

Social Media as Language Learning Communities: Impact on EFL Acquisition among Kurdish Learners

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Abstract

This study explored the impact of social media on the development of English as Foreign Language (EFL) skills among Kurdish university students. With the rising importance of English in the Kurdistan Region, students increasingly turned to innovative platforms beyond traditional classrooms to enhance their language proficiency. Social media served as a dynamic environment for practicing vocabulary, speaking, and listening skills, while promoting interaction with English speakers globally. Adopting a mixed-methods design, the study surveyed 200 students from four universities in Duhok, Kurdistan, utilizing both quantitative Likert-scale questionnaires and qualitative interviews. Findings revealed that social media significantly enhanced student engagement and contributed to improvements in vocabulary acquisition, speaking fluency, and listening comprehension. However, challenges in writing proficiency persisted, indicating a need for targeted pedagogical interventions. The study also underscored the importance of the English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) perspective, which emphasized effective communication over native-speaker norms, empowering learners to navigate diverse linguistic contexts with confidence. Ultimately, the integration of social media with traditional instructional strategies offered a more engaging and balanced EFL learning experience, supporting skill-specific development and fostering holistic language acquisition.

Keywords— social media, EFL skills, Kurdish EFL learners, mixed-method approach, language acquisition.

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Overview of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Kurdistan English as a Foreign Language (EFL) holds significant importance in Kurdistan, particularly in academic, professional, and global communication. With the increasing demand for English proficiency, Kurdish students are exposed to English in both formal and informal settings. Many universities in the region have developed English language programs to help students acquire the necessary skills for success in an interconnected world. English is not only seen as crucial for higher education and career opportunities but is also considered key to international collaborations (Aziz & Ali, 2016). However, challenges persist in achieving high levels of proficiency due to limited exposure to native English speakers and the

predominance of traditional, teacher-centered approaches to language teaching. Kurdish learners, in particular, face unique challenges, such as limited access to quality instruction, linguistic and cultural barriers, and technological constraints (Hassan, 2019; Saeed, 2018). These challenges underscore the need for more engaging and innovative strategies to enhance EFL acquisition. In this context, integrating social media offers a promising solution by providing interactive, authentic, and immersive language learning experiences that extend beyond traditional classroom settings (Rasouli & Razavi, 2020).

The Rise of Social Media as a Learning Tool and Its Significance for EFL Learners The rapid rise of social media has revolutionized language learning, providing English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners with unprecedented opportunities for engagement, interaction, and real-world communication (Godwin-Jones, 2018).

Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram enable Kurdish learners to access authentic language resources, collaborate with peers, and engage with native speakers, which are crucial for effective language acquisition (Saeed, 2018). In regions like Kurdistan, where traditional language instruction may be limited, these platforms help bridge gaps by offering opportunities for learners to practice in dynamic, real-time environments (Aziz & Ali, 2016). Studies also highlight that social media can alleviate anxiety and boost motivation, creating a supportive learning community that fosters increased language proficiency (Salih & Kadir, 2020). Additionally, social media facilitates global connections, allowing Kurdish learners to participate in cross-cultural exchanges, which further enriches their linguistic competencies (Hassan, 2019). Given these advantages, integrating social media into language learning strategies is essential for promoting more effective and engaging EFL acquisition, particularly for learners in underrepresented contexts like Kurdistan (Warschauer & Grimes, 2007).

1.2 Problem Statement

Challenges Kurdish students face in traditional EFL learning methods. Kurdish students face challenges in traditional English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, primarily due to outdated teaching methods, large class sizes, and limited individual attention, which hinder effective language acquisition. These issues, along with limited exposure to English outside the classroom and socio-economic barriers, restrict students' ability to achieve fluency (Al-Hazmi, 2003; Rahimi, 2010). As a result, there is a pressing need for more engaging and innovative approaches to language instruction that provide authentic, real-world practice. Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram present opportunities for immersive and interactive learning, enabling Kurdish learners to engage with native speakers and peers in diverse contexts (Godwin-Jones, 2018). The informal nature of social media fosters a risk-taking environment that promotes language development by allowing learners to experiment with language use in ways that traditional classrooms cannot. This study explores how social media can complement traditional EFL methods to improve Kurdish learners' language acquisition by offering a dynamic and accessible supplementary tool (Reinhardt & Zander, 2011).

The need to explore innovative platforms like social media for EFL skill enhancement. The exploration of social media as a supplementary tool for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) acquisition is essential for understanding its impact on language learning among Kurdish learners. Social media platforms create interactive environments that enhance language skills through

authentic communication and engagement with diverse linguistic communities (Al-Azawi & Al-Sharifi, 2019). This academic inquiry contributes to the literature by providing insights into how these platforms can be integrated into language curricula, specifically for Kurdish EFL learners (Hameed, 2020). Furthermore, it addresses the research gap concerning the unique challenges and experiences of Kurdish learners using social media for language acquisition (Ranjbar & Khosravi, 2021). By examining how social media fosters collaborative learning and peer support, this study highlights its potential to enrich the EFL experience (Hameed, 2020). Additionally, the findings will inform educators and policymakers about the effective incorporation of technology in language education. Ultimately, this research will expand understanding of social media's role in language learning.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

- To examine the role of social media in developing vocabulary, speaking, and listening skills.
- To identify gaps in writing proficiency and suggest targeted interventions.
- To understand the impact of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) on communication practices.

1.4 Research Questions

RQ1: How does social media influence vocabulary acquisition, speaking, and listening skills

among Kurdish EFL students?

RQ2: What are the key challenges Kurdish EFL learners face in developing writing proficiency?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the academic understanding of social media as a supplementary tool for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) acquisition, particularly for Kurdish learners. Traditional EFL methods often face limitations such as minimal classroom interaction and limited exposure to authentic language use (Ellis, 2008). Additionally, Kurdish learners encounter cultural and linguistic barriers that lead to low motivation, limited proficiency, and reduced real-life communication opportunities (Khansir, 2012; Al-Saud, 2013).

By exploring social media-based language learning communities, this research addresses these challenges by offering dynamic platforms for authentic practice, cultural exchange, and collaborative learning (Bista, 2015; Houghton & Joinson, 2014). Social media fosters engagement with peers and native speakers, which can enhance learners' motivation, participation, and communicative competence (Warschauer & Grimes, 2007; Kessler, 2018). The study's findings aim to inform

educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers on how to integrate social media into EFL pedagogy, particularly in the Kurdish context.

1.6 Scope and Limitations

Focus on 200 undergraduate students across four universities in Duhok, Kurdistan. The primary objective is to explore the role of social media as a tool for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) acquisition among Kurdish learners. Participants will be selected from both public and private universities, ensuring a diverse sample that reflects a range of educational backgrounds. The research will investigate how students use social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and language-specific groups to enhance their EFL skills, as well as the perceived effectiveness of these platforms in improving language proficiency. However, the study is geographically confined to the Duhok region, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to the broader Kurdish or Iraqi student populations. The sample size of 200 students may not capture the full diversity of social media usage among EFL learners, and variations in internet access or socioeconomic status could influence participants' engagement with these platforms. Furthermore, the study focuses exclusively on undergraduate students, which may limit the applicability of the findings to other academic levels. Lastly, while the research emphasizes social media as a language learning tool, it does not explore other digital learning platforms, narrowing the scope of investigation.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Previous Studies

Overview of Global Research on Social Media and EFL Acquisition A growing body of research underscores the significant role social media plays in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) acquisition, demonstrating how digital platforms foster authentic, interactive, and learner-centered environments (Stockwell, 2010; Dooly, 2008). Studies reveal that social media encourages collaborative learning and enhances language skills through real-time communication, peer feedback, and exposure to diverse linguistic resources (Godwin-Jones, 2018; Thorne, 2003). Research by Wang and Vasquez (2012) and Kabilan et al. (2010) illustrates that platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter improve vocabulary, grammar, and reading comprehension, while providing learners with opportunities to engage in low-stress environments that promote motivation and language practice. In the context of Kurdish learners, preliminary studies suggest that social media fosters intercultural exchange and creates supportive learning communities, yet there remains a paucity of research specifically addressing the impact of these

platforms on Kurdish EFL learners (Aziz & Rashid, 2019; Hama & Sheni, 2020). Furthermore, while the informal nature of social media reduces learners' affective filters, promoting risk-taking and language experimentation (Krashen, 1982), challenges such as language inaccuracies and over-reliance on digital communication persist (Hama & Sheni, 2020). Overall, international research highlights the transformative potential of social media for language acquisition, but also underscores the need for further studies on how these platforms can be optimally utilized in Kurdish EFL contexts.

Studies Focusing on Kurdish or Regional Contexts, a growing body of research has explored the role of social media in enhancing English as a Foreign Language (EFL) acquisition in Kurdish and regional contexts, revealing both opportunities and challenges specific to these learners. Studies focusing on Kurdish learners highlight how platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Telegram facilitate informal language practice, enabling students to engage with English-language content and interact with native speakers in real-world contexts (Aziz & Rashid, 2019; Hama & Sheni, 2020). These interactions promote vocabulary acquisition, improve reading comprehension, and increase cultural awareness, contributing significantly to learners' fluency. Additionally, studies indicate that social media fosters a sense of community among Kurdish learners, providing a supportive environment where students can share resources and practice language skills collaboratively (Khosravi & Shahraki, 2018; Ahmed, 2020). However, challenges such as limited access to technology, inconsistent internet connectivity, and varying levels of digital literacy present significant barriers to fully utilizing social media for EFL acquisition (Hassan & Jamil, 2019). Furthermore, while social media reduces affective barriers by offering low-pressure environments for experimentation, concerns about the quality of input and the prevalence of linguistic inaccuracies remain (Hama & Sheni, 2020). Overall, these studies underline the importance of understanding the regional and cultural context when assessing the potential of social media as a tool for language learning, emphasizing both its promise and its limitations in Kurdish educational settings.

2.2 Social Media in Language Learning

Social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram have emerged as powerful tools for enhancing English as a Foreign Language (EFL) skills among learners, particularly in contexts like Kurdistan. These platforms provide learners with authentic, real-time communication opportunities that are crucial for language acquisition. Studies show that Facebook fosters collaborative learning environments where learners can

engage in group discussions, share resources, and receive feedback, which enhances vocabulary, grammar, and overall communication skills (Kabilan et al., 2010; Wang & Vasquez, 2012). WhatsApp, known for its focus on instant messaging, offers a more informal space for learners to practice writing and engage in daily conversations, which boosts fluency and reduces language anxiety (Zhang, 2016). Instagram, with its visual and creative nature, further supports language learning by encouraging learners to engage with English content through images and hashtags, thus broadening their vocabulary and improving cultural awareness (Duffy, 2019; Godwin-Jones, 2018). In Kurdish EFL contexts, these platforms have been shown to support language learning by enabling interaction with peers and native speakers, providing both formal and informal language practice opportunities (Aziz & Rashid, 2019; Hama & Sheni, 2020). However, challenges such as digital literacy gaps and limited access to technology can hinder the effective use of these platforms for all learners (Hassan & Jamil, 2019). Despite these challenges, the overall contribution of social media to language acquisition remains significant, offering flexible, learner-centered environments that foster both linguistic skills and intercultural competence (Stockwell, 2010).

The comparison between traditional classroom-based language learning and social media-driven learning has been a topic of increasing interest in the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) acquisition. Traditional classroom methods typically rely on structured curricula, teacher-led instruction, and controlled environments, which provide a stable foundation for grammar and vocabulary acquisition (Hama & Sheni, 2020). In contrast, social media-based learning offers a more flexible and interactive approach, where learners engage in real-time communication with peers and native speakers, facilitating authentic language use in informal settings (Wang & Vasquez, 2012; Godwin-Jones, 2018). Research indicates that while traditional classrooms tend to focus on language accuracy and formal aspects, social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram encourage spontaneous communication, improving fluency and reducing language anxiety (Kabilan et al., 2010; Aziz & Rashid, 2019). Furthermore, social media-based learning fosters a sense of community and collaboration, as students interact with diverse linguistic backgrounds and cultural perspectives, promoting intercultural competence (Hassan & Jamil, 2019). However, one drawback of social media-based learning is that it may lack the direct guidance and personalized feedback offered in face-to-face classroom settings, which can hinder error correction and structured learning (Khosravi, 2018). Overall, while both approaches have their advantages, social media-based learning has

emerged as a dynamic complement to traditional methods, particularly in the context of Kurdish EFL learners, where digital tools offer more accessible and diverse learning opportunities (Aziz & Rashid, 2019).

2.3 Skill-Specific Impact of Social Media

Social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, have emerged as powerful tools for enhancing vocabulary acquisition among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. These platforms provide dynamic, real-time interactions that facilitate vocabulary exposure in various authentic contexts, which significantly enhances retention and recall (Kabilan et al., 2010; Godwin-Jones, 2018). For Kurdish EFL learners, social media offers a less formal and more engaging environment for learning, where learners can interact with native speakers and peers, thus acquiring vocabulary in meaningful contexts (Aziz & Rashid, 2019; Hama & Sheni, 2020). Moreover, the multimodal nature of these platforms—incorporating text, images, and videos—allows learners to engage with vocabulary in different formats, catering to various learning styles and increasing retention (Saeed, 2018). Interactive features, such as quizzes, games, and collaborative discussions, further motivate learners to practice and reinforce new vocabulary (Kabilan, 2010; Salih, 2017). Despite these advantages, it is crucial to balance informal learning through social media with more structured instruction to ensure comprehensive vocabulary development and avoid the risks of misinformation or improper language use (Khosravi, 2018). In this context, social media not only supplements traditional language learning methods but also enriches the overall vocabulary acquisition experience for Kurdish EFL learners.

Development of Speaking and Listening Skills through Audio-Visual Content, The development of speaking and listening skills through audio-visual content on social media platforms has significantly enhanced English as a Foreign Language (EFL) acquisition, particularly for Kurdish learners. Platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram offer rich, authentic language input that allows learners to engage with a variety of accents, speech patterns, and real-world dialogues (Sadiq & Rashid, 2019). This exposure to natural language use helps learners improve their listening comprehension and pronunciation by mimicking native speakers in diverse contexts (Hassan, 2020). Furthermore, the interactive features of these platforms—such as video comments, live streaming, and voice messages—provide opportunities for learners to practice speaking in a supportive environment, fostering increased fluency and confidence (Khosravi, 2018). Research shows that learners who actively engage with audio-visual materials on social media demonstrate

significant improvement in their listening skills and their ability to articulate thoughts more effectively (Kabilan et al., 2010). The multimodal nature of these platforms, combining auditory and visual cues, aids in vocabulary retention and the understanding of cultural nuances (Godwin-Jones, 2018). Despite these benefits, it is essential for educators to guide learners in selecting high-quality content to ensure the optimal development of speaking and listening skills (Yıldız, 2020).

Challenges in writing proficiency among Kurdish EFL learners can be significantly influenced by their engagement with social media platforms. While these platforms offer opportunities for practice, many learners struggle with the informal nature of online communication, which may hinder the development of formal writing skills (Hassan, 2020). The prevalence of abbreviations, slang, and lack of structure in social media interactions can lead to confusion when transitioning to academic writing (Khan & Ali, 2021). However, integrating structured writing tasks within social media contexts can provide learners with valuable feedback and opportunities for improvement (Sadiq & Rashid, 2019). For instance, encouraging learners to participate in blog writing or collaborative projects on platforms like Facebook can enhance their writing proficiency while fostering a sense of community (Khosravi, 2018). Additionally, utilizing peer review mechanisms within these platforms can promote critical thinking and self-reflection, ultimately leading to better writing outcomes (Yıldız, 2020). Therefore, while challenges exist, the strategic use of social media can offer effective solutions for enhancing writing skills among Kurdish EFL learners.

2.4 Research Gaps

While research on social media's role in enhancing English as a Foreign Language (EFL) acquisition is expanding, there remains a significant gap in studies focusing specifically on Kurdish EFL learners. Existing research often generalizes findings across diverse linguistic and cultural contexts, making them difficult to apply to Kurdish learners, whose educational and social environments differ considerably (Aziz & Rashid, 2019; Goran, 2021). Challenges like limited access to educational resources and varying levels of digital literacy have not been fully explored in the context of social media's impact on Kurdish learners' language skills (Zarif, 2020; Khosravi, 2018). Additionally, while some studies examine the effect of social media on language proficiency globally, few investigate its influence on specific skills such as speaking and writing among Kurdish EFL learners (Hassan & Salih, 2019).

Moreover, there is a lack of research on the role of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), especially in the context

of Kurdish learners' social media interactions. Most studies continue to prioritize native-speaker norms, neglecting the growing prevalence of ELF interactions where communication effectiveness takes priority over grammatical accuracy (Jenkins, 2015; Seidlhofer, 2011). This gap is particularly significant for Kurdish learners, whose social media communication is shaped by local cultural and linguistic factors (Hassan, 2020). Exploring ELF in the Kurdish context will contribute to a better understanding of how these learners engage in intercultural communication, offering insights that can lead to more culturally relevant language teaching strategies (Sadeghi & Khajavy, 2020).

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative techniques. The combination of these methods enabled a well-rounded exploration of the role of social media in language learning among Kurdish EFL learners. Quantitative methods were used to measure the broader impact of social media on language acquisition, including aspects such as frequency of use and perceived effectiveness in enhancing language skills. Qualitative methods, on the other hand, provided deeper insights into the learners' personal experiences, perceptions, and challenges, utilizing interviews, focus groups, and observations. The mixed approach allowed for a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the complex relationship between social media and EFL acquisition.

3.2 Research Setting and Participants

The research was conducted in Duhok, Duhok Province, Iraq, and focused on Kurdish learners who actively engaged with social media platforms such as YouTube and Instagram to enhance their English language skills. The participants were selected from a range of Kurdish individuals living in Duhok, including students, teachers, and professionals, ensuring diversity in age, educational background, and English proficiency. The study aimed to explore how social media influenced EFL acquisition within the Kurdish context, offering insights into the specific dynamics and challenges that Kurdish learners faced while using social media for language learning.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

Data were collected using a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative techniques. The quantitative data were gathered through a Likert-scale questionnaire, which measured the impact of

social media on EFL learners' skills, including their listening, speaking, reading, and writing abilities. The questionnaire also addressed learners' motivation, attitudes towards social media use, and perceived benefits and challenges. A total of 200 participants, primarily Kurdish EFL learners from Duhok, completed the survey, which included both closed-ended questions (quantitative) and open-ended questions (qualitative). This allowed for a balanced understanding of the learners' quantitative data and detailed qualitative insights.

For qualitative data collection, semi-structured interviews and focus groups were used. The interviews provided an opportunity for in-depth exploration of learners' personal experiences, including how social media influenced their vocabulary acquisition and language practice. Focus groups allowed for dynamic interaction and discussions among learners, shedding light on shared experiences, challenges, and strategies used for effective language learning. The interviews and focus groups were conducted with a purposeful sample of learners representing different proficiency levels and backgrounds, ensuring diverse perspectives.

3.4 Data Analysis

Quantitative Data: Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) to identify patterns, correlations, and trends within the data. This helped quantify the relationships between social media usage and improvements in language learning skills.

Qualitative Data: Thematic analysis was applied to interview and focus group data. This method allowed for the identification of key themes, patterns, and insights

emerging from participants' responses regarding their use of social media for language learning. Themes might include the types of content consumed, the platforms most used, learner motivation, and perceived barriers.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

To ensure the ethical integrity of the study, the following principles were adhered to:

Informed Consent: All participants were fully informed about the purpose, procedures, and potential risks of the study. Informed consent was obtained from every participant, and they were made aware that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without facing any penalties.

Confidentiality and Anonymity: Participants' identities remained anonymous, and their personal information was kept confidential. Unique identifiers were assigned to each participant to ensure that no personally identifiable information was included in the study findings. All data were securely stored and only accessible to the research team.

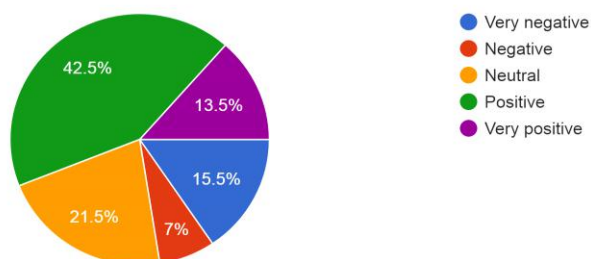
Voluntary Participation: Participants were assured that their involvement in the study was entirely voluntary, and they had the right to withdraw from the research at any stage without any repercussions.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the analysis of the questionnaire and Likert scale survey. It discusses the students' responses and interprets the major findings. The results are then connected to the study objectives, highlighting key insights and implications.

4.1 Analysis of Survey Data from Questionnaires

Q1/How does social media impact your vocabulary acquisition for Kurdish learners of English?
200 responses



A total of 200 responses were collected to investigate the impact of social media on vocabulary acquisition among Kurdish learners of English. The findings revealed that a significant portion of the respondents (42.5%) perceived

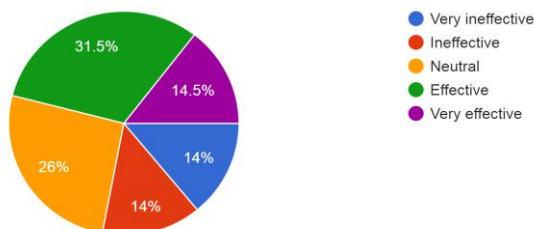
social media as having a positive effect on their vocabulary learning. Additionally, 13.5% of participants reported a very positive impact. Meanwhile, 21.5% of the respondents expressed a neutral stance, indicating neither a positive nor negative influence. On the other hand, 7% of the

participants perceived the impact as negative, and 15.5% reported it as very negative. These results suggest that while opinions vary, there is a generally optimistic perception of

the role of social media in vocabulary development among Kurdish learners of English.

Q2/How effective is for you as Kurdish learner to find social media compared to traditional English learning methods?

200 responses

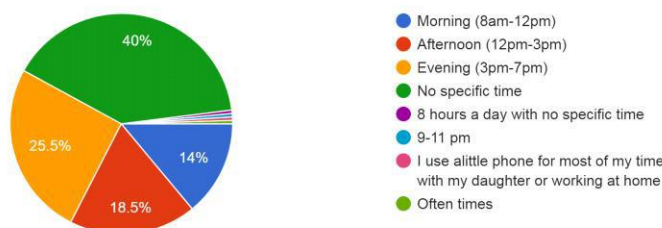


Kurdish learners of English were asked to evaluate how effective they find social media compared to traditional English learning methods. A total of 200 responses were recorded. The largest portion of respondents (31.5%) rated social media as effective, and an additional 14.5% considered it very effective. Meanwhile, 26% of

participants remained neutral, suggesting they view both methods equally or are undecided about the difference in effectiveness. On the other hand, 14% found social media ineffective, and another 14% reported it as very ineffective, indicating some skepticism or preference for traditional approaches.

Q3/When do you typically spend most of your time on social media? (Select one)

200 responses

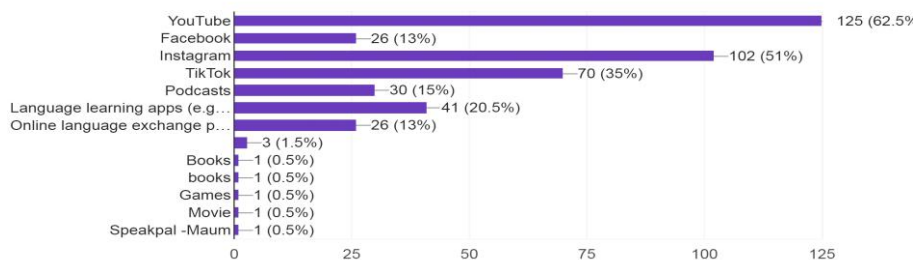


A total of 200 responses were collected to examine the preferred times of social media usage among Kurdish learners of English. The majority of participants (40%) selected "No specific time," indicating flexible or irregular usage patterns. This suggests that many learners engage with social media based on convenience rather than during predetermined hours. The second most frequent response was "Evening (3 p.m. – 7 p.m.)," chosen by 25.5% of

respondents, followed by "Afternoon (12 p.m. – 3 p.m.)" at 18.5%. Usage during the "Morning (8 a.m. – 12 p.m.)" was reported by 14% of participants. A small number of respondents provided additional comments such as "8 hours a day with no specific time," "9–11 p.m.," and "I use a little phone for most of my time with my daughter or working at home," reflecting diverse habits shaped by personal schedules and responsibilities.

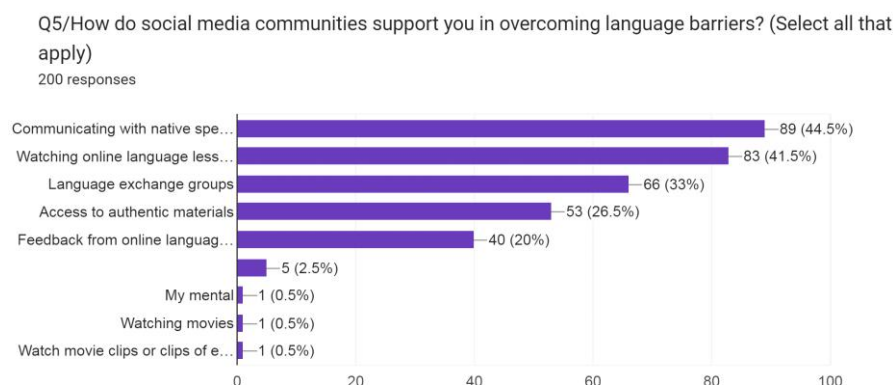
Q4/Where do you find language practice opportunities on social media? (Select all that apply)

200 responses



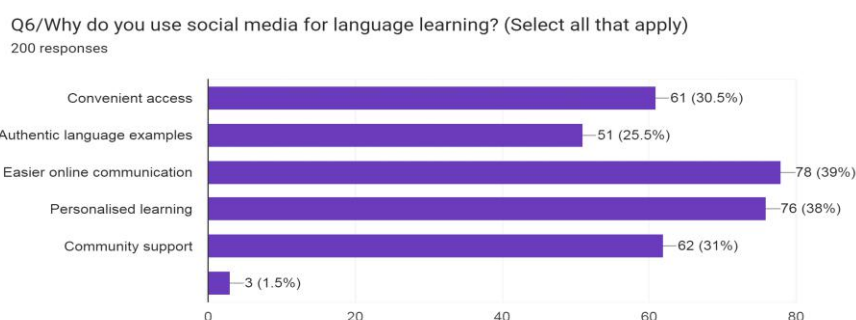
A total of 200 participants were asked to identify where they find opportunities for language practice on social media, with the option to select multiple platforms. The results revealed that YouTube was the most commonly selected platform, with 125 respondents (62.5%) indicating it as a source for language learning, suggesting a strong preference for video-based content. Instagram followed with 102 responses (51%), and TikTok with 70 responses (35%), highlighting the popularity of short-form and visually engaging content among learners. Language

learning apps such as Duolingo and Memrise were selected by 41 participants (20.5%), while podcasts were chosen by 30 participants (15%), reflecting moderate levels of engagement. Facebook and online language exchange platforms (e.g., Tandem, HelloTalk) were each selected by 26 respondents (13%). Other sources—including books, games, movies, and a platform called Speakpal-Maum—were mentioned by only one participant each (0.5%), indicating minimal use of these tools for language practice through social media.



To explore how social media communities assist Kurdish learners of English in overcoming language barriers, 200 participants were surveyed with the option to select multiple responses. The most frequently chosen option was “Communicating with native speakers,” selected by 89 participants (44.5%), indicating that direct interaction with native speakers is widely regarded as an effective strategy for language improvement. “Watching online language lessons” was selected by 83 participants (41.5%), highlighting the popularity of structured instructional content on social media platforms. “Language exchange groups” were chosen by 66 respondents (33%), suggesting

a strong interest in peer-to-peer learning environments. Additionally, 53 participants (26.5%) selected “Access to authentic materials,” such as real-life videos, posts, or dialogues, emphasizing the value of natural language exposure. “Feedback from online language communities” received 40 responses (20%), underlining the importance of receiving corrections and encouragement from peers or native speakers. Other responses—such as mental support, watching movies, and viewing movie clips—were mentioned by only one participant each (0.5%), indicating that these are considerably less relied upon for addressing language barriers.



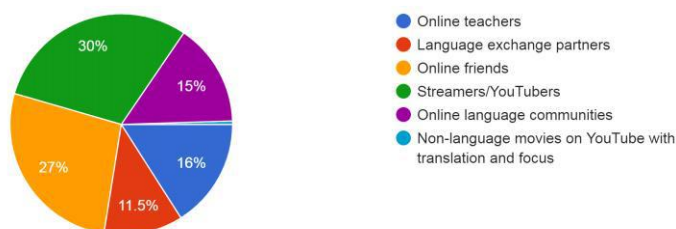
To investigate the motivations behind using social media for language learning, 200 participants were surveyed, with the option to select multiple reasons. The most frequently selected reason was “Easier online communication,” chosen by 78 participants (39%),

suggesting that learners value the simplified interaction features of social media, such as messaging, video calls, and commenting. “Personalised learning” was the second most common reason, selected by 76 participants (38%), indicating that the ability to tailor content to individual

preferences and learning pace is a key advantage. “Community support” received 62 responses (31%), reflecting the importance of encouragement, shared experiences, and peer assistance in online learning communities. Similarly, “Convenient access” was cited by 61 participants (30.5%), underscoring the significance of the flexibility to learn anytime and anywhere. “Authentic

language examples,” including native speakers’ posts, videos, and comments, were selected by 51 participants (25.5%), pointing to the value of exposure to real-life language use. Additionally, a small portion of respondents (1.5%) mentioned other unspecified reasons for using social media as a language learning tool.

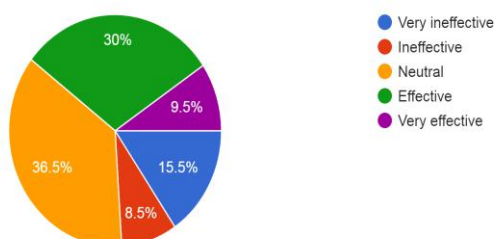
Q7/Who do you usually interact with on social media for language learning?
200 responses



To understand with whom Kurdish learners of English typically interact on social media for language learning purposes, 200 participants were surveyed. The largest proportion of respondents (30%) reported that they primarily interact with streamers or YouTubers, highlighting the widespread appeal of content creators who provide engaging, often informal, language input. Online friends were the next most common interaction group, selected by 27% of participants, indicating the significance of casual, peer-based conversations in language practice. Interactions with online teachers accounted for 16%, reflecting a preference for structured, professional guidance

available on platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok. Additionally, 15% of respondents indicated that they engage with online language communities, suggesting that group-based forums and learning networks contribute meaningfully to their learning experience. Language exchange partners were selected by 11.5% of participants, showing that while peer-to-peer language exchange is valued, it is slightly less prevalent than other forms of interaction. A very small percentage (0.5%) mentioned using non-language YouTube movies with translation and focused attention, indicating this as a niche but personalized method for language exposure.

Q8/How effective are your current time management strategies in balancing social media use and English language learning?
200 responses

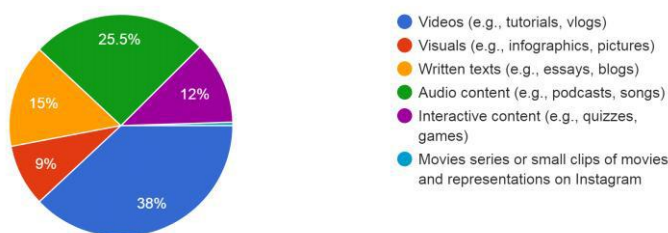


To assess the effectiveness of time management strategies among Kurdish learners of English in balancing social media use and language learning, 200 participants were surveyed. The largest portion of respondents (36.5%) selected “Neutral,” indicating a general sense of uncertainty or ambivalence regarding the efficiency of their current time management practices. This may suggest inconsistency or the need for improved strategies. A significant percentage (30%) rated their strategies as “Effective,” reflecting

confidence in their ability to balance social media use with language learning. In contrast, 15.5% of participants reported their strategies as “Very ineffective,” revealing considerable challenges in managing time effectively. A smaller group (9.5%) selected “Very effective,” suggesting that these learners have likely developed well-structured and efficient routines. Lastly, 8.5% rated their time management as “Ineffective,” indicating that a minor yet notable group faces difficulty in maintaining balance

between social media engagement and English language learning.

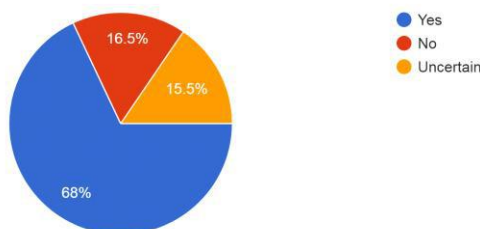
Q9/What language learning content do you prefer on social media?
200 responses



To determine the preferred types of language learning content on social media, a survey was conducted among 200 participants. The majority of respondents (38%) indicated a preference for video content, such as tutorials and vlogs, underscoring the popularity of dynamic visual and auditory learning formats. Audio-based materials, including podcasts and songs, were favored by 25.5% of participants, reflecting a strong inclination toward flexible and convenient listening-based learning. Written texts, such as essays and blogs, were selected by 15%, suggesting a considerable portion of learners prefer reading-focused

strategies. Interactive content, including quizzes and games, was chosen by 12% of respondents, indicating the appeal of active engagement and real-time feedback. Visual materials such as infographics and images were preferred by 9%, highlighting the value of easily digestible and quick-reference content. A small fraction (0.5%) expressed a preference for movie series, short clips, and Instagram representations, suggesting that these formats are less commonly utilized for language learning among the surveyed group.

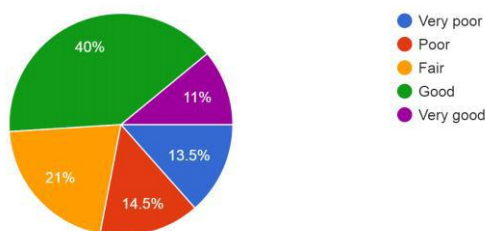
Q10/In your opinion, Can social media facilitate friendships?
200 responses



When asked whether social media can facilitate friendships, the majority of the 200 participants expressed a positive view. A substantial 68% of respondents answered "Yes," indicating a strong belief that social media plays a significant role in forming and strengthening friendships. This suggests that many participants perceive social media as an effective means of connecting people, especially across geographic distances or language barriers.

Conversely, 16.5% of participants answered "No," suggesting that a smaller yet noteworthy group remains skeptical about the authenticity or depth of friendships developed online. Meanwhile, 15.5% responded "Uncertain," potentially reflecting mixed experiences or the perspective that the effectiveness of social media in fostering friendships depends on its usage context.

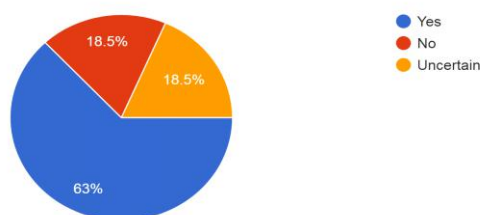
Q11/Rate how social media facilitates communication among you as Kurdish EFL learner?
200 responses



In response to the question of how social media facilitates communication for Kurdish EFL learners, 200 participants provided their feedback, which generally reflected positive experiences. The largest group, comprising 40% of respondents, rated the impact of social media on communication as “Good,” indicating that a significant number of learners believe it plays a helpful role in enhancing their English communication skills. Another 21% rated it as “Fair,” suggesting that social media offers

moderate benefits. Additionally, 11% rated its effectiveness as “Very good,” indicating a particularly strong positive influence for some learners. On the other hand, 14.5% of participants considered social media's impact as “Poor,” while 13.5% rated it “Very poor,” pointing to a smaller group of learners who encountered difficulties or perceived limited effectiveness in using social media for language communication.

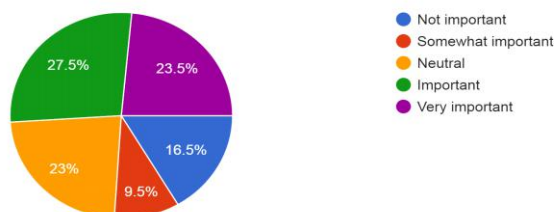
Q12/Is interacting with native English speakers on social media important for you as Kurdish EFL learner?
200 responses



In response to the question of whether interacting with native English speakers on social media is important for Kurdish EFL learners, 200 participants shared their views. A significant 63% of respondents answered “Yes,” indicating that most learners consider engagement with native speakers on social media an important aspect of their language learning process. This suggests that such interactions are valued for improving fluency,

understanding cultural context, and practicing authentic language usage. However, 18.5% of participants answered “No,” implying that some learners do not view this interaction as essential, perhaps due to other preferred learning methods. Additionally, 18.5% of respondents were “Uncertain,” suggesting that some learners may not have enough experience with native speaker interactions or are unsure about their impact on language learning.

Q13/How important is improving vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation skills to your English language learning goals?
200 responses



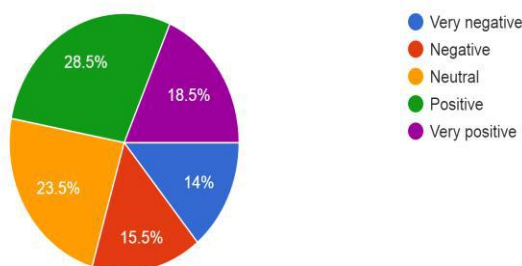
A total of 200 participants were asked about the

importance of improving vocabulary, grammar, and

pronunciation skills in achieving their English language learning goals. The results show that 51% of respondents believe these skills are either "Important" (27.5%) or "Very important" (23.5%), reflecting a strong recognition of their value in reaching language learning objectives. On the other hand, 23% of participants were "Neutral," suggesting they

may not see these skills as critical or have mixed views on their necessity. A smaller group, 9.5%, felt these skills were "Somewhat important," while 16.5% considered them "Not important," indicating that a portion of learners may prioritize other aspects of language learning, such as conversational ability, over technical precision.

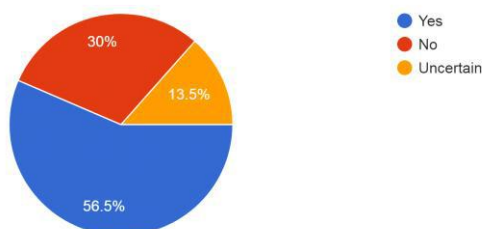
Q14/How does social media feedback affect your English writing skills?
200 responses



In a survey of 200 respondents, participants were asked, "How does social media feedback affect your English writing skills?" The results revealed that 28.5% of respondents felt social media feedback had a positive effect on their writing, suggesting that many learners find value in the feedback they receive on social media platforms. Additionally, 18.5% rated the impact as "very positive," further emphasizing the role of social media as a supportive

tool for improving writing skills through interactive and corrective engagement. Meanwhile, 23.5% of participants remained neutral, possibly indicating that they either do not see a significant benefit or detriment to the feedback they receive. On the other hand, 15.5% experienced a negative impact, and 14% viewed the feedback as "very negative," possibly due to unhelpful or discouraging comments, or a lack of constructive and consistent input.

Q15/Do cultural differences on social media impact your language learning?
200 responses



A survey question on whether cultural differences on social media impact language learning yielded the following results from 200 participants: 56.5% of respondents answered "Yes," indicating that they believe exposure to cultural differences on social media significantly affects their language learning experience. This suggests that learners find value in encountering diverse cultural norms, idioms, and communication styles, which enhance their language comprehension in real-world

contexts. In contrast, 30% responded "No," implying that cultural differences do not notably influence their learning process, possibly because they focus more on the technical aspects of language. Finally, 13.5% were "Uncertain," potentially due to limited interaction with varied cultural content or a lack of awareness about how culture can shape language use.

4.2 Likert Scale Survey Analysis

Table:1 Likert Scale Survey

Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1. Social media facilitates easy communication for you as Kurdish English learners.	11	10.5	23.5	20	35
2. Social media groups effectively support English language practice.	12	15.5	20	35.5	17
3. Social media provides valuable English language learning content to you.	11	11.5	21	34	22.5
4. Videos on social media enhance English language learning to you.	13	15.5	15.5	38	27.5
5. Quizzes and posts on social media are useful for language development.	13	11	20.5	29	26.5
6. English articles on social media improve language skills.	12.5	8.5	22	38	19
7. Social media platforms support speaking practice for Kurdish English learners.	11	12.5	22	32	22.5

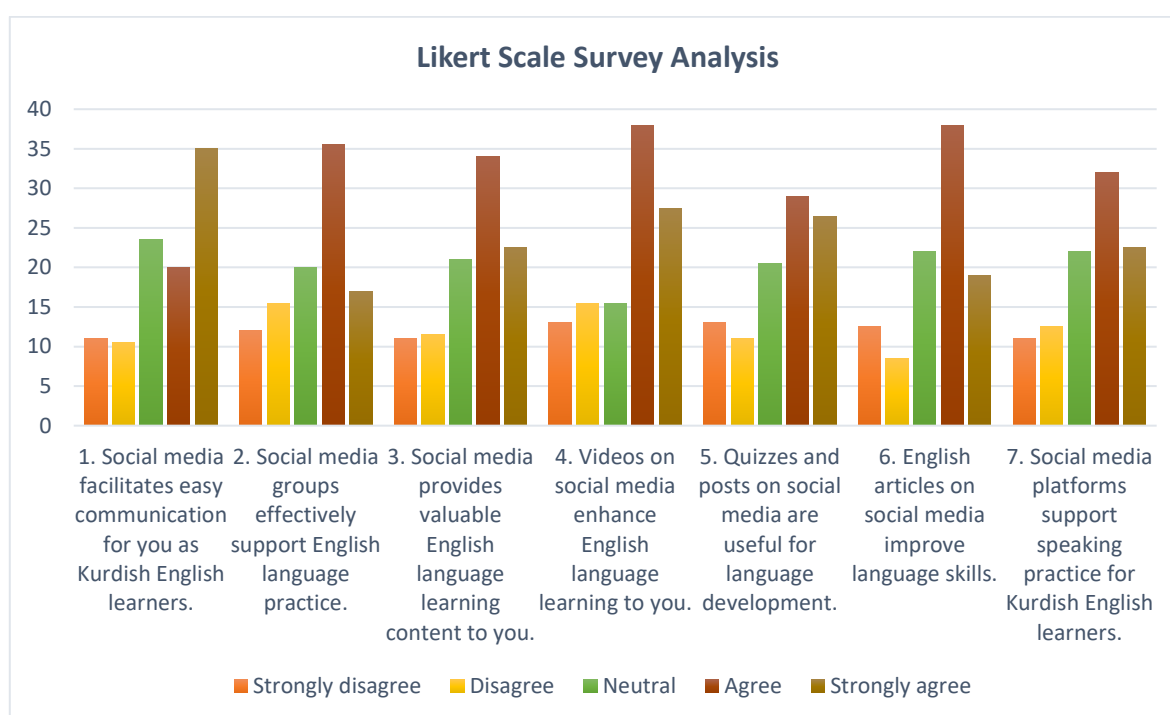


Figure:15 Likert Scale Survey Analysis

The Likert scale survey results reveal that a significant number of Kurdish English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners view social media as a valuable resource for enhancing their language learning journey. A majority of respondents expressed agreement or strong agreement with statements highlighting social media's role in facilitating communication (46%), aiding language practice through online groups (52.5%), and providing

helpful language learning content such as articles (57%) and videos (65.5%). Additionally, over half of participants recognized the usefulness of interactive elements like quizzes and posts (55.5%) and the support for speaking practice (54.5%). These findings indicate that social media is seen as a versatile tool that supports various facets of English language acquisition. However, the data also demonstrate some ambivalence among a significant portion

of participants. Neutral responses ranged from 15.5% to 23.5%, suggesting that many learners are uncertain or have mixed experiences with using social media for language learning. Furthermore, a notable minority—between 19% and 30.5%—disagreed or strongly disagreed with the positive statements, indicating that not all learners find social media to be an equally beneficial resource. This variation may be attributed to factors such as differing levels of digital literacy, access to relevant and high-quality content, or personal preferences in learning styles.

Overall, while the majority of Kurdish EFL learners view social media as a positive tool for language learning, these results underscore the importance of considering individual learner differences and the need for tailored strategies to maximize social media's potential in language education.

V. CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary of Findings

This study underscores the vital role of social media in enhancing English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning among Kurdish university students in Duhok. Platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok effectively support vocabulary acquisition, speaking fluency, and listening comprehension by offering real-time, authentic language exposure. These tools reduce anxiety, boost motivation, and create a learner-centered environment that encourages informal and personalized practice. Interactions with native speakers and online content creators help build confidence and intercultural awareness.

Despite its strengths, social media offers limited support for writing due to its informal nature. Additional challenges include inconsistent feedback, time constraints, and unequal access to digital tools. Nonetheless, most students view social media as a valuable complement to traditional instruction. When integrated purposefully into formal education, it enhances engagement, relevance, and practical language use—especially in regions like Kurdistan with limited access to immersive English environments.

5.2 Recommendations

Integrate Social Media into EFL Classrooms

Teachers should incorporate platform-specific tasks (e.g., watching and discussing YouTube videos), create class groups on WhatsApp or Telegram for peer interaction, encourage contextual writing through blogs and social media captions, organize live language exchanges via Zoom or Instagram Live, and include digital literacy training to ensure responsible and effective use.

Enhance Writing Proficiency through Structured Activities

Conduct writing workshops that focus on grammar, organization, and academic formats; implement peer review sessions; assign regular blogging or journaling tasks; encourage rewriting informal posts into formal English; and use digital tools like Grammarly and Google Docs for real-time feedback and editing.

Boost Engagement with Relevant, Interest-Based Prompts

Design writing tasks and classroom activities around students' personal interests and trending topics to increase motivation, encourage authentic language use, and promote deeper engagement with English both inside and outside the classroom.

5.3 Limitations

- i. The study focused on 200 undergraduate students in Duhok, limiting the generalizability of the findings.
- ii. High school students, adult learners, and working professionals were not included, though their learning contexts and media habits may vary significantly.
- iii. Caution is advised in extending these findings to the broader Kurdish or Iraqi population.

5.4 Future Research Directions

- i. Broaden participant scope to include other Kurdish regions such as Erbil, Sulaymaniyah.
- ii. Investigate differences between urban vs. rural settings, public vs. private institutions, and varied English proficiency levels.
- iii. Analyze the specific impact of platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok on distinct language skills such as vocabulary acquisition, fluency, and academic writing.
- iv. Conduct cross-regional studies involving areas with similar sociolinguistic characteristics to develop more inclusive and context-sensitive teaching strategies.

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