

Students' Perceptions of Integrating Social Networking Sites in Language Learning: Benefits and Challenges

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Abstract

This study aims at investigating students' perceptions of integrating Social Networking Sites (SNS) in language learning. A project integrating SNS (Facebook as an example) was designed to give students an opportunity to use a Facebook group in their language learning process. 57 third year basic education, English department students participated in the project during a complete academic year at the university of Damanhour, Egypt. A detailed questionnaire was prepared and used to enquire students' perceptions. Results of the study indicated that the majority of participants perceive SNS as beneficial in language learning. The most perceived benefits include improvement in a lot of aspects including self-confidence in writing, all language skills especially writing, increased vocabulary, grammar, motivation, interaction among students and between students and teachers, creative skills, exposure to language, cooperation and thinking in English. The study also revealed that the majority of participants are willing to use SNS in learning English as students and in teaching English as future teachers. Participants also declared that they prefer writing and reading short posts than long ones. Some challenges appeared when using SNS for learning language including students' lack of

sufficient time, technical problems related to the access of consistent internet services, and overload of posts on SNS when used for learning. It is recommended to integrate SNS in language learning and more studies especially experimental ones are needed to investigate the effectiveness of using SNS for improving different language skills.

Introduction

The use of computers in language teaching dates back to 1960's and since that time, we see the shift of the role of computer from a mechanical tutor used primarily for drills into a real usage of language in an authentic context by students' self discoveries and developments. When microcomputers entered in the daily life in 1970's, the era of computer assisted language learning has begun at schools and computers were used primarily for drilling activities in language classes. Computer assisted language learning (CALL) expanded in 1980's and 1990's with accessibility of personal computers for language learners. The use of internet in 2000's enabled educators to create web-based language programs which allowed students to use language in real context. Today, millions of people are using SNS and online learning has arisen as one of the most important and fastest moving trends in education (Palmer and Bray, 2001). There are even researchers contending that social networking sites (SNS) have potential to change educational system radically, motivating students for better learning rather than being passive attendees of a classroom (Ziegler, 2007).

Social networking sites (SNS), such as Facebook, have spread widely. Consequently researchers are trying to explore the potentials of using these sites in learning and instruction in general. These sites go along with social constructivism theory of learning and the zone of proximal development which emphasizes that learners can learn in association with others much more than what they can learn alone. As a fresh area of research, it needs exploratory studies followed by experimental studies to get clear insight into the potentials of SNS in order to make the best use of it in the field of learning and instruction.

SNS are perhaps the most underutilized ICT in L2 education. While there were more than a billion active users of Facebook as of March, 2013 (Facebook Statistics, n.d.), Facebook and other SNS have yet to gain wide usage in L2 education compared to ICTs such as blogs and wikis. Certainly, the use of SNS has provided communication practice and led to incidental learning for a great number of learners (Mitchell, 2009), but educators could utilize younger learners' reliance on SNS in a more focused and constructive way (Blattner & Fiori, 2009). Indeed, SNS have a variety of tools and are used for a number of purposes, and language teachers have many options for using them in their classes.

Blattner and Fiori (2009) indicate that little is known about how SNS such as Facebook can develop a sense of community in language classrooms or how

they can impact the development of socio-pragmatic competence in language learners. Tilfarlıoğlu (2011) also emphasizes that there is not enough research about applying SNS, into the classroom and students' attitudes about the use of Web 2.0 tools in language teaching. Consequently there is a clear need to investigate the potentials of SNS in language learning and to explore students' perceptions of this issue.

Review of Literature:

To review the studies related to the use of SNS in language learning and instruction, we will start with a sample of the studies that dealt with students' perceptions of using SNS in learning in general, then studies that dealt with student's perceptions of using SNS in language learning and finally studies that dealt with students' perceptions of using SNS in writing instruction as the major sub-skill affected by these sites.

Studies that Dealt with Students' Perceptions of the Use of SNS in Learning in General:

Veletsianos and Navarrete (2012) conducted a case study of learners' perspectives and experiences in an online course taught using the Elgg online social network. Findings from this study indicate that learners enjoyed and appreciated both the social learning experience afforded by the online social network and supported one another in their learning, enhancing their own and other students' experiences. Conversely, results also indicate that students limited their participation to course-related and graded activities,

exhibiting little use of social networking and sharing. Additionally, learners needed support in managing the expanded amount of information available to them and devising strategies to manage their time and participation.

Bosch (2009) carried out a study about exploring students use of Facebook and lecturer engagement with students on social media at the University of Cape Town. She conducted a semi-structured qualitative interview with a sample of 50 undergraduate students and five lecturers. In her research, she sorted out the use of Facebook for various aims like social networking, identity construction, privacy concerns and the potential use of Facebook for academic purposes. The study showed that while there are positive benefits to using Facebook for academic purposes, there might be certain challenges like computer literacy and uneven access.

Selwyn (2009) conducted a study to explore students' education-related use of Facebook. His research examined the social significance of Facebook in the lives of undergraduate university students (N=909) in the UK. In particular his study investigated the realities of students' Facebook activity and considered the role that Facebook is playing in the wider student experience of twenty-first century university education. He wanted to learn when and for what purposes were students using Facebook; what aspects of their interactions via Facebook can be

considered to be related to their university education; what evidence was there for Facebook use contributing to the increased (dis)engagement of students with their university studies and what can be said to be new about the nature and outcomes of students' use of Facebook. Analyzing the data, he asserts that Facebook use must be seen as identity politics of being a student rather than enhancing front stage engagement with formal studies.

The above-mentioned studies reveal students' enjoyment and appreciation of using SNS in learning in general. However, there were no specific benefits of using SNS in learning mentioned. The studies also showed some challenges that face the use of SNS in learning including computer literacy and uneven access.

Studies that Dealt with Students' Perceptions of the Use of SNS in Language Learning:

Gamble and Wilkins (2014) conducted a study to investigate Japanese students' perceptions and attitudes of participating in activities through Facebook for language learning. In addition, the researchers discuss the overall implications of and potential uses of Facebook in the field of second language learning and teaching. Ninety-seven students from three private universities in Japan participated in this study. A 26-item quantitative questionnaire using a 7-point Likert scale and an open-ended qualitative questionnaire were used in this study. The results showed a small increase

in positive attitudes toward most activities for language learning following the completion of the study compared to prior attitudes, but there were mixed attitudes toward using Facebook in an educational environment. The study also indicated that participants enjoyed peer editing of classmates writing or discussing videos; all outside of the classroom and through Facebook's user platform.

Eren (2012) conducted a study aiming at investigating students' attitudes towards the use of SNS, Facebook in particular, in language classroom. The study was carried out at a university in Gaziantep, Turkey with 48 undergraduate students who were enrolled in one year compulsory English preparatory class. The research design included a 5 point Likert-type questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. It was found out that students have a very positive attitude towards the use of Facebook activity as a supplement to language classroom, but traditional classroom based language learning still remains a backbone for language education. Though the study is a good effort in the field, it depended on a very general questionnaire and explored the issue in hand globally. Consequently more detailed work is needed in the area.

Blattner and Lomicka (2012) investigated how students use and make sense of Facebook in second language learning. Firstly, they sought to investigate how SNS are used in a language course and how

students respond to this use. Secondly, they examined attitudes of language learners towards it. the main research questions were: (1) How do students react to using this social networking site in a language course? and (2) What are the student perceptions of university level foreign language learners towards the social networking website Facebook within the context of a language course? Twenty-four students between the ages of 18 and 21 (17 female, 7 male) were enrolled in an intermediate level French course at a southeastern university during the fall and spring semesters 2010-2011. The class, along with a partner class in France, used a group Facebook page created specifically for their course in which they participated in discussions that corresponded with themes presented in the course textbook. Since one of the course goals was to focus on honing communication skills, the use of Facebook forums was one way to assist students with that goal. Students also used Twitter, e-mail and Skype to promote different types of written and oral expression and communication. These out of class discussion opportunities related to in class material extended discussion beyond the four walls of the classroom. students generally reported that they liked the use of Facebook for a variety of reasons, which fell under two main themes: (a) facilitation of communication among students and faculty – collaborative exchanges and (b) language and cultural exchange. The researchers concluded that even though Facebook appears to provide valuable benefits and opportunities for

learners and educators in the field of foreign language education, more research is needed to further establish the effectiveness of web 2.0 tools in foreign language classrooms.

Piriyasilpa (2010) conducted a research on the effects of the application of Facebook as part of the classroom. She examined students' opinions about this activity and their use of language in their interaction. The study was conducted at a university in Thailand. The topics were advised by the teacher and students were asked to make comments or discuss their opinions on the teacher's wall. She found out that such incorporation was useful for students to create their social network and it was also beneficial for supporting language learning.

In Klimanova and Dembovskaya' s study (2010), students reported their enjoyment of an assignment where they had to join a group on VK, a social network site popular in Russia. This enabled students to have authentic discussions about topics relevant to each learner with fluent Russian users. This study highlights one of the potentials of SNS in learning a language which is achieving authenticity. Authenticity is one major criteria in current language learning and instruction approaches.

Moreover, Kabilan et al. (2010) conducted a study to investigate students' perceptions of using Facebook

in language classes. They reported that students believe their language skills increased through using Facebook, and further, their motivation, confidence, and attitude concerning language learning were also enhanced through their experiences.

Mitchell (2009) conducted a study to investigate students' purposes of using SNS. The study found that users have mainly social reasons for using SNS. The study was a case study of seven English learners studying in a university in Oregon. All participants reported that they had registered on Facebook to build and maintain relationships, not to learn English. Nevertheless, six of the learners thought that using Facebook had improved their proficiency in English. This indicates one major potential of SNS which is unconscious spontaneous development of language.

Blattner and Fiori (2009) in their theoretical analytic article state that various usages of SNS can be integrated in foreign language courses. They emphasized the role of Group application available on Facebook and highlighted the benefits of authentic language interaction indicating that learners may feel publishing on SNS is more meaningful and authentic than traditional writing. The "net generation," especially, may feel that assignments handed in only to the teacher are "limited in audience, scope and communicative purpose". They also highlighted the potential of Facebook in the development of socio-pragmatic awareness (language use in specific contexts,

relationship building, and language awareness through observation and/or experience), which is an aspect of language acquisition that is often omitted in textbooks. In addition, they reported that increased motivation and improved performance in language classes have been associated with the feeling of classroom community (Rovai, 2002) and Facebook is undoubtedly a tool that can enhance the sense of belonging. What's more, Facebook has unique features that offer constructive educational experiences while maintaining privacy and safety. They consider their work as a starting point for the engagement of further investigations in the abundantly promising field of Facebook pedagogical and linguistic research.

Prichard (2013) surveyed studies that dealt with students' attitudes towards using SNS in language learning and found out that users' attitudes likely affect how SNS can be used. Some learners have reported writing cautiously, feeling unconfident about their language use, especially if their work is public and viewed by fluent speakers of L2 (Hitosugi, 2011; Klimanova & Dembovskaya, 2010; Mitchell, 2009). However, some learners have stated that SNS writing is so informal and that mistakes are so tolerated that it is not an appropriate platform for practicing writing (Mills, 2009; Mitchell, 2009). The variance in learners' attitudes seems to depend on one's personality and learning style, his/her proficiency level and confidence, and how public the platform is.

Students in the above-mentioned studies revealed some benefits of using SNS in learning language including facilitation of communication between students and staff, language and cultural exchange, authentic discussions, improved motivation and confidence. However, some studies showed variance in attitudes. Most of the studies dealt with attitudes and opinions not perceptions. This shows the need for more detailed studies in the area.

Studies that Dealt with Students' Perceptions of the use of SNS in Writing Instruction:

Leonard (2012) conducted a study to explore how students perceive a combination of three strategies, social networking, the writing process, and cooperative learning may help students to be successful with the prewriting phase of the writing process. The three research questions were (1) what are students' perceptions of a social networking tool; (2) how do students perceive a social networking tool influences prewriting in cooperative groups; and (3) how do cooperative groups work together to prewrite? A combination of strategies together with a high level of student engagement may help to increase student success in developmental writing and first-year composition courses. Nine students across four sections of writing courses agreed to participate in this qualitative inquiry. Data were collected from semi-structured interviews, social networking posts, observations, and a researcher-made handout, and data were analyzed using the constant comparative method.

Three themes emerged: Students perceived usefulness related to using a social networking tool, their behaviors, and positive results. Group interaction reflected students' positive interdependence, individual accountability, group processing, social skills, and face-to-face interaction. Finally, knowledge representation was evident as it encapsulated the participants' views on making their thinking visible and sharing ideas. A discussion of the research questions integrated these findings. Students perceived a social networking tool to be valuable, beneficial to helping them learn, and an achievement for their ideas. Students perceived a social networking tool to influence prewriting in cooperative groups by generating ideas, representing their contributions, and communications with group members. Finally, the participants' perceptions and observations revealed that working together in cooperative groups to prewrite reflected the five elements of cooperation.

Yunus and Salehi (2012) investigated students' perceptions on the effectiveness of Facebook groups for teaching and improving writing. The authors saw a need to carry out this study as it provides a platform to discover pedagogical implications that would benefit in terms of improving writing skills in a Malaysian ESL context. The respondents of this research comprise 43 third year students completing their bachelor's degree in TESL, at the Faculty of Education, University Kebangsaan, Malaysia. The students' perceptions were

measured through a questionnaire comprising 10 closed-ended items and 3 open-ended ones. Respondents were required to participate in a Facebook group created by the researchers. The Facebook group, called 'Write Out Loud'. The findings showed that 'Facebook groups' is an effective tool in improving the students' writing skills, especially in the brainstorming of ideas before the actual writing. The results of this study may be beneficial to ESL educators in incorporating ICT into their teaching repertoire. It is suggested that future research should focus on the challenges of integrating Facebook groups for teaching and improving writing, and look into the perceptions of the teachers as well. In addition, experimental research could also be done to see how Facebook and Facebook groups help in improving writing skills. This study focused only on students' perceptions of the benefits of using Facebook for improving writing skills. The present study tries to cover a wide range in students' perceptions of using SNS in learning language investigating possible potentials for other skills, students' willingness to use these sites as students and as future teachers, their preferences when using them and the challenges that faces students during usage.

Kabilan et al. (2010) conducted a qualitative study to investigate students' perceptions of using SNS in writing instruction. The study depend on a survey of 300 undergraduate students in Malaysia. A great majority (92.5%) of the participants replied that they

thought using Facebook could improve their English. In the survey, most learners replied that using Facebook could offer effective writing practice and increase their motivation to write in English. One student reported that he/she felt particularly motivated to write posts that “attract people” to comment.

In the above-mentioned studies, students stated some benefits of using SNS in learning writing including improvement in generating ideas, and improved cooperation and motivation. However, these studies dealt with the topic quite globally.

From the above-mentioned presentation of related studies, it is clear that there is a rareness of the studies that explored students' perceptions of integrating SNS in language learning and instruction. As recommended in the studies , there is a need for investigating students' perceptions and the challenges that face students when using SNS in language learning and instruction. The present study aims at breaching this research gap. The present study seeks to give more insight of the use of SNS in language learning through a detailed questionnaire investigating the perceived benefits, students' willingness, students' preferences, and challenges faced during usage.

Research Questions:

1. What are the perceived benefits of the use of SNS in language learning?

2. How is students' willingness of using SNS in language learning and instruction?
3. What are students' preferences when using SNS in language learning?
4. What are the challenges that face students when using SNS in language learning?

Method:

Participants:

Fifty-seven third year basic education English department students participated in this project.

The Facebook Project:

Students had established a Facebook group for themselves long ago before the project started. The researcher noticed that most of the posts on the group were written in students' mother tongue (Arabic) though the group was a closed one for students of English department and discussed issues related to their study.

The teacher told students that there will be a project integrating their Facebook use in their process of learning English as a foreign language. Students were encouraged to make English the language of the group whatever they write.

The teacher encouraged them to express themselves using different forms of writing such as essays, short posts, writing comments about others' posts. They were encouraged to write whatever they

want but in English. Students were asked to have daily participation in the group.

The teacher participated by giving comments and opinions about what students write on the Facebook group. The project last for a complete academic year.

Instruments:

Students' Perceptions Questionnaire

A questionnaire was prepared by the researcher to investigate students' perceptions of integrating SNS in language learning (appendix 1). The questionnaire consists of 18 items divided into four dimensions. Table (1) shows the distribution of the items to the different dimensions.

Table (1): Distribution of students' perceptions questionnaire items to the different dimensions

Dimension	Items
Students' perceptions of the Benefits of using SNS in language learning	1-2-3-4-5
Students' willingness of using SNS in language learning and instruction	6-7-8-9-10-11
Students' preferences when using SNS in language learning	12-13-14
Students' perceptions of the challenges that face them during using SNS in language learning	15-16-17-18

A four-point Likert-type scale was used. Students chose their responses from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The questionnaire was revised by specialists in the field to ensure its internal validity. The calculated reliability of the questionnaire was (Alpha = .881)

Two open ended questions were added at the end of the questionnaire to give students chance to add whatever they want about the most important dimensions which are benefits of SNS in learning a language and the challenges they face during the use of SNS in learning a language.

Results and Discussion:

For statistical analysis, the researcher depended on percentages as they give detailed insight for each item of the questionnaire.

The first dimension of the questionnaire, students' perceived benefits of using SNS in language instruction, consists of five items. Table (2) clarifies the percentages of each item.

Table (2): Percentages of the first dimension of students' perceptions questionnaire (students' perceived benefits of using SNS in language instruction)

Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Writing on this Facebook group increased my self-confidence when writing.	75.4	24.6	0	
I feel more motivated to write when I publish on Facebook.	47.4	45.6	7.0	0
I think the use of Facebook for learning is useful.	73.7	26.3	0	0
I think my writing improves when I participate in English groups on Facebook.	54.3	42.1	1.8	1.8
I think the participation in English groups on Facebook improves other skills besides writing.	36.8	54.4	8.8	0

It's clear from the table that the majority of students perceive SNS (here Facebook is an example) as beneficial in language learning. The general perceptions that Facebook is beneficial for learning in general and the improved self-confidence got 100% agreement (75% strongly agree and 25% agree). Improved writing follows with about 96% agreement. Improved motivation follows with 93% agreement. Finally, improvement in other language skills other than writing follows with about 91%. However, in the last item we can notice that only 37% strongly agree while 54% agree only. This could indicate that writing is the most perceived skill to benefit from the use of SNS in language learning.

In response to the first open ended question which asked about students' benefits of using Facebook, students added details about the benefits of using SNS in language learning including:

- Increased interaction among students
- Exchanging advices about writing
- Making new friendships
- Feeling free and liberated to write about one's own feelings and opinions
- Sharing opinions and ideas
- Improving creative skills
- Writing funny posts
- Improvement of English generally
- Opportunity to communicate more with professors
- Improved typing skills

- Increased vocabulary
- Better exposure to English
- Useful usage of Facebook
- Improved grammar
- Improved reading
- Gaining general knowledge
- Learning from the styles of writing of others
- Learning from teachers' comments
- Taking more time in thinking about what they write
- Improved cooperation among colleagues
- Thinking in English not in native language.
- Encouragement to participate in similar projects

The second dimension of the questionnaire, students' willingness to use SNS in language learning and instruction, consists of six items. Table (3) clarifies the percentages of each item.

Table (3): Percentages of the second dimension of students' perceptions questionnaire (students' willingness to use SNS in language learning and instruction)

Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I participated in the project because I wanted to improve my writing.	50.9	29.8	17.5	1.8
I participated in the project only because the teacher asked me to.	15.8	29.8	38.6	15.8
I hope the writing in the group continues in English after the project is over.	59.6	33.3	5.3	1.8
I will continue writing in English in the group after the project is over.	29.8	59.6	8.8	1.8
I hope that all professors at college use Facebook to facilitate learning.	66.6	26.3	5.3	1.8
I intend to use Facebook with my students in the future if possible.	52.5	43.9	1.8	1.8

It's clear from the table that the majority of students are willing to use SNS (here Facebook is an example) in learning and instruction. Items 6 and 7 contradict to show the real purpose of students' participation in the project; about 80% responded that they participated in the project because they wanted to improve their writing while when asked in item 7 whether they participated to satisfy the teacher about 45% agreed. This means that some of them (about 25%) have mixed purposes or are confused about their purpose. About 96% of the participants showed willingness to use SNS in their own teaching in the future. This indicates that they believe they have benefited a lot from it and thus they believed it will be a successful tool in teaching English in the future. About 92% agreed that they hope to write in English even after the project is over and they hope all professors use SNS in teaching. This indicates clear willingness to use SNS in learning. However, about 79% declared that they intend to continue writing in English when the project is over (30% only strongly agree). This shows that there is a difference between what students believe as successful teaching methods and what they really apply in their learning and teaching. This was very clear in the follow up observation. The researcher made a follow up observation of the Facebook group after the project was over. The researcher noticed that students began to fall back gradually to the use of their native language (Arabic) as the language of the group. After three months about 90% of students' posts in the group were in the native language not in English. This

indicates that students need to be engaged in academic projects to use SNS in language learning.

The third dimension of the questionnaire, students' preferences when using SNS in language learning, consists of three items. Table (4) clarifies the percentages of each item.

Table (4): Percentages of the third dimension of students' perceptions questionnaire (students' preferences when using SNS in language learning)

Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I prefer writing short posts than writing essays on Facebook.	59.6	29.8	7.0	3.6
I prefer reading short posts than essays on Facebook.	50.9	33.3	15.8	0
I prefer to write one-word comment than writing comments in complete sentences.	14.0	36.6	33.4	14.0

Item 12 dealt with students' preferences when they write on the Facebook group. About 89% of the participants preferred to write short posts than writing essays or long posts. This is consistent with the nature of SNS as they are meant for social interaction and in social interaction we don't use long texts; we use short texts. This could be an obstacle for using SNS in developing writing skill. The topic of the potentials of SNS in developing writing skills needs more investigation. Item 13 dealt with students' preferences when they read what has been written by others on the Facebook group. About 84% of the participants preferred to read short posts than reading essays. Again this is consistent with the nature of SNS especially Facebook. When you use Facebook, you find yourself

confronted with a great number of posts. You want to read as many posts as you can and thus you prefer to read the short posts than longer ones. Item 14 dealt with a phenomena common on Facebook which is responding to posts with one word such as great, cool, wonderful, nice etc. 51% percent of the participants preferred writing one word comment. This is not a big percentage; however, students participating in projects aiming at using SNS in language learning need encouragement to use complete sentences not one word comments as complete sentences can help better in the improvement of language use.

The fourth dimension of the questionnaire, challenges that face students when using SNS in language learning, consists of four items. Table (5) clarifies the percentages of each item.

Table (5): Percentages of the fourth dimension of students' perceptions questionnaire (challenges that face students when using SNS in language learning)

Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
It's difficult to use Facebook daily because of the lack of time.	36.8	38.6	15.8	8.8
It's difficult to use Facebook daily because of technical problems.	36.8	40.4	17.5	5.3
It's difficult to read all the posts on the group as they are too many.	47.4	45.5	5.3	1.8
My parents object to my use of Facebook in this project.	1.7	5.3	35.1	57.9

Item 15 deals with the issue of time availability. About 75% of the participants declared that they don't have enough time to participate daily in the Facebook group for the purpose of learning. This could be due to the burden on students during the academic year. This could lead teachers to make use of SNS during summer vacations as students are free and have enough time. Item 16 dealt with availability of access to the SNS. About 77% of the participants declared that it's difficult to use Facebook daily because of technical problems. These technical problems are related to the internet service in Egypt which is not available for everyone. Though the majority has the service now, the service is not consistent. Item 17 dealt with the large number of posts on Facebook groups. About 93% of the participants declared that it's difficult to read everything on the group. However, this is not a big problem. Students are exposed to a lot of posts and they can select what is interesting for them. Teachers using SNS in language learning shouldn't insist that all students read all the posts as this is difficult for them. Item 18 dealt with a social issue. In most families parents object to their children's use of Facebook during academic year. However, only 7% of the parents object to the use of Facebook when it was used in learning. This indicates that the resistance of society to the integration of new technologies in learning is not a hindrance.

These percentages are consistent with students responses to the open ended question about the

challenges that faced them when using SNS in learning language. The top responses were as follows:

- Shortage of students' time
- Technical problems
- Access problems
- A lot of time to write essays
- Using transliteration (students write Arabic words in English letters)

Conclusion and Recommendations:

The study revealed that the majority of participants perceive SNS as beneficial in language learning. The most perceived benefits include improvement in a lot of aspects such as self-confidence in writing, all language skills especially writing, vocabulary, grammar, motivation, interaction among students and between students and teachers, creative skills, exposure to language, cooperation and thinking in English. The study also revealed that the majority of participants are willing to use SNS in learning English as students and in teaching English as future teachers. Besides they showed willingness to continue using the sites for learning after the project is over. Participants also declared that they prefer writing and reading short posts than long ones. Some challenges appeared when using SNS for learning language including students' lack of sufficient time, technical problems related to the access of consistent internet services, and overload of posts on SNS when used for learning. Consequently, the study recommends the integration of SNS in language

learning and calls for more studies especially experimental ones to investigate the effectiveness of using SNS for improving different language skills.

Theoretically, this study filled a research gap. Most of the studies that dealt with students' perceptions of SNS in learning language focused on positive and negative attitudes while the present study provides detailed insight in students' perceived benefits of using SNS in learning language, their willingness to use it as students and as teachers in the future, their preferences when using these sites in learning and the challenges they faced.

Practically, this study provides teachers and university staff with detailed insight in students' perceptions of SNS in language learning.

This could encourage teachers and university staff to incorporate SNS in language instruction programs. This also could help them overcome the challenges that face students when using SNS in learning.

Suggestions for further research:

1. Investigating experimental the impact of using facebook in writing instruction
2. Investigating university staff's perception of using facebook in language instruction
3. Investigating the dynamics of student-teacher relationship when using facebook in language instruction

4. Investigating the possibilities of using facebook for improving the four language skills

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