

ARE THEY LEARNING LANGUAGE THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA INTERACTION? EXPLORING EFL PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE USEFULNESS OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN ENHANCING THEIR LANGUAGE SKILLS

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ABSTRACT: *This paper highlights the role of social media in learning English as a foreign language (EFL) among Kuwaiti pre-service EFL teachers. The participants involved in the study are female undergraduate students majoring English language at the College of Basic Education (CBE) in Kuwait. The data is collected via a questionnaire designed to explore the usefulness of social media in developing language skills, as perceived by pre-service teachers. The findings demonstrate that social media plays a significant role in learning English, revealing that the participants use social media to enhance their vocabulary development, reading, and listening skills, which consequently improves their English language ability. Their writing and communication skills are also moderately developed. This paper therefore argues that interacting via social media is extremely beneficial for learning languages, although both teachers and students require guidance concerning its use.*

KEYWORDS: Social Media, Pre-Service EFL Teachers, Language Skills, Sociocultural Theory.

INTRODUCTION

Millions of people worldwide use social media for interacting and collaborating with others, as well as for purposes of entertainment and education (Warschauer and Grimes, 2007). Social media platforms are popular among language students, due to their potential to support language learning (Wang and Vasquez, 2012). Social media includes Web2.0 e-learning resources that emphasize active participation, collaboration, and the sharing of knowledge and ideas among its users (O'Reilly, 2005) through publishing content, such as posts; sharing media, such as pictures, videos, audio files, and hyperlinks; and engaging in online discussion (Cormode and Krishnamurthy, 2008; Page et al., 2014). Social media platforms include Twitter, Facebook, blogs, YouTube, Wikis, and any other technology that facilitates communication, secure information sharing, and on-line collaboration (Godwin-Jones, 2003; Page et al., 2014). When people communicate via social media, they are engaging in social networking whereby a group of users share conversation, messages, ideas, and information, therefore these terms are employed interchangeably.

The fundamental principles of social media, which emphasize social interaction between people, align with the theoretical shift in the language learning context. In other words, they align with the paradigm shift in language theories from cognitive to social-cultural theory (SCT), which places an emphasis on collaboration and social interaction in knowledge construction (Vygotsky, 1978; Wang and Vasquez, 2012). Based on this theoretical assumption, studies have been conducted in order to investigate the effectiveness of using social media platforms to develop learners' language skills, with blogs and Wikis being the

most investigated social media tools (ibid.). Other studies have found that the most frequently used social media platforms are Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram (Alnujaidi, 2017; Kalasi, 2014, Li, 2017; Lin, Zhang, Zheng, 2017; Tantarangsee, 2016). Research in this area has focused on how students use social media, and the potential of these social media platforms for developing language skills (Alshumaimeri, 2011; Blattner and Fiori, 2009; Kalasi, 2014; Mork, 2009; Noytim, 2010; Suthiwartnarueput and Wasanasomsithi, 2012; Wang and Vasquez, 2012). The findings of these studies have demonstrated the positive attitudes of language learners towards the use of social media in their learning process, suggesting that skills such as communication, writing, listening, and vocabulary knowledge can be improved through interacting via social media.

Despite the popularity of social media, and its potential for personal interaction and language learning, the significance of its role has not been explored at the tertiary level. While many students spend a considerable amount of time online using social media, the extent to which they utilize it to improve their language skills is relatively unknown. Therefore, this study aims to explore the usefulness of social media from the perspective of Kuwaiti pre-service English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers at the College of Basic Education (CBE) in Kuwait by targeting the following questions:

- 1 Do Kuwaiti pre-service EFL teachers benefit from using social media for learning English?
- 2 If yes, in which language areas/skills, or themes do they obtain the greatest benefit?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The following sub-sections will focus on two main areas: (1) the main principles of SCT, and how they align with the social media affordances, and (2) the empirical findings of the usefulness of using social media in Second and Foreign Language (SL/FL) classrooms. The discussion concerning social media will focus on the possible educational and pedagogical potential of some of the most frequently used social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Wikis, since these are the most significantly reported platforms in the literature.

SCT and social media

From a SCT perspective, learning a language is not an individual endeavour, but rather is essentially embedded in social interaction with other people in culturally-organised activities within a particular social learning context (Mitchell and Myles, 2004; Lantolf and Poehner, 2008). Vygotsky(1978) claimed that, during these activities, a child could perform any task that is beyond their current cognitive ability with the assistance of external mediation. Lantolf (2000) explained that, in a classroom context, mediation can occur between the teacher and students, or among the students themselves, which is to say social mediation, and in the form of artefact mediation, such as language or technology in which language takes the form of a collaborative talk by social mediators, whether teachers or peers, in order to develop the cognition of the other students (Mercer, 1996; Ohta, 2000, Swain, 2000). Therefore, from a SCT perspective, mediation is essential, however Vygotsky (1978) argued that development could only occur if mediation existed in what he called the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). This describes the difference between what a child is capable

of achieving individually within the sphere of their current ability, and what they are able to achieve with assistance from mediators, such as parents, teachers, peers, or cultural tools; in other words, their potential ability. Therefore, learning is a social process that occurs in conjunction with the obtainment of knowledge, appearing first in social interaction with others, in the inter-mental plane, and later becoming internalized individually in the intra-mental plane (Lantolf, 2000). SCT posits that interaction, and in particular talking about language and language use, in other words, engaging in collaborative dialogue (Swain, 2000), is an essential process in second language learning through which students construct knowledge regarding the target language.

Computer-mediated communication tools, including social media platforms, provide a context in which learners can interact not only with their peers and native speakers, but also with artefacts, such as videos links, pictures, and other authentic audio-materials that are able to mediate the way in which they learn language (Lamy and Hample, 2007). Such mediation can enhance a learner's language skills, and assist them in learning the language while interacting with other people through engaging in online discussion, reading other people's posts, or following channels that allow them to interact directly with native speakers. When interacting on social media platforms, students are able to ask questions, and engage in discussion (Kalasi, 2014). Therefore, social media platforms mediate students' learning by providing collaborative learning opportunities, access to information resources in a virtual community in which time and distance are irrelevant, and by connecting formal and informal learning through technology (Li, 2017).

Social media and language learning

Empirical findings have supported the aforementioned theoretical assumption that social media provides a context in which language learning can occur, with studies evidencing that the most frequently used tools, such as Facebook, Twitter, Wikis, and YouTube improve students' language skills. Furthermore, it has been reported that students exhibit a favourable attitude towards employing these platforms in their learning process, due to their potential to enhance their skills.

Blogs and Wikis have been reported to be forms of social media that are beneficial for improving writing and communication skills, collaborative learning, and grammatical knowledge, with empirical studies revealing that blogs can motivate students to develop their writing skills through self-reflection and peer feedback (Vurdin, 2013). Meanwhile, a study undertaken by Noytim (2010) found that learners perceive blogs to be an effective tool for enhancing different language skills, including writing, reading, and vocabulary, while others have observed that the use of blogs encourages students to write, and to practice self-expression. Studies have also reported that wiki-mediated collaborative writing activities enhance students' writing performance (Alshumaimeri, 2011; Mohammed, 2010), grammar and content knowledge (Castañeda and Cho, 2012; Pellet, 2012), and collaboration (Li, 2013).

Furthermore, studies have argued that Facebook can be utilized to improve students' English language performance, to increase motivation, lessen students' stress, and enhance learners' engagement and interaction (Blattner and Fiori, 2009; Shih, 2011). For example, in Shih's (ibid.) study involving tertiary students at a university in Taiwan, the students enjoyed interacting in English with their peers on Facebook, and were comfortable expressing their opinions and thoughts on the platform. Likewise, Yunus, Salehi and Chenzi (2012), and Melor and Salehi (2012) found that integrating social media, such as Facebook, in English as

a Second Language (ESL) classrooms could help to broaden students' knowledge, increase their motivation, and develop their confidence in learning ESL writing. Facebook groups have also been found to be effective in teaching ESL writing, as students are able to learn new vocabularies from reading the group members' comments, as well as by engaging in peer dialogue (Camus et al., 2016), and the spell-check feature helps to reduce their spelling errors (Melor and Salehi, 2012). Mahmud and Ching (2012) supported the incorporation of Facebook as a pedagogical tool, since it has the potential to improve students' language skills. They reported students' positive perceptions regarding the use of social media, and the fact that Facebook had enhanced their second language (L2) skills, such as reading and writing, as well as expanding their social circle, improving their communication skills, and minimizing their apprehension when using the language among their peers. Furthermore, a study by Suthiwartnarueput and Wasanasomsithi (2012) found that the use of Facebook improved grammar and writing skills.

Twitter and YouTube have been reported to be effective social media tools in terms of improving students' listening skills (Hamilton, 2010), and written communication skills (Mork, 2009), and for creating a classroom community (Grosbeck and Holotescu, 2008). In addition, Dervin (2009) argued that Twitter is of benefit to language learners in developing fluency in their written skills, since students read and write when communicating on Twitter, as well as employing the oral skills of speaking and listening, since they are required to focus on limiting their communications to 140 characters. The vast database of multimedia content available on YouTube has also been reported to promote learners' motivation (Hamilton, 2010).

A further benefit of using social media is that it provides a motivational and relaxed learning environment in the form of a comfortable, collaboration-oriented, enjoyable medium, which increases the awareness of its audience (Wang and Vasquez, 2012). Lin, Warchauer and Blake (2016) found that students' motivation and self-confidence increases when they interact using social media, and they attributed this to the participants' ability to communicate with native speakers via the social media platforms, with their data demonstrating a greater perceived progress in listening and speaking than in reading and writing. Meanwhile, Basoz's (2016) study found that pre-service EFL teachers have positive attitudes towards employing social media in their learning process, since it provides them with a relaxed and stress-free language-learning environment. They reported its positive effectiveness in improving the skills of reading (89.9%), communication (80.8%), listening (83.3%), writing (70%), speaking (66.7%), and pronunciation (60.9). However, the participants disagreed that social media helps them to improve their grammar skills, or to plan and organize their studies effectively. In a study involving Saudi Arabian students, Alnujaidi (2017) found that EFL students in Saudi higher education institutions reported positive experiences, attitudes, and expectations in terms of social media use. The majority of participants reported positive experiences in using YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram, which were demonstrated to have developed their listening and writing skills in particular. Most of the participants expressed a strong desire to use social media in their language learning, agreeing that social media assisted them to learn EFL, and English culture, effectively (Alnujaidi, 2017).

Thus, it can be argued that social media is beneficial for the language learning process, however there is a need to investigate its effectiveness among pre-service EFL teachers for two primary reasons. First, the findings of the current study may provide insights for

educators and future EFL teachers in terms of the usage of social media in teaching English. Secondly, relatively few studies have been conducted to explore the impact of using social media for learning EFL in Arab nations generally, and specifically in the Kuwaiti context. The following section presents the methodological approach that was employed to address our research questions.

METHODOLOGY

A quantitative approach was employed for this study, using a questionnaire as an instrument for data collection. A quantitative perspective has many benefits for educational research, as it is considered more reliable and objective, and quantitative analysis can employ statistics to generalize findings, while researchers' subjectivity is reduced in this type of research paradigm (Dörnyei, 2007).

SETTING AND PARTICIPANTS

In total, 201 pre-service EFL teachers enrolled in the English language department at the CBE in Kuwait participated in this study. Data was collected from the participants in the academic year of 2017 to 2018. All of the participants were female undergraduates aged between 19 and 21 years, and all spoke Arabic as their first language, and English as a foreign language (FL). The CBE has a gender-segregated system; therefore it was easier for the researchers to collect the data from the female college where they teach. The participants were all student teachers who were studying the English language in order to become English language teachers following their graduation.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

In this quantitative research study, the data was collected using a questionnaire adapted from previous studies included in the related literature (Basoz, 2016). The adaptations made to the questionnaire were based on a review of the literature, and the current study objectives. As a result, the following five themes were developed: vocabulary development, communication and speaking, reading, listening and writing skills, and the nature of the studying context. Within these themes, 30 items in total sought to explore whether or not the students acquired language skills when using social media. The term 'social media' was used instead of specifying a particular platform, such as Twitter, Facebook, Wikis, and blogs, for two reasons. First, most social media platforms share similar technical features, such as the ability to post and read items, and to share and watch multimedia such as videos, images, and audio files. Second, the study did not involve an exploration of the social media platforms currently being used by the participants. Therefore, it was believed that employing the term 'social media' would be sufficient to refer to the various forms of technologies used by the students.

In order to ensure the questionnaire's validity, it was piloted by 40 of students, who demonstrated no problems with reading, understanding, or scoring their answers. In addition, in order to ensure the validity of the internal consistency of the questionnaire, the statistical programme (SPSS) was applied to calculate the correlations, using Pearson Correlation. The statistical results showed that all of the correlations between each statement and the theme to which it belonged were statistically significant at (0.01). Furthermore, the correlations between each theme and the questionnaire as a whole were also significant, and high in the (0.01) significance level, ranging between (0.702 and 0.889), which confirmed the internal

consistency of the questionnaire, and thus the credibility of the study. The reliability was calculated by locating the (Alpha) for each theme in the questionnaire, and also by applying the (SPSS) to the sample of the study, as illustrated in Table 1. This table shows that the themes of the questionnaire were characterized by a high statistical reliability, as they ranged between (0.70 and 0.78), therefore the results obtained from the application of the basic sample of this study can be trusted.

Table 1: Reliability of questionnaire themes

Theme	No. of Statements	Alpha
Vocabulary development	3	0.77
Reading	2	0.78
Communication	5	0.74
Listening	3	0.77
Writing	6	0.74
Studying context	11	0.70

Data analysis

In order to determine the degree of the effect of social media on learning English, according to the categories used to address the questionnaire's statements, the pre-service teachers' responses were classified into three levels to enable the easy interpretation of the results by applying the following equation:

Category length = range ÷ number of levels (high – moderate – low).

Range = the highest value of answers (5) – the lowest value of answers (1) = 5 – 1 = 4.

Therefore, the Category length = $4 \div 3 = 1.33$, thus adding the answer (1.33) to the end of each category provided the following:

- 1- The minimum: $1 + 1.33 = 2.33$;
- 2- The average: $2.34 + 1.33 = 3.67$;
- 3- The maximum: 3.67 and higher.

The values therefore became as follows:

- 1- The statistical mean ranging between (3.67 to 5) indicated that the effect of social media on teaching English was **high**;
- 2- The statistical mean ranging between (2.34 and 3.67) indicated that the effect of social media on teaching English was **moderate**;
- 3- The statistical mean ranging between (1.00 and 2.33) indicated that the effect of social media on teaching English was **low**.

RESULTS

This section presents the results of the study, following the statistical analysis of the data. In order to address the questions of the study, the sample's responses were collected and analysed using the statistical program (SPSS) to obtain the mean and the standard deviations for each statement in the questionnaire. Each theme was analysed separately in order to clarify the degree of the effect of social media on each theme. The conclusions in terms of the two research questions are then addressed in the subsequent discussion.

The degree of the effect of social media on the vocabulary development of the pre-service English teachers

The recurrences, percentages, means, and the standard deviations for each statement in the questionnaire were calculated and arranged in accordance with the means, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Percentages, means, and the standard deviations of the study sample's responses to vocabulary development

No.	Statements	Percentages					Mean	Std. Deviation	Order according to mean	The Effect
		Totally Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally agree				
1	Social media could help me to develop my vocabulary knowledge.	1.49	1.99	6.97	54.73	34.83	4.19	0.77	1	High
2	I search for the meaning of the vocabulary I encounter when I struggle to understand something written in a comment on social media sites.	3.98	2.49	15.42	48.76	29.35	3.97	0.95	2	High
3	Interacting via social media has helped me to use the new vocabulary that I have learned in meaningful communications.	3.98	5.47	15.92	50.25	24.38	3.86	0.98	3	High
The mean of the theme.							4.01	0.900	-	High

This table demonstrates that the degree of the effect of social media on vocabulary development for the pre-service EFL teachers in the study was high, since the mean of the theme as a whole was (4.01/5), and the standard deviation was (0.900). The themes included three statements that recorded high degrees, with their means ranging between (3.86 and 4.16), with these means lying in the third category of the degree of the effect of social media, demonstrating that their influence was high.

There was a remarkable variety in the responses of the study's sample regarding the statements, with Statement 1, 'Social media could help me to develop my vocabulary knowledge', achieving the first ranking with a mean of (4.19), and a standard deviation of (0.77). Statement 2, 'I search for the meaning of the vocabulary I encounter when I struggle to understand something written in a comment on social media sites', achieved the second ranking with a mean of (3.97), and a standard deviation of (0.95). While Statement 3, 'Interacting via social media has helped me to use the new vocabulary that I have learned in meaningful communications', achieved the third ranking with a mean of (3.86), and a standard deviation of (0.98).

The degree of the effect of social media on the reading development of the pre-service EFL teachers

The recurrences, percentages, means, and the standard deviations for each statement in the second theme were calculated and arranged in accordance with the means, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Percentages, means, and the standard deviations of the study sample's responses to reading.

No.	Statements	Percentages					Mean	Std. Deviation	Order according to mean	The Effect
		Totally Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally agree				
4	Social media could help me to develop my reading skills.	3.48	5.47	20.40	39.30	31.34	3.90	1.02	1	High
5	I read other people's comments when they are written in English.	2.99	3.98	24.38	39.80	28.86	3.88	0.97	2	High
	The mean of the theme.						3.89	0.995	-	High

The above table demonstrates that the degree of the effect of social media on reading for the pre-service EFL teachers was high, since the mean of the theme as a whole was (3.89/5), with a standard deviation of (0.995). This theme included two statements that recorded high degrees, with the means of these statements ranging between (3.88 and 3.90), and their means lying in the third category of the degree of the effect of social media, which was high in terms of its influence. Statement 4, 'Social media could help me to develop my reading skills', achieved the first ranking with a mean of (3.90), and a standard deviation of (1.02). Statement 5, 'I read other people's comments when they are written in English', achieved the second ranking with a mean of (3.88), and a standard deviation of (0.97).

The degree of the effect of social media on the communication skills of the pre-service EFL teachers

The recurrences, percentages, means, and the standard deviations for each statement in the third theme were calculated and arranged according to the means, as presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Percentages, means, and the standard deviations of the study sample's responses to communication.

No.	Statements	Percentages					Mean	Std. Deviation	Order according to mean	The Effect
		Totally Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally agree				
6	Social media could help me to develop my communication skills.	4.48	8.96	15.92	36.32	34.33	3.87	1.12	1	High
7	I like to communicate frequently with my teacher in English using social media.	6.47	15.92	27.36	35.32	14.93	3.36	1.11	5	Moderate
8	I like to communicate frequently with my peers in English using social media.	6.97	12.44	29.85	37.81	12.94	3.37	1.08	4	Moderate
9	Social media could help me to develop my speaking skills.	4.98	11.44	22.89	38.31	22.39	3.62	1.10	2	Moderate
10	Social media could help me to develop my pronunciation.	8.96	12.94	23.88	32.34	21.89	3.45	1.22	3	Moderate
	The mean of the theme.						3.53	1.126	-	Moderate

The above table illustrates that the degree of the effect of social media on the communication skill of the pre-service EFL teachers, including speaking skills was high, since the mean of the theme as a whole was (3.53/5), with a standard deviation of (1.126). Of the five statements included in this theme, one, Statement 6 'Social media could help me to develop my communication skills', recorded a high degree of effect with a mean of (3.87), and a standard deviation of (1.12), while four statements had a moderate degree of effect, since their means ranged between (3.36 and 3.62). These means lay in the second category of the degree of the effect of social media, demonstrating a moderate influence.

There was a remarkable variety in the responses of the study's sample concerning these statements. Statement 9, 'Social media could help me to develop my speaking skills', had a mean of (3.62), and standard deviation of (1.10). Statement 10, 'Social media could help me to develop my pronunciation', had a mean of (3.45), and a standard deviation of (1.22). Statement 8, 'I like to communicate frequently with my peers in English using social media', had a mean of (3.37), and standard deviation of (1.08). Finally, Statement 7, 'I like to communicate frequently with my teacher in English using social media', had a mean of (3.36), and standard deviation of (1.11).

The degree of the effect of social media on the listening skills of the pre-service EFL teachers

The recurrences, percentages, means, and the standard deviations for each statement in the fourth theme were calculated and arranged according to the means, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Percentages, means, and the standard deviations of the study sample's responses to listening.

No.	Statements	Percentages					Mean	Std. Deviation	Order according to mean	The Effect
		Totally Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally agree				
11	Social media could help me to develop my listening skills.	7.46	10.95	16.42	36.32	28.86	3.68	1.21	3	High
12	I usually listen to English music posted on social media.	4.48	9.45	14.93	29.35	41.79	3.95	1.16	2	High
13	I usually watch English videos posted on social media.	4.98	3.48	10.95	32.84	47.76	4.15	1.08	1	High
The mean of the theme.							3.93	1.15	-	High

The above table indicates that the degree of the effect of social media on listening for the pre-service EFL teachers was high, since the mean of the theme as a whole was (3.93/5), with a standard deviation of (1.15). This theme included three statements that recorded high degrees of effect, since the means of these statements ranged between (3.68 and 4.15), therefore lying in the third category of the degree of the effect of social media, indicating a high degree of influence.

There was a remarkable variety in the responses of the study's sample concerning the statements. Statement 13, 'I usually watch English videos posted on social media', achieved the first ranking with a mean of (4.15), and a standard deviation of (1.08). Statement 12, 'I usually listen to English music posted on social media', achieved the second ranking with a mean of (3.95), and a standard deviation of (1.16). Statement 11, 'Social media could help me to develop my listening skills', achieved the third ranking with a mean of (3.68), and standard deviation of (1.21).

The degree of the effect of social media on the writing skills of the pre-service EFL teachers

The recurrences, percentages, means, and the standard deviations for each statement in the fifth theme were calculated and arranged according to the means, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Percentages, means, and the standard deviations of the study sample's responses to writing.

No.	Statements	Percentages					Mean	Std. Deviation	Order according to mean	The Effect
		Totally Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally agree				
14	Social media can help me to develop my writing skills.	4.98	7.46	24.88	37.81	24.88	3.70	1.08	2	High
15	I usually consider the audience when I write on social media.	5.47	11.94	27.86	34.83	19.90	3.52	1.10	5	Moderate
16	Social media could help me to develop my grammar.	4.98	10.95	19.90	37.81	26.37	3.70	1.12	3	High
17	I check my grammar before I post my comments on social media.	3.98	5.47	12.44	40.30	37.81	4.02	1.04	1	High
18	I check the grammar of the posts posted by other people on social media.	7.46	16.42	24.88	30.85	20.40	3.40	1.20	6	Moderate
19	I interact more with my friends using English when using social media.	7.46	11.44	21.39	36.32	23.38	3.57	1.18	4	Moderate
	The mean of the theme.						3.65	1.12	-	Moderate

The above table indicates that the degree of the effect of social media on writing for the pre-service EFL teachers was high, since the mean of the theme as a whole was (3.65/5), with a standard deviation of (1.12). This theme included six statements, three of which recorded high degrees of influence, with their means ranging between (3.70 and 4.02), and lying the third category of the degree of the effect of social media, which indicated a high degree of influence. The statements produced the following results: Statement 17, 'I check my grammar before I post my comments on social media', achieved the first ranking with a mean of (4.02), and a standard deviation of (1.04). It was followed by Statement 14, 'Social media can help me to develop my writing skills', which had a mean of (3.70), and standard deviation of (1.08). Statement 16, 'Social media could help me to develop my grammar', had a mean of (3.70), and standard deviation of (1.12).

The theme included three statements that recorded moderate degrees of effect, since their means ranged between (3.40 and 3.57), therefore lying in the second category of the degree of the effect of social media, which indicated a moderate influence. The results of these statements were as follows: Statement 19, 'I interact more with my friends using English when using social media', achieved a mean of (3.57), and a standard deviation of (1.18). It was followed by Statement 15, 'I usually consider the audience when I write on social media', which achieved a mean of (3.52), and a standard deviation of (1.10). Finally, Statement 18, 'I check the grammar of the posts posted by other people on social media', achieved a mean of (3.40), and a standard deviation of (1.20).

The degree of the effect of social media on the studying context of the pre-service EFL teachers

The recurrences, percentages, means, and the standard deviations for each statement in the sixth theme were calculated and arranged according to the means, as presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Percentages, means, and the standard deviations of the study sample's responses to studying.

No.	Statements	Percentages					Mean	Std. Deviation	Order according to mean	The Effect
		Totally Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally agree				
20	Learning a language through social media can help me to improve my studies.	4.98	4.98	17.41	48.76	23.88	3.82	1.02	5	High
21	I exchange comments and information in English using social media.	2.99	5.97	22.39	44.28	24.38	3.81	0.97	6	High
22	Social media provides learners with access to more real life language use.	2.49	5.97	18.91	51.24	21.39	3.83	0.92	4	High
23	I follow language teachers on social media.	3.98	17.91	19.40	33.83	24.88	3.58	1.16	10	Moderate
24	I feel more confident when I interact with my language teacher via social media.	6.47	9.95	21.39	41.79	20.40	3.60	1.11	9	Moderate
25	Social media can make language learning more accessible.	2.49	4.48	17.91	42.79	32.34	3.98	0.95	1	High
26	Social media can help me to learn wherever I wish.	2.99	5.97	19.90	40.80	30.35	3.90	1.00	3	High
27	I am skeptical about the usefulness of social media in the language classroom.	4.48	12.44	37.81	33.83	11.44	3.35	0.99	11	Moderate
28	Social media provides a more relaxed and stress-free language learning environment.	5.97	3.98	25.87	36.82	27.36	3.76	1.08	7	High
29	The language learner is more self-directed and flexible when employing social media.	3.98	6.47	23.88	46.27	19.40	3.71	0.98	8	High
30	Social media could help me to learn in ways that align with my personality and needs.	3.98	4.48	15.92	44.28	31.34	3.95	1.01	2	High
The mean of the theme.							3.75	1.02	-	High

According to the above table, the degree of the effect of social media on studying for the pre-service EFL teachers was high, since the mean of the theme as a whole was (3.75/5), and the

standard deviation was (1.02). This theme included 11 statements, eight of which recorded high degrees of influence, since the means of these statements ranged between (3.71 and 3.98), and therefore lay in the third category of the degree of the effect of social media, which indicated a high influence.

There was significant variety in the responses of the study's sample regarding the statements, as follows: Statement 25, 'Social media can make language learning more accessible', achieved the first ranking with a mean of (3.98), and a standard deviation of (0.95). Statement 30, 'Social media could help me to learn in ways that align with my personality and needs', achieved the second ranking with a mean of (3.95), and a standard deviation of (1.01). Statement 26, 'Social media can help me to learn wherever I wish', achieved the third ranking with a mean of (3.90), and a standard deviation of (1.00). Finally, Statement 28, 'Social media provides a more relaxed and stress-free language learning environment', achieved the seventh ranking with a mean of (3.76), and a standard deviation of (1.08).

The theme also included three statements that recorded moderate degrees of effect, since the means of these statements ranged between (3.35 and 3.60), and therefore laying in the second category of the degree of the effect of social media, indicating a moderate influence. The results of these statements were as follows: Statement 24, 'I feel more confident when I interact with my language teacher via social media', achieved a mean of (3.60), and a standard deviation of (1.11). Statement 23, 'I follow language teachers on social media', achieved a mean of (3.58), and a standard deviation of (1.16), and finally Statement 27, 'I am skeptical about the usefulness of social media in the language classroom', achieved a mean of (3.35), and a standard deviation of (0.99).

DISCUSSION

After analyzing the effect of social media on each theme separately, it is possible to discuss the effect of social media on all of the themes collectively, and to compare between them. The below table displays the general means and standard deviations of the study sample's responses to the themes of the questionnaire as a whole.

Table 8: The general means and standard deviations of the responses of the study's sample to the themes as a whole.

Theme	Mean	Std. Deviation	Order according to mean	The Effect
Vocabulary development	4.01	0.900	1	High
Reading	3.89	0.995	3	High
Communication	3.53	1.13	6	Moderate
Listening	3.93	1.15	2	High
Writing	3.65	1.12	5	Moderate
Studying context	3.75	1.02	4	High

The data displayed in this table demonstrates a remarkable variety in the responses of the study's sample regarding the themes as a whole. Vocabulary development achieved the first ranking with a mean of (4.01), and a standard deviation of (0.900), followed by listening with a mean of (3.93), and standard deviation of (1.95), then reading with a mean of (3.89), and a standard deviation of (0.995); studying context with a mean of (3.75), and a standard deviation of (1.02); and finally communication with a mean of (3.53), and a standard deviation of (1.13). Therefore, in terms of the first research question of this study, one of the main findings was that the participants do indeed learn different language skills through their use of social media. It was noteworthy that the effect of social media on all of the themes ranged between high and moderate, and that none of themes demonstrated a low effect, thereby confirming that the participants learned different skills through their use of social media. The primary skills that appeared to be developed as a result were vocabulary knowledge, reading, and listening skills as well as providing a relaxed studying context. Thus, from an SCT perspective, social media provides a social learning context in which students interact, which consequently enhances different language skills (Wang and Vasquez, 2012).

The results of this current study proved two main findings discussed in the extant literature: first, the widespread use of social media among language learners, and second, the importance of social media in developing different language skills. The participants' responses confirmed the fact that social media plays an inevitable role in their learning process, which corroborated previous researchers' claims concerning the importance of social media in learning languages (Warschauer and Grimes, 2007; Wang and Vasquez, 2012). Furthermore, the participants in this current study reported positive perspectives regarding the usefulness of social media in improving their language skills, which concurred with other studies in the literature. Many researchers have found that the use of social media in language classrooms improves different language skills, including reading and writing, since students not only read other peers' posts, but also compose comments in order to interact with others (Alshumaimeri, 2011; Noytim, 2010). The findings of this current study concurred, since it was found that the students involved agreed to a high degree that reading other people's comments helped them to develop their reading skills, and that they usually checked the grammar of their posts, which may help them to develop their grammatical knowledge (Suthiwartnarueput and Wasanasomsithi, 2012; Melor and Salehi, 2012). Similarly to the findings of Dervin (2009), and Hamilton (2010), the participants in the current study agreed to a high degree that social media helped them to develop their listening skills, due to the availability of countless English videos on social media platforms. The results of this current study also confirmed that the use of social media expands learners' knowledge of vocabulary, and improves their communication skills (Alnujaidi, 2017; Basoz, 2016). Another important result suggested that social media platforms provide favorable and relaxed learning environments, which facilitate ease of learning. For example, the participants agreed to a high degree that social media provides a stress-free learning environment, and that most materials are accessible via social media, which aligns with the findings of other studies (Alnujaidi, 2017; Melor and Salehi, 2012; Yunus, Salehi and Chenzi, 2012; Wang and Vasquez, 2012).

This study's findings contribute to the literature by further exploring the skills that students develop as a result of interacting via social media. By assessing the ranking of the means of all the themes, it can be concluded that vocabulary development, listening, and reading are the skills that are primarily developed. This can be attributed to the fact that the participants were pre-service EFL teachers, who may read and listen more to online materials on social

media, which may consequently affect their vocabulary knowledge. Another explanation is that EFL students, compared with ESL students, may possess limited language skills, and therefore may find it difficult to interact and communicate with others using the foreign language. Thus, in terms of writing and communication, these students are likely to use either their first language, Arabic, or to alternate between their first and foreign language, since they find it more comfortable to use their first language in communication and writing in on-the-spot contexts. This finding concurred with that of Lin, Warchauer and Blake (2016), who observed a greater perceived progress in listening and speaking than in reading and writing. Nevertheless, this finding contradicted other studies in which the researchers found out that reading, writing, and communication are developed equally (Alnujaidi, 2017; Basoz; 2016; Melor and Salehi, 2012; Suthiwartnarueput and Wasanasomsithi, 2012), although some of those studies were conducted in an ESL context, which may encourage students to use English in writing and communication, as well as in reading and listening, more than students in EFL contexts.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In summary, this current study found that pre-service EFL teachers learn different language skills through their use of social media, specifically those defined in the main themes: vocabulary development, reading, listening, writing, communication. It also found that the subjects perceived vocabulary development, reading, and listening to be the themes that were most affected by their use of social media. In addition, social media provides a relaxed and stress free studying context for EFL pre-service teachers.

Policy makers, curriculum developers, and EFL teachers should consider implementing social media in EFL classrooms, whether in schools or colleges, as it may have a powerful impact on their students' proficiency in EFL. Furthermore, the use of social media for learning should be considered a part of school-wide culture in the sense that everyone in a school, from the administration and library staff to the departmental teams, can produce activities that encourage the use of social media as a learning tool. For example, a Twitter or Instagram account could be established on which students share their favorite books, or favorite place they have visited; ideas for improving the school; suggestions; comments on specific events; and complaints. Parents could also consider approaches to directing their children's usage of social media in ways that will motivate them to use English.

Future research might investigate the kinds of social media platforms are particularly useful for students learning different language skills, which would assist policy makers and curriculum planners when they are considering practical means of integrating social media in the curriculum, and teaching EFL. Furthermore, in contexts in which gender plays a role, future researchers might investigate the differences between male and female perspectives of the usefulness of social media platforms in learning EFL.

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