

أثر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي على لغة متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية في دولة الكويت

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الملخص

يتناول هذا البحث دور منصات التواصل الاجتماعي، مثل: (إنستغرام واتساب)، في تشكيل استخدام اللغة الإنجليزية بين متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية في الكويت. وقد شارك في الدراسة 92 طالباً جامعياً من الهيئة العامة للتعليم التطبيقي والتدريب؛ حيث قدموا بيانات استقصائية حول أنماط استخدامهم لوسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، فضلاً عن عينات لغوية حقيقية. وحُللت هذه البيانات باستخدام أساليب إحصائية وصفية ومنهجية تحليلياً موضوعياً. وأُجريت مقابلات مع المعلمين والطلاب؛ مما أتاح تقديم رؤى معمقة حول تأثير هذه المنصات على تطور اللغة لدى المتعلمين. وأظهرت النتائج أن الاستخدام المتكرر لمفردات جديدة، واختصارات، ورموز تعبيرية يعكس تأثيراً مباشراً لمنصات التواصل الاجتماعي على أساليب التواصل غير الرسمي والابتكار اللغوي المعجمي. وفي هذا السياق يبرز البحث الأبعاد المتعددة لهذا التأثير من منظور لغوي واجتماعي، حيث تظهر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي بوصفها منصة ديناميكية للتنشئة اللغوية؛ مما يتسق مع النظريات التي ترى اللغة نظاماً يتكيف مع التغيرات المجتمعية. ومع ذلك، وعلى الرغم من الفوائد الملحوظة لهذه المنصات في تعزيز ممارسة اللغة الإنجليزية بانتظام، فإن الانتشار الواسع للأنماط اللغوية غير الرسمية يثير تساؤلات جديدة حول تأثيرها المحتمل على المهارات اللغوية الرسمية والدقة النحوية. وفي ضوء هذه النتائج، يسلم البحث الضوء على الفجوة بين التواصل غير الرسمي والمعايير الأكاديمية، ويؤكد على أهمية دمج وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي ضمن سياقات تعليمية موجهة، بهدف تحقيق توازن فعال بين التطورات اللغوية غير الرسمية والحفاظ على معايير اللغة الرسمية. ويوصي البحث أيضاً باتباع نهج تعليمي أكثر وعياً يُمكن الطلاب من الاستفادة القصوى من إمكانيات وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي دون الإضرار بجودة أدائهم الأكاديمي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي وتعلم اللغة، متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية، دولة الكويت، التواصل غير الرسمي، التنشئة اللغوية الرسمية.

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Social Media's Influence on Kuwaiti ELLs' English Communication

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Abstract

This study examines the role of social media platforms, such as Instagram and WhatsApp, in shaping English language use among English Language Learners (ELLs) in Kuwait. Ninety-two undergraduate students from the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training participated, providing survey data on social media usage patterns and real language samples, analysed through descriptive statistics and thematic methods. Semi-structured interviews with educators and students offered deeper insights into the perceived impact of these platforms on language development. Findings reveal frequent use of new vocabulary, abbreviations, and emojis, reflecting social media's direct influence on informal communication styles and lexical innovation. The study highlights the multifaceted dimensions of this impact from linguistic and social perspectives, portraying social media as a dynamic platform for linguistic socialisation in line with theories that view language as an adaptive system responding to societal changes. However, despite the noticeable benefits of social media in fostering regular English practice, the widespread prevalence of informal linguistic patterns raises significant concerns regarding its potential impact on formal language skills and grammatical accuracy. In light of these findings, the study highlights the gap between informal and academic communication standards, emphasising the importance of integrating social media into directed educational contexts. Such integration aims to achieve an effective balance between informal linguistic innovations and observing formal language norms. Additionally, the study recommends adopting a more conscious pedagogical approach to enable students to maximize the benefits of social media while safeguarding the quality of their academic performance.

Keywords: social media and language learning, English Language Learners, Kuwait, informal communication, digital language socialisation.

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Introduction

The advent of the World Wide Web in the early 1990s initiated an electronic revolution, introducing communication tools such as chatrooms, discussion groups, and online games, which collectively contributed to the emergence of computer-mediated communication (CMC) or what is colloquially referred to as 'Netspeak' (Crystal 452). Over the years, short message services (SMS) and social networking services (SNS) like Facebook and Twitter have reshaped the nature of communication, particularly influencing the use of English. These platforms fostered a new communication style, characterized by abbreviations, emoticons, and informal language.

Social media platforms have become integral to daily communication and their influence on language use is increasingly evident. It has been hypothesized that social media platforms facilitate the emergence of new vocabulary, abbreviations, and informal communication patterns that challenge traditional language-learning processes, particularly among English Language Learners (ELLs) (Al Jahromi 2020; Calude 2023; Laitinen, Fatemi and Lundberg 2020). While these platforms offer opportunities for authentic interaction in English, they also introduce challenges in maintaining formal writing standards as learners adopt informal linguistic elements into academic or professional contexts (Zainal and Rahmat 2020).

For instance, Saha (2019) argued that social media enhances communicative competence by creating environments for efficient, real-time conversations. However, it is also observed that the frequent use of abbreviations, contractions, and slang can negatively impact formal English skills (Tagg and Seargeant 2012). This tension between the benefits of social media-driven language acquisition and its potential to hinder formal linguistic development is particularly relevant for ELLs in non-English-speaking countries like Kuwait.

This study draws on Language Socialization Theory and Language Contact Theory to explore how social media influences English language use among Kuwaiti ELLs. Social media platforms provide an environment for informal language socialization in which learners adapt to evolving linguistic norms through interaction with peers (Schieffelin and Ochs 1986a, 1986b). Additionally, Language Contact Theory (Weinreich 1968) addresses the bilingual context of these learners where Arabic and English interact, potentially shaping unique communication patterns.

Despite the growing body of research on social media's linguistic impact, few studies have focused on the Kuwaiti context where English is predominantly learned as a second language (L2) (Dashti and Abdulsalam 2025). This study addresses that gap by exploring how social media influences the English language use of Kuwaiti ELLs, particularly regarding vocabulary acquisition and informal communication styles. The study examines how social media shapes language learning in a non-native context, contributing to the broader understanding of digital platforms' role in language evolution.

Literature Review

English has become indispensable in global communication, particularly through the expansion of social media platforms and the internet. This trend is reflected in Kuwait, where English increasingly shapes social interactions and educational systems (Al-Ajlan and Al-Qenaie 2023; Al-Qenaie and AlBader 2024; Hayat and AlBader 2022). However, research on how social media impacts English language proficiency, especially among Kuwaiti English Language Learners (ELLs), is still emerging. Al-Shammari (2022), and AlAdwani and Al-Shammari (2021) explore the role of social media in English language learning among Kuwaiti students, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Both studies highlight students' positive attitudes towards using social media for education and recommend its broader integration into teaching. Their findings underscore the potential of social media to enhance language learning and support the shift toward innovative educational practices in Kuwait.

Globally, studies have confirmed that social media affects English language usage among both native speakers and ELLs (Al Jahromi 2020; Laitinen, Fatemi, and Lundberg 2020; Lucy and Bamman 2021). The most notable linguistic changes include the creation of new terms, abbreviations, and neologisms (Alenezi and Al-Qenaie 2024; Čilić and Plauc 2021; Jeresano and Carretero 2022; Saha 2019). These changes often lead to the simplification of language, with social media promoting a relaxed linguistic environment. For example, terms like 'LOL' and 'B4' have emerged from social media and are now common in both online and offline communication (Lucy and Bamman 2021; Natsir et al. 2020).

Social media platforms have also become spaces for identity construction and self-presentation, as demonstrated by Lee (2014), who examined how university students in Hong Kong adapted their English usage on social media to navigate social interactions and project specific identities. Similarly, these platforms have become essential tools for ELLs, particularly during times of increased online interaction, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic, when students turned to social media for language practice (Muftah 2022). This aligns with findings from studies in Kuwait, where ELLs frequently used social media to expand their vocabulary and adapt to informal communication styles (Alenezi and Brinthaupt 2022; Al-Qenaie and AlBader 2024).

In Kuwait, studies like Hayat and AlBader (2022) explored how English has penetrated youth culture, particularly through social media. Their study highlighted the "McChicken phenomenon," according to which Kuwaiti youth frequently code-switch between English and Arabic on platforms like Instagram and TikTok, using English to signal social status and engage with global trends. This is consistent with a broader trend

among Kuwaiti students, namely, that English is used informally in daily conversations while also functioning as the language of education and career advancement (Al-Qenaie and AlBader 2024; Dashti 2015; Kabilan, Ahmad and Jafre 2010).

In educational settings, social media's role in language acquisition is complex, offering both opportunities for learning and challenges for maintaining formal language standards. Social media platforms encourage interaction and collaborative learning that can enhance language acquisition although they may also introduce informalities that hinder formal academic writing (Alenezi and Brinthaup 2022). Lomicka and Lord (2016) highlighted how social networking facilitates peer interaction and supports language learning by providing opportunities for authentic communication, while McBride (2009) underscored its potential to create interactive environments where learners can practice language use informally. Roblyer et al. (2010) stated that both students and educators use social media differently, reflecting the varied functions it serves within an educational context. Patty and Noija (2023) highlighted TikTok's role in fostering English language learning, showcasing how even newer platforms support language practice and informal communication. In Kuwait, similar dynamics were observed on platforms like WhatsApp and Instagram that are widely used by ELLs to broaden their vocabulary and grammar skills outside structured classroom settings (Alghasab and Alfadley 2018; Al-Shammari 2022).

Research conducted by Hamat and Abu Hassan (2019) with Malaysian students disclosed that 99.7% of participants used social media platforms to enhance their English skills. Similarly, Amin, Rafiq and Mehmood (2020) and Karim et al. (2022) found that social media provided substantial opportunities for language practice and real-world application among ELLs. Karim et al. (2022) specifically investigated the impact of social media on English language learning among undergraduate students, accentuating how platforms can facilitate vocabulary acquisition and informal communication skills, which matches the context of Kuwaiti ELLs. These studies demonstrated that, while social media introduced informalities, it also served as a practical tool for language practice and enhancement (Alenezi and Al-Qenaie 2024).

Further research supports the idea that social media encourages linguistic transformation by enabling users to adapt and repurpose vocabulary. For example, Natsir et al. (2020) and Yunis (2019) recorded that users frequently integrated new vocabulary and communicative practices from online environments into everyday interactions. Al-Qenaie and AlBader (2024) pointed out that English serves as a marker of educational quality and social status in Kuwait, contributing to its widespread use among younger generations.

Language Socialization Theory, introduced by Schieffelin and Ochs (1986a, 1986b), posits that language learners acquire linguistic norms and cultural values

through social interactions. In digital environments, this theory is particularly relevant as it suggests that Kuwaiti ELLs may adopt informal English norms via interactions on social media. Studies like Kim and Duff (2012) demonstrated that bilingual individuals negotiate language and identity through such interactive platforms, navigating informal English norms and adapting their language use to meet the demands of digital communication contexts.

In conclusion, social media has significantly influenced English language usage among Kuwaiti ELLs, contributing to both formal and informal linguistic shifts. However, current studies mostly focus on informal language use, with limited attention to how these platforms affect formal language learning. This study aims to address this gap by examining the effects of social media on both formal and informal communication among Kuwaiti ELLs, with a particular focus on vocabulary acquisition and syntactic changes through a mixed-method framework capable of encompassing the complex relationship between language learning and virtual space.

Research Aims and Questions

This study explored how social media influences the English language acquisition of ELLs in Kuwait. Specifically, it examined how social media stimulates the emergence of new linguistic trends, promotes the creation and reinterpretation of vocabulary, and transforms both formal and informal communication styles. The study also focused on Kuwaiti ELLs to investigate the unique effects of social media on English as a second language in a non-native L2 environment. The study answers the following questions:

- 1 - How does daily use of social media influence the formal and informal communication skills of Kuwaiti ELLs, particularly in terms of vocabulary, syntax, and grammar?
- 2 - How does social media usage shape the acquisition and evolution of new vocabulary and grammatical structures among Kuwaiti ELLs?

Methodology

To strengthen the validity of the findings and address the limitations of relying solely on self-reported data, the study incorporated both qualitative and objective elements by collecting actual language samples produced by learners during their interactions on social media. These samples reflect typical English usage in informal contexts, including abbreviations, slang, emoji usage, and code-switching. For instance, examples like "BRB, need to eat" and "Wallah, you're too funny 😄" demonstrate both language simplifications and bilingual blending in digital interactions, providing concrete evidence of the impact of social media on vocabulary acquisition, informal communication styles, and grammatical changes.

This study's methodology was informed by Language Socialization Theory and Language Contact Theory. Language Socialization Theory, as described by Ochs and

Schieffelin (2012), provides a framework for understanding how language learners acquire linguistic norms and cultural values through social interactions, including interactions via social media. This perspective guided the analysis of social media samples and interview data, focusing on how ELLs in Kuwait adopt informal English norms and linguistic practices through digital interaction (Duff 2007). Language Contact Theory supports the examination of Arabic influence on students' English usage, recognizing social media as a site of bilingual language contact where cross-linguistic features may emerge (Weinreich 1968).

Whereas the study primarily employed a qualitative approach, a mixed-methods framework was adopted by including quantitative analysis of questionnaire data. Descriptive statistics, such as percentages, averages, and ranges were calculated from questionnaire responses to quantify students' social media usage habits and language preferences. This quantitative layer provides a broader context for qualitative insights, ensuring a balanced analysis of how social media affects language learning by combining subjective insights from participants with objective linguistic data.

Participants

The study involved 92 undergraduate students majoring in English during Fall 2023/2024 at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) in Kuwait. These students were selected because they actively used social media platforms daily for communication, as indicated in the preliminary screening survey, making them well-suited for examining English language usage in digital contexts. In addition to completing surveys and interviews, all participants consented to provide samples of their social media interactions in English, adding an objective layer to the study and enabling a detailed analysis of vocabulary and communication styles.

Data Collection

Social Media Samples

Participants were invited to submit up to three examples of their written communication on social media platforms, such as Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), WhatsApp, and TikTok. These samples included comments, direct messages, and posts that reflect their typical use of English in informal, digital contexts. Students were asked to submit interactions that specifically showcase their use of English, focusing on elements such as vocabulary, slang, abbreviations, or any grammatical changes resulting from social media usage. These interactions were collected from before the survey and interview to provide a more authentic snapshot of their language use.

Surveys and Interviews

In addition to the social media samples, students completed structured surveys quantifying their social media habits (e.g., time spent on different platforms, frequency of using English) and participated in semi-structured interviews that explored their perceptions of how social media affects their English language development. Descriptive statistics, including percentages, averages, and ranges were calculated from the survey responses to provide a quantitative overview of participants' social media usage patterns and language preferences. These quantitative measures complement the qualitative insights from interviews, contextualizing the linguistic data gathered from the social media samples and offering a more comprehensive view of social media's impact on language use.

Consent and Anonymization

All participants provided informed consent for the use of their social media data. To ensure privacy, all submissions were fully anonymized by removing any identifying information such as usernames or personal references. Pseudonyms were used, and data were paraphrased where necessary to protect participants' confidentiality. Participants had the option to opt out of this phase of the study without affecting their involvement in the other parts of the research.

Inclusion Criteria

Social media posts were included in the study if they:

- Used English as the primary language.
- Reflected informal communication, such as casual conversations, comments, or personal updates.
- Contained features such as new vocabulary, slang, abbreviations, or modifications in grammar and sentence structure due to the social media format.

Data Analysis

The data analysis was structured around key tenets of Language Socialization Theory and Language Contact Theory. Thematic analysis focused on identifying informal vocabulary and syntax adaptations, reflecting the idea that learners adopt linguistic norms from their social environment (Ochs 1988). Language Contact Theory informed the examination of Arabic-English cross-linguistic features within social media samples, recognizing social media as a domain where bilingual individuals negotiate and blend linguistic resources (Sankoff 2013). The data analysis combined thematic

analysis of qualitative data with descriptive statistics for quantitative insights, providing a comprehensive understanding of how social media influences English language usage among Kuwaiti ELLs.

Qualitative Analysis

A thematic analysis of the social media samples and interviews was conducted to identify specific linguistic features shaped by social media usage. The analysis focused on the following elements:

- **New Vocabulary and Slang:** Identification of newly coined terms, slang, or acronyms that emerged from social media use.
- **Abbreviations and Acronyms:** Frequent use of abbreviations (e.g., LOL, BRB, FYI) and their communicative function in conversations.
- **Grammatical Simplifications:** Noting changes in grammar, such as the omission of articles or the use of sentence fragments, influenced by the brevity required on social media platforms.
- **Shortened Forms:** Patterns of shortening sentences or words for brevity in digital interactions.

These linguistic elements were categorized into themes related to language change and informal communication. This thematic analysis of social media samples and interviews provided real-world data that corroborated the quantitative findings from the surveys. The analytical process was informed by both participatory and hybrid approaches to thematic analysis, as discussed by Liebenberg, Jamal and Ikeda (2020) and Xu and Zammit (2020), allowing for a flexible, yet systematic interpretation of linguistic adaptations. This approach enabled the study to incorporate both pre-existing codes based on language socialization theory and emergent themes observed directly in the data.

Quantitative Analysis

For the survey data, descriptive statistics were calculated to provide a quantitative overview of students' social media usage patterns, preferences, and frequency of English use. Measures, such as percentages, averages, and ranges, were used to summarize the following aspects:

- **Platform Usage:** Frequency and popularity of social media platforms (e.g., Instagram, WhatsApp) among participants.
- **Time Spent:** Average time spent on social media daily.

- Frequency of English Usage: Proportion of social media interactions conducted in English.

The quantitative data from the surveys offered a foundational understanding of students' social media habits and language use that complemented the in-depth qualitative insights. The combination of qualitative themes and quantitative metrics strengthened the reliability of the findings and provided a well-rounded view of social media's impact on English language usage (see Naeem, Ozuem and Ranfagni 2023 for a comprehensive discussion).

Results

Student Survey Results

The survey revealed high social media usage among students, with all respondents reporting at least one active account. Instagram and X were the most popular platforms, capturing 28% and 29% of usage preferences, respectively, followed by TikTok at 21%. Facebook and WhatsApp each held 11% of student preferences, with WhatsApp often cited as a primary communication tool among peers. Data from similarweb (Top Websites Ranking) support these findings, ranking X as the most visited social media site in Kuwait with a usage score of 88%.

Students identified various purposes for their social media use beyond socializing, including interacting with friends, learning, reading news, following influencers, and engaging in content creation and self-expression. Approximately 90% of students used social media to stay connected and informed about trends, with 70% primarily using it for entertainment. Around 50% of the participants followed content creators in fields such as travel, fitness, and lifestyle, reflecting diverse engagement and content preferences.

These patterns suggest that social media is deeply integrated into students' daily lives and introduces them to varied forms of language use. Exposure to evolving English vocabulary and conversational expressions through digital interactions appear to influence their familiarity with informal English language norms, which may, over time, shape their language use.

Table 1**Student Survey Results on Social Media Usage**

Social Media Platform	Percentage of Usage Preferences	Additional Notes
X (formerly Twitter)	29%	Favoured for concise updates and microblogging
Instagram	28%	Popular for image sharing and influencer content
TikTok	21%	Known for short video content
Facebook	11%	Used less frequently but still significant
WhatsApp	11%	Primary communication tool among peers

Thematic Analysis

Social media platforms were found to foster linguistic innovation, significantly influencing how English is used and understood by Kuwaiti ELLs. A primary trend observed was the morphing of adjectives and the creation of unique terms. For example, students frequently used “lit” as a standalone positive adjective, reflecting a shift towards concise and trendy expressions. Additionally, social media facilitates the frequent use of abbreviations and acronyms (e.g., LOL, BRB, FYI), which now permeate everyday speech, demonstrating how informal language elements have become ingrained in digital interactions.

Social media also encourages informal language patterns such as sentence fragments and shortened expressions. These adaptations reflect a tendency towards brevity and casualness, with expressions like “BRB, need to eat” and “u coming tmrw?” showing how digital communication prioritizes efficiency over formal grammatical structures.

Analysis of the social media samples reveals six distinct linguistic features that highlight the influence of digital platforms on language use among Kuwaiti ELLs: abbreviations and acronyms, slang and informal vocabulary, emoji usage as language replacements, code-switching between Arabic and English, grammatical simplifications, and phonetic spelling with informal typing conventions. Each category provides insights into how social media fosters an informal and dynamic approach to English communication.

Table 2

Linguistic Features Influenced by Social Media Among Kuwaiti ELLs

Linguistic Feature	Description
Abbreviations and Acronyms	Frequent use of shortened forms (e.g., "BRB" for "Be Right Back," "IDK" for "I Don't Know").
Slang and Informal Vocabulary	Adoption of trendy, casual terms (e.g., "lit," "vibe," "bop") for informal communication.
Emoji Usage as Language Replacements	Use of emojis to complement or replace words, adding emotional or contextual meaning (e.g., "🥰," "💧").
Code-Switching (Arabic-English Blending)	Mixing Arabic and English in the same sentence or phrase (e.g., "Yalla, let's go!").
Grammatical Simplifications	Reduced sentence structures (e.g., omission of articles, sentence fragments).
Phonetic Spelling and Informal Typing	Simplified spellings and typing conventions (e.g., "u" for "you," "gonna" for "going to").

1. Abbreviations and Acronyms

Social media platforms encourage brevity, leading to the frequent use of abbreviations and acronyms. Kuwaiti ELLs incorporate commonly used shorthand expressions like "LOL" and "BRB" in their digital interactions, reflecting a trend towards concise, informal language. For instance:

- a. "Can't wait for the weekend! TGIF 🎉"
- b. "DM me the location, plz."
- c. "I'm OMW, see you soon!"
- d. "Can we meet around 3ish? LMK."
- e. "GG on the game yesterday! We crushed it!"

2. Slang and Informal Vocabulary

The adoption of trending slang terms is another hallmark of social media language. Students often use phrases such as "lit" and "vibe" to express emotions and opinions, showing how exposure to online culture influences their vocabulary. Examples include:

- a. "The weather today is so lit 🌈💧"
- b. "That new cafe is a vibe, for real."
- c. "This song is a total bop! 🎵"

- d. "She's such a foodie, loves trying new places."
- e. "You're killing it! Keep up the hustle!"

3. Emoji Usage as Language Replacements

Emojis are frequently used as substitutes or complements to words, adding emotional nuance and reducing the need for lengthy explanations. Participants often rely on emojis like "🔥" and "👊" to convey enthusiasm and encouragement, illustrating the visual aspect of modern communication. For example:

- a. "Today was amazing! 😄👊"
- b. "This food is fire 🔥, love it!"
- c. "Let's go! 👊 We can do it!"
- d. "Missing you! 💔👤"
- e. "Thank you so much! 🙏💔"

4. Code-Switching (Arabic–English blending)

In our data, among Kuwaiti bilinguals, social media platforms frequently facilitated code-switching between English and Arabic, allowing users to blend languages fluidly to express cultural nuances, emotions, and context-specific meanings unique to their linguistic background. This blending is particularly prominent in informal settings, where users switch between languages within single sentences or phrases, creating a hybrid form of expression that reflects their bilingual identity. Common expressions, such as "Yalla, let's go!" or "Wallah, you're too funny 😂," illustrate how this practice allows speakers to draw from both languages for more expressive communication. Examples of code-switching from participants' social media interactions include:

- a. "Yalla let's go eat before it gets crowded."
'Come on, let's go eat before it gets crowded.'
- b. "That's so حلو of you!"
'That's so sweet of you!'
- c. "I'll meet you at the mall inshallah."
'I'll meet you at the mall, hopefully.'
- d. "Shlonkom? Can't wait to see you guys!"
'How are you all? Can't wait to see you guys!'
- e. "Mabrook on the promotion! You totally deserve it."
'Congratulations on the promotion! You totally deserve it.'

- f. "Bas laish? I thought it was over."
'But why? I thought it was over.'
- g. "Wallah you're too funny 😄"
'I swear, you're too funny 😄'
- h. "Ya wayli :/ forgot my book!"
'Oh no, I forgot my book!'
- i. "Mashallah you did amazing!"
'God bless, you did amazing!'
- j. "7adee tired can't even move [7 = h]"
'I'm so tired, I can't even move.'

These examples highlight the adaptive nature of bilingual language use in digital interactions, where English serves as a foundation for communication, complemented by Arabic words or phrases that capture cultural expressions and emotions more precisely. The prevalence of this code-switching on social media reflects the dynamic linguistic environment Kuwaiti ELLs navigate daily, allowing them to connect with both their local and global cultural identities (Hayat and AlBader 2022).

5. Grammatical Simplifications

To maintain speed and simplicity, users often forgo formal grammar rules, opting for sentence fragments and simplified structures. Examples like "u coming?" and "Got exams next week" highlight the informal grammar adaptations prevalent in digital conversations. For example:

- a. "Saw u at the mall yesterday."
- b. "Wish u all the best, bro."
- c. "Got exams next week, so stressed!"
- d. "Missed class today, what did I miss?"
- e. "Leaving in 5 mins, be ready!"

6. Phonetic Spelling and Informal Typing Conventions

Informal phonetic spellings and typing shortcuts further reflect the casual nature of social media language. Expressions such as "Srsly" and "Thx" indicate an approach to spelling that prioritizes convenience over conventional accuracy. For instance:

- a. "Srsly, that's amazing news!"
- b. "Gonna be late for class, stuck in traffic."

- c. "Nvm, I'll handle it myself."
- d. "C u tmrw in the class."
- e. "Gonna need more info on this chapter ASAP."

Table 3 summarizes the thematic analysis of interviews with Kuwaiti teachers and students, highlighting their perceptions of social media's impact on English. Both groups observed shifts in language use, including the adoption of new terms, acronyms, and slang. However, while teachers generally viewed these changes neutrally, students expressed mixed feelings: they appreciated that social media helps expand their vocabulary but felt it hindered their ability to maintain formal language standards in writing. Notably, only students observed the prevalence of message shortening and specific acronyms like "DM" and "FYI," a trend attributed to their frequent engagement on these platforms.

The analysis underscores a shared recognition among students and teachers of social media's role in modern communication. Both groups agreed that language use on these platforms has introduced noticeable linguistic shifts in vocabulary, syntax, and communication styles. Students' comments about phrases like "gonna" or "wanna" and the bilingual code-switching expressions (e.g., "Yalla, let's go!") further illustrate how social media encourages casual and dynamic language practices, contributing to an evolving lexicon that blurs the lines between formal and informal English.

Table 3
Thematic Analysis

Theme	Sub-theme	Example
Teachers		
Noticeable Change	New words, terms, and neologisms	"I've noticed my students using terms like 'following,' 'likes,' 'sharing,' 'memes,' 'YOLO,' 'FYI' in their daily interactions with each other and, sometimes, during lessons" (Teacher 2).
	Change of meaning of traditional words	"I remember when I realized some time ago that the action of 'liking someone' was related to clicking a button on Facebook. Now I google for the meaning of new words constantly" (Teacher 1).
	New slang	"Students often say: DM me or saying something like 'for the win' or NBD, which I did not understand. So, I had to ask them" (Teacher 4).
	Change of orthography	"I've noticed that some students' messages on MS Teams lack capitalization, punctuation, and spelling, easing up on the rules governing them" (Teacher 3).

Cont. Table 3

Thematic Analysis

Theme	Sub-theme	Example
Interaction	Communication patterns stimulate change	"I realized that changes in language were stimulated by their interactions with each other, considering how many people are today in social media" (Teacher 10).
	Interaction in the global community stimulates change	"English is obviously changing because so many people, including ELLs, interact with each other daily. I think the changes are cultural and social" (Teacher 9).
Social Construction	Society within society	"I perceive social media as a big village or a market where people are gathering to interact, which leads to change in language" (Teacher 8).
	New language experiences	"Interaction among people stimulates the development of new language experiences leading to language transformations" (Teacher 5).
Neutral Effect	The social media effect is neutral	"While I am not a frequent user of social media, I can see that it does not have a positive or a negative effect. It is just a part of our reality today" (Teacher 7).
	Social media reflects the plasticity of language	"I always thought that language is a flexible and malleable instrument, which is why it is always changing" (Teacher 6).
Students		
Language Change	New acronyms and slang	"New acronyms and slang appear quite often in social media, especially on Twitter: OOTD, TBT, TBH, NVB, NVM" (Student 2).
	Communication pattern change	"I've noticed that it is more comfortable for me to send a message on Insta [i.e., Instagram] or DM my friend rather than calling" (Student 8).
	Perception of linguistic content	"I realized that I tend to perceive shorter texts better than a long read. Like, I do not want to invest my time in reading long posts; I keep scrolling" (Student 1).

Cont. Table 3

Thematic Analysis

Theme	Sub-theme	Example
Communication and Change	Communication with others changes the language	"My language changed when I started communicating with my friends overseas. They are native speakers" (Student 5).
	New forms of interaction change language	"I realized that since we changed the way we interact, the changes in language are inevitable" (Student 6).
	Communication with foreign people changes the language	"I have several friends across the globe. Communication with them altered my linguistic patterns and my perception of printed text" (Student 9).
Natural Effect	Neither positive nor negative	"I think that at this point, it is difficult to say whether the change is positive or negative. The language is changed because we engage in social media communication" (Student 8).
	Social media is part of modern communication	"Social media is essential for our communication, and until new methods of interaction emerge, it is impossible to ignore its impact" (Student 7).

Discussion

This study explored the effects of social media on the English language use of ELLs in Kuwait. The data confirm that platforms like Instagram, X, and WhatsApp dominate social media use among students. These findings conform to similarweb's (Top Websites Ranking) regional usage data, supporting the notion that platforms fostering brief, frequent communication resonate strongly with Kuwaiti users. The prominence of platforms like Instagram, X, and WhatsApp may indicate that concise communication and visual engagement are particularly valued among Kuwaiti ELLs, as they balance both formal and informal English use. This suggests that, within the Kuwaiti context, social media facilitates various aspects of language learning, from vocabulary acquisition through exposure to informal expressions to syntax simplification in abbreviated formats.

The findings reflect Schieffelin and Ochs's (1986a, 1986b) Language Socialization Theory which posits that individuals acquire linguistic and cultural norms through interactive social contexts. In the contemporary digital age, social media has become an important environment for informal language socialization, where ELLs adapt to English norms such as abbreviations, emojis, and other informal features through online interactions. The frequent incorporation of Arabic phrases or code-switching

also underscores insights from Language Contact Theory (Weinreich 1968), illustrating how bilingual settings enable cross-linguistic influence in digital communication.

The high prevalence of informal language patterns, such as slang and abbreviations, mirrors findings by Natsir et al. (2020), who observed similar linguistic shifts among English learners on social media. This phenomenon supports Language Socialization Theory, as Kuwaiti students appear to adopt these informal patterns through social interactions online. Similarly, Liu, Gui, and Dai (2019) highlighted how internet slang is integrated into persuasive advertising, demonstrating how digital language trends influence broader communication practices, including among ELLs. These findings also reflect Al Jahromi's (2020) conclusions that social media fosters vocabulary growth by exposing users to dynamic language environments, even though it may complicate adherence to formal language norms. Additionally, the study supports Yousif's (2023) assertion that social media accelerates linguistic evolution, introducing new vocabulary and fostering informal communication patterns.

Furthermore, the influence of social media on Kuwaiti students' vocabulary and informal language use fits within Crystal's (2008, 2011, 2019) theory that online communication accelerates language change. In contrast to the traditional evolution of language, social media accelerates the adoption of new words and slang. This rapid change is congruent with the observations of Bahri et al. (2023), Natsir et al. (2020), and others who recognize the transformative impact of digital interactions on language development.

The results also reveal a challenge Kuwaiti students face in maintaining formal writing standards, despite vocabulary gains. Zainal and Rahmat (2020) highlighted similar challenges in balancing formal and informal language skills due to social media use. This study also confirms Language Contact Theory's relevance, as bilingual environments like Kuwait's can lead to fluid boundaries between language registers. Kuwaiti ELLs, frequently switching between Arabic and English, may find it more difficult to maintain distinct formal and informal language standards. The frequent use of bilingual expressions, such as "Yalla, let's go!" and "Mashallah, you did amazing!" reflects Language Contact Theory, according to which bilingual speakers adapt language patterns based on social context and audience (Auer 1998). These patterns show how ELLs in Kuwait incorporate Arabic-English blends on social media, consistent with the theories of socialized language adaptation.

Whereas previous studies suggested social media could enhance language learning (e.g., Akakandelwa and Walubita 2018; Bosch 2009; Madge et al. 2009), this study revealed that without structured academic support, students primarily use these platforms for entertainment or social interaction rather than as dedicated learning tools. This result corroborates findings by Carpenter and Krutka (2014), Cinkara and Arslan (2017), and Greenhow, Galvin and Willet (2019), who noted that students seldom leverage social media for independent academic purposes.

Social media's dual role—as a source of informal language and potential learning tool—is further evident in this study. Similar to Kasuma's (2017) findings, students reported enhanced confidence and motivation in reading and communicating in English via social media. The potential of social media to enhance language skills is promising but requires structured integration into the learning environment to avoid conflicts with formal language standards, as noted by Pikhart and Botezat (2021) and Mahmud and Ching (2012).

These findings reinforce the notion that social media contributes to the natural evolution of language by exposing users to diverse linguistic registers. Singer (2024) anticipates that social media's role in English language education will grow, suggesting that digital platforms might increasingly shape informal and formal language norms as they integrate further into educational practices.

Conclusion

This study delineated the ways in which social media influence English usage among Kuwaiti ELLs, examining both the modalities and underlying reasons for this impact. Using a qualitative exploratory research design, we engaged 102 participants, comprising 10 English language educators and 92 undergraduate students, with data collected through semi-structured interviews and brief qualitative surveys. Both thematic and graphical analyses were employed, revealing that students primarily favor X, Instagram, and TikTok for engaging with bloggers and content creation.

The thematic analysis highlighted that social media shapes English usage by advancing the creation of new acronyms, vocabulary, neologisms, and reinterpretations of existing words. This language evolution appeared to be driven by globalization, the rise of virtual communication, and shifts in interpersonal interaction patterns. Both students and teachers recognized social media's pivotal role in modern communication, acknowledging its significance in shaping language use within a rapidly globalizing context.

The thematic analysis underscored nuanced influences on English usage among ELLs and educators in Kuwait, highlighting the emergence of new linguistic phenomena and evolving digital communication styles. While social media's primary function may not be language learning, these platforms support incidental language acquisition through informal interactions, fostering vocabulary growth and conversational skills.

Social media has thus become central to daily interactions in Kuwait, contributing to significant linguistic transformations. These changes are characterized by the rise of new terms, neologisms, acronyms, and informal phrases, all facilitated by global engagement on digital platforms. Social media has reshaped communication norms, establishing these platforms as indispensable tools for information consumption and

social connection. This shift suggests a profound evolution of language, not merely a fleeting trend, driven by social media's prevalence and broad reach.

This study focused on vocabulary acquisition and casual English use among Kuwaiti ELLs, but its implications extend beyond these findings. Future research should explore how social media platforms shape language use across diverse age and social groups, examining whether these changes enhance global communication or contribute to linguistic fragmentation. Additionally, future research should incorporate larger and more diverse samples to assess how social media supports language preservation across multilingual and multicultural settings.

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Appendix A

Debriefing Protocol

Thank you for participating in this research study. Your involvement in this interview will contribute to a better understanding of how social media influences the English language usage of English Language Learners (ELLs) in Kuwait. This study aims to examine the linguistic changes observed under the influence of social media, focusing on aspects such as vocabulary, grammar, and informal communication styles among individuals learning English as a second language.

Confidentiality and Privacy

Please be assured that all information you provide will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. Any identifying details have been anonymized to protect your privacy, and your responses will only be used for academic purposes.

Right to Withdraw

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw at any time without any consequences. If you choose to withdraw or have any questions or concerns about the study, please feel free to reach out to me at yb.albader@paaet.edu.kw.

Once again, thank you for your valuable time and contribution to this research. Your input is greatly appreciated and will play an essential role in enhancing our understanding of social media's impact on language learning.

Appendix B

Teacher Questionnaire

1. Have you noticed any changes in your students' use of English over the past few years due to social media? If yes, how?
2. In your opinion, how do modern social media platforms affect the English language?
3. What mechanisms within social media use do you think affect the English language?
4. In what way has social media affected your students' linguistic patterns?
5. In what way has social media affected your students' communication style?
6. In your opinion, are the effects of social media on the English language positive, negative, or both? Please elaborate.
7. Why do you think social media affects the English language?
8. Do you personally or professionally use social media? What are the most common reasons for your usage?
9. In your opinion, do social media help students learn English or hinder it?
10. How do you predict social media will impact the English language among ELLs over the next few years?

Appendix C

Student Survey and Interview Questionnaire

A. Social Media Usage Survey:

Please complete this brief survey regarding your social media habits and usage patterns:

1. Which social media platforms do you regularly use?
 - a. Instagram
 - b. WhatsApp
 - c. TikTok
 - d. Twitter (X)
 - e. Other (please specify): _____
2. What is your favorite social media platform, and why?
3. What are your primary purposes for using social media platforms?
 - a. Connecting with friends
 - b. Learning and educational content
 - c. Reading news or seeking information
 - d. Following bloggers and influencers
 - e. Content creation and self-expression
4. Please describe the main reasons why you prefer these social media platforms.

B. Interview Questionnaire

The following questions are designed to explore your personal experiences and perceptions of how social media influences your English language usage:

1. Have you noticed any changes in your English over the past few years due to social media usage? If yes, please explain how.
2. In your experience, how do modern social media platforms affect English language use?
3. What specific features or aspects of social media do you believe impact the English language most significantly?
4. In what ways has social media influenced your vocabulary and language patterns?

5. How has social media impacted your communication style, particularly in terms of informality or abbreviation?
 6. Do you feel that the influence of social media on your English is primarily positive or negative? Why?
 7. What makes you believe that social media has a noticeable effect on the English language?
 8. In your view, has social media helped you learn English or presented challenges to your language development?
 9. What new words, phrases, or abbreviations have you encountered on social media in recent years? Please provide specific examples.
 10. Looking ahead, what are your predictions regarding social media's impact on the English language?
-