

# A Study on the Diagnostic Effect of Social Media on Libyan EFL University Students Writing Skills in General and Day-to-day Written Communication Specifically

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## Abstract

The present study aims to scrutinise the diagnostic effect of social media on Libyan EFL University Students Writing skills in General and day-to-day Written Communication specifically. As social media is a growing phenomenon that contributes to language change and the way we use it, the effects this language change has on EFL students is of particular interest. This research covers Facebook and Instagram, as it also employs a quantitative method with an online questionnaire as its research instrumentation to collect the data. The questionnaire was distributed online through Google forms using a closed-ended questionnaire. The findings indicated that Libyan EFL University Students believe that social media has a positive effect on their language. It was also found that writing is the most affected and improved skill when using social media for learning the English language. Results also indicated that social media helps learners acquire and practise new vocabulary and decrease spelling errors. The researchers recommended more research to assess the influence of other social media platforms on EFL learners, such as Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube. Furthermore, further research into the impact of social media on each skill independently is also advised.

**Keywords:** Social media, English as a foreign language, Quantitative method, Written communication and university students

## 1. Introduction

Social media is a collective term used to describe websites and applications that focus on communication and content-sharing. Since the advent and rise of social media in the last two decades, it has had a tremendous impact on different aspects of our lives ranging from society, economy, politics, and even language. It has become a part of our daily lives, with around 4.7 billion people around the world using it. Because of this incredibly vast international platform where cultures and languages interact on a daily basis, linguistic changes are disseminating quickly and may even be speeding up the rate at which the languages we use are changing.

Additionally, the introduction of texting on social media has changed writing skills in general and day-to-day written communication specifically, completely and has popularised many acronyms and terms which have been incorporated into our daily lives such as unfriend, LOL, and selfie. One of the most notable ways social media has impacted the English language is through the reappropriation of existing words. Reappropriation is the cultural process by which a group claims words that were previously used in a certain way and gives them a new meaning. Examples of this include Catfish (an internet user who pretends to be someone they are not) and Like (to display a positive reaction).

The development of languages is an especially intriguing process. Language can evolve with time to the point where speakers in the present day find it difficult to understand it in its earlier forms. Naturally, to an English as a foreign language (EFL) student who is new to English, being subjected to this rapid flow of new vocabulary can be confusing. It has been shown that social media can be a friend and foe for the natural processing of language. On one hand, the social media shorthand is a cause of many spelling inconsistencies, free-form adoption of new terms, and violations of English grammar norms. On the other hand, frequent interactions with native speakers help EFL learners become more naturalised in their use of language and may influence the acquisition of vocabulary.

Social media like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Youtube, etc. has an impact on language use and structure as well. Almost everyone in the world uses social media, and in Libya, most Social media users are those aged 25-34 and 18-24 respectively, so college students have access to the internet and are active on social media almost every day. Many students use social media in their daily lives to communicate with others. Learning became a tool supported by technology for public and academic use. Language is greatly affected by technology in general and social media specifically, because of those various effects social media has on language and more specifically, EFL students, it is regarded as a double-edged sword.

### *1.1 Statement of the Problem*

The number of social media users has rapidly increased lately, especially on Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram. According to (datareportal.com) and (statista.com), the most used social media platforms in Libya are Facebook, Messenger, and Instagram respectively. It was also found that social media is especially favoured by people aged 18-24 who spend an average of 3 hours a day on social media platforms. Social media is with them from the moment they wake up until they fall asleep. Therefore, social media plays an important role in communication, specifically for EFL university students whose written communication is still developing and could be affected positively or negatively.

Correspondingly, this study attempts to investigate the effects of social media on EFL University written communication. As internet users tend to use informal short-formed cyber language the most when communicating via social media, their language skills are subsequently affected as a whole. In order to find out if social media affects Libyan university EFL students on their writing skills in general and day-to-day written communication more specifically, as well as to what extent it is affected, the researchers will conduct a quantitative methods study via a questionnaire designed for EFL university students to share their social media experience and its effect on their written communication.

### *1.2 Research Objectives*

1. To investigate the association between social media and Libyan EFL students' writing skills in general and day-to-day written communication specifically.
2. To evaluate the extent of the effect of social media on Libyan EFL students writing skills in general and day-to-day written communication specifically.

### *1.3 Research Questions*

1. To what extent does social media affect EFL students' writing skills in general and day-to-day written communication specifically?
2. Does social media have a predominantly positive or negative effect on writing skills in general and day-to-day written communication specifically?

### *1.4 Research Hypothesis*

The researcher assumes that:

1. There is a strong association between social media use and writing skills in general and day-to-day written communication specifically.
2. Social media has a predominantly positive effect on writing skills in general and day-to-day written communication specifically.

### *1.5 Significance of the Study*

The contributions of this work are presented as follows:

For this field of study, this research tackles an unexplored area and is the first (to the best of our knowledge) to investigate the relationship between social media and written language in Libya. Additionally, it provides much-needed data concerning social media use among Libyan youth. Moreover, it serves as a base for future studies in this growing field of study.

For EFL students, who are the direct recipients of the output of this study, it highlights the educational side of social media and can establish the fact that they can utilise it to practise their written language skills.

For teachers, this study presents the possibility of incorporating social media into teaching.

For society, this study aids in breaking the widely held stereotype which perceives social media negatively and instead sees its educational potential. It also adds to society's benefit, considering that social media plays a vital role in our society.

Finally, for the researcher, the investigation will uncover critical areas in the educational process that many researchers could not explore.

## 1.6 Summary

The researchers' opening chapter gives a general overview of the study's context before going on to describe language change and social media's growing influence. This is followed by the problem statement, research objectives, and research questions. The chapter concludes with the significance of the study.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the existing literature on the growing field of social media, language change, and its effect on EFL students. The literature is reviewed thematically rather than chronologically, focusing on both the positive and negative aspects of social media. There are many studies on this topic, however, we will be focusing on countries that do not use English as a second language (ESL) since our study focuses on English as a foreign language for students.

### 2.2 Theoretical Review

In this section, the researchers will discuss the existing theories within the literature as well as evaluate the relationships between those theories.

#### 2.2.1 Social Media

Social media is permanently changing the way we communicate. It has enabled us to communicate with a larger number of people anywhere in the world simultaneously. Godwin-Jones (2008) and Sturgeon & Walker (2009) go so far as to say that social networks are kinds of social environments that have been made for learners who want to interact with people from other countries to learn a language easily. At the same time however, this means that the average social media user is under the pressure of maintaining far more relationships than a non-user. Consequently, the speed at which communication occurs has accelerated. As such, language is changing at rapid speeds with new words being made and discarded all the time. The question is: can EFL students who are still grasping the notion of a new language keep up with this?

#### 2.2.2 Social Media and Writing Skills

While the literature in this field tends to generalise the skills that are affected by social media, our study aims to bridge this gap by focusing on the written skill of EFL students, to which one study confidently states that social networks impact our writing more than any other skill (Saha, 2020). Since most of the communication on social media is written it makes sense that writing skills are the most affected. However, the same study concludes that the writing skill is the most negatively affected by social media. Moreover, to the best of the researchers' knowledge, there are no studies linking social media to day-to-day written communication. In the literature, if a link to the writing skill is made, it focuses on the relation between the effect of "netspeak" and formal academic writing. Thus our study attempts to bring new insight into this rarely addressed issue.

#### 2.2.3 Social Media Usage Statistics in Libya

There are many specialised websites that provide statistics on social media platform users in Libya and other countries. According to (gs.statcounter.com), (www.statista.com), and (www.napoleoncat.com), Facebook is the leading social media platform in Libya, counting nearly 6.4 million users. The second most used platform was Messenger, with approximately

5.9 million users in the country, followed by Instagram with around 1.3 million users.

The following Figure shows Social media user statistics in Libya from Oct 2021 to Oct 2022 (gs.statcounter.com).

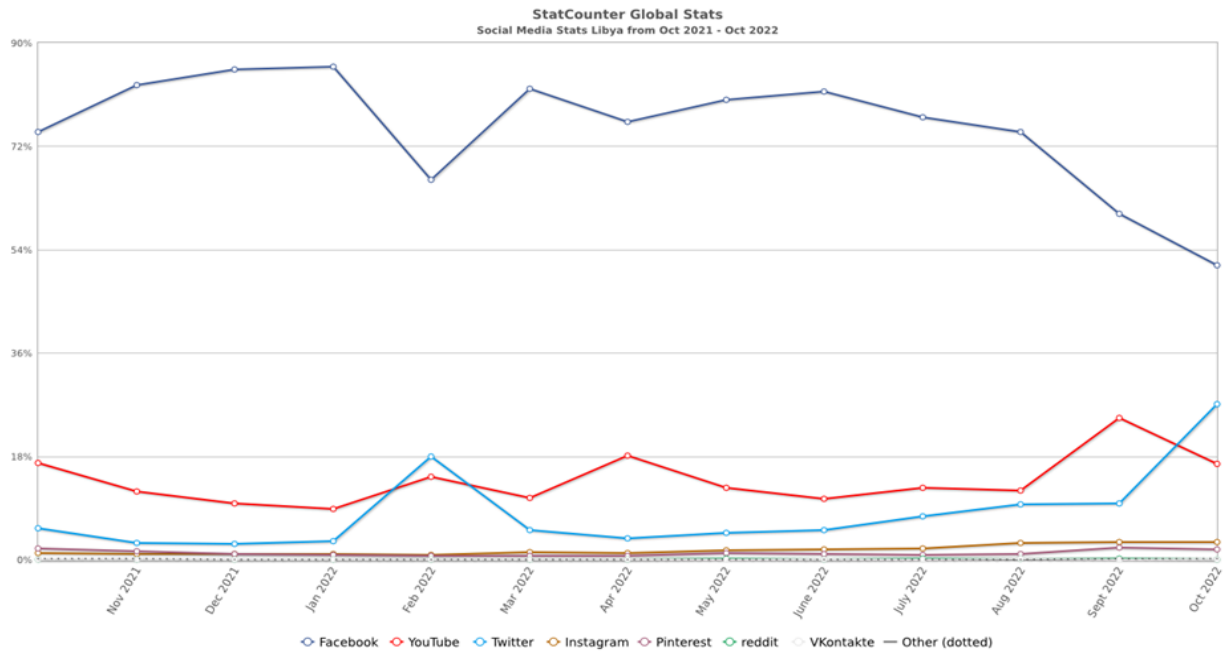


Figure 2.1 Social Media Stats Libya Oct 2021 – Oct 2022

#### 2.2.4 Facebook and Instagram Users in Libya by Age and Gender

Since there are age restrictions on some social media sites, there is no data that accurately represents the ages of social media users (many users register with false data). Consequently, the researchers present the approximate percentage of Facebook and Instagram users as they are published by some major internet database websites.

The following Figures show the percentage of the leading social media platform users in Libya by age and gender as published on October 10, 2022, by (www.napoleoncat.com).

Figure 2.2 shows that there were 6,161,000 Facebook users in Libya in October 2022, which accounted for 87.8% of its entire population. The majority of them were men (59.8%). People aged 25 to 34 were the largest user group (1,939,200). The highest difference between men and women occurs among people aged 25 to 34, where men lead by 1,200,000.



Facebook users in Libya  
October 2022



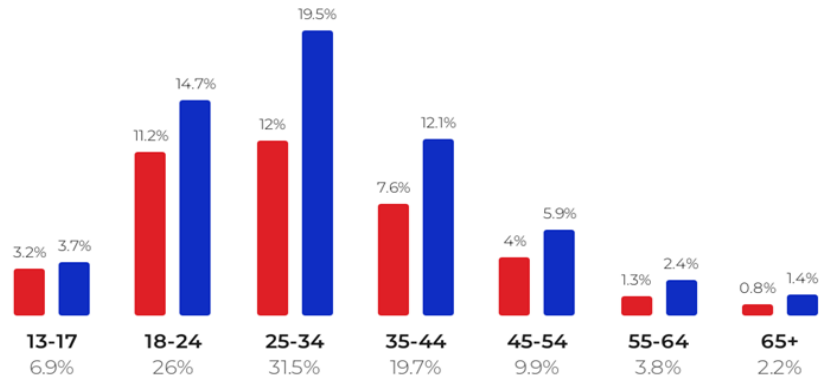
6 161 000



40.2%  
women



59.8%  
men



NapoleonCat.

Source: NapoleonCat.com

Figure 2.2 Facebook users in Libya as of Oct 2022, by age and gender.

Figure 2.3 shows that There were 1,707,000 Instagram users in Libya in October 2022, which accounted for 24.3% of its entire population. The majority of them were men (56.4%.) People aged 18 to 24 were the largest user group (653,000). The highest difference between men and women occurs within people aged 25 to 34, where men lead by 319,800. As we can see, while Facebook is the most popular social media platform among Libyans, Instagram is favoured by the youth.

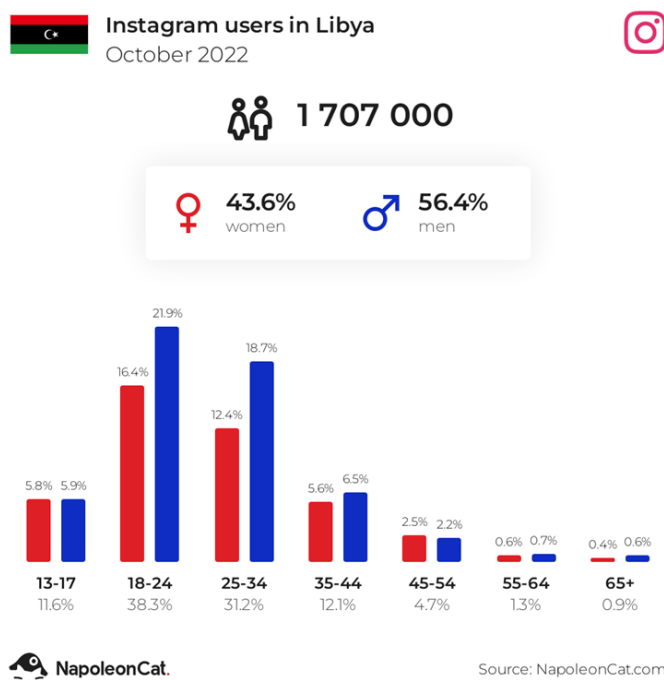


Figure 2.3 Instagram users in Libya as of Oct 2022, by age and gender

## 2.3 Current Research in Broad Area

### 2.3.1 Social Media's Positive Impact on Students

Researchers have found positive outcomes in online community engagement among students. For example, Deng and Tavares (2013) showed that "Web-based discussions among students can contribute to the students' reflective ability and critical thinking skills." The authors added that with relative face-to-face communication, students are more willing to voice their views (agreements or disagreements) and more attuned to others' opinions in online discussions. Meanwhile Tienne (2000) support this by saying that "written communication in cyberspace enables students to take part in discussions at a time convenient to them and articulate their ideas in more carefully, thorough, and structured ways."

Appeanti and Danso (2014) showed that students think that it is more fun for their teachers to use social media. The authors also note that students think their academic performance would be better if they could contact their classmates and teachers on social media. This indicates that most students see social media as helpful if they use it to collaborate with their friends and teachers.

Similarly, Ahn (2011) adds that "Social Media provides a platform for youth or students to participate in communities that help them learn and also practise skills within a particular knowledge area." Similar research also indicated that students produce a great volume of writing through various social tools such as blogs, emails, and other social media environments (Fishman et al. 2005).

### 2.3.2 Social Media's Negative Impact on Students

Several studies and research have indicated that social media can harm students. A negative correlation between social media and student academic achievement was observed. According to Banquil et al. (2009), students' grades have been declining due to their use of



social media. These studies show that social media has an academic impact on students.

Yeboah and Ewur (2014) studied the impact of WhatsApp usage on students' performance in Ghanaian higher institutions. Their findings showed that excessive use of social media diverts students' attention away from their studies and impairs their ability to concentrate in class.

Similarly, studies by Enriquez (2010) and Choney (2010) found that student's use of social media sites negatively impacted their academic performance. Enriquez (2010) found that students who multitask between social networking sites and assignments get 20% poorer grades than students who don't. According to Choney (2010), a Facebook user has an average GPA of 3.06, while non-users have an average GPA of 3.82. This reveals that students' usage of Facebook and other social media could have a negative impact on their grades.

### 2.3.3 Negative Effects of Social Media on Students' Writing

Netspeak also breaks English grammar norms regarding capitalization, punctuation, and sentence construction (O'Connor, 2005). Because many students are used to spelling words incorrectly and using abbreviated forms of words on social media, learning the correct full orthography of words can be difficult. However, because social media users are literate and can spell words, using abbreviations does not mean they do not know the spelling of a term. So, social media messaging cannot cause poor spelling (Crystal, 2008)

On the other hand, a study found that social networking sites do not promote correct language and writing (Perkins, 2014). One example of this could be Twitter, which only allows 140-character messages, resulting in run-ons and fragments. The small character count could be harming reading and writing attention spans. Thus, this could result in poor word choice as well as an increased use of abbreviations. Students tend to use acronyms and netspeak to make messages short. However, it can be argued that this character limit pushes users to write concisely and straight to the point, thus making sure they choose their words carefully, a skill that is needed for academic writing as well.

Baldwin (2012) considers social media to be a ground for "spelling inconsistencies, the free-form adoption of new terms, and regular violations of English grammar norms." Likewise, Saha (2020) argues that the majority of what is written by the general public on social media is unedited, unsupervised, and unchecked. This could create a negative effect when these typographical errors are encountered by EFL students. However, while this is true in some cases; it can be argued that knowing your tweet, post or caption is potentially going to reach thousands of people is a good incentive to proofread social media posts.

Many researchers fear that social media is in fact harming students' language skills. Some believe that netspeak, the jargon used on social media which consists of abbreviations, acronyms, and emoticons, is harming the English language. Nonetheless, there is no evidence linking the use of netspeak to poor English. The idea that pupils might use 'netspeak' or text-message style in formal academic writing is a widely publicised linguistic myth (Thurlow 2007).

### 2.3.4 Positive Effects of Social Media on Students' Writing

On the contrary, it has been shown that there is a positive relationship between informal netspeak and students' formal writing. Thurairaj, Hoon, Roy, and Fong (2015) found that while there is no negative relation between netspeak and academic writing, there is no positive relation either. Rather, their study illustrated that students were conscious of the differences between the meta-language of social media and formal writing. Similarly,



Dürscheid, Wagner, and Brommer (2010) carried out a large-scale empirical study in Germany titled “How Youth Write” The results suggest that students' use of netspeak has no effect on their academic writing. Nevertheless, this raises a major question which is: If the language learnt on social media has no effect on students’ academic written language and is rather considered a separate, distinct language to be used solely on the internet, how can EFL students gain/learn from using social media and in turn how can social media be used as an educational tool? This theory begs the question that EFL students can discern between netspeak and academic English. Additionally, the previous studies were carried out on native speakers and thus the findings can not be applied to include EFL students. To the best of the author's knowledge, there is yet to be a study on the relationship between netspeak and academic writing in EFL students.

Crystal (2008) supports the theory that netspeak improves students' writing rather than harms it. Crystal argues against netspeak's harmful influence on pupils' writing and asserts that pupils rarely use abbreviations or net language in homework or assignments. He believes that the idea that netspeak harms student performance is based on assumptions rather than facts agreeing with Thurlow (2007). Crystal's claim that some students do not use netspeak in their schoolwork isn't entirely true however as several researchers have shown that some students use netspeak in their work.

Nevertheless, Crystal argues that texting allows the practice of reading and writing in English, believing that the more individuals text, the more they learn English. This theory supports the hypothesis of the present study. Similarly, a study from The British Journal of Developmental Psychology revealed that students who text often had a broader vocabulary, which may have benefited their reading development. Recent research from Coventry University found significant positive relationships between writing (text) use and success in standard English. The more abbreviations they use, the better their vocabulary scores.

One major theme throughout studies believes that social media makes students bolder and more likely to converse in the FL confidently. Some studies argue that social media helps students become more self-confident and would increase their abilities, self-knowledge, and lifelong learning (Derakhshan and Hasanabbasi, 2015). Warschauer (2000) supports this by saying that online interaction makes learners motivated to have more interactive conversations without being concerned about pronunciation. This contrasts with the widely held notion that social media negatively affects self-confidence since, while hiding behind a screen, people tend to be bolder and hence ruder. Alternatively, EFL students may fear making mistakes in front of native speakers.

On the other hand, researchers believe that social media's positive effect can also be caused by subjecting EFL students to the foreign language’s culture. Upon using social media, students will ultimately come across foreign/western media. Becoming accustomed to the culture of this language will help improve their language skills since second language culture improves comprehension of the language (Chen & Yang, 2007). In addition to this, learning through social media is done subconsciously, much like acquisition, and can be considered entertainment, thus students will spend more time doing it. Furthermore, second language students who learn online reportedly suffer from less anxiety in comparison to their strictly traditional learning counterparts (Akinola, 2015). This shows that students feel more at ease while learning online and as such, will likely spend more time learning.

#### *2.4 Similar Researches in Narrow Area*

Many studies have discovered that social media impacts education and learning languages.

However, not all researchers agree on the positive or the adverse effects of social media on the process of language learning.

However, what most researchers seem to agree on is that social media certainly has an effect on EFL students' language. They agree that this effect is a double-edged sword, but the positive aspects ultimately outweigh the negative aspects enough so that it can be considered an educational tool but this is where study findings start to diverge.

Several studies found that social media plays a vital role in developing English language writing and can make learning new words and phrases much easier for English language learners. Thus, they stated that social media could make language teaching and learning more accessible (Al-Jarrah et al., 2019). Likewise, a study investigated the role of social media on English language vocabulary at the university level (Khan, Ayaz, and Faheem, 2016). The study's findings indicated that social media has a dominant role in the vocabulary development of English for learners at all levels and stages. The researchers concluded that social media should be integrated into teaching and learning English at the university level as it assists learners of the English language.

Furthermore, Belaid (2015) in his doctoral programme interviewed several Libyan EFL senior learners and language teachers on their attitudes toward social media use in EFL teaching. Results of his survey revealed strong and positive attitudes toward using social media apps inside language classrooms. His programme ended with numerous recommendations for the full employment of technology apps in teaching languages.

### *2.5 Summary*

Overall, the literature review provides a comprehensive overview of the existing research on the relationship between social media, language change, and its effect on EFL students. It covers both the positive and negative aspects of social media and highlights the need for further investigation in specific areas. However, there are a few areas where the former studies lack and where the current study can contribute or make a difference:

Firstly, lack of focus on EFL students: The literature review mentions that most studies in this field focus on countries where English is used as a second language (ESL), but the current study specifically targets EFL students. By narrowing down the focus to EFL students, the study can provide insights and recommendations that are more relevant to this specific group.

Secondly, limited research on the impact of social media on day-to-day written communication: The literature review acknowledges that there is a lack of studies linking social media to day-to-day written communication. The current study aims to bridge this gap by examining the effect of social media on the written skills of EFL students in their daily communication. This focus on everyday writing will contribute to a better understanding of how social media influences language use outside formal academic contexts.

Lastly, lack of research on the relationship between netspeak and academic writing in EFL students: The review highlights that previous studies on the relationship between netspeak (abbreviations, acronyms, and emoticons) and academic writing have been conducted on native speakers. The current study aims to fill this gap by examining the impact of netspeak on academic writing specifically in EFL students. This research will provide valuable insights into how EFL students navigate between netspeak and academic English.

In summary, the literature review provides a strong foundation for the current study by highlighting the gaps and limitations in previous research. The current study aims to

contribute by focusing on EFL students, exploring the impact of social media on day-to-day written communication, investigating the relationship between netspeak and academic writing in EFL students, analysing social media usage statistics in Libya, and providing empirical evidence on the effects of social media on language learning. These contributions will enhance the understanding of the role of social media in language learning and inform educational practices for EFL students.

### **3. Methodology**

#### *3.1 Introduction*

This chapter presents the detailed procedures used in conducting the research. This is a prospective quantitative method questionnaire study. The sample is Libyan EFL students who are enrolled in universities across the capital Tripoli, Libya from both the public and private sectors. This is a questionnaire-based research that will be distributed in one way. This chapter will cover the research design, participants, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis.

#### *3.2 Research Design*

The main theoretical approach of this research is represented in the descriptive and inferential statistical methods, which are supported by a positivist paradigmatic hypothesis. Choosing a questionnaire design to determine the effect of social media on EFL students may be more suitable, especially when using quantitative techniques; the latter will aid in obtaining more accurate and valid data. The questionnaire was distributed online in the form of a Google form questionnaire via the social media platforms Facebook and Instagram to target social media users. The researchers posted the questionnaire on their personal social media pages and shared it with university student groups in Tripoli to make sure that the target sample is reached.

#### *3.3 Participants*

For the purpose of reaching an impartial and representative sample of the population, the researchers chose a random sample of 400 people ( $n = 400$ ) in Tripoli of which 326 were females and 74 were males. This research has been carried out during the period from the 20<sup>th</sup> of September to the 20<sup>th</sup> of October, 2022. They came from both the public and commercial sectors, with the main goal of gathering as many perspectives on the usage of social media as possible.

#### *3.4 Instrumentation*

The essence of any scientific research is the attempt made to find out answers to questions in a systematic manner. One of the most common methods of data collection in foreign or second-language research is to use questionnaires of various kinds which has attracted a worldwide interest among researchers. The questionnaire is aimed at analysing the diagnostic effect of social media on Libyan EFL university students' writing skills in general and day-to-day written communication specifically. The questionnaire consists of a total of 14 questions. The data was gathered using a questionnaire on Google forms in both English and Arabic language to make sure all levels of EFL university students understood the questions fully making sure our results are fully reliable. The analysis of the data was immediately performed once the number of participants was reached.

### *3.5 Data Collection*

The researchers used a self-administered online questionnaire as it is cost-effective, easy to manage, and faster to reach a big audience. The questionnaire was closed-ended and in both English and Arabic language, where the questions offered respondents a fixed set of choices to select from on Google form. The questionnaire consisted of nominal, ordinal, and Likert-type questions.

### *3.6 Data Analysis*

The researchers carried out data analysis by reviewing the quantitative method data collected and making sure there are no errors such as respondents missing some questions to make it ready for analysis. Given that the questions are close-ended, the researchers analysed the data per question according to the answer selected. The data analysis is viewed as graphs and pie charts in both numbers and percentages.

### *3.7 Summary*

In this chapter, the researchers gave a general background about the participants in the questionnaire, the Instrumentation, the procedures, and how the data was analysed.

## **4. Data Analysis**

### *4.1 Introduction*

The researchers analysed the data collected through the tools that were adopted using a questionnaire. This was done so that the researchers can better understand the students' experiences around social media and its influence on their writing skills in general and day-to-day written communication specifically. As the researchers adopted a quantitative method on collecting the data needed, the type of questions were close-ended questions with Likert-scales and some questions are rank-order and open ended questions, so the researchers will choose the data analysis which is suitable for this kind of questions.

### *4.2 Data Analysis*

An online questionnaire was administered via Google Forms to Libyan university students. There were 400 respondents, of which the number of females was much higher than the males with 326 (81.5%) females and 74 (18.5%) males who belonged to three different age groups illustrated in Figure 4.1. The targeted age group for this study was students enrolled in university, aged 18-24. This age group was specifically targeted as they are the biggest users of social media sites. The fact that the majority of respondents were young yet seasoned users of social media networks improved the internal validity and dependability of the research study. To answer the research questions and examine the correlations and differences among variables, data from the questionnaires was analysed using descriptive statistics and measures of central tendency (means, standard deviations, and percentages).

#### *4.2.1 Sample of the Research*

Figures below illustrate the demographic representation of the participants with regard to their gender, age, sector of studies, and where they first learned the English language.

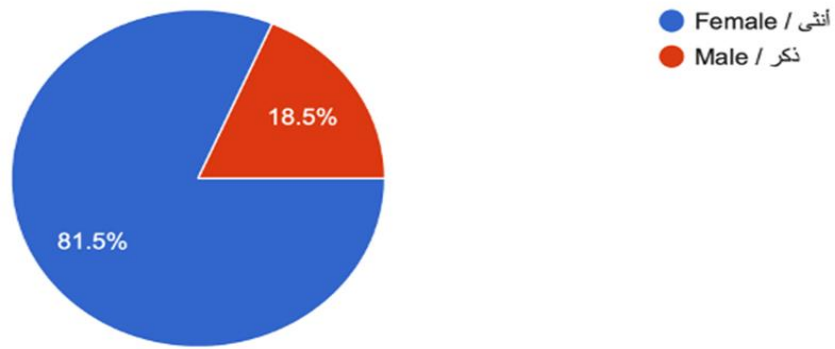


Figure 4.1 Sample gender

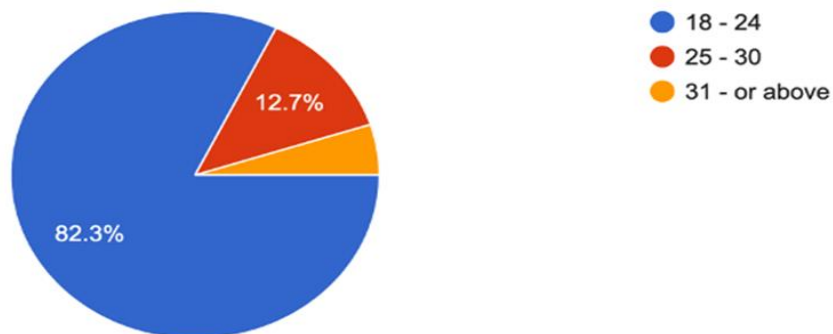


Figure 4.2 Sample age

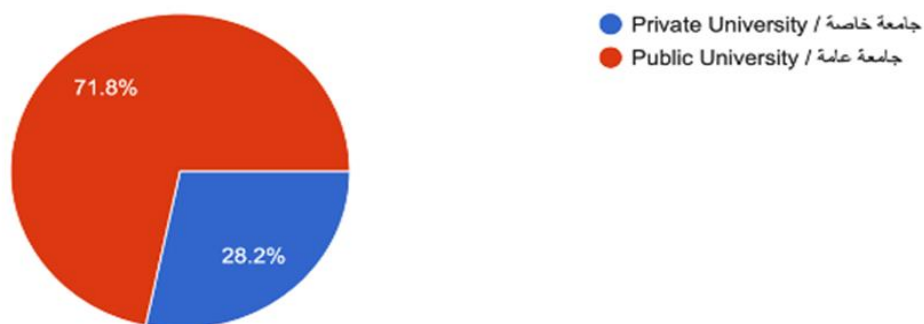


Figure 4.3 Academic sector of participants

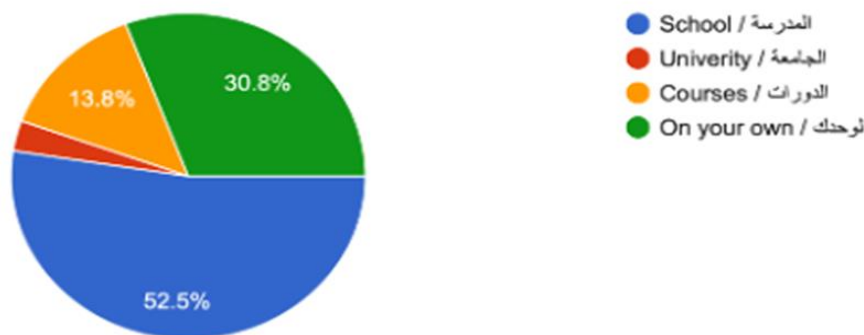


Figure 4.4 Medium through which the participants first learned English

It can be clearly seen that there were 81.5% female and 18.5% male participants. The graphics also indicate that the majority of the participants were between the ages of 18 to 24 years (82.3%). Most of the participants study in the public sector (71.8%). The majority of the participants first learnt English in school (52.5%) followed by participants who learnt it on their own (30.8%) and others who learnt it through courses (13.8%) as well as from university (3%). The indication of diverse data among the participants gives a positive impression that the participants have diverse backgrounds and experiences.

#### 4.2.2 Analysis of the Questionnaire

The researchers came to a number of key results after analysing the data collected from the aforementioned data collection methods which will be highlighted in the next sections.

The first finding is related to the number of hours the respondents spent on social media networks. Where 60.3% of the respondents acknowledged using social media for more than 4 hours on a daily basis. 36.7% reported that they spend around one to three hours daily while only 3% responded that they spend less than one hour using social media.

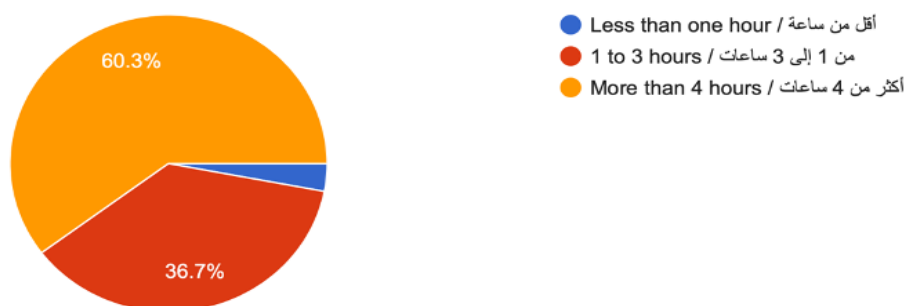


Figure 4.5 Number of hours spent on social media networks

More than 85% of the respondents (n=341) responded that using social media has an impact on their English language while 14.7% of the respondents (n=59) reported that it does not.

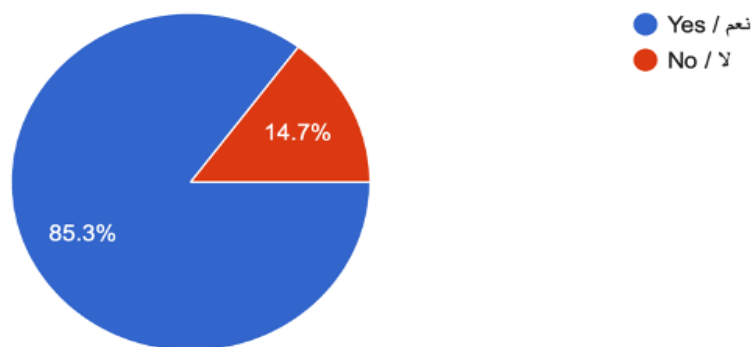


Figure 4.6 Whether social media affects the respondents' English Language

The respondents who answered yes to the previous question to were presented with a follow-up question where it was found that 91.9% of the respondents who responded that using social media has an impact on their English language found that social media has a positive effect on their English language while 8.1% said that it has a negative effect on their English language.

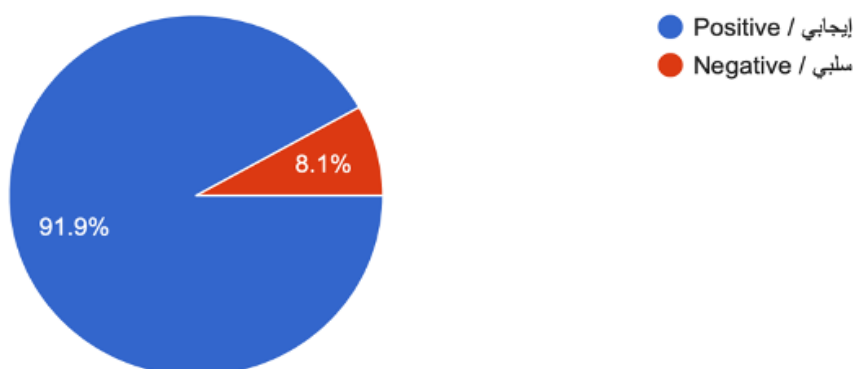


Figure 4.7 Perceptions of the effects of social media on English

According to the respondents' as shown in Figure 4.8 below, the respondents perceived their vocabulary to be the skill most affected by social media (61%) followed by writing (36.3%), spelling (22.3%), and grammar (11%).

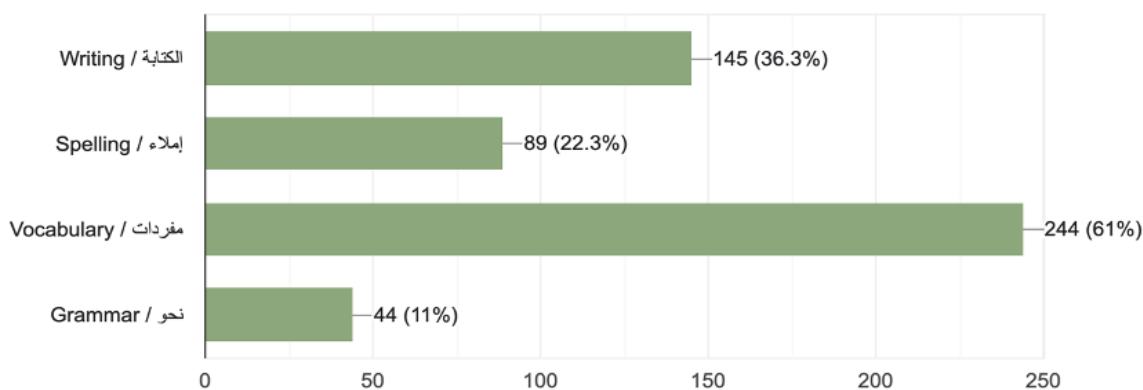


Figure 4.8 Skills most affected by social media



The majority of the respondents reported that they use informal writing (81.5%) while only (18.5%) use formal writing. (59.5%) of the respondents using informal writing reported that this was done mainly because it was easier than using formal writing. These results were followed by other respondents who reported because everyone else uses it (30.5), to save time (20.8%), and lastly to avoid spelling mistakes (15.5%)

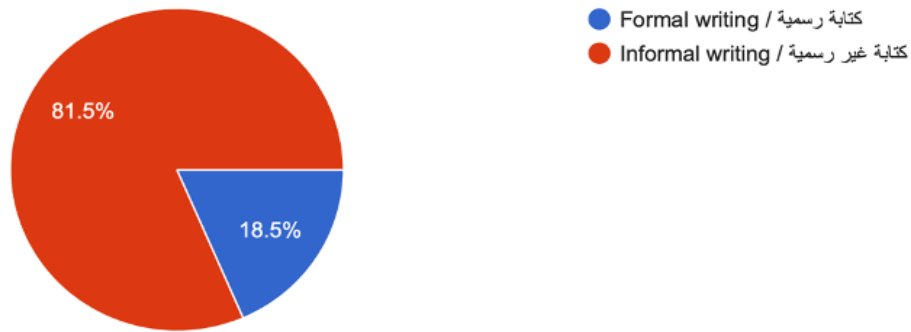


Figure 4.9 Writing style used on social media

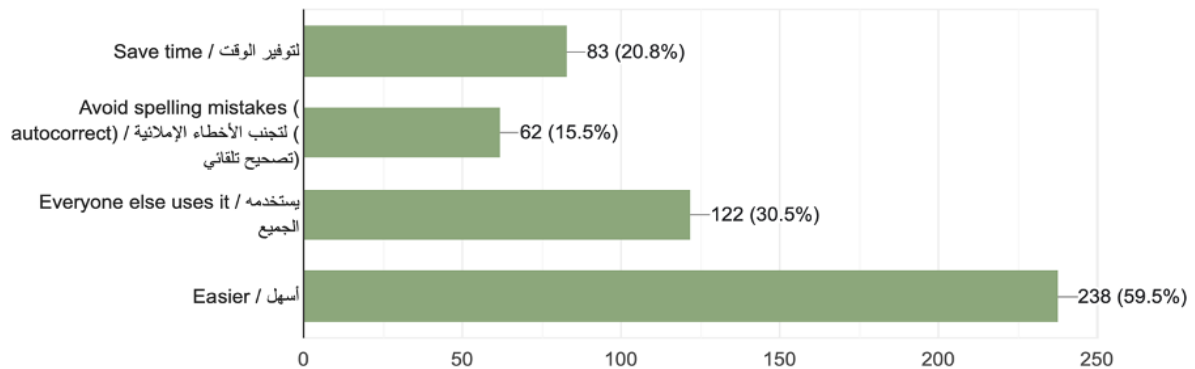


Figure 4.10 Reason for using informal writing

When asked if the respondents used the English language to message others on social media, the majority responded with yes (60.3%). On the other hand, some responded with no (30.8%)

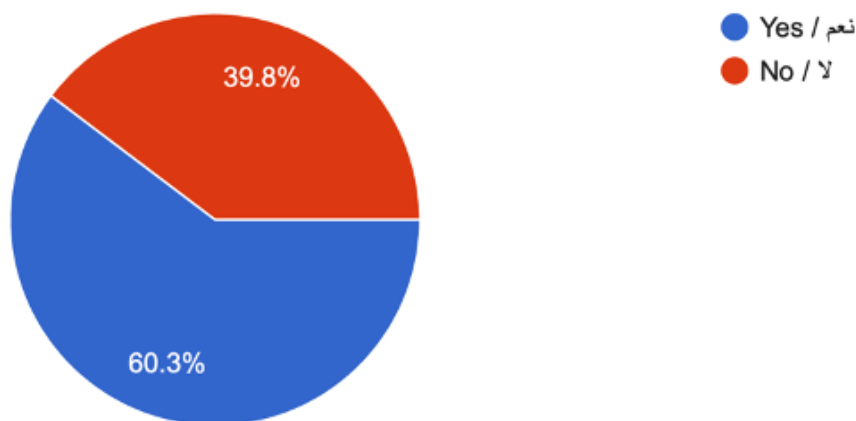


Figure 4.11 Usage of English language in messaging

(49.5%) of the respondents reported that they sometimes come across English words that they do not understand while (28.5%) rarely do and (22%) very often do come across English words they do not understand.

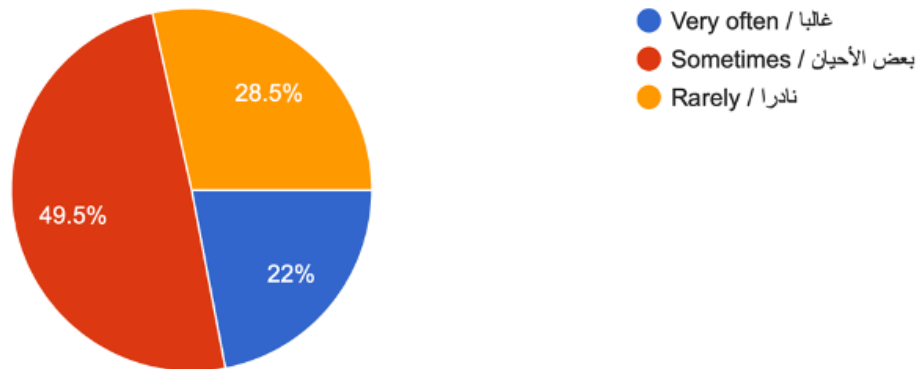


Figure 4.12 Coming across words that are not understandable

Most of the respondents think that social media influences their style of writing a little (54.3%), some think it influences their style of writing a lot, and a few think it does not influence their style of writing at all (12.7%)

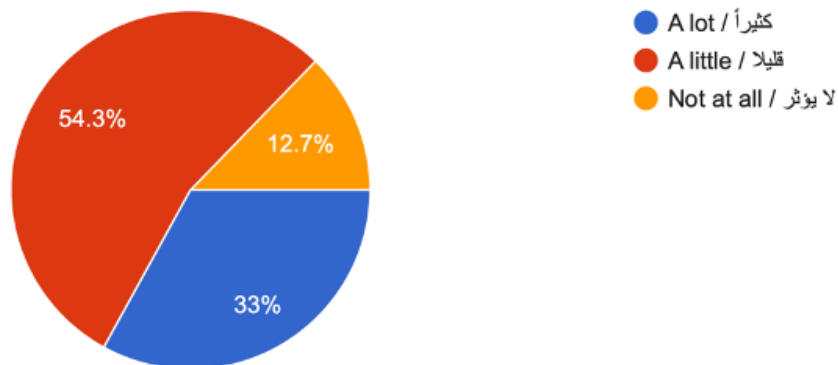


Figure 4.13 Measure of the effect of social media on writing style

Furthermore, most of the respondents reported that they pay attention to the grammatical structure and spelling when writing on social media (77%) while some do not (23%).

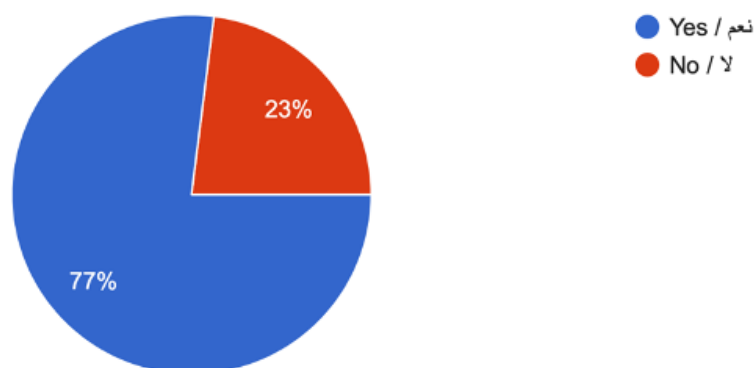


Figure 4.14 Measure of attention to grammatical structure and spelling while writing on social media

#### 4.3 Discussion

The purpose of this study was to discover whether and to what degree social media has an impact on EFL learners' writing skills in general and day-to-day written communication specifically. The researchers found that there is a strong association between social media use and writing skills, in which social media does affect writing skills in general and specifically day-to-day written communication of Libyan EFL university students. Additionally, it was found that social media has a predominantly positive effect on writing skills in general and day-to-day written communication specifically, where it was found that vocabulary and writing skills are the most improved by social media.

Though the topic of whether or not social media has an impact at all and whether this impact is positive or negative has varying opinions, the researchers found that a majority of the existing studies agree that the impact is mainly positive. However, a few studies argue that the writing skill is the most negatively affected (Saha, 2020). Nevertheless, since social media's medium of communication is written, we can conclude that the writing skill is ultimately the most affected both positively as well as negatively. Moreover, as the researchers' findings affirm; the positive effects outweigh the negative effects.

As such, the researchers found that there is a strong connection between the hypothesis and the findings of the study in which the findings fully support the hypothesis. However, the number of female respondents (326) was unexpectedly higher than the male respondents (74) especially since the number of social media male users in Libya is higher than female users (60.3% and 39.7% respectively). This could be explained by the method of distributing the questionnaire mainly through the researchers' personal social media accounts where the audience has more females than males. Given that the researchers also distributed the questionnaire to different groups where males can be of higher numbers, it can be justified that females are more reactive on social media and willing to spend time to fill out the questionnaire. According to Brandwatch, "Women are more vocal, expressive, and willing to share. In other words, women are biologically wired for social networking." (<https://www.brandwatch.com/blog/men-vs-women-active-social-media/>)

This is the first research done in Libya and moreover, by Libyans on such an important topic as the effects of social media on EFL university students. Additionally, it is among the few studies that focus on the effect on written communication and possibly the first on day-to-day

written communication. Even though the present study deals with a considerably large number of students (400) studying at Libyan universities in Tripoli, Libya, it focused on Facebook and Instagram platform users only. Thus, further research is needed for a decisive view on the exact effects of social media use on foreign language learning across Libya as a whole, using more social media platforms.

Students' extensive usage of social media should not be viewed entirely as a negative activity. Social media has become a daily habit among students, and the incorporation of online written communication in English should create a fun environment while also keeping students on track to improve their own abilities. This study proves that students, for their part, are aware of the impact of social media.

Due to variables such as conscious error correction, enhanced interactive communication, and use of translation and L2 learning platforms, social media networks have an impact on their English language learning process in general, and on their writing, vocabulary, and day-to-day written communicative skills in particular. What the data reveals about the enhancement of purposeful and unintentional internalised language acquisition processes by social media networks warrants special attention. The fact that Libyan EFL university students are mindful while fixing their grammatical and spelling issues on social media platforms is maybe the most relevant discovery here. They also believe that using these networks improves their writing and vocabulary acquisition as opposed to the stereotype that the use of social media language negatively affects students' writing skills, thus reaffirming Thurlow's (2007) statement that this is a myth.

#### *4.4 Summary*

In this chapter, the researchers analysed the data collected from the questionnaire and provided a discussion that covered the findings, limitations, strengths, limitations, and recommendations of the study.

### **5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

#### *5.1 Introduction*

In this chapter, the researchers will conclude their study on the diagnostic effect of social media on Libyan EFL university students' writing skills in general and day-to-day written communication specifically. This chapter will include the major findings of the study and recommendations to students, teachers, and future studies accordingly.

#### *5.2 Findings*

Through this study, the researchers concluded that social media does in fact have a strong effect on Libyan EFL students' writing skills in general and specifically, day-to-day written communication. Moreover, while social media is considered a double-edged sword, having both positive and negative impacts on language, the researchers' study found that social media has a predominantly positive effect on writing skills in general and day-to-day written communication specifically, where this research proves vocabulary to be the skill most affected by social media followed by writing, spelling, and grammar. The majority of respondents in the study came across words they do not understand on social media and given that the majority spend more than four hours on social media, that is great exposure to the English language per day. Furthermore, the study proves that the majority of Libyan EFL students pay close attention to their grammatical structure and spelling when writing on social media.

### 5.3 Recommendations

Students:

- Use Social media positively to maximise language skills development.
- Communicate with native speakers.
- Communicate with other EFL university students in English via text.
- Read more useful content that would help improve the writing skill.

Teachers:

- Use Social media as part of the teaching method using social media features such as groups or pages where the teachers can post and interact with students.
- Encourage their students to be exposed to language through Social media by communicating with native speakers

### 5.4 Recommendations for Further Studies

Following the analysis of the research findings, the researchers propose the following recommendations:

- Focus on gathering the perspectives of a considerably larger sample of respondents
- Use mixed methods in data collection where qualitative and quantitative methods might be utilised to maximise the internal validity and reliability of the findings of future research.
- Explore other social media platforms such as Twitter, Youtube, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, and Telegram.
- Expand the research to include more cities in Libya
- Replicate in other countries where English is a foreign language

### 5.5 Summary

In this chapter, the researcher discussed the findings of the study and gave recommendations to students, teachers and future studies related to the topic of the research.

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## Appendix: Copy of the Online Questionnaire

### *Social Media and English Language*

Hello!

We are undergraduate researchers at the University of Tripoli Alahlia University. We are conducting a study on "**The Diagnostic Effect of Social Media on Libyan ESL University Students day-to-day Written Communication**" and we would like to know your experiences with social media. Please complete this 8-minute questionnaire. We would like to remind you that your responses are anonymous and confidential.

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions!



**\*Required**

1. What is your age? \*

العمر؟

*Mark only one oval.*

18 - 24

25 - 30

31 - or above

2. What is your gender? \*

الجنس؟

*Mark only one oval.*

Female / أنثى

Male / ذكر

3. What sector do you study in? \*

في أي قطاع تدرس؟

*Mark only one oval.*

Private University / خاصة جامعة

Public University / عامة جامعة

4. Where did you learn English first? \*

أين تعلمت اللغة الإنجليزية أول مرة؟

*Mark only one oval.*

School \ المدرسة

University \ الجامعة

Courses \ الدورات

On your own \ الوحدك

Section 2

5. How many hours do you usually spend on social media a day? \*

كم ساعة تقضيها عادة على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي يوميا؟

Mark only one oval.

- Less than one hour / ساعة من أقل  
 1 to 3 hours / من 1 إلى 3 ساعات  
 More than 4 hours / من أكثر 4 ساعات

6. What is the main reason you use social media for? \*

ما هو السبب الرئيسي لاستخدامك وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي؟

Mark only one oval.

- / friends and family with Communicate تواصل مع العائلة والأصدقاء  
 / information Share تبادل المعلومات  
 / Learn بهدف التعلم  
 / Work للعمل

7. Do you think social media is affecting your language skills? \*

هل تعتقد أن وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي تؤثر على مهاراتك اللغوية؟

Mark only one oval.

- Yes نعم  
 No لا

Section 3

8. To what extent do you think social media is affecting your language skills? \*

إلى أي مدى تعتقد أن وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي تؤثر على مهاراتك اللغوية؟

Mark only one oval.

/ lot A كثيراً

A little قليلاً

/ all at language my affected hasn't It إطلاقاً على لغتي لم يؤثر ذلك على لغتي

Skip to question 11

9. Do you think that the effect of social media on your written English language is..

.. هل تعتقد أن تأثير وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي على لغتك الإنجليزية المكتوبة هو

Mark only one oval.

Positive /  
إيجابي

Negative /  
سلبي

10. Which skill is the most affected by social media? \*

ما هي المهارة الأكثر تأثراً بوسائل التواصل الاجتماعي؟

Tick all that apply.

Writing الكتابة

Spelling إملاء

Vocabulary مفردات

Grammar انحو

Section 4

11. What style of writing do you use the most? \*

ما هو أسلوب الكتابة الذي تستخدمه أكثر؟

Mark only one oval.

/ writing Formal كتابة رسمية

Writing Informal كتابة غير رسمية

12. If you use informal writing the most, is it to... \*

... إذا كنت تستخدم الكتابة غير الرسمية أكثر من غيرها، انه بسبب

Tick all that apply.

/ time Save لتوفير الوقت

/ (autocorrect) mistakes spelling Avoid (لتجنب الأخطاء الإملائية) تصحيح تلقائي

/ it uses else Everyone يستخدمه الجميع

Easier / أسهل

13. Do you use social media to text others in English? \*

هل تستخدم وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي لإرسال رسائل نصية إلى الآخرين باللغة الإنجليزية؟

Mark only one oval.

Yes / نعم

No / لا

14. How often do you come across words you do not understand on social media? \*

كم مرة تصادفك كلمات لا تفهمها على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي؟

Mark only one oval.

Very often غالباً

Sometimes أحياناً

Rarely نادراً

15. On what scale does social media influence your style of writing? \*

على أي مقياس تؤثر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي على أسلوبك في الكتابة؟

*Mark only one oval.*

- / كثيرأ lot
- A little / قليلا
- Not at all / يؤثر

16. When you chat, comment or post on social media do you pay attention to the grammatical structure and spelling used? \*

عند الدردشة أو التعليق أو النشر على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي ، هل تهتم بالبنية النحوية والتهجئة المستخدمة؟

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes / نعم
- No / لا

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