Role of Social Media in Developing English Language Skills: Writing in Context

Taj Mohammad[1], Aadel Yousuf Khandey[1]*, Soada Idris[1], and Zulfi Syed[1]

[1]Department of English, Najran University, Saudi Arabia.

*Correspondence: aykhanday@nu.edu.sa (Aadel Yousuf Khandey, Department of English, Najran University, Saudi Arabia).

ABSTRACT

The present research is propelled to utilize indistinguishable social media as an innovative and creative tool for language learning as Darekshan and Aliabbasi, (2015) state, "Social network platforms are mentioned as innovative and creative ways to learn English as a second language" (p.1092). The research aims to assess, investigate, and rationalize role of social media in developing writing skills. It analyses participants' opinions on the use of social media in language learning. As part of methodology, the research uses a triangulation: a survey questionnaire, a semi-structured interview (for students), and WhatsApp messages thread (for students). The study offers recommendations to integrate social media as a formal tool in classroom teaching.

Keywords: Apparatus, Language skills, Social media, English language, and SPSS analysis.

INTRODUCTION:

Technology has such a great impact on our life and education. Students are often found using smart phones during the lecture. They seem to be more interested in using different social networking sites like WhatsApp, LinkedIn, Google chat, Facebook, etc. than to listen to teachers' lectures. Resultantly, teachers have had to adjust their methodologies and techniques to cater to students' interests (their use of social media) while teaching in the classroom (Hasibuzzaman *et al*., 2022).

Social media has busted the myth that traditional classroom teaching is the only successful method of teaching. Nevertheless, the advent of the internet and technology has provided innovation and creativity in language teaching which of course caters to the psychological and emotional needs of students. As per the obsession of students, it is mandatory to create a techno-friendly environment in the classroom to exploit students' interest to facilitate the teaching-learning

process, as there seems to be no substitution of technology in the near future. To facilitate the teaching-learning process and ease the classroom environment, teachers can form a group on WhatsApp or Facebook and encourage students to use the target language while sharing ideas (as texts) or having discussions on different topics (as a thread of messages) provided by the teachers in advance. It is quite rewarding for students who are shy in nature and feel hesitant to form a physical group in the classroom. The virtual mode of teaching provides teachers with sufficient opportunities to provide feedback to students. A language teacher can exploit Instagram, Face-book, and Twitter very smartly to teach a language. Facebook and other social networks extend the scope of communication between learners and expose them to communication and information technology (Elliott *et al.,* 2010).

Social media can be a reliable platform that gives students learning environments to enhance their partici-

pation in the learning process under the guidance of teachers to exchange their views on different topics by using the target language (Mazman & Usluel, 2010). Moreover, social media like Facebook and WhatsApp encourages students to do their homework (Kitsis, 2008) in an innovative way. According to Carmean & Haefner, (2002) social networks are considered applied online technologies which make second language learning more social, enjoyable, and stress-free. Real learning occurs when it is social and student-centered. In other words, this style of education leads to a "meaningful understanding of material and content" (p. 29).

Social networks enhance and develop a social environment for learners who desire to engage with people from all over the world in order to improve their language skills (Godwin-Jones, 2008; Sturgeon & Walker, 2009). Online social technologies have transcended national borders, transforming the entire world into a microcosm. If technology is used constructively, it can greatly aid in the development of language skills such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking (Miller *et al.,* 2018) state:

One fruitful source of technology-based language learning
Is social media Modern foreign language learners are?
Active participants in the online world in their everyday lives,
So it seems natural for instructors to adopt this inherently
Collaborative platforms to the classroom environment (p. 550).

Technology may assist in developing our communication skills and has the potential to provide us with all the assistance we need to learn a language. Social media network is an effective source where teachers and learners can receive and share a huge amount of authentic learning materials (Blake, 2013). Undoubtedly, social media is an innovative and creative way of learning and students rarely get bored with it. Being influenced with innumerable learning advantages of social networks, the researchers exerted their efforts in exploring it (particularly WhatsApp) as a tool to harness students' infatuation with smart phones to open new vistas of developing a language. Students usually do not like writing as a classroom activity. They do not

feel interested to develop their writing skills. Most of the students memorize writing paragraphs in order to score good marks and pass the examination. In this technological era, writing, which requires intensive attention, is the most suffering and neglected skill as it is hardly practiced by students. WhatsApp application is used by teachers and learners to develop writing skills because most students use it to write their mess-ages (as revealed through the analysis of data obtained from students). This study aims to bridge the gap between social media and traditional classroom education, as well as to universalize researchers' experiences using social media (WhatsApp) as a learning tool.

Review of Literature
Social media provide English Language Learners (ELL) with choices of when, where, and how to study and enable them to take charge of their own learning by focusing on content instead of struggling with the mechanics of reading and writing English (Kurzweil Educational Systems, 2004). Kurzweil instills 3000 features that aid in the composition, editing, and proofreading of written work, such as converting highlighted text into an outline as a starting point for writing, using word prediction to improve vocabulary selection and spelling, using the thesaurus to substitute alternate words to make writing more interesting, and using the dictionary and spell check to make proofreading easier (Bakeer, 2018). Researches on social media focus on the use of media tools, personally or for the purpose of learning/ teaching a language. It is assumed that integrating social media applications brings several benefits to learning a foreign language. However, if Facebook is utilized as an educational tool, it must be effectively integrated into the course objectives in order to facilitate effective language learning (Jones *et al.,* 2010; Kabilan *et al.,* 2010; Tess, 2013). Social media develops a particular language behavior in a given social setup which is the need of current teaching and learning program. In this kind of setup, preferably, the learners not only learn a language but also explore the possibilities to use language in a variety of contexts.

Integrating social media in teaching and learning language leads to the development of a new phase of educational inquiry, educational communication, educational groups, collaboration groups, and multiple platforms to share information and resources. Wherever

they are, students and teachers are always connected with each other through online group activities. They only need to have an account and a group where they can share assignments, queries, homework, etc. They can discuss their academic issues and problems with quick feedback (Manish & Yogesh, 2015). Previous researches suggest incorporating social media with curriculum enhances the scope of interaction, collaboration, identity work, information, & resource sharing, or has good cognitive, social, and emotional effects (Greenhow & Lewin, 2015). Professors can use social media to stay in touch with their students both on and off campus, as well as with former students. Professors utilize social media to teach their students by creating groups and accounts for them to access information (Bakeer, 2018). According to Ghasemi & Hashemi, (2011) social media tools serve to enhance interactive teaching and learning methods and provide various opportunities for innovation. They can temper students' interest in how languages work, increase cognitive difficulty, and increase their ability to be self-sufficient in the use of the new language. ICT is a great tool for allowing students to be completely engaged in their language learning process while also encouraging creativity and collaboration (Bakeer, 2018). Social media plays an important role in breaking out the imposed restrictions on receiving education online from home. Students, comfortably, can access materials, lectures, and guidance by connecting to the online classroom through a computer network, breaking all barriers such as age, economic and gender issues, etc (Selfe,1990). This study indicates social networks like Facebook, email, WhatsApp and computer delimit the chances of barriers in learning language. Social media is more responsible for bringing changes to develop, acquire and deliver knowledge of a foreign language. It never intends to replace the teacher but shoulders more responsibilities on the teacher to play the role of a manager, controller, designer, and facilitator in developing communication technologies for teaching language. The teacher collaborates, shares, and generates knowledge and content in a different way which seems more creative and interesting for learners. This is the so-called need of the current education system (Gupta, 2019). Due to several advantages of social media, the present research is an attempt to identify, assess, investigate, & rationalize the use of social media in enhan-

cing English language skills, which is a very rare practice at Najran University, KSA. This research anticipate motivating several of EFL teachers worldwide use social media (WhatsApp & Facebook) inside/ out-side the classroom to develop writing skill of students.

METHODOLOGY:
Method
The research adopted a triangulation: students' survey questionnaire, students' semi structured interview, and WhatsApp message thread of students. They are selected keeping in mind the research problem to be investigated, the nature of sampling, and the effectiveness of the tools (Rana & Kumar, 2014).

Tools
One survey questionnaire (containing 14 items) for students, students' semi-structured interviews, and WhatsApp message threads of students are used to obtain and analyze the data. A set of selected topics from the course book is given to students to write on any one topic after a training/ teaching of two months. The write-ups are analyzed to compare and contrast what they perceive (in the questionnaire) regarding the use of social media in writing enhancement and what they could actually perform (writing samples in form of WhatsApp threads) to validate the data. A semistructured interview was conducted to ensure the validity & reliability of using WhatsApp develops writing skills.

Participants
Twenty-six students are selected using the convenience sampling method for conducting the research survey. During the interview, the researchers followed the purposive sampling criteria.

Procedure
The questionnaires are distributed among students and analyzed using SPSS. Further, data from students is also used to justify the use of social media. Students' write-ups through WhatsApp threads are analyzed to minutely observe the development of writing skills. Finally, the data is compared to rationalize the WhatsApp application as a formal tool to teach and learn the language and use it as a formal tool.

Objectives of the study
○ To assess, investigate, and rationalize the role of social media in developing writing skill

o   To analyze participants' responses on the use of social media

o   To offer recommendations to integrate social media as a formal tool

Research questions

1) To what extent social media can help in developing writing skills?
2) Whether social media can be integrated as a formal tool in teaching/ learning?

Analysis of data

The study has been divided into two parts: the first contained a detailed distinctive analysis and discussion of the statements of the questionnaires and the second one was a detailed distinctive analysis and discussion of the responses of the interview. Based on the findings, the researchers offered recommendations and suggestions to integrate social media as a formal tool in language learning/ teaching.
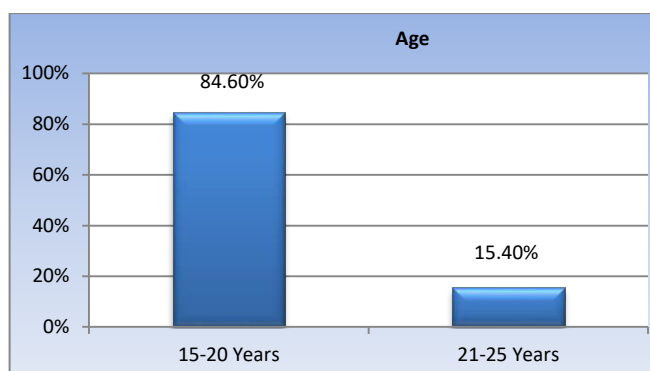
Data Analysis

Fig. 1: Age group of respondents.

The above graph shows that 84.60% students are in the age group of 15-20 years and 15.40% students are in the age group of 21-25 years. Therefore, it is clear that

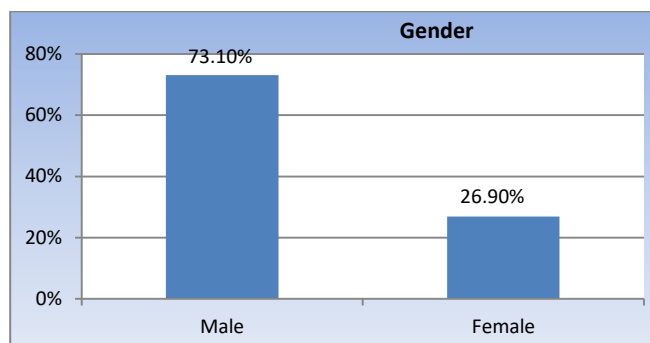the most of the students are in the age group of 15-20 years.

Fig. 2: Gender group of respondents.

In **Fig. 2**, we can see that 73.10% of the participants were male and 26.90% were female. It shows that the percentage of male participants is higher than female participants. It also depicts that less female students participated in the study.
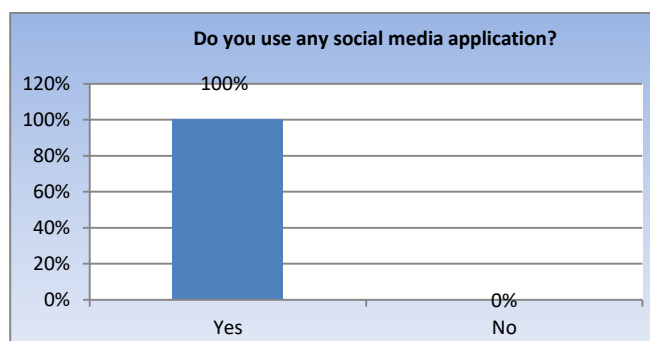

Fig. 3: Knowledge of Social Media Respondents.

The above item has two options [a. Yes b. No] and only one option was selected by the respondents. The data in the graph three reflected that 100% of the respondents were of the view that they used social media in their daily life. Therefore, it reflects that every student either male or female uses social media applications.

Table 1: A Dichotomy group is tabulated at value 1.

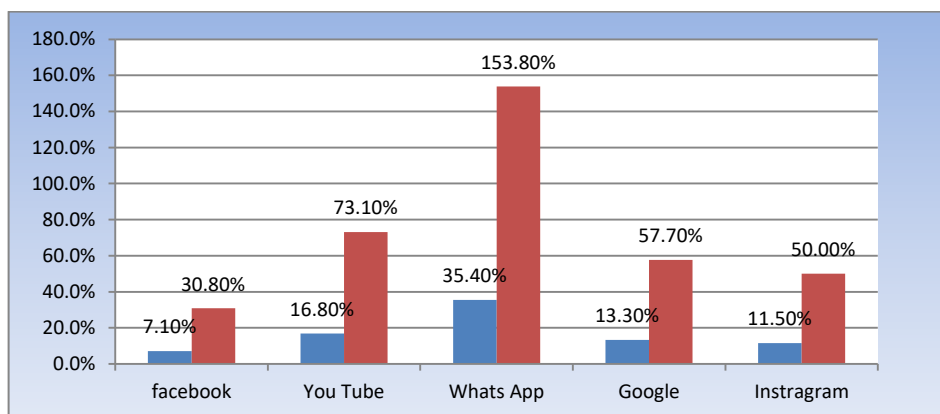|		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	N
a)	Facebook	8	7.1%	30.8%
b)	YouTube	19	16.8%	73.1%
C)	Twitter	18	15.9%	69.2%
d)	Instagram	13	11.5%	50.0%
e)	WhatsApp	40	35.4%	153.8%
f)	Google	15	13.3%	57.7%
	Total	113	100.0%	434.6%

Fig. 4: Knowledge of Social Media

The above item has seven options [a. Facebook b. YouTube c. WhatsApp d. Google e. Instagram] the respondents selected all these options. In the above table, the column "N" indicates how many respondents selected each option. The 'Percent of Responses' column indicates what percentage of the total number of options mentioned is contained in each category. The 'Percent of Cases' indicates what percentage of respondents selected options of each given type. In the column of 'percent of cases', there is a possibility to have above 100%, that is because each respondent can select more than one category. As shown in the above figure, 26 students were selected and total 113 responses were generated. Those 26 students opted 88 categories that are almost more than four categories per respondent. Of the 113 category "c" [WhatsApp) was selected frequently by 40 responses (representing 35.4%, the largest portion of total) by 153.8%, in other words we can say from the above data that 153.8% of the cases responded that mostly they use WhatsApp as a social media in their daily life. That is 35.4% of all responses. Category "b" [YouTube] is the second most chosen response 73.1% of the respondents selected the option that is the 16.8% of the total response. Category "e" Instagram, the third most chosen response, 57% of the respondents selected the option that is the 13.3% of the total response. Category "e" [Instagram] was the least opted category by the respondents. The above data indicates that most of the participants (PYP students) used different social applications in their daily life whereas WhatsApp was the most popular among students.

The data in the graph five reflects that 30.8% of the respondents use social media 1-2 hours daily, 53.80%

of the respondents use social media 3-5 hours daily which is the highest figure in graph and 15.40% of them use social media more than five hours daily. Therefore, this graph depicts clearly that most of the students use social media 3-5 hours on daily basis.
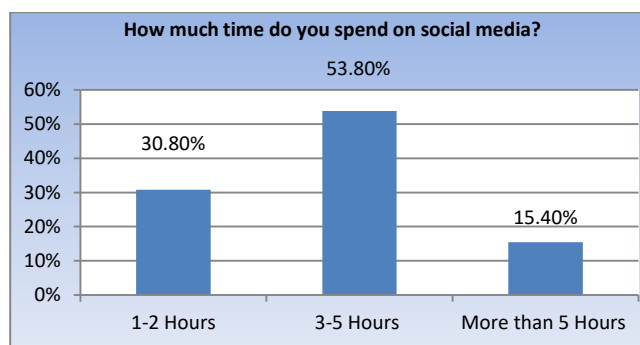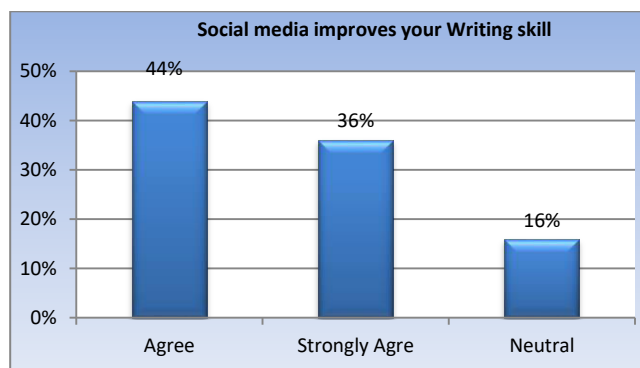

Fig. 5: Time spend on social media.

Fig. 6: Writing Skills of social Media.

The data in the graph six reflects that 44% of the respondents agreed that social media improved their writing skill, and 36% of them strongly agreed that it improved their writing skill, while as, 16% of them remained neutral. Therefore, it clearly shows that most of the respondents agreed that by using social media application and improved their writing skill.
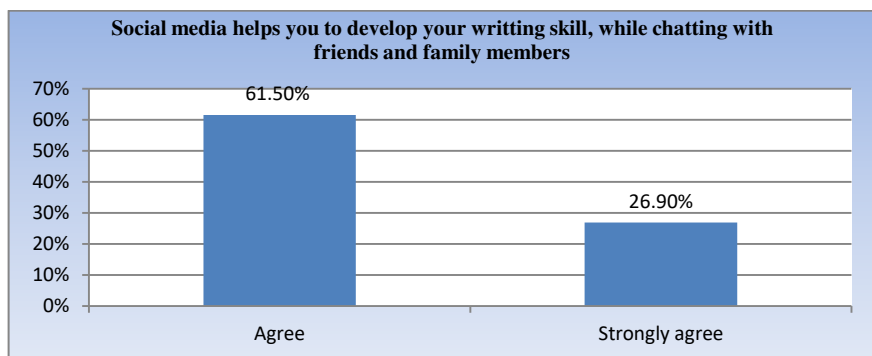
Fig. 7: Social Media chatting rate.

The data in the graph seven reflected that 61.50% of the respondents agreed and 26.90% of them strongly agreed that while (texting) with friends and family members, they developed their writing skill. Therefore, it is clear that all the respondents agreed that social media application developed their writing skill.
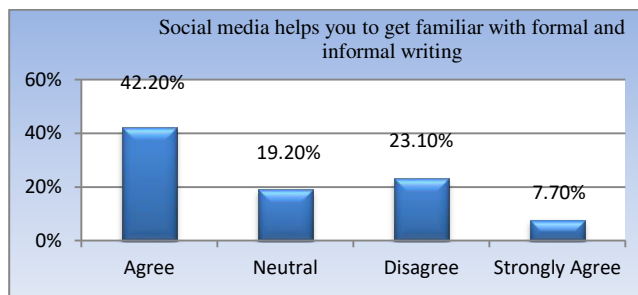
Fig. 8: Vocabulary response on Social Media.

The data in the graph eight reflects that 26.90% of the respondents responded that social media helped them to improve their vocabulary and 38.50% strongly agreed while as, 26.90% remained neutral. Therefore, it clearly shows that majority of the respondents agreed that use of social media helped them in developing vocabulary which ultimately affects their writing skill.

Fig. 9: Social Media helps familiar with formal and informal writing.

The data in the graph nine reflects that 42.20% of the respondents agreed, that social media helped them to get them familiar with formal and informal writing. 7.70% of them also strongly agreed with the same while as, 23.10% of the respondents admitted that social media did not help them to comprehend familiar and unfamiliar writing, and 19.20% of them did not express themselves. Therefore, it shows that most of the respondents agreed that social media helped them to get familiar with formal and informal writing.
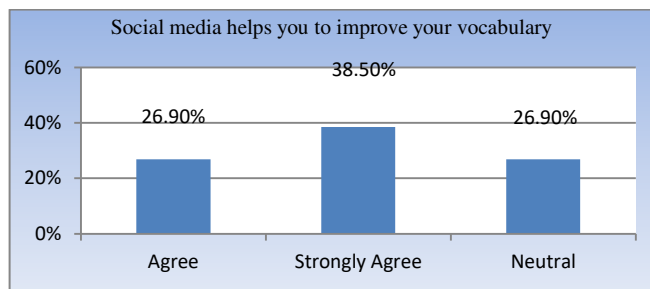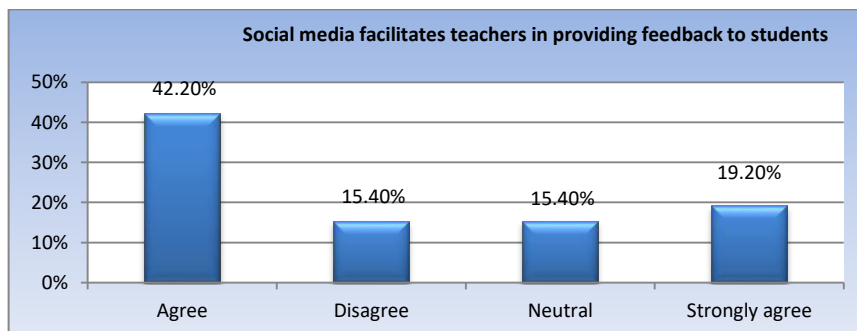
Fig. 10: Facilities of Social Media.

The data in the graph ten reflects that 42.20% of the respondents agreed that social media facilitates teac-

hers in providing feedback to students. 19.20% of them strongly agreed to it. 15.40% of them disagreed while

15.40% of the respondents remained neutral. There-fore, it is clearly depicted that social media facilitates teachers in providing feedback to students.
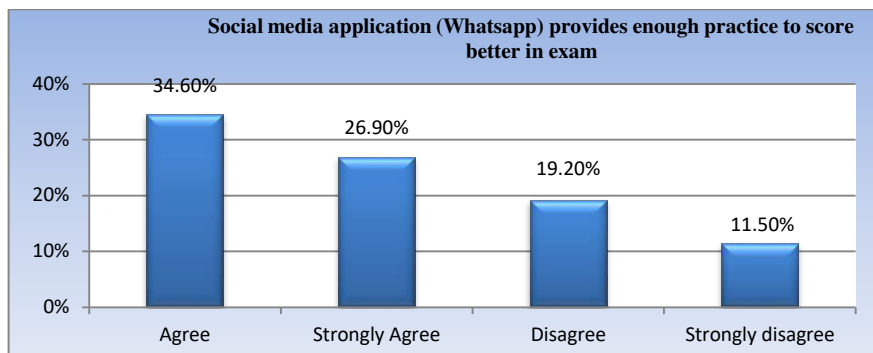
Social media application (Whatsapp) provides enough practice to score better in exam

- Agree: 34.60%
- Strongly Agree: 26.90%
- Disagree: 19.20%
- Strongly disagree: 11.50%

Fig. 11: Social Media application.

The data in the graph eleven reflects, that 34.60% of the respondents agreed that social media (WhatsApp) provide enough practice to score better in exam. 26.90% of them strongly agreed while 19.20% of the respondents disagreed to it. 11.50% of them strongly disagreed to the statement. Therefore, it clearly depicts that social media (WhatsApp) provided enough prac-tice to students to score better in exam.
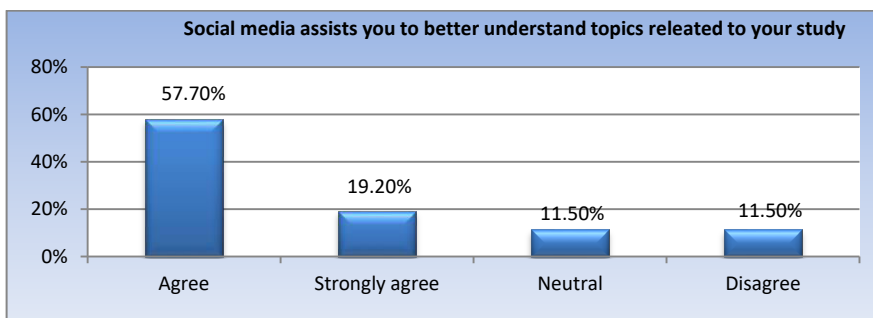
Social media assists you to better understand topics releated to your study

- Agree: 57.70%
- Strongly agree: 19.20%
- Neutral: 11.50%
- Disagree: 11.50%

Fig. 12: Social Media assist.

The data in the graph twelve reflects, that 57.70% of the respondents agreed that social media helped them to understand topics related to their study, and 19.20% of them strongly agreed while as, 11.50% of the res-pondents disagreed 11.50% of them remained neutral. Therefore, it is clearly depicted that social media help-ed a majority of students to understand the topics rela-ted to their study.

Social media helps you get rid of fear and shyness in developing writing communication

- Agree: 30.80%
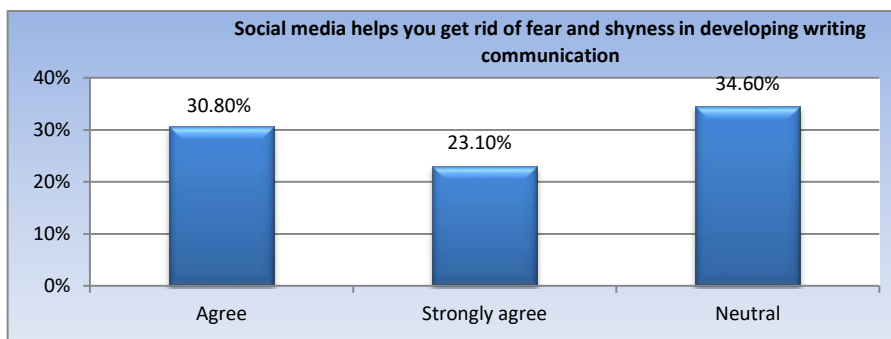- Strongly agree: 23.10%
- Neutral: 34.60%

Fig. 13: Communication by Social Media.

The data in the graph thirteen reflects that 30.80% of the respondents agreed that social media helped them to get rid of fear and shyness in developing writing communication, and 23.10% of them strongly agreed to the same while as, 34.60% of the respondent's rem-ained neutral. Therefore, it clearly depicts that social media helped them to get rid of fear and shyness in developing writing communication.
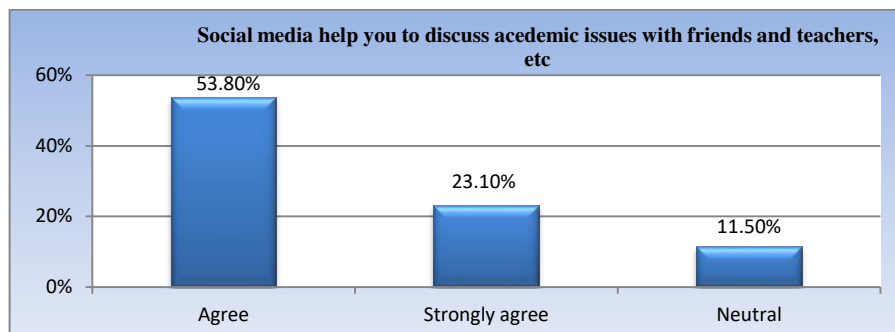
Fig. 14: Academic contribution of social media.

The data in the graph fourteen reflects that 53.80% of the respondents agreed that social media helped them to discuss academic issues with friends and teachers and 23.10% of them respondents strongly agreed that it helped them a lot.

Students' Open-ended Responses
Table 2: Showing students' suggestions regarding the use of social media in English language learning.

Items	Responses
1. English news channels subscribed by students	BBC
	None
	CNN
	Aljazeera
	No response
2. Languages mostly used by students while chatting	Arabic
	English
	Arabic and English
3. Social media helped you to improve language skills: reading and writing	By reading newspapers
	By reading books on Google
	By watching videos on YouTube about reading and writing skills by English teachers
	By reading chats on Twitter and Facebook
4. English Learning/ entertainment channels subscribed by students on YouTube	British Council
	Learning English
	None
	Hollywood movies
	English with Khalid

11.50% of them remained neutral and did not show their interest. Therefore, it clearly shows that most of them agreed that students could improve writing skills more easily on social media (by discussing related topics) than in the actual classroom.

The above table shows that all the questions were responded by the students. The table shows when the students were asked which English news channels they had subscribed, thirteen of the students responded that they had not subscribed to any English news channel. One of them responded that he had subscribed BBC, followed by two respondents who had subscribed CNN and Aljazeera. Ten of the respondents did not respond to the question. It seems that most of the students do not listen to or watch news in English. While listening or watching news, students can find several topics, and sources. Students are required to be able to interpret spoken language and enhance their listening comprehension by listening to the news (TV or radio). When asked which language they usually used while chatting with friends on social media, ten of them said they used Arabic as a medium, eight said they used English and Arabic as a medium, and six said they only used English as a medium with their friends while chatting on social media. It clearly shows only few of them use English on social media while chatting or commenting with their friends. It has been proved by many of the studies (Hamad, 2017 & Anamalia, 2019) that Whats App plays an effective role in developing students' vocabulary, grammar, reading comprehend-sion and length of their writing. It is graded positively by the students as a motivating pedagogical tool for developing learning and making language learning more interesting and enjoyable than the traditional method of teaching. It provides students with good opportunities to practice English as a means of communication (specially written communication) and helps them to learn from each other. At the same time when students were asked which social media applications helped them in reading and writing skills, nine of them responded that reading chats and comments on Face-

book and Twitter helped them a lot, while as four of them responded that by watching videos on YouTube about reading and writing by English teachers proved to be me of immense help. Three of them responded that by reading newspaper they had developed these skills; three of them responded that by reading books on Google they developed these skills (reading leading to writing) of English language. At last when the students were asked which English learning/entertainment channels they had subscribed on YouTube, nine of them res-ponded that they had not subscribed any English learning/entertainment channels on YouTube, but eight of them responded that they had subscribed Hollywood movies channels on YouTube. Six of them responded that they had sub-scribed English with Khalid English language learning on YouTube, while as four of them responded that they had subscribed British Council on YouTube. Four of them responded that they had subscribed American English Language learning channels on YouTube. But it had been obser-ved that YouTube could be a valuable tool through which English language skills could be taught more easily. Using it both inside and outside the classroom can enhance conversation, listening, and pronunciation skills. Even reading and writing activities can be struc-tured around YouTube videos.

DISCUSSION:

The analysis of the respondents' views (**Fig. 1**) on social media affirms that youngsters, particularly teen-agers, take great interest in social media. They are obs-essed with social media. According to a similar survey conducted by Kuss and Griffiths, (2011), between 55 and 82 percent of teenagers and young adults use Facebook on a regular basis. The sample population selected for this study specifically constitutes a bigger part of the teenager youngsters. Therefore, it ascertains that use of social media can be made a rewarding exp-erience for the students specifically belonging to teen-age as they spend most of their time on social media. Among the respondents, the percentage (**Fig. 2**) of active female users of social media is only 26.90%. It shows that less female students have participated be-cause of cultural or modesty issues. The female stud-ents were deliberately made the part of the study as to identify and determine whether social media is going to be a successful learning tool with female students or

not. Unfortunately, female students did not support social media because of the privacy issues. However, females' reluctance to use social media cannot be attri-buted to regional, cultural or religious sensitivities; it may be more because of personal reasons. A study conducted by Mary Madden in Washington reports similar results as Mary, (2012) presents an analysis on female privacy settings on social media:

However, there is a significant gender gap when it comes to the way male and female social media users choose to manage their profiles. Women are much more conservative in the basic settings they choose; 67% of female profile owners restrict access to friends only compared with 48% of male profile owners. Like-wise, men are more apt than women to choose partially are private (23% vs. 16%) or fully public (26% vs. 14%) settings (p.5). It shows that women's concern with their privacy is universal and not regional. Neve-rtheless, the data in the **Fig. 3** reflected that 100% students whether male or female use social media app-lications. Women prefer to use social media having protected their privacy. It affirms that the use of social media is all-pervasive and it is quite inevitable for stu-dents not to use social media. Teachers in the female section can use social media as a learning tool by dete-rmining to protect their privacy. The **Fig. 4** reflected that all the participants used one or other social media platform in their daily lives. However, all the given options were selected by the respondents, but Whats-App got the highest number of response as 35.4% followed by YouTube 16.8%. Moreover, only 11.5% of the respondents selected Instagram as a social media application used by them. However, this analysis can-not be universalized as a research in Kansas City in US by Seo *et al.* (2013) rates the YouTube as the most popular site but it excludes the other two, "YouTube was the most popular social networking site among youth, followed by Facebook and Twitter" (p.893). There is no mention of WhatsApp or Instagram. It shows that social media applications vary from region to region, person to person, or group to group. In US, people prefer to use Facebook and Twitter though this choice may vary from country to country. In Najran, a city in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, most of the res-pondents use Instagram, YouTube and WhatsApp in their daily life as analyzed in this study. Because most

students use social media for 3-5 hours per day, as indicated in **Fig. 5**, teachers can take advantage of this fascination with social media applications to help EFL students learn more effectively. Students spend a lot of time on social media, and it obviously helped them enhance their language skills, as seen in **Fig. 6**, where 80% of respondents agreed that social media improved their speaking ability. Namaziandost & Nasri, (2019) conclude in their study, "Learners will enhance their speaking skill if they use Social media in an appropriate way" (p. 211). While analyzing their data they mentioned, "The majority of participants (eighty-two) making up (82%) stated that they always use Social media, while only sixteen students making (16%) stated that their use of social media is not a priority and therefore, they use them only sometimes" (p.11). It clearly reveals that social media applications are good facilitator in improving writing skill. Social media is a great source of encouragement to improve writing skills of students as 61.50% of the respondents (**Fig. 7**) agreed and 26.90% of them (**Fig. 7**) strongly agreed that social media developed their writing skill. There was a drastic improvement in the performance of students while using WhatsApp. One excerpt of student from WhatsApp is pasted here:

The excerpt shows that students have developed their writing skills exceptionally. They seem to be more confident in expressing themselves. Though they have not used full stop at the end of each sentence, their grammatical structures are quite convincing.
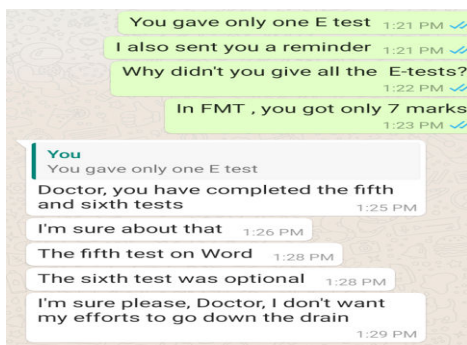
The problem of punctuation is usually found while using social media as students do not pay attention to it. Teachers need to advise students repeatedly so that they can develop the habit of using proper punctuation. However, social media and online resources are one of the best means to develop writing skills of students. De Voss *et al.* (2010) state, "Posting their writing on the

Youth Voices network forces it to be archived and searchable, allowing students to revisit their own-and others'- work in order to develop and refine ideas for future writing" (p. 85). Therefore, it reaffirms the assumption that social media application might be used as a tool in developing the writing skill. A significant percentage of the participants (**Fig. 8**) admitted that social media applications helped them to improve their vocabulary. One of the screenshots of students' conversation with teacher is pasted here to show their improvement in using vocabulary through WhatsApp.

Social media provides a platform where participants can acquire new vocabulary as the same is evidence found in the above screenshot. Khan *et al.* (2016) examined the influence of social media in the development of English language vocabulary at the university level. They came to the conclusion that social media plays a key role in the development of English language vocabulary at the university level because it allows English learners to learn new words and phrases and expand their vocabulary. English language learners can use social media to improve their writing and reading skills, as well as read new texts and phrases to expand their vocabulary. Social media serves multipurpose in language learning, as it not only contributes in acquiring vocabulary or developing linguistic structures but also familiarizes with formal and informal writing.

The above screenshot shows that students improved their formal writing also through WhatsApp. Teachers not only assigned formal writing to students but also focused on their informal writing by sharing the greeting or wishing on the festivals. One screenshot is pasted here to show that students also progressed informal writing through WhatsApp. Mostly, students learnt informal writing unconsciously through texting teachers.
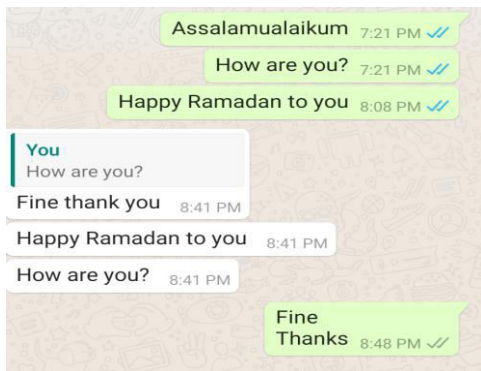

Almost 50% of the participants (**Fig. 9**) admitted that social media helped them to get familiar with formal and informal speech. The same is proved through the screenshots pasted above. WhatsApp has been quite beneficial as a unique feature in improving communicative competence of students. Berge & Muilenburg, (2013) state that the use of social media and mobile platforms is creating a major impact on the learning and teaching process. Social media create an atmosphere in which individuals can learn from their peers about communication as the screenshot shows here:

The above screenshot reveals that students can communicate not only formally but also informally as they share with each other coupon offer information in Al-Othaim market. WhatsApp sometimes deviate's students as they get more involved in personal than academic chats. Here lies the risk of using mother tongue and avoiding the target language. A significant number

of the participants (**Fig.10**) also frankly opined that social media facilitates teachers in providing feedback to students. Students were enthusiastic by receiving instant feedback from teachers. Their learning was not confined only to classroom as they could access teachers anytime. Teachers were prompt to provide the feedback as soon as they were free. One of the screenshots showing the same is pasted here.
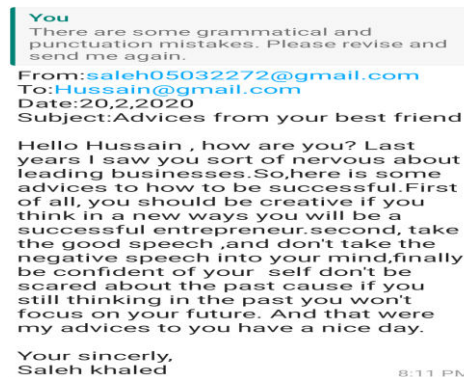
As the message shows, the feedbacks was provided by the teachers at 8:11 pm which ensures that WhatsApp crosses the boundaries of classroom teaching and engage students and teachers beyond the classroom teaching hours. This study suggests that social media should be incorporated as a formal tool because of the several advantages associated with it. There is no doubt that it has innumerable educational benefits, which help students not only to learn in the classroom but also to write in the examination. However, one cannot deny the fact that WhatsApp cannot be instrumental in conducting the formative assessment though summative assessment can be carried out with the help of WhatsApp. In this research, almost 60% of the respondents (**Fig. 11**) agreed that social media (Whats App) provide enough practice to score better in exam. One of the screenshots is presented here where teacher shared a quiz on WhatsApp and students enthusiastically and positively responded to it.

There were many quizzes provided by the teachers on WhatsApp. One of them is pasted above to show how students positively responded to a quiz shared by the teacher. However, there were also students who did not agree to it, which corresponds to a study by Stollak *et al.* (2011) as it demonstrates that students' grades can be affected negatively by using social networking tools and visiting many sites. This study used a questionnaire to test this fact, and the results suggest that 63 percent of students earn good grades because they spend less time on the internet. Unlike Facebook, the researchers chose WhatsApp because it can be easily monitored by teachers to safeguard that students are not wasting their time. It is impossible to deny that students need to be taught how to use educational apps to their full potential in order to use them effectively in the classroom. There is scope of further research on how social media can assist in conducting formative and summative assessments. A significant number of participants (**Fig. 12**) agreed that social media assisted them to better comprehend the topics related to their study. One of the screenshots is shared here to show how students responded to the question of teacher on how to become a successful entrepreneur.
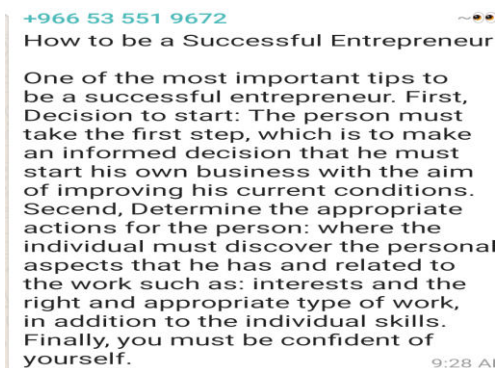
Students have searched for the materials on the topic and wrote the essay. Some of them copied it from Google. When teacher refused to accept their essays, they used their own language to write on the topic. Of course, Google and YouTube are a source of immense information on almost every topic in the world. However, it also stresses on the need that students should avoid copy and pasting from Google or steal ideas of others. Students need to know how they could discuss with each other on the specific topics through getting ideas from Google or YouTube and share them on WhatsApp. The use of social media as a learning tool has the potential to connect informal and formal learning. Third-party social media applications, such as Word Press, Wikipedia, and LinkedIn, for example, can extend beyond the one-semester time frame and connect learners with communities, experts in the subject, and peers all over the world. It also provides interactive multimedia channels for student-student, student-instructor, and student-content interactions (Chen & Bryer, 2012). Social media also provides several blessings for the shy students who hesitate in initiating and maintaining face-to-face interaction and eye con-tact. A good percentage of students (**Fig. 13**) were positive about social media as it helped them to get rid of fear and shyness in developing communication skill. Use of social media can prove a good learning and teaching strategy for shy students. The following screenshot shows that students feel free to ask the questions in the group, to each other as well as teacher.

Though some of the students use Arabic to communicate with each other, teacher doesn't intervene as they are using some words of target language also. Teacher aimed at improving their shyness first and then he motivated them to use only target language in their conversations. Social media creates a sense of community and togetherness, which makes students extrovert. It promotes collective intelligence by forming social networks around academic issues or connecting students with alumni, community members, and experts from around the world. Students are encouraged to join professional groups on social media, such as the National Academy of Public Administration's LinkedIn group (Chen & Bryer, 2012). The data in the **Fig. 14** reflected that most of the respondents agreed that social media (specifically WhatsApp) helped them to discuss academic issues with friends and teachers. The following screen-shot shows that students were able to explain present continuous tense along with their examples.

It corresponds to a study by Chen & Bryer, (2012) in which, "Interviewees also had success with social media activities outside of class. For instance, they maintained and shared learning content, such as just-intime news articles and videos, and facilitated noncredit, extracurricular discussions amongst students and a network of friends, associates, and colleagues" (p. 95). Therefore, it clearly showed that most of them agreed that social media helped them to discuss academic issues with friends and teachers. It, of course, boosts the confidence of the students too. Yunus *et al.* (2012) describe one of the advantages of networking services as, "they increase motivation and build confidence for students in using and learning English" (p.47). Students were enthusiastic to search other sources for learning too like their national newspaper *Arab News* and share the breaking news with their teachers and students.
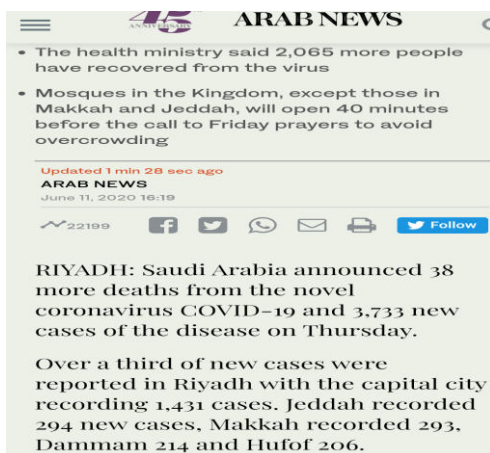
The above screenshot shows that WhatsApp encourages students to read more which ultimately affects their writing skills. In the open-ended questions session, the researchers observed that the students were well aware of the role of social media. They came with good and creative suggestions that might help them improve English language skills. Two of them had

subscribed BBC. Here is one of the screenshots shared by the student on WhatsApp which shows that WhatsApp encouraged them to search the different newspapers as teachers could ask them to write on any topic extemporarily.
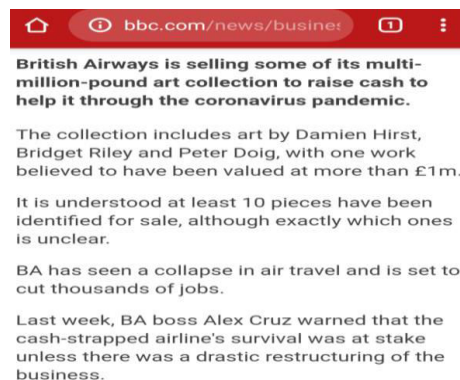
One of them subscribed the New York Times and another one subscribed English language learning channel. Thirteen of the respondents responded that they had not subscribed any English channels on their social media applications. Here, teachers need to suggest students and help them choose newspapers, which might enhance their language skills as newspapers, are a great source of learning. Mittal, (2014) states "For effective English Learning, newspaper can work as a major tool. Numerous activities can be done with newspapers for EET. Students want innovations and new ways of learning and newspapers always give them teaching in innovative way, as they change thought, topic and ingredients daily" (p. 690). Most of the students responded that they use Arabic language while chatting, only 6 of the respondents responded that they use English language and 8 of them responded that they use both: Arabic & English language while chatting with others. The following screenshot represents those students who use Arabic while chatting with friends.

CONCLUSION:

Teachers should create a control group and ensure that students use only English language while chatting with friends and colleagues. In response to the role of social media to improve writing skills, three of them accepted reading newspapers and tweets helped them to improve writing skills. Two of them suggested that reading books on Google and watching videos on YouTube helped them a lot. Some of them suggested that following comments and chatting with friends on Facebook and Twitter helped them develop their reading and writing skills. It reveals that social media has been a good source for students. When the students were asked about English channels they have subscribed on social media, most of them responded that they had not subscribed any English language-learning channel. Some of them confessed that they had subscribed some channels like; English courses online, Hollywood movies, English with Khalid and American English etc. Teachers need to suggest English channels and websites, which students can use while learning English language and improving their writing skills.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest related to this article.

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