

A QUANTITATIVE STUDY OF THE PERCEIVED IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKS ON BAHRAINI USERS' ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Abstract

The various facets and networks of social media have had significantly phenomenal influence on the individual life and on the societal, economic, and political status of their users. The linguistic discourse of interlocutors on social media has also been influenced. The current study aims at measuring how the English language learning process of non-native Bahrainis has been affected by the use of social media. To explore such effects, a quantitative methodological measure was used in the form of an online questionnaire administered to a random sample of L2 Bahrainis. Responses from 330 respondents from different age groups and gender types were analysed using measures of central tendency and other statistical measures such as t-tests and ANOVA using SPSS. Findings have revealed that the utilization of social media has been perceived to have positively impacted interlocutors' lexical variation, writing style, reading skills, and communication skills. These findings were subjective to variables related to gender, age, and the multimodality of particular social media facets. Accordingly, some significant implications and recommendations are drawn, the most important of which is the provision of mechanisms to ensure the effective utilisation and employment of social media in the pedagogical practices in L2 contexts.

Keywords: social media; perceptions; language education; English as a second language; Bahrain

1. Introduction

During the last decade, the inception of the evolving and phenomenal facets of social media networks has been a fundamental breakthrough that has played a major role in the lives of millions of people. According to the latest data available on Statista (2020), there are around 3.96 billion social media users across the globe. Social media networks range from microblogs such as Twitter and sites and applications such as *Facebook*, *YouTube*, *Tumblr*, *Instagram*, *LinkedIn*, and *Snapchat*.

Social media networks have influenced all the socioeconomic, political, educational and personal aspects of life. In the area of education, a significant number of research studies have been conducted to gauge the effectiveness of these networks in different disciplines. Linguistically speaking, the influx of linguistic output on social media represents a myriad of opportunities for language learners to process language and receive input as young users of social media networks spend more than half of their days using and interacting on these networks using their language and communication skills. Hence, online conversations, whether oral or written, have replaced conventional face-to-face dialogues, leading to significant changes in the users' daily language and repertoire. The widespread use of smartphones, laptops, and tablets with affluent and facile social media applications has perhaps availed rich linguistic input at the fingertips of their users and have contributed in the production of comprehensible L2 output.

2. Literature review

The body of literature reflects a significant number of studies in the area of the effects of social media on the linguistic output of non-native speakers of English (NNSs). According to Chomsky (2014), our language is constantly, inevitably, and naturally changing, transforming, and becoming more adaptive to its users due to the changes in our contemporaries. More particularly, the inception and rapid development of social media networks as eminent pastime has led to the establishment of a distinctive language system necessary for operative communication (Attila, 2017). Baldwin (2012, p.58) posits that social media can be both a friend and a foe for natural language processing. While he considers social media a cause for "spelling inconsistencies, the free-form adoption of new terms, and regular violations of English grammar norms," he refers to the advantage of 'lexical normalization' in the same linguistic milieu. In this regard, Thurairaj, Hoon, Roy, and Fong (2015) investigated whether social media networks were 'making or marring academic English' and whether occasional online code-switching and erratic spelling affect NNSs' language learning process. Their statistical findings revealed that the discourse utilized on social media had not affected the participants' English language proficiency due to their enhanced consciousness of the differences between their online informal meta-language and their formal academic language.

Another advantage of social media mentioned by Baldwin (2012, p.58) is the ability to "disambiguate the textual content" and make it cohesive and coherent using the sources that are not textual such as links, linear structures of threads, multimodality of content, contextualized information related to cues such as identity and timestamps, and socio-pragmatic proficiency.

In addition, facilitated online interactions help interlocutors produce meaningful exchanges whilst using the target language in constructive manners (Mutum & Wang, 2010; Vie, 2007). This corresponds with Wenger's (1998) *community-of-practice* theory, which postulates that learning transpires while interlocutors mutually and recurrently interact on issues related to shared interests using a "shared repertoire of resources and practices" (p. 124) through feedback and peer reviews. Hence, socialization in the space of social media can be considered crucial in acclimatizing these interlocutors with the linguistic repertoire needed to succeed in meaningful communication of generated and shared information (Slim & Hafedh, 2019). Another advantage of social media is the reduced communication apprehension. People often exchange and share information and construct new personal and linguistic identities on social media networks because of being at ease with revealing their preferred identities behind monitors as a result of the anonymity expedited in such milieus (Blattner & Fiori, 2011). Lowered anxiety in online settings coined with heightened motivation and self-confidence have been shown to provide L2 learners with anxiety-free zones that enable them to produce language spontaneously and creatively (Al Jahrami, 2019; Chen, 2013; Klimanova & Dembovskaya, 2013; Mills, 2011; Mitchell, 2012; Lin, Warschauer, & Blake, 2016).

Studies conducted by Slim and Hafedh (2019), Thurairaj et al. (2015), as well as Kabilan, Ahmad, and Zainol Abidin (2010) have shown that social media networks such as *Facebook* and *Twitter* enhance students' overall language learning process. In particular, Zappavigna (2012) acknowledges the freedom people find on *Twitter* to voice their opinions and the effects of such freedom on their discourse. Mukherjee and Bhattacharyya (2013) recognize the effect of *Twitter* and propose a detailed lightweight sentiment method to analyze its discourse.

With reference to particular language skills, a significant number of studies have found that the use of social media enhances learners' grammatical complexity and vocabulary acquisition and learning (Al Jahrami, 2019; Attila, 2017; Mason & Rennie, 2008; Mills, 2011; Stevenson & Liu, 2010). Khan, Ayaz, and Faheem (2016) investigated the role of social media in enhancing English vocabulary and found it significant. Mason and Rennie (2008) observe that vocabulary acquisition on social media has become a phenomenon due to the employment of techniques such as coining and compounding to produce words such as *Face+book*, *Snap+chat*, and *Blog+sphere*. Another employed technique is sound imitation resulting in words such as *Twitter* which comes from the verb *tweet*, and *Boo* which reflects the sound of contempt. Similarly, social media have affected the forms of different words. For instance, the proper names of social media applications and websites have become verbs and adjectives (e.g.

Google it, I'll Instagram this). Another technique is the change in the negative form of the verb *like* and the noun *friend* to become *unlike* and *unfriend*. Added to that, the semantic connotations of many words have undergone change on social media (e.g. *wall* on *Facebook*, *spam*, *steam*, etc.). As to the writing skill, the fact that social media exchanges are more written than spoken in what is referred to as 'text speak'. Attila (2017) argues that the use of logograms, abbreviations, acronyms, and paralinguistic features (e.g. b4=before, Gr8=great) has made writing easier, faster and more liberated from the normal constraints of traditional writing. However, spelling can accordingly be negatively affected when frequently using logograms and abbreviations (e.g. *2day=today*). That said, Wood, Vardy, Hart, Plester, and Wilde (2011) found that their study's subjects exhibited commendable lexical retrieval skills. Improved oral proficiency with particular reference to speaking and listening was also evident in Chen's (2013) and Lin, Warschauer, and Blake's (2016) longitudinal studies. Lin, Warschauer, and Blake, however, caution that learners would need instructional guidance and tailored activities that are carefully structured in order to be able to use social media effectively to enhance their language learning process.

Notwithstanding the positive effects of social media on language proficiency, many scholars lament the harmful effects these networks might have on one's interlanguage with particular reference to erratic spelling and violated grammatical rules (Baldwin, 2012). Lin, Warschauer, and Blake (2016, p.143) claim that "language use on the Internet is often criticized as being less correct and less coherent than other forms of language use, and as having disrupted adjacency." Tariq, Mehboob, Khan, and Ullah (2012) reported negative effects of social media on their Pakistani students' L2 learning process. Similarly, Akram and Albalawi (2016) found *Facebook* to be a negative learning distraction with their Saudi students.

Amidst these conflicting claims, the current study aims to verify the possible effects of social media on English language learning from the perspectives of its users in the Bahraini context. Ever since the inception of the Internet, Bahrain has been one of the pioneering MENA (Middle East and North Africa) countries to copiously utilise the World Wide Web and all its facets for different socioeconomic and educational purposes. According to recent statistics, Bahrain ranks 40 globally among the countries that provide Internet speed on mobile networks and it also provides the cheapest Internet services among all Arab countries (Ookla, 2020). It is not surprising, then, that social media networks are heavily used by Bahrainis with a percentage of 99.7%, according to international statistics (Al Ayam Newspaper, 2020). Nevertheless, no studies have been conducted to evaluate the possible gains of the broad use of social media

networks on the learning of the English language and to view the perceptions of their users in regard to these possible gains, which is a gap in literature that the current study aims to fill.

3. The study

3.1. Aims and research questions

The current research study aims at examining the effect of social media on the English language in Bahrain from the users' perspectives. In particular, the study endeavors to answer the following main research questions:

1. What social media networks are the most frequently used by Bahrainis?
2. What is the level of Bahraini people's overall perception of the effects of social media on their English language learning?
3. What are the most influenced English language skills by the use of social media?
4. What are the variables that affect English language learning on social media?
5. Are there significant differences in Bahraini people's overall perceptions towards the effects of social media on their language leaning and their gender and age?

3.2. Data collection and analysis

In order to answer the aforementioned research questions, an online questionnaire was administered via *Google Forms* to 400 Bahraini social media users. Out of these 400 Bahrainis, 330 respondents filled in the online questionnaire with a response rate of 82.5%. The respondents were 215 females (65%) and 115 males (35%) who belonged to five different age groups: a. *17 or less* (9%), b. *18-25* (68%), c. *26-35* (15%), d. *36-46* (4%), and e. *More than 46* (4%). The fact that the majority of the respondents were young yet mature users of social media networks enhanced the research study's internal validity and reliability.

After eliciting respondents' demographic information (age, gender), the questionnaire contained two sections: Section A (*Type and Frequency of Usage of Social Media*) which contained two questions, and Section B (*Relationship between Social Media and English Language Learning*) which contained 15 different questions, two of which were opinion questions using 5-Likert scale for 5 items and 40 items, respectively.

To answer the research questions and examine the correlations and differences among variables, data from the questionnaires were coded and analysed using descriptive statistics and measures of central tendency (means, standard deviations, and percentages) in addition to paired sample *t*-tests and ANOVA using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

4. Results

Following the analysis of the data obtained from the aforesaid data collection methods, a number of key findings were attained.

The first finding is related to the number of hours Bahraini users spend on social media networks. Almost 70% of the respondents acknowledged using them for at least 3 hours on a daily basis (*see* Figure 1). In particular, 37% of them reported that they spend around three to four hours daily while 35% of them stated that that they spend five hours or more using these networks.

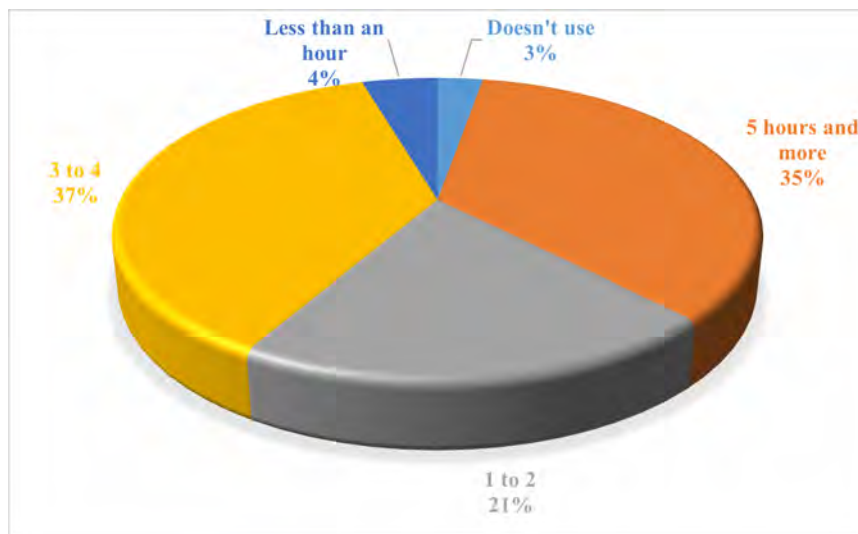


Figure 1. Number of hours spent on social media networks

In addition, Bahrainis reported that they mainly use social media networks to communicate with friends (29%) and with family members (20%). Other purposes for using social media were to share information (20%), learn (18%), and work (13%).

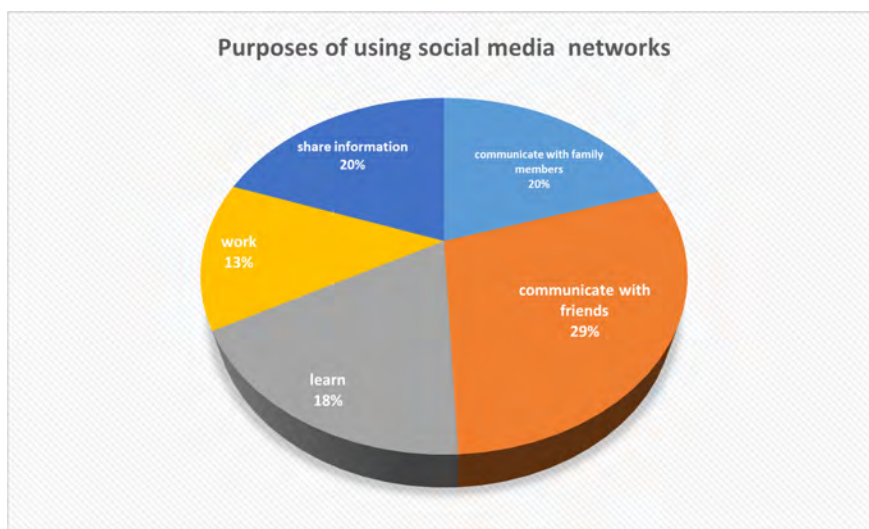


Figure 2. Purposes of using social media networks among Bahrainis

As illustrated in Table 1, *Twitter* was found to be the most frequently used social media network among respondents (49.8%), followed by *Instagram* (26.1%). This signifies that the social media interactions in which almost half of the respondents are involved are asynchronous and written-based, unlike the synchronous oral-based interactions facilitated on networks such as *Snapchat* or *YouTube*.

Table 1. The most frequently used social media networks

N.	Social Media Networks	Freq.	Percent
1	<i>Instagram</i>	86	26.1
2	<i>Facebook</i>	13	4
3	<i>YouTube</i>	54	16.4
4	<i>Tumblr</i>	8	2.4
5	<i>Twitter</i>	164	49.8
6	<i>Snapchat</i>	68	20.7
7	Others	12	3.6

In addition, the respondents reported that they equally use Arabic and English on social media. Only 5% of the respondents indicated that they use *Romanised Arabic* (i.e. writing Arabic using Roman letters). According to the body of literature, written-based interactions on social media have been shown to be effective in enhancing certain levels of competence in the English language (Kabilan, Ahmad & Zainol Abidin, 2010; Thurairaj et al., 2015; Zappavigna, 2012). This was evidently found in respondents' overall perception of the effect of social media on the enhancement of their English language learning, as illustrated in Table 2 and Figure 3.

Table 2. Bahraini's overall perceptions of the effects of social media on English

What is the effect of social media on your English language?		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Positive	196	59.4
	Some effects	105	31.8
	No effect	20	6
	Negative	9	2.8
	Total	330	100

More than 59% of the respondents (n=196) stated that using social media networks has had a positive impact on their English language learning while 32% of the respondents (n=105) reported that using these networks has had some positive effects on their English. Conversely, only 8.8% reported that using social media networks has either had no effect or has had negative effects their English language learning. Hence, it can be induced that Bahrainis have a positive attitude towards the effect of social media on their linguistic repertoire. Similar

findings were found by Sitthirak (2012), who acknowledged the attitudinal impact of social media on language from an educational perspective.

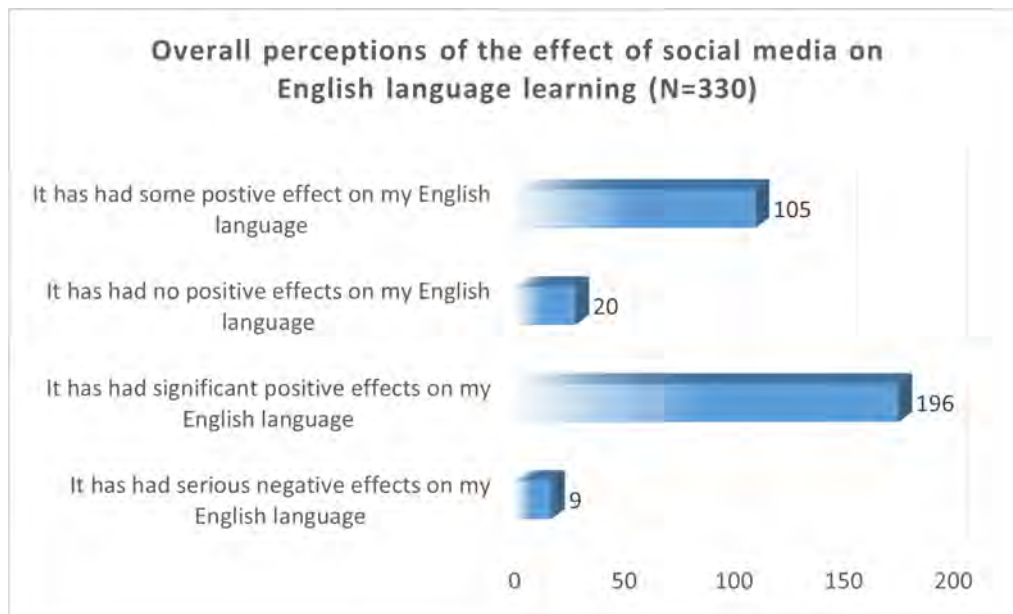


Figure 3. Respondents' overall perceptions of the effect of social media on English language learning

Notwithstanding, a number of negative effects of social media on English language learning were reported by some respondents (*see* Table 3). These were mainly related to the use of foul language, abbreviations and inaccurate spellings, which could negatively affect their academic writing and academic examination results as they considered these negative effects major contributors to the mass failure of students in their L2 courses and examinations. Bahraini users' reservations correspond with the views of the respondents in the studies of Akram and Albalawi (2016), Lin, Warschauer, and Blake (2016), and Tariq et al. (2012).

Table 3. The negative effects of social media on English

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
11. [Social media exposes students to abbreviations and inaccurate spellings which later have negative impacts on them during examinations]	3.70	1.007
12. [Social media contributes to mass failure of students in English language and other English related courses or subjects]	3.41	1.098
13. [Social media encourages examination malpractices in schools]	3.61	.960
14. [Social media is a wastage of students' time that should be wisely invested in academic and profitable ways]	3.65	.973
15. [Social media encourages the use of foul language and cyber bullying]	3.74	.887

In particular, the respondents who acknowledged the positive effects of social media on their English learning reported different levels of language skills enhancement. As shown in Figure 4 below, the respondents perceived their reading skill to be the most enhanced skill due to social media (24%) followed by their communication skill (21%) and their writing skill (20%). Given that the majority of the respondents were using written-based social media networks such as *Twitter* and *Instagram*, speaking and pronunciation skills were perceived as the least enhanced.

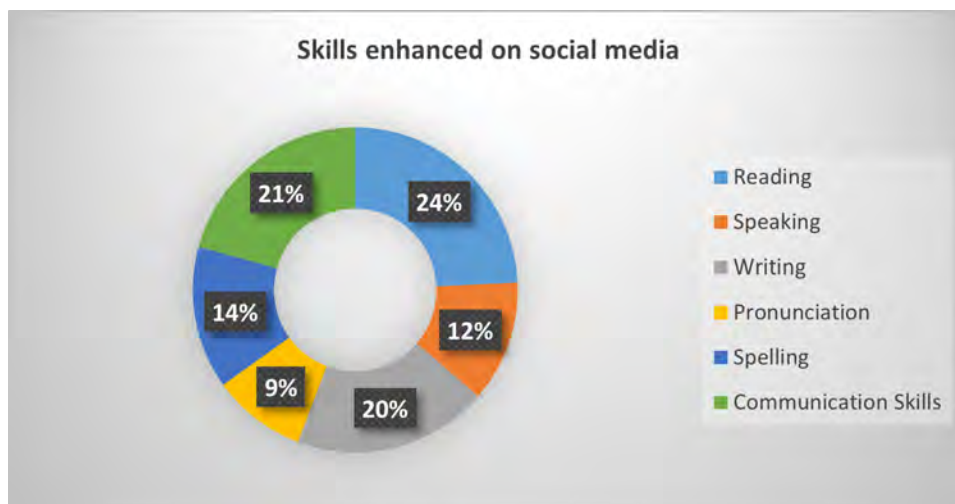


Figure 4. English language skills enhanced on social media

These findings corresponded with the aforementioned ones related to respondents' views on the particular effects of social media on the enhancement of these skills. With reference to Research Question 3, results of the mean and standard deviation show positive perceptions of the respondents of the effects of using social media on their L2 writing (see Table 4). In addition to improved English language learning, these effects included enhanced writing style, quality, and quantity. Al Jahrami (2019) and Li (2017) have similarly found that online interactions on social media networks and online facets significantly develop L2 learners' writing accuracy and complexity. These findings could also be related in this regard to the influence of the projection of authorial and social presence and identity practices facilitated on social media due to the increased linguistic input and output on these platforms in comparison to the less-advantageous classroom settings (Chen, 2013).

Table 4. Effects of social media on L2 writing

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
6. Social media influences my style of writing.	3.85	.938
9. Social media introduces students to modern writing patterns.	3.83	.887
22. Social media helps me write better in English.	3.44	1.209
31. I learn English through extensive writing on social media networking platforms.	3.47	1.202

In addition, the majority of the respondents reported perceived satisfaction with the effects of using social media on improving their lexical richness through the learning and use of the lexical items exchanged on social media, as shown in the statements in Table 5. Studies such as Baldwin (2012), Khan, Ayaz, and Faheem (2016), Sim and Pop (2014), Teng (2015), and many others acknowledge the effect of the intentional and incidental cognitive internalization of vocabulary learning mechanisms such as noticing, unconscious repetition while reading and writing, and retention on social media networks.

Table 5. Effects of social media on vocabulary learning

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
4. Social media improves my knowledge about new terminologies in English	3.92	.963
5. Social media helps vocabulary development.	3.98	.880
23. I derive most of the terms I use from social media	3.58	1.194

Furthermore, respondents highly valued the enhanced global communication and interaction facilitated by the use of social media, as reflected in the mean scores of the statements in Table 6. This finding corresponds with the aforementioned fact that Bahrainis primarily use social media for communicative purposes with family members and friends. Similar findings were found by Swaitek (2013).

Table 6. Effects of social media on L2 communication skills

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
2. Social media changes the way people communicate and share information.	4.17	.899
3. Social media improves the way people interact globally.	4.16	.878
21. Social media improves English language communication skills.	3.82	1.035

In this regard, a number of variables affecting English language learning have been verified by Bahraini users of social media. Perhaps the most significant variable is the conscious correction of mistakes while using social media network. The vast majority of the respondents (91.5%) reported that they consciously correct their own grammar and spelling mistakes and those of their interlocutors on social media, as shown in Figure 5. Studies conducted by Thurairaj et al. (2015), Yunus, Salehi, and Chenzi (2012), and Zaidieh (2012) similarly found that users edit their writing for grammar and spelling mistakes before posting them which, accordingly, could signify users' conscious use of social media networks as learning tools.

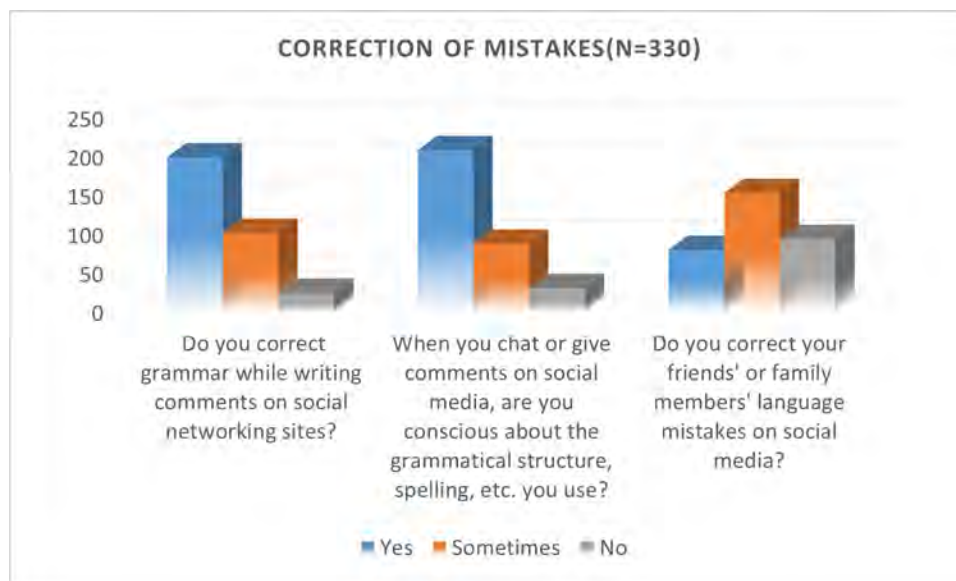


Figure 5. Correction of mistakes

Another variable is the utilization of translation. As shown in the descriptive statistics in Table 7, translation websites, features, and tools availed on social media were found to be highly used by the respondents. Given that Bahrainis equally use Arabic and English on social media networks, translating the content displayed on these networks from and to their mother tongue seems to positively contribute to the enhancement of their English language learning process. It is also noteworthy to assert that translation is deployed by respondents prior to posting on social media networks which, accordingly, could signify carefully constructed linguistic output in which significant editing is employed.

Table 7. Using translation on social media

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. I often use translation websites	3.34	1.171
38. I use translation features on social media networks	3.75	1.041

39. I get help from translation tools before sending any post on social media networks	3.70	1.026
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In addition, social media users seem to highly benefit from L2 learning platforms and professional instructional accounts to learn and practice English and to take English language tests, as shown in Table 8. In this regard, Reinhardt (2018) acknowledges the enhanced authenticity in the presence of a real audience and increased learner autonomy on social media L2 learning networks which could result in intentional and incidental language learning.

Table 8. L2 learning platforms and links

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
27. I follow English language teachers through social media networks to improve the target language	3.60	1.146
28. I follow online platforms on social media networks to learn the English language.	3.53	1.082
30. I take tests in English to evaluate my level in the target language.	3.48	1.217
37. I use applications through social networks related to language learning.	3.56	1.144
40. Online platforms related to language learning are very helpful for learning my English language.	3.74	1.051

Furthermore, respondents considered engaging in oral and/or written L2 communication with others on social media to be highly effective in enhancing their overall language proficiency (see Table 9). This could be attributed to the expedited production of constructive, authentic, meaningful, and personal communicative exchanges with foreign and non-foreign interlocutors on asynchronous and synchronous social media networks such as discussion groups and chatrooms. As previously mentioned, the presence of a real audience on these networks seems to make them more advantageous than traditional classroom milieus (Al Jahrami, 2019; Mutum & Wang, 2012).

Table 9. Interactive communication

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
29. I try to enhance the language ability by communicating with foreign people via social media networks.	3.65	1.120
31. I force myself to learn language by writing sentences on social media networking discussion groups.	3.47	1.202

32. I use live chatrooms on social media networks to improve my English language.	3.34	1.237
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In addition to the aforementioned variables, other factors such as the utilization of audio-visuals, extensive reading of news, and exposure to accurate accents and pronunciations were also reported to be highly effective.

With reference to the demographic background of the respondents, however, the study found no significant differences between the overall positive perceptions and gender, as shown in the results of the paired sample *t*-test below.

Table 10. Correlation between Bahraini's overall perceptions and gender

	Female (215)		Male (114)		t	df	Sig.
	<i>M</i>	Std.D.	<i>M</i>	Std.D.			
Bahraini's overall perceptions	3.71	0.49	3.71	0.55	0.069	327	0.945

Similarly, the overall perceptions were correlated to the respondents' age groups using ANOVA. However, no significant differences were found between these age groups, as shown in Table 11.

Table 11. Correlation between Bahraini's overall perceptions and age group

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.750	4	.187	.704	.589
Within Groups	86.194	324	.266		
Total	86.944	328			

These two tables reveal that neither age nor gender affected the overall positive perception of Bahrainis of the impact social media networks had on their English language learning. This finding deserves particular attention as male and female young, mature, and old Bahrainis equally and collectively perceived the positive effects of using social media on English language learning. Hence, online socialization seems to have positively affected the production of an acknowledged linguistic repertoire independent from age or gender (Slim & Hafedh, 2019; Sitthirak, 2012).

In sum, the emerging findings of the study indicate that Bahrainis use written-based social media networks more than the spoken ones for communicative purposes. The most used social media network is *Twitter*. The vast majority of Bahrainis perceive the positive effects

social media networks have on their English language learning process in general and on their reading, writing, lexical knowledge and communicative skills in particular due to variables such as the conscious correction of mistakes, enhanced interactive communication, and use of translation and L2 learning platforms. What deserves particular attention is what the findings suggest with reference to the facilitation of social media networks of the intentional and incidental internalised language learning processes. Perhaps the most significant finding here is the fact that Bahrainis are conscious while correcting their grammar and spelling mistakes on social media platforms. They also perceive enhanced writing and vocabulary learning due to the use of these networks. This is similar to the findings obtained by Mutum and Wang (2010); Thurairaj et al. (2015), and Slim and Hafedh (2019). Hence, it is safe to argue that social media networks can enhance higher-order thinking skills. Schmidt's (1990) *Noticing Hypothesis* posits that input becomes intake only when it is noticed. When students read extensively, they notice lexical terms that develop into intentional and incidental intakes (Hulstijn, 2013; Nation, 2008;). Teng (2015) acknowledges the vivid correlation between rigorous reading and vocabulary intake, which could be attributed to the employment of intentional and incidental vocabulary learning strategies. This is particularly applicable when the messages read online intrigue the readers' intrinsic motivation and immediate interest. Hence, learning vocabulary is managed by incidental and intentional internal mechanisms such as noticing, word recall, cognition, and long-term retention (Ahmed, 2017; Hulstijn, 2013) as the readers are not merely reading for comprehension but for communicative purposes for which input is considered comprehensible (Krashen, 2003; Yali, 2010). This is also a truism when language accuracy is concerned. Research has shown that extensively reading and writing online can enhance L2 learners' grammatical competence (Al Jahrami, 2019).

5. Conclusion, implications and recommendations

The research study investigated the effect of social media on the English language proficiency from Bahraini users' perspectives. The aforementioned findings suggest that Bahrainis, regardless of gender or age, find social media networks effective in enhancing their L2 proficiency with particular reference to how positively they influence L2 writing, vocabulary learning and communication skills. They also reported deploying a number of language-related techniques that help them enhance their L2 proficiency such as correcting mistakes before posting, using translation tools, and using L2 learning websites and applications. The major negative effect of social media perceived by Bahrainis is the use of abbreviations and

ungrammatical spellings. Based on these findings, it is safe to conclude that social media networks can be appreciably helpful in enhancing the target language.

The findings of the study can serve as crucial indicators to implement instantaneous pedagogical reformations, for which a number of pedagogical implications can be proposed. Social media networks can be utilised to make teaching more student-centred through the facilitation of interactive collaboration and exchange of information leading to enriched syntactic and lexical complexity. Based on Selwyn's (2012) recommendations and inspired by the requirements of the new generation of students who are highly advanced in the use of social media and technological interfaces, higher education institutes should base the pedagogical practices on collectively explorative, playful, and ground-breaking principles. L2 teachers in particular need to use social media networks to support their teaching methods and augment their material with interactive and innovative activities on social media such as online debates and threaded discussions. Another equally important pedagogical implication is the design and delivery of professional development and training sessions to teachers on the ultimate utilization of social media as instructional technologies. Correspondingly, knowledge transfer workshops, seminars and think-tank hackathons need to be organized to exchange pedagogical success stories and anecdotes of the use of social media in ELT contexts. Social media networks can be employed in this regard to provide authentic extensive reading tasks that can facilitate intentional and incidental vocabulary learning and writing complexity. In addition, awareness campaigns can be coordinated by e-learning educationists and advocates to acknowledge the benefits of online learning and teaching and validate the correctness of online discourse and acceptability of social media learning, mobile learning, and hybrid teaching via learning management systems (LMSs), especially during and after the COVID-19 era. The question of how online technologies in general and social media in particular can be used to augment language learning classroom in the local context, which has been lying dormant for decades beneath the expected levels regardless of sporadic calls for educational reform, has been addressed and resolved with the sudden shift to e-learning and the urgency to utilise of online instructional technologies in the teaching and learning process. This consequently necessitates that L2 opposing educationists and sceptical decision-makers with reference to e-learning and use of instructional technologies revise their traditional views and reform the conventional technology-free teaching methods and approaches and embrace the various facets of the provision of e-learning, including the effective and careful employment of social media.

Although the number of subjects in the study was high, future studies could focus on obtaining the perceptions of a significantly greater number of respondents. Furthermore, given

that the findings of the study cannot be conclusive as they mainly relied on questionnaire responses, qualitative data collection methods coined with quantitative methods could be used to enhance the findings' internal validity and reliability. In addition, the linguistics gains of asynchronous social media networks could be investigated separately from synchronous ones in order to highlight their educational gains and further investigate the internalized cognitive processes and higher order thinking skills practiced in the context of social media networks.

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