook), and text messaging (Smith and Gorsuch, 2004). CMC plays a significant component in language learning, offering learners opportunities to run through communication in an interactive and flexible environment (Lamy & Hampel, 2007). According to Shetzer and Warschauer (2000), CMC facilitates global communication at a minimal cost, fostering interaction across diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Thus, CMC could be considered a powerful tool that can provide variety in the way people live, work and learn.

2.2. The Development of CMC

In order to understand the evolution of CMC, the progress of CMC should briefly provide insight into its recent applications in education. Harasim (1990) mentions that CMC was originally used for instructional purposes in the early 1980s, primarily in higher education for non-credit mini-courses and classroom-based courses with remote collaboration. By the mid-1990s, asynchronous text-based networking became widespread among students in educational institutions (Lamy & Hampel, 2007), employed by the gradual adoption of synchronous communication tools, such as voice-based internet telephony.

CMC has been founded to support learner autonomy and language proficiency. Al-Saadi (2011) highlights its effectiveness in enhancing writing skills, while Babni (2019) emphasises its potential to improve overall English language proficiency. Additionally, Mahfouz (2010) found that students in Jordan have positive attitudes toward using email exchanges with native English speakers, reinforcing the value of CMC in authentic language use. Even though it has some benefits, further research studies are needed on the extent of CMC adoption and its influence on motivation and attitudes of learners.

2.3. Using Facebook (FB) to Improve Students' Learning Performance

Facebook is considered one of the most popular social networking platforms among university students (Kabilan et al., 2010). Ross et al. (2009) point out that Facebook is "a computer-mediated Social Networking System that has become one of the most popular means of communication" (p. 579). Some researchers identify that Facebook plays a significant role in helping students to improve their writing skills by providing them with authentic material (see, for example, Yancey 2009; Blattner and Fiori 2009; Kabilan et al. 2010; Roblyer et al.). Mazer et al. (2007) indicate that Facebook plays an important role which leads to a more comfortable learning atmosphere by allowing students to connect with peers and instructors. Haverback (2009) found that Facebook interactions seemed to enhance students' motivation and reading

comprehension skills.

Facebook provides exposure to authentic materials and encourages language practice (Yancey, 2009; Blattner & Fiori, 2009). Faryadi (2017) argues for its role in enhancing English proficiency, critical thinking, and comprehension skills, while Shams (2017) emphasises that Facebook promotes motivation and confidence in language learning. Moreover, Aloraini and Cardoso (2024) reported that students improved their grammar, vocabulary and contextual understanding through Facebook engagement. Yunus and Salehi (2016) stress the importance of interactive and engaging content in motivating learners.

2.4. Using Discussion Forums in Language Learning

Discussion forums are mediums where L2 students can "discuss topics related to courseware, their current learning task, or the learning project they are working on. These discussion forums contain tremendous educational potential for future learners, since they contain question and answer dialogues, discussions, or examples made by previous learners" (Helic, Maurer and Scerbakov, 2004: p. 8). Discussion forums offer an interactive platform where students can engage in meaningful discourse connected to their coursework. Researchers (Al-Jarf, 2004; Lam, 2000; Singhal, 1998) found that discussion boards produce a natural learning environment by encouraging social interactions and leading students to authentic language materials. They provide opportunities for learners to express different viewpoints and interact with peers at several proficiency levels.

Alzahrani (2017) discovered a significant positive relationship between student participation in discussion forums and academic performance. However, Zha et al. (2006) mention that peer writing may not always benefit language learning, as students tend to adapt their writing styles to match their peers, which may not always be useful. Despite this, discussion forums provide effective practices for written communication and critical thinking development (Murphy, 2010).

Using discussion forums in language classrooms has many benefits. It can be said that using discussion forums in the language classroom might give EFL teachers more control over the content of the discussion forums, as they can set tasks and topics which will be discussed. Such forums help students with writing in English as they have time to respond, but it does not help them improve their speaking and listening skills much.

2.5. Students' Attitudes Towards Using CMC

Many studies have investigated students' attitudes towards using CMC for language learning. Coniam and Wong (2004) studied the effect of chat programs on the language learning enhancement of secondary school students in the Chinese context. Similarly, Shang (2005) points out that email-based discussions have positively influenced students' attitude towards reading performance, using an email and confidence in language acquisition. Yang (2006) found that Taiwanese students benefit from synchronous CMC discussions before completing written tasks, enhancing their engagement and motivation. He (ibid, 2006) states that "students could read and write at their own pace and participate as they wanted during online discussion" (p. 3).

Facebook, as a form of CMC, has also received positive feedback. Al Ghazali (2016) found that students perceived Facebook as a useful tool for language learning, reinforcing the role of social media in education. Additionally, Charoenwet and Tubsree (2017) observed that graduate students viewed CMC tools as beneficial for improving their English skills, underscoring their potential for digital language learning.

2.6. The Context of the Study

This study focuses on Saudi EFL students studying abroad, particularly in British universities, where they are required to achieve and prove their English proficiency through IELTS, TOEFL or preparatory courses. English Language, in Saudi Arabia, is taught in the fourth grade and continues through higher education. However, ineffective teaching methods and limited technology integration often result in students falling short of expectations in language proficiency by the time they graduate.

Although there has been an increase in the use of CMC and e-learning resources in Saudi schools and universities, challenges still persist. While some institutions have computer labs, many schools lack the resources or trained instructors to utilise digital learning tools. Al-Saif, (2005) mentions that students in Saudi universities mostly have positive attitudes toward web-based instruction, emphasising a need for expanded initiatives of digital learning. Alghammas and Alghamdi (2020) highlight the benefits of web-based synchronous speaking platforms, such as 'Cambly', in boosting students' confidence and proficiency in spoken English.

By addressing these gaps, this study seeks to investigate the attitudes of Saudi EFL students towards using Facebook and discussion forums in English language learning, contributing to the broader discourse on digital education in Saudi Arabia.

3. Methodology

The main aim of the study is to investigate how Saudi EFL students use computer-mediated communication (CMC), particularly through Facebook and discussion forums, to enhance their English. The study examines whether these tools play a role in motivation and benefit language learning, as well as their limitations in terms of Arabic-speaking and specifically Saudi students. A clear understanding of the benefits of integrating CMC from this research will help Saudi language course designers develop a teaching approach that motivates and engages learners.

3.1. Research Design

This study used a mixed-method approach, the two methods being quantitative and qualitative research techniques. Following Johnson and Christensen's (2004) typology, "quan" (quantitative) data takes precedence over "qual" (qualitative) data. The quantitative data is collected first, and qualitative data is gathered to help explain the results. Dörnyei (2007) notes that this approach enables both methods to complement each other, enhancing the understanding of the research phenomenon.

3.2. Participants

A total of 65 Saudi EFL students (23 females and 42 males) aged 20 and above were involved in this study. The participants are studying English in British universities and language schools to prepare for academic programmes. The technique used for sampling was 'convenience sampling'. The questionnaires were sent randomly by email to these participants, allowing flexibility in participation. Mackey and Gass (2005) define it as "the selection of individuals who happen to be available for study" (p. 101).

3.3. Instruments

This study used a questionnaire and follow-up interviews to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. The questionnaire consisted of five sections, including personal information, computer usage and attitudes towards using Facebook and discussion forums for English learning, and the last was an optional section for participants who agreed to be interviewed. The survey was distributed online to help reach a sufficient number of the study sample in a short time. The questionnaire included 35 items and took 10-15 minutes to complete. A Likert scale was used and the answers ranged from 'very poor', 'poor', 'fair', 'good' to 'excellent'. This scale was used to convey the participants' views on the use of computer-mediated communication (CMC) and social media as tools for language learning. The third and fourth sections of the questionnaire, adapted from Kabilan, Ahmad, and Abidin (2010), examines the students' attitudes towards using discussion forums to learn or improve English, and was slightly modified to fit the study's context. The last section asked participants to provide contact information if they were willing to participate in an interview. The questionnaire is attached in Appendix A.

The questionnaire of this study was formed by using online survey website (Survey Monkey) Smart-Survey, creating links for both Arabic and English versions. The statements are adopted from Warschauer (1996) and Kabilan, Ahmad, and Abidin (2010). These statements are slightly modified to investigate participants' attitudes towards using some CMC and the attitudes of participants in this context. In answering such statements, the Likert scale is used and the answers range from 'very poor', 'poor', 'fair', 'good' to 'excellent'. The Arabic version was distributed, receiving 72 responses in about a month, although a total of seven questionnaires were eliminated and were not used in the data analysis because they did not match.

Interviews in this study were conducted to capture participants' responses, providing deeper insight into their cultural and contextual perspectives. The interviews were semi-structured, and Gill et al. (2008) described how the semi-structured interviews "consist of several key questions that help to define the areas to be explored, but also allow the interviewer or interviewee to diverge in order to pursue an idea or response in more detail" (p: 291). The interviews asked about CMC use by Saudi EFL students and their motivation and attitudes towards using Facebook and discussion forums to learn or improve their English.

Both group and individual interviews were employed. Due to the circumstances of participants, group interviews were conducted, but some participants could not attend, so interviews were conducted individually in these instances. Initially, 18 participants volunteered, but logistical

issues reduced the number to eight, with five ultimately completing interviews. These interviews (lasting about 55 minutes) included one group and two individual sessions and were conducted in Arabic.

3.4. Data Analysis

The quantitative data for this study was analysed using the online survey website (Survey Monkey) the same software that designed the questionnaire, which generated graphical summaries and allowed data export to Microsoft Word. Seven questionnaires were excluded for various reasons, leaving 65 valid responses. Descriptive statistics, specifically measures of frequency, were employed to analyse the data. This approach, as explained by Mackey and Gass (2005), helps identify the frequency of certain behaviours or phenomena, enhancing understanding of the data set.

The qualitative data from the Arabic interviews was analysed using content analysis, involving recording, translation and coding. This method, as described by Dörnyei (2007), includes coding themes, identifying patterns, interpreting findings and developing theoretical insights.

3.5. Ethical Consideration

Ethical considerations were a key focus in this study, given its involvement with human participants. Following guidelines by Mackey and Gass (2005) and Dörnyei (2007), participants aged 20 and older were provided with an informed consent form attached to the questionnaire. The form outlined their rights, including understanding the study, the voluntary nature of participation and the option to withdraw at any time without explanation.

Participant anonymity was maintained through coding questionnaires and interviews with numbers, ensuring confidentiality. Sample consent forms are attached in Appendices B.

4. Findings and Discussions

This section will provide the findings of a study on Saudi EFL students in the UK, focusing on the use of Facebook and discussion forums for English language learning. It shows three aspects: the extent of Facebook and forum use, how students utilised the features of these platforms that they found helpful, and students' motivation and attitudes towards using them for the purpose of English language learning.

4.1. Descriptive Statistics of General Questions

Most participants (47.7%) were aged 26–35, with less than 4% aged 46 or older. All were Saudi nationals, with 64.6% male and 35.4% female. The majority (49.2%) held Bachelor's degrees, while 26.2% had Master's degrees, and 12.3% had a secondary school certificate or diploma. Over 70% had upper-intermediate or advanced English proficiency, while 16.9% were intermediate, and fewer were at lower levels. Regarding courses, over 40% studied general or academic English, 33.8% were in pre-sessional courses, and smaller percentages enrolled in a foundation year or other courses. Most participants (86.2%) had stayed in the UK for more than

six months, as shown in table 1.

Table 1: The personal information of participants

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	20-25	21	32.3%
	26-35	31	47.7%
	36-45	11	16.9%
	46 or more	2	3.1%
Nationality	Saudi	65	100%
	Other	0	0%
Gender	Female	23	35.4%
	Male	42	64.6%
Highest academic qualification	Secondary school certificate Diploma	8	12.3%
	Bachelor	8	12.3%
	Master	32	49.2%
	Other	17	26.2%
		0	0%
English level (as indicated by participants)	Beginner	2	3.1%
	Pre-intermediate	6	9.2%
	Intermediate	11	16.9%
	Upper-intermediate	23	35.4%
	Advanced	23	35.4%
	Other	0	0%
Language course	General English course	14	21.5%
	Academic English course	14	21.5%
	Pre-sessional course	22	33.8%
	Foundation year	8	12.3%
	Other	7	10.8%
Time spent in the UK	Less than 6 months	9	13.8%
	More than 6 months	56	86.2%

Nearly all participants (98.5%) had home computers, with most reporting good to excellent typing skills and computer knowledge. Email, the web, and word processing were frequently used (98.46%, 73.85%, 61.54%, respectively), while chat, Twitter and blogs were rarely used. Focus group interviews highlighted email's role in study applications and communication in English. Some participants used chat rooms to enhance language skills, while blogging and Twitter were largely unused. Participants also used word processing and English websites

regularly, as can be seen in tables 2 and 3.

Table 2: General questions (1)

Having a computer	Percentage %	
	Yes	No
Home	98.5%	1.5%

	Ability and knowledge of using computers				
	Percentage %				
	Poor	Fair	Good	Very good	Excellent
Typing ability of using a computer	0%	12.3%	30.8%	29.2%	27.7%
Knowledge of using a computer	1.5%	10.8%	20%	41.5%	26.2%

Table 3: General questions (2)

	Frequency of using some aspects of a computer		
	Percentage %		
	A lot	Little	Never
Word processing	61.54%	36.92%	1.54%
E-mail	98.46%	1.54%	0%
Blog	9.23%	44.62%	46.15%
Chat	10.77%	24.62%	64.62%
Discussion forums	16.92%	63.08%	20%
Facebook	44.62%	43.08%	12.31%
Twitter	15.38%	23.08%	61.54%
World wide web	73.85%	12.31%	13.85%

4.2. Attitudes to using Facebook to learn English

The study explored the use of Facebook for learning English through two types of questions. First, participants were asked about the frequency of logging into their Facebook accounts. The results showed that 47.69% logged in daily, 20% logged in once a week, 16.92% logged in 2–3 times a week, and 15.38% never used Facebook.

The second part examined participants' attitudes and motivation for using Facebook to learn English, using a Likert scale. Agreement with positive statements ranged from 47.7% to 72.3%, with the highest agreement for "Facebook enhances my English communication

skills" and the lowest for "Facebook makes learning English easier" and "Facebook encourages a more positive attitude towards English". Disagreement ranged from 6.2% to 23.1%, with the highest disagreement for "Facebook makes learning English easier."

In contrast to previous studies by Kabilan et al. (2010) and Roblyer et al. (2010), which suggested Facebook supports language learning, interviewees in this study mainly used Facebook in Arabic but incorporated some English phrases like "thank you" and "bye", as shown in tables 4 and 5.

Table 4: Attitudes towards using Facebook to learn English (1).

	The frequency of logging into a Facebook account			
	Percentage %			
	Every day	**2 or 3 times a week**	**Once a week**	**Never**
Weekly	**47.69%**	**16.92%**	**20%**	**15.38%**

Table 5: Attitudes towards using Facebook to learn English (2).

	Using computer-mediated communication				
	Percentage %				
Scale	**Strongly disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**
When I use Facebook, I can practise writing in English.	3.1%	3.1%	32.3%	47.7%	13.8%
Facebook enhances my English communication skills.	3.1%	9.2%	15.4%	58.5%	13.8%
Facebook enhances my confidence to write in English.	1.5%	13.8%	21.5%	47.7%	15.4%
Facebook enhances my confidence to communicate using English.	1.5%	9.2%	23.1%	52.3%	13.8%
Facebook enhances my motivation to communicate using English.	3.1%	10.8%	24.6%	46.2%	15.4%
Facebook enhances my motivation to write in	1.5%	15.4%	24.6%	49.2%	9.2%

English.

Facebook makes learning English more interesting.	3.1%	21.5%	26.2%	40%	9.2%
Facebook encourages a more positive attitude towards learning English as a second language.	3.1%	13.8%	30.8%	43.1%	9.2%
Facebook encourages a more positive attitude towards English as a language.	4.6%	12.3%	35.4%	36.9%	10.8%
Facebook makes learning English easier.	3.1%	20%	29.2%	40%	7.7%

4.3. Attitudes of Using Discussion Forums to Learn English

The study investigated Saudi EFL students' use of Facebook and discussion forums (forums) for learning English, focusing on frequency, attitudes and motivation. Regarding discussion forums, 23.08% used them 2–3 times a week, 32.31% once a week, 10.77% daily, and the same percentage never used them. Participants' agreement on forums' benefits ranged from 26.2% to 40%, with the highest agreement for "forums make learning English easier" and the lowest for "forums enhance motivation to write in English". Many participants lacked confidence in their English skills and only read forums to learn phrases, such as "by far".

For Facebook, students used English minimally, often writing in Arabic with occasional English phrases. Despite low motivation and a perception of unattractive learning environments, Facebook helped maintain communication in English, particularly when face-to-face interaction was not an option. About 70% of participants, at an upper-intermediate level, were better positioned to benefit from Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC). However, students agreed that while CMC could enhance motivation and communication, it had a limited impact on their writing skills.

Overall, the findings highlight varying attitudes towards using Facebook and forums for language learning, with confidence and motivation playing significant roles. This aligns with previous research, such as Krish et al. (2010) and Warschauer (1996), which emphasised that students' readiness and interactive environments influence their engagement with online tools for language learning. The following tables 6 and 7 show the details of attitudes towards using discussion forums to learn English.

Table 6: Attitudes towards using discussion forums to learn English (1).

	The frequency of logging into a discussion forum account			
	Percentage %			
	Every day	2 or 3 times a week	Once a week	Never
Weekly	**10.77%**	**23.08%**	**32.31%**	**10.77%**

Table 7: Attitudes towards using discussion forums to learn English (2).

| | Using computer-mediated communication | | | | |
| | Percentage % | | | | |
Scale	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
When I use discussion forums, I can practise writing in English.	13.8%	13.8%	38.5%	29.2%	4.6%
Discussion forums enhance my English communication skills.	7.7%	21.5%	41.5%	24.6%	4.6%
Discussion forums enhance my confidence to write in English.	9.2%	20%	41.5%	24.6%	4.6%
Discussion forums enhance my confidence to communicate using English.	12.3%	13.8%	40%	27.7%	6.2%
Discussion forums enhance my motivation to communicate using English.	12.3%	20%	35.4%	26.2%	6.2%
Discussion forums enhance my motivation to write in English.	9.2%	21.5%	43.1%	20%	6.2%
Discussion forums make learning English more interesting.	10.8%	16.9%	38.5%	26.2%	7.7%
Discussion forums encourage a more positive attitude towards learning English as a second language.	7.7%	18.5%	43.1%	23.1%	7.7%
Discussion forums encourage a more positive attitude towards English as a language.	7.7%	18.5%	41.5%	26.2%	6.2%
Discussion forums make learning English easier.	4.6%	20%	35.4%	32.3%	7.7%

5. Conclusion

The study investigated the use of Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) tools, specifically Facebook and discussion forums, among Saudi EFL students in the UK to enhance their English language learning. By employing a mixed-methods approach, the research highlighted students' access to technology, how they interacted with digital platforms, and their attitudes and motivation towards these tools.

The findings reveal that while most students have access to computers and possess adequate digital literacy, their use of CMC tools for language learning remains limited. Many students lack confidence in their English skills and struggle to find suitable academic learning materials through these platforms. This highlights the need for language institutions and educators to provide structured digital learning resources that cater to both academic and general English development. Additionally, encouraging the integration of CMC tools into language learning can foster greater autonomy and engagement among students.

Although Facebook was identified as a more widely used platform for communication and

language practice compared to discussion forums, a significant number of students do not utilise its full potential for learning. The findings suggest that targeted interventions are necessary to increase student participation in online learning communities and maximise the benefits of digital tools for language acquisition.

In conclusion, while technological accessibility is not a major barrier for Saudi EFL students, their limited use of CMC tools for English learning points to a need for greater institutional support and pedagogical strategies. By addressing these challenges and fostering a more engaging digital learning environment, educators can enhance students' confidence and motivation, ultimately improving their English proficiency through effective use of online resources.

5.1. The Pedagogical Implications

The findings of this study suggest several pedagogical implications for language teaching, particularly in the Saudi Arabian context. Saudi EFL students tend to use computer applications for learning English, such as word processing and email, as well as Facebook, but they engage less frequently with discussion forums. This highlights the need to encourage the use of tools like discussion forums for language learning, which could involve training students on their effective use and integrating them into classroom activities, such as posting assignments and sharing ideas.

The study also underscores the importance of providing computers and internet access in language resource centres and encouraging their integration into language classrooms. Saudi educational institutions should adopt policies to incorporate CMC tools, including Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs), which offer structured and interactive activities to engage students in online discussions. For instance, teachers could use Facebook accounts to share authentic materials or websites to enhance learning. In addition, the development of language resource centres in schools and universities is crucial to facilitate access to computer applications and CMC tools. Teaching students how to utilise these resources effectively and encouraging their use can promote learner autonomy, a key factor in motivating students to improve their language skills. Providing CMC materials that introduce the target language culture, such as English-focused discussion forums, is particularly essential in Saudi Arabia, where opportunities for direct contact with L2 native speakers are limited.

5.2. Limitations of the Study

This study faced some limitations, despite efforts to mitigate them. The first limitation involved data collection, as only five participants were interviewed for qualitative data. Practical challenges, such as participants being located in different regions of the UK and some backing out or not responding, hindered the process. Nonetheless, the 55-minute interviews provided valuable insights alongside the questionnaire data. The second limitation was the reliance on a quantitative questionnaire. If open-ended questions had been included, it could have offered deeper insights into the frequency of CMC use and students' motivation and attitudes. Lastly, the questionnaire's method of assessing English proficiency, where participants self-identified their level from "beginner" to "advanced", may be considered unreliable. However, the study's

findings were not significantly impacted by this limitation.

5.3. Suggestions for Future Research

This study explored the use of computer applications by Saudi EFL students, focusing on how Facebook and discussion forums influence their motivation and attitudes. It highlighted differences in the use of computer-mediated communication (CMC) and provided insights into its application in the Saudi context, as all participants were Saudi nationals.

For future research, further investigation is recommended to integrate aspects of CMC, such as Facebook and electronic discussion boards, into language teaching and higher education in Saudi Arabia. Comparing these findings with studies on Saudi EFL students in other contexts, such as the UK, could yield valuable insights. Additionally, research is needed to explore why Saudi EFL students prefer Facebook over discussion forums and to include participants from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds to make findings more generalisable.

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Informed consent

Obtained.

Ethics approval

The Publication Ethics Committee of the Macrothink Institute.

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

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Questionnaire (English version).

Questionnaire about Attitudes towards Using Facebook and discussion fora for Writing and Communication in English.

Part 1: Personal information

Please provide the following information

* 2) Age:

☐ 20-25   ☐ 26-35   ☐ 36-45   ☐ 46-more

*3) Nationality:

☐ Saudi

☐ Other: (please specify)

☐

* 4) Gender:

☐ Female   ☐ Male

*5) Your last academic qualification:

☐ Secondary school certificate

☐ Diploma

☐ Bachelor

☐ Master

☐ Other: please specify

☐

*6)

Your English Level:

☐ Beginner

☐ Pre-intermediate

☐ Intermediate

☐ Upper intermediate

☐ Advanced

☐ Other: please specify

[   ]

*7)   Your current/ previous language course:

☐ General English

☐ Academic English course

☐ Pres-sessional course

☐ Foundation year

☐ Other: please specify

[   ]

* 8)

How long have you been in the United Kingdom?

☐ Less than six months ☐ More than six months

Part 2: General Questions

9) Do you have a computer at home?

☐ Yes ☐ No

*10) Please rate your typing ability:

☐ poor

☐ fair

☐ good

☐ very good

☐ excellent

*11) Please rate your knowledge of using computers:

- ☐ poor
- ☐ fair
- ☐ good
- ☐ very good
- ☐ excellent

*12)   **How often do you use a computer to do the following:**

	a lot	a little	never
Word processing :	☐	☐	☐
E-mail:	☐	☐	☐
Blog :	☐	☐	☐
Chat:	☐	☐	☐
Discussion fora:	☐	☐	☐
Facebook:	☐	☐	☐
Twitter:	☐	☐	☐
World wide web:	☐	☐	☐

Part 3: Questions about attitudes toward using Facebook to learn English.

Please, choose an answer that best describes your level of agreement with each of the following statements:

*13) How often do you log into your Facebook account per week?

	Never	Once a week	2 or 3 times a week	Every day
Weekly	☐	☐	☐	☐

*14) When I use Facebook, I can practise writing in English.

☐ Strongly Disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neutral

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly agree

*15) Facebook enhances my English communication skills.

☐ Strongly Disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neutral
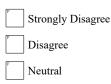
☐ Agree

☐ Strongly agree

*16) Facebook enhances my confidence to write in English.

☐ Strongly Disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neutral

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly agree

*17) Facebook enhances my confidence to communicate using English.

☐ Strongly Disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neutral

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly agree

*18) Facebook enhances my motivation to communicate using English.

☐ Strongly Disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neutral

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly agree

*19) Facebook enhances my motivation to write in English

☐ Strongly Disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neutral

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly agree

*20) Facebook makes learning English more interesting.

☐ Strongly Disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neutral

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly agree

*21) Facebook encourages a more positive attitude towards learning English as a second language.

☐ Strongly Disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neutral

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly agree

*22) Facebook encourages a more positive attitude towards English as a language.

☐ Strongly Disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neutral

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly agree

*23) Facebook makes learning English easier.

☐ Strongly Disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neutral

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly agree

Part 4: Questions about attitudes toward using Discussion fora to learn English

Please, choose an answer that best describes your level of agreement with each of the following statements:

*24) How often do you log into discussion fora per week?

	Never	Once a week	2-3 times a week	Every day
Weekly	☐	☐	☐	☐

*25) When I use discussion fora, I can practise writing in English.

☐ Strongly Disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neutral

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly agree

*26) Discussion fora enhance my English communication skills.

☐ Strongly Disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neutral

☐ agree

☐ Strongly agree

*27) Discussion fora enhance my confidence to write in English.

☐ Strongly Disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neutral

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly agree

*28) Discussion fora enhance my confidence to communicate using English.

☐ Strongly Disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neutral

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly agree

*29) Discussion fora enhance my motivation to communicate using English.

☐ Strongly Disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neutral

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly agree

*30) Discussion fora enhance my motivation to write in English.

☐ Strongly Disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neutral

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly agree

*31) Discussion fora make learning English more interesting.

☐ Strongly Disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neutral

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly agree

*32) Discussion fora encourage a more positive attitude towards learning English as a second language.

☐ Strongly Disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neutral

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly agree

*33) Discussion fora encourage a more positive attitude towards English as a language.

☐ Strongly Disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neutral

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly agree

*34) Discussion fora make learning English easier.

☐ Strongly Disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neutral

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly agree

Part 5: Future interview:

Note that all information will be treated as confidential and you will not be personally named in any reported finding.

35) If you would be willing to participate in the follow-up recorded interviews about the attitude toward using Facebook and discussion fora to learn English, please provide your name, phone number, city, and e-mail:

Name	
Phone	
City	
E-mail	

Appendix 2: A sample of the informed consent form (English version).

CONSENT FORM

* 1) **Title of Project:** <u>Saudi EFL Students' Attitudes Towards Using Facebook and Discussion Forums for Writing and Communication in English</u>

Name of researcher: Hassan Alshehri

Please initial box

	Yes	No
I confirm that I have understood the information for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	☐	☐
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason.	☐	☐
I agree to take part in the study.	☐	☐