EFFECTS OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES ON EFL TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT: *This study examines the effects of Social Network Sites (SNS) on English language teaching and learning. SNS effectiveness was measured by participants' experience, attitudes, perceptions, and expectations toward SNS. 107 EFL teachers and 103 EFL students from several higher education institutions were investigated. Findings revealed significant differences between teachers' and students' experiences, attitudes, perceptions, and expectations regarding the effectiveness of SNS in EFL instruction.*

KEYWORDS: EFL; TEFL; SNS

INTRODUCTION

The impact of technology-mediated interaction on the acquisition of the four skills in foreign language learning (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) has been widely stressed and the new generation of language learners would prefer technology-mediated interaction modes of communication for both learning and social purposes (Pauwels (2011). Tudini (2015) also emphasized that communication technologies could provide foreign language students with virtual immersion and learning opportunities as well as higher levels of real-time interaction and appropriately timed, individualized environments. Manuel and Schunke (2016) stated that teachers need to teach students *about* social media and not just teach *with* social media.

Previous studies have investigated EFL teachers' (Author 2016a) and students' (Author 2016b) experience, attitudes, perceptions, and expectations concerning the effectiveness of social network sites (SNS) into English language teaching and learning. The present study extends the findings of these earlier studies by investigating the differences between EFL teachers and students in their experience, attitudes, perceptions, and expectations concerning SNS in language learning instruction.

Purpose of the Study

The study reported here explored the differences between EFL teachers' and students' experience, attitudes, perceptions, and expectations concerning the effectiveness of SNS in EFL. This study addressed the following research questions:
  (1) Is there a statistically significant difference between EFL teachers' and students' *experience* in using SNS?
  (2) Is there a statistically significant difference between EFL teachers' and students' *attitudes* towards using SNS?

(3) Is there a statistically significant difference between EFL teachers' and students' *perceptions* of SNS?

(4) Is there a statistically significant difference between EFL teachers' and students' *expectations* for SNS?

Significance of the Study

This research study aims to investigate the difference between EFL students' experience, attitudes, perceptions, and expectations toward the effectiveness of SNS in English language learning. The results of this study can provide valuable insights into how social networking technologies function as effective teaching and learning tools for EFL language learners when developing their language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). It also provides deeper understanding of the importance of teachers' and students' experiences, attitudes, perceptions, and expectations toward the effectiveness, adoption, integration, and implementation of SNS into the teaching and learning contexts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

EFL students' exchanges in an online environment develop both their language skills and intercultural communicative competence (Guth and Helm 2011). The great popularity of SNS has created new opportunities for language learners to interact in authentic ways that were previously difficult to achieve (Chartrand 2012). SNS build positive relationships among students and provide many opportunities for them to interact with peers, instructors, and native speakers (Blattner and Fiori 2009). SNS is regarded as the latest step in the great shift in computer-assisted language learning and is now a part of thousands of teachers' and students' daily lives (Dudeney and Hockly 2012).

Hung and Yuen (2010) investigated the use of SNS to supplement face-to-face courses as a means of enhancing students' sense of community and promoting classroom communities of practice in the context of higher education. Their findings indicated that 'the majority of participants developed strong feelings of social connectedness and expressed favourable feelings regarding their learning experiences in classes where SNS were used as a supplementary tool' (2010: 703). SNS integration into language teaching was found to 'broaden students' knowledge, increase their motivation, and build confidence in learning writing' (Yunus, Salehi, & Chenzi, 2012: 16). Not only could SNS assist in the acquisition of lower thinking skills (e.g. basic vocabulary), but it could also offer language learners opportunities to acquire higher proficiency skills with more complex structures that involve conceptual learning (Alm 2006). Morofushi & Pasfield-Neofitou (2012) utilized an SNS tool named Bebo, to increase students' opportunities for Japanese use and self-expression, develop student-teacher and student-student relationships outside the classroom, and allow students to share their interests with their classmates and teachers. They argued that Bebo was able to develop students' computer literacy, create opportunities for authentic interaction in the target language, and empower students to find their voices in the target language.

Facebook-integrated instruction can significantly enhance students' interest and motivation (Ru-Chu 2011). Camus et al. (2016) compared the effects of a Facebook-based and LMS-based online discussion forum on students' participation, achievement of learning goals, and overall course performance. They found Facebook better at fostering student participation

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and encouraging peer-to-peer dialogue.

Twitter also has been proved to improve students' written communication skills, as well as their analytical, collaborative, and social networking skills (Mork 2009). Grosseck and Holotescu (2008) argued that Twitter could create a classroom community, promote collaborative writing, foster editing skills, develop literacy skills, provide reader response, offer students opportunities to discuss issues in formal and informal settings, provide collaboration across schools and countries, enhance group-project management, assess opinion and examine consensus, foster interaction about a given topic, and enhance metacognition. Bicen (2012) investigated the usage habits of undergraduate students on Twitter and found that the majority of the participants spent most of their time on Twitter to share quotes, photos, videos, music, and news. The study also found that 34% of students use Twitter on their mobile phones, 30% at home, 20% at cafés/restaurants, 13% at university, and 3% at Internet Cafes.

The Faculty Focus survey (2009) found that a growing number of professors use Twitter to connect with colleagues around the country as well as in the classroom to keep students engaged and encourage dialogue. The survey also reported that almost a third (30.7 %) of the 1,958 respondents who completed the survey are using Twitter in some capacity. More than half (56.4 %) say they have never used Twitter. The remaining 12.9 % of respondents say they tried it but no longer use it. Dervin (2009) argued that Twitter could develop students' fluency in written (writing and reading) and oral (speaking and listening) skills, allow them to focus on what they want to say better within 140 characters, lead them to more interactive and quick discussions, and enhance their metacognition.

Hamilton (2010) found that YouTube's online technology and video streaming capabilities have generated tremendous interest and motivation in EFL students. Similarly, Chartrand (2012) pointed out that YouTube has a number of ESL-related videos posted by teachers and students that can be incorporated into the ESL classroom to promote discussions among students.

In Author's first study (Author 2016a), EFL teachers completed a questionnaire survey of their overall SNS experience. The respondents' overall experience was average; they were most experienced with YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter. Author (2016a) also found that attitudes, perceptions, and expectations concerning SNS among the respondents in his study were positive overall. His results revealed statistically significant correlations between experience and attitudes and between experience and perceptions. In addition, Author found statistically significant correlations between attitudes and perceptions and between attitudes and expectations; however, he found no significant correlation between experience and expectations or between perceptions and expectations. Finally, Author found that the variables of attitudes, perceptions, and expectations towards SNS, taken as a class, were statistically significant predictors of experience in SNS. The significant predictors were attitudes and perceptions.

Author (2016b) went on to investigate the integration and effectiveness of SNS in English language learning in Saudi Arabia as measured in EFL students' experience, attitudes, perceptions, and expectations concerning SNS. This study of students found that, overall, respondents' experience in SNS was average and that they were most experienced with

YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram. As with Author's earlier findings where EFL teachers were concerned, his findings with EFL students indicated that they too had overall positive attitudes, perceptions, and expectations towards SNS. The correlation between experience and attitudes and the correlation between experience and expectations were statistically significant. This study also found statistically significant correlations between attitudes and perceptions, attitudes and expectations, and perceptions and expectations. However, experience did not significantly correlate with perceptions. As with his study of teachers, Author found that among students the variables of attitudes, perceptions, and expectations towards SNS, taken as a class, were statistically significant predictors of experience in SNS. Here the significant predictor was expectations.

METHODS

Participants

Data were collected from two previous studies administered by the Author. The sample of the first study comprised EFL teachers (N=107) in several Saudi higher education institutions, including male, female, Saudi, and non-Saudi EFL teachers holding different academic positions (i.e. teachers, lecturers, assistant professors, associate professors, and professors). The sample of the second study comprised EFL students (N=103) in several Saudi higher education institutions, including male, female, Saudi, and non-Saudi EFL students at different college levels and with various majors.

Research Constructs

The four constructs used in the two previous studies were: experience, attitudes, perceptions, and expectations. A definition of each construct is provided below:

1. *Experience* was defined as knowledge and mastery of SNS tools.
2. *Attitude* was defined as "an internal factor when comparing interpersonal traits such as one's feelings or motivation toward an innovation" (Johnson, 2010, p. 51).
3. *Perception* was defined as "an external factor which concerns one's view, understanding, belief, or reaction to an innovation" (Johnson, 2010, p. 51).
4. *Expectation* was defined as "one's belief, understanding, or conception about an innovation" (Johnson, 2010, p. 51).

Data Collection

The data collection instrument was a survey questionnaire consisting of five parts with 63 items. The first part comprised five items that focused on the participants' demographics. The second part comprised 10 items that were designed to identify the participants' experiences in SNS. The third and fourth parts comprised 10 Likert-scale items designed to identify participants' attitudes and 20 Likert-scale items to identify participants' perceptions toward SNS, respectively. The fifth part comprised 18 Likert-scale items designed to identify the participants' expectations toward SNS.

Data Analysis

A two-sample t-test was employed to investigate the differences between EFL teachers' and students' experience, attitudes, perceptions, and expectations towards the effectiveness of SNS in English language teaching and learning.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Experience in Using SNS

A statistical analysis, as explained above in the Method section, was conducted to acquire useful insights into teachers' and students' experience with using SNS (see Figure 1). Interestingly, this analysis revealed that the teachers' overall experience was average (mean=2.60, standard deviation=1.22). On a positive note, the teachers had robust experience with using YouTube (4.28) and significant experience with using Facebook (3.78). However, they had only average experience with using Twitter (3.15), Google+ (2.72), Instagram (2.55), Academia (2.26), and Classmate (1.97). However, they were shown to have poor experience with using Flickr (1.79), English, baby! (1.79), and Myspace (1.77).

Similarly, a statistical analysis of the SNS experience of students (see Figure 1) revealed that their overall experience was also average (mean=2.97, standard deviation=1.32). It was found that the students had robust experience with YouTube (4.27) and significant experience with Twitter (3.81), Instagram (3.50), and Facebook (3.47). However, they had only average experience with Google+ (2.84), Classmates (2.72), English, baby! (2.51), Academia (2.35), and Flickr (2.22). Disappointingly, they had poor experience with Myspace (1.99).
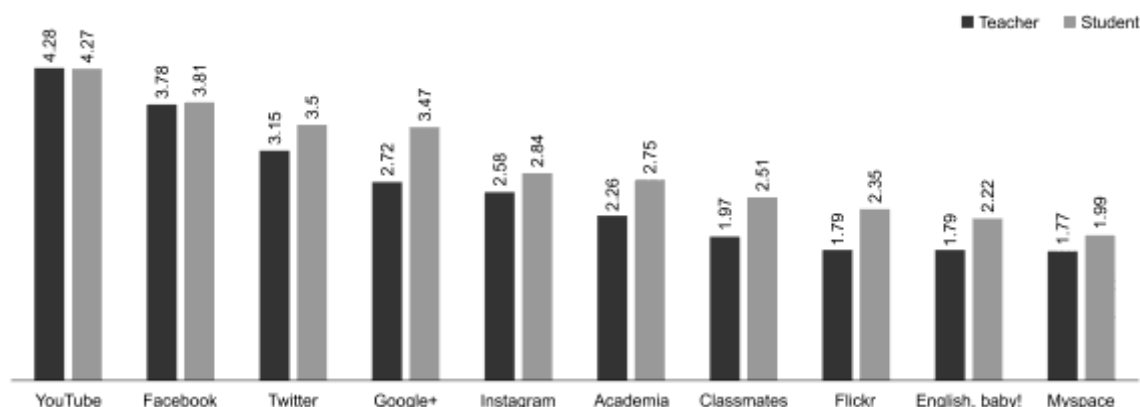

Figure 1. Comparison between Teachers' and Students' Experience with SNS

Note: The mean score >3 indicates teachers' average experience, >4 indicates very good experience and the <2 indicates poor experience. The overall mean score for teachers was 2,60, while the overall mean score for students was 2.97.

Differences between Teachers' and Students' Experience in Using SNS

A two-sample t-test was performed to investigate the differences between teachers' and students' experience in using SNS. The results (see Table 1) showed a significant difference in the scores for teachers' experience (mean=26.06, standard deviation=7.40) and those of students (mean=29.69, standard deviation=8.47); $t(209)=3.31$, $p = 0.05$: students had more experience using SNS than teachers had.

	Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t	Degrees of Freedom	Significance
Experience	Teachers	107	26.06	7.402	3.31	209	0.05
	Students	103	29.69	8.477			

Table 1. Two-Sample t-Test for Teachers' and Students' Experience Using SNS

Attitudes towards SNS

As explained in the Method section, a statistical analysis was conducted to assess teachers' attitudes towards SNS (see Figure 2). Interestingly, this analysis showed that their overall attitude was positive (mean=3.44, standard deviation=1.8).
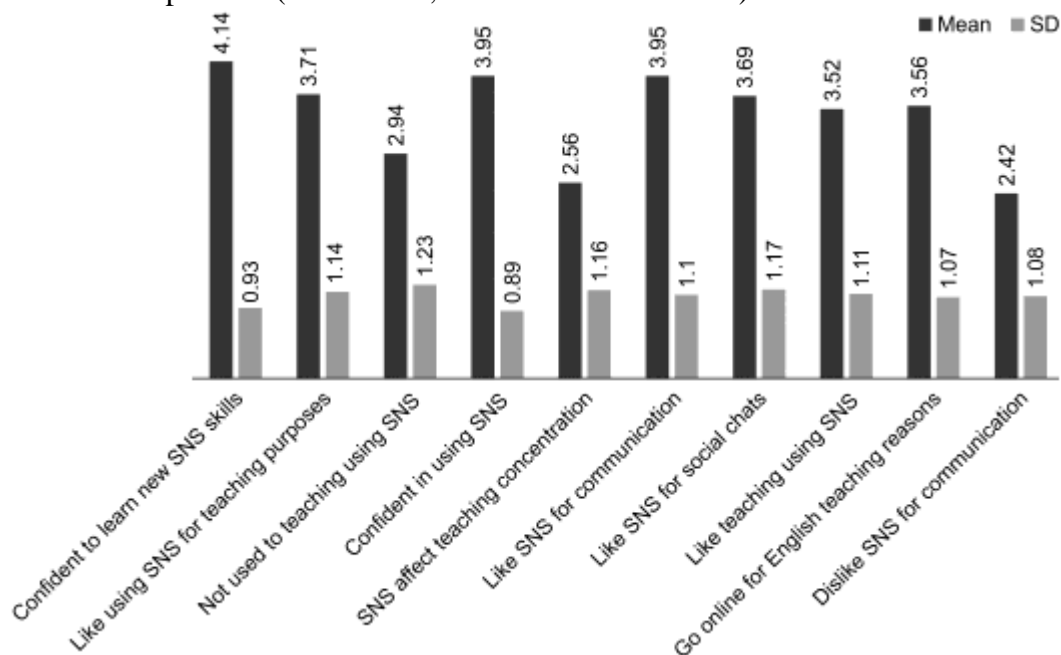

Figure 2. Teachers' Attitudes towards SNS
Note: The mean score >3 indicates teachers' positive agreement and # indicates neutral agreement. The overall mean score was 3.44 with the SD 1.80, which indicates a general positive attitude of teachers toward SNS use in the EFL context.

Moreover, the statistical analysis of the SNS attitudes of students (see Figure 3) showed that their overall attitude was also positive (mean=3.46, standard deviation=1.39), similar to that of teachers.
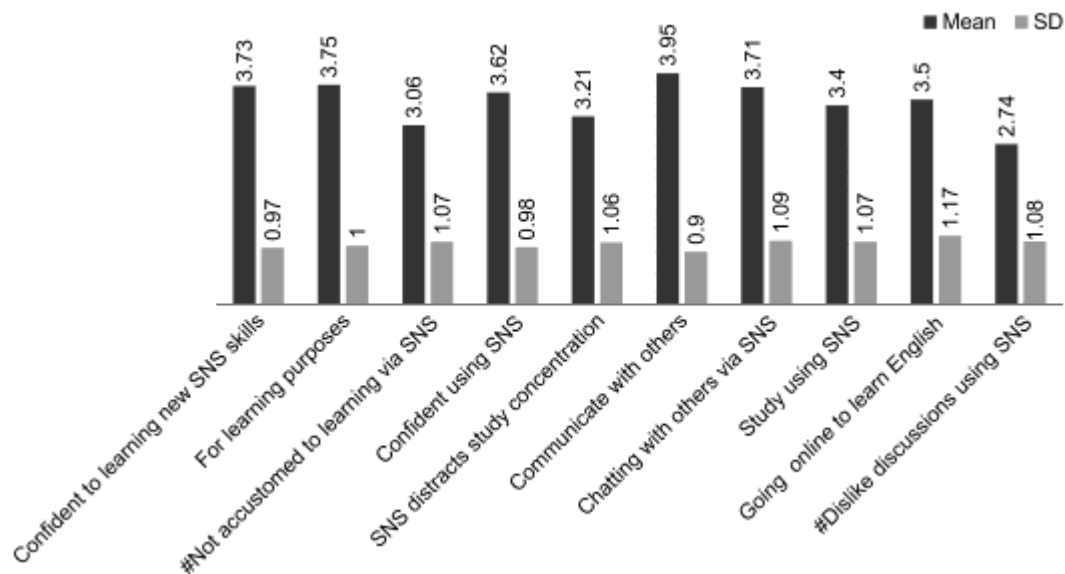
Figure 3. Students' Attitudes towards SNS

Note: The mean score >3 indicates students' positive agreement, while # indicates neutral agreement. The overall mean score was 3.46 with the SD of 1.39, which indicates a general positive consensus of students' attitudes toward SNS in the EFL context.

Differences between EFL Teachers' and Students' Attitudes towards SNS

A two-sample t-test was performed to investigate the differences between EFL teachers' and students' attitudes towards SNS in English language teaching and learning. The results (see Table 2) showed a significant difference between the scores for teachers' attitudes (mean=76.27, standard deviation=12.09) and those of students (mean=34.66, standard deviation=5.77); $t(208)=31.61$, $p = 0.05$: teachers had more positive attitudes towards SNS than students had.

	Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t	Degrees of Freedom	Significance
Attitudes	**Teachers**	107	76.27	12.09	31.61	208	0.05
	Students	103	34.66	5.77			

Table 2. Two-Sample t-Test for Teachers' and Students' Attitudes towards SNS

Perceptions of SNS

It was encouraging to note that the statistical analysis of teachers' perceptions of SNS (see Figure 4) revealed their overall perceptions to be positive (mean=3.87, standard deviation=0.92).
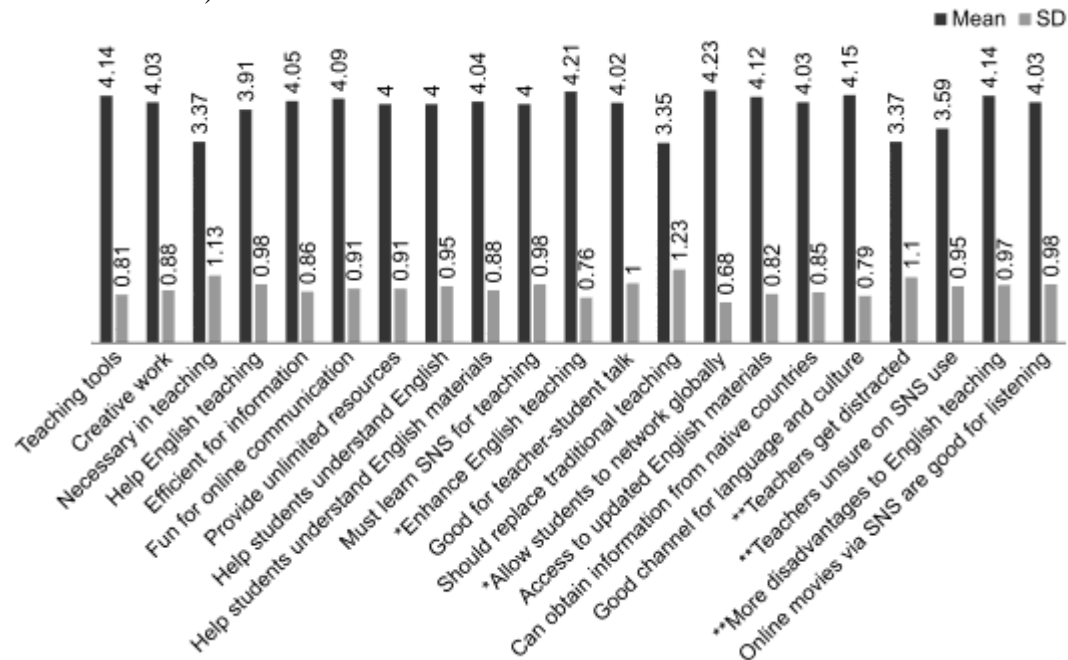

Figure 4. Teachers' Perceptions of SNS

Note: All teachers were in agreement except for items indicated by * to mean strong agreement and ** for disagreement. The overall mean score was 3.87 with the SD of 0.92, which indicates a general positive consensus of teachers' perceptions toward SNS in the EFL context.

Similarly, the statistical analysis of students' SNS perceptions (see Figure 5) showed that their overall perceptions of SNS were also positive (mean= 3.94, standard deviation=0.96).
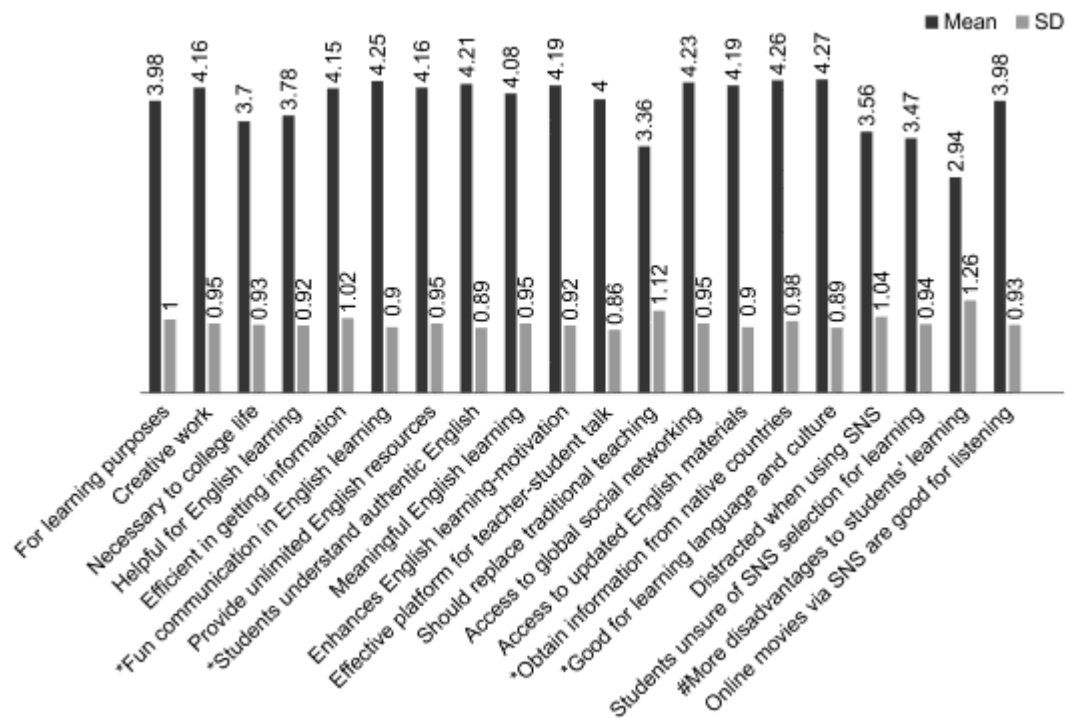
Figure 5. Students' Perceptions of SNS
*Note: The mean score >3 indicates students' positive agreement, * indicates strong agreement, and # indicates neutral agreement. The overall mean score was 3.94 with the SD 0.96, which indicates a general positive consensus of students' perceptions toward SNS in the EFL context.*

Differences between EFL Teachers' and Students' Perceptions of SNS

A two-sample t-test was performed to investigate the difference between EFL teachers' and students' perceptions of SNS in English language teaching and learning. The results (see Table 3) showed a significant difference between the scores for teachers' perceptions (mean=68.24, standard deviation=12.23) and those of students (mean=78.61, standard deviation=13.10); $t(208)=5.92$, $p = 0.05$: students had more positive perceptions of SNS than teachers had.

	Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t	Degrees of Freedom	Significance
Perceptions	**Teachers**	107	68.24	12.23	5.92	208	0.05
	Students	103	78.61	13.10			

Table 3. Two-Sample t-Test for Teachers' and Students' Perceptions of SNS

Expectations for SNS

Continuing the positive trend, the statistical analysis of teachers' expectations for SNS (see Figure 6) showed that their overall expectations for SNS were positive (mean= 3.7, standard deviation=0.92).
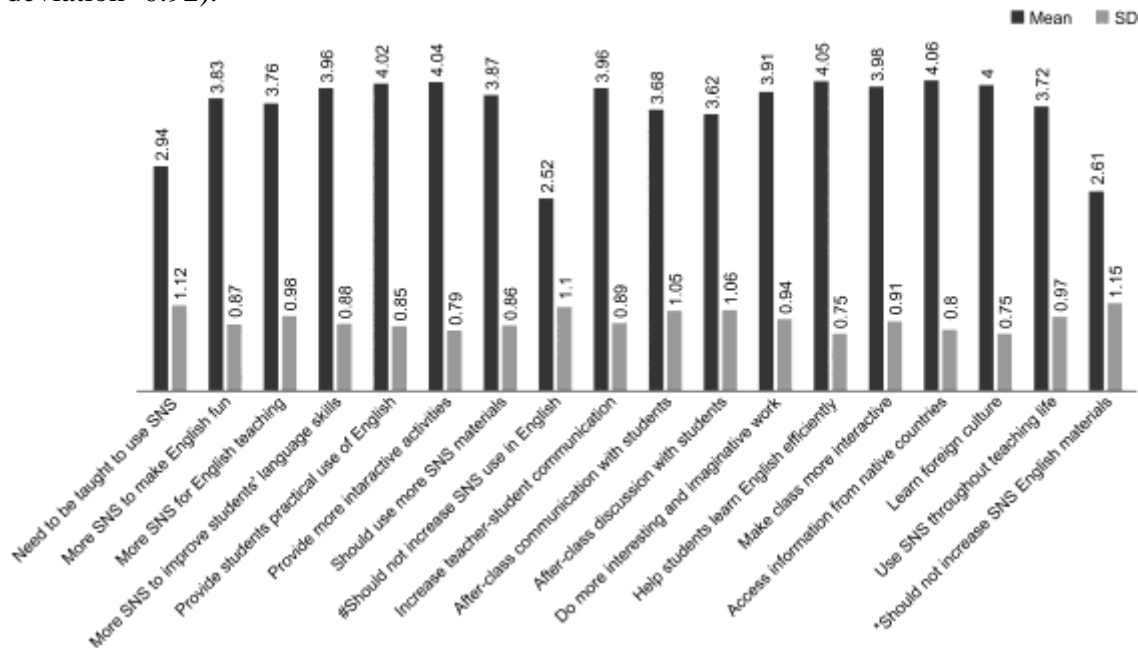

Figure 6. Teachers' Expectation for SNS

Note: All teachers were in positive agreement except in items marked with # to mean a neutral agreement. The overall mean score was 3.70 with the SD 0.92, which indicates a general positive consensus of teachers' expectations toward SNS the EFL context.

Adding further to the positive trend, the statistical analysis of students' expectations for SNS (see Figure 7) showed that their overall expectations for SNS were also positive (mean= 3.84, standard deviation=0.99).
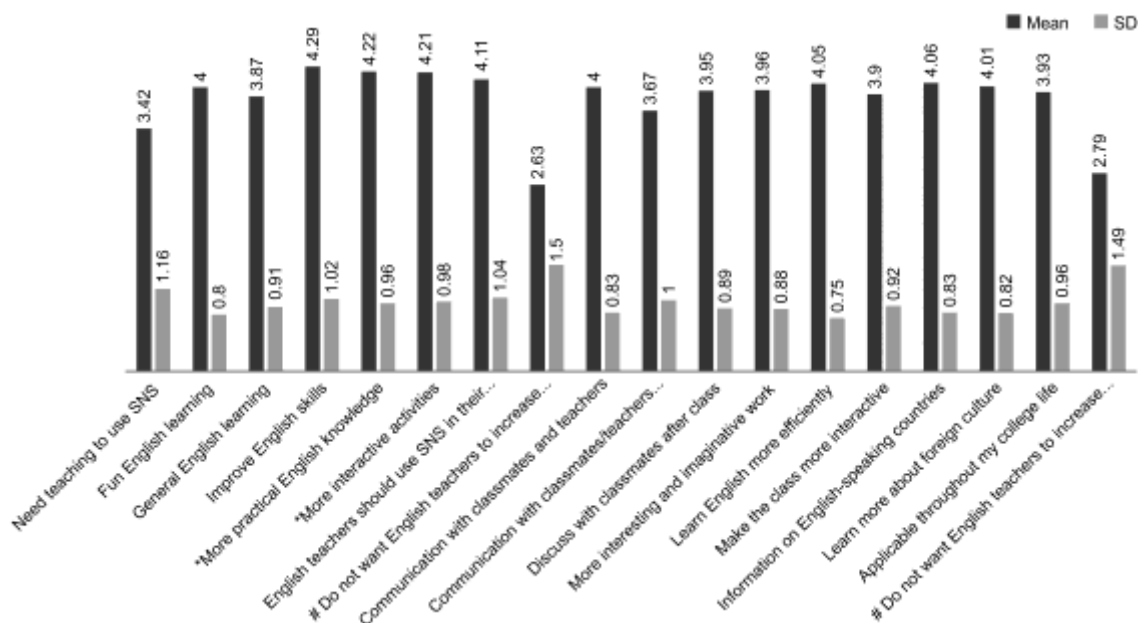

Figure 7. Students' Expectation for SNS

Note: The mean score >3 indicates students' positive agreement, * indicates strong agreement, and # indicates neutral agreement. The overall mean score was 3.84 with the SD 0.99, which indicates a general high and positive consensus of students' expectations toward SNS use in the EFL context.

Differences between EFL Teachers' and Students' Expectations for SNS

A two-sample t-test was performed to investigate the difference between EFL teachers' and students' expectations for SNS in English language teaching and learning. The results (see Table 4) showed a significant difference in the scores for teachers' expectations (mean=26.14, standard deviation=7.44) and those for students (mean=69.06, standard deviation=11.69); $t(208)=31.84$, $p = 0.05$: students had more positive expectations for SNS than teachers had.

	Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t	Degrees of Freedom	Significance
Expectations	**Teachers**	107	26.14	7.44	31.84	208	0.05
	Students	103	69.06	11.69			

Table 4. Two-Sample t-Test for Teachers' and Students' Expectations for SNS

CONCLUSION

The results presented above reveal that teachers' and students' overall experience of SNS was positive. These findings also indicate that the overall attitudes, perceptions, and expectations of respondents concerning SNS were positive. The study also revealed significant differences in all four of these areas between the findings for teachers and those for students: students had more experience of using SNS tools than teachers and more positive perceptions and expectations. However, teachers had more positive attitudes towards SNS than students. Hung and Yuen (2010) indicated that the majority of participants developed strong feelings of social connectedness and expressed favourable feelings regarding their learning experiences in classes where social networking sites were used as a supplementary tool.

Language learners should also be provided with SNS integration throughout their learning experience. They need opportunities to best integrate SNS in their learning process in order to improve their performance, and they need to be exposed to different SNS tools so that they can better use them regardless of the limitations of time and place. Both language teachers and learners also need adequate technical support in order to enhance the adoption and integration of SNS and to overcome any technical difficulties arising before, during, and after the integration process. The learning environment should also be equipped with necessary tools in order to better encourage teachers and students to adopt SNS as an integral part of their teaching and learning processes. Yunus, Salehi, & Chenzi (2012) argued that it is essential for students and teachers to be equipped with technical skills to make them competent for life-long learning and teaching.

Language teachers should be provided with professional development in SNS integration through workshops, seminars, and conferences. They need training on how to best integrate

SNS in their teaching in order to improve their instructional performance and empower their students. They need to learn best practices associated with SNS in order to make better use of them as supplementary components of the language teaching process. Mix (2010) emphasized that institutions that are designed well are more likely to bring services to students, build connections, and establish the necessary culture to achieve higher levels of student success.

Many higher education institutions have spent a large amount of money establishing the infrastructure of their campuses. Great attention must also be paid to the adoption, integration, and implementation of SNS in language teaching and learning. Redecker, Ala-Mutka, and Punie (2008) concluded in their study that SNS enable higher education institutions to face the challenges of changing learning contexts and to support lifelong learning.

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY

The results of this study suggest that further research could profitably address the issue of SNS in EFL teaching and learning. The following recommendations are offered for further investigation:

(1) This study was limited to EFL teachers' and students' experience, attitudes, perceptions, and expectations concerning SNS. Future research should cover other factors such as students' learning styles and teachers' teaching methods, as SNS adoption and integration are integral parts of the teaching and learning process generally.

(2) This study used a quantitative approach to investigating EFL teachers' and students' experience, attitudes, perceptions, and expectations concerning SNS. Qualitative approaches can be expected to shed more light on the issue of SNS in language teaching and learning.

(3) This study was conducted on teachers and students of English as a foreign language. Future research might also cover the influence of SNS on teaching and learning other foreign languages.

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