

---

## The Impact of Social Media on Learners' English Speaking and Writing Skills: Focus on the Students and Teachers of United Arab Emirates Universities

Ghadah Al Murshidi<sup>1</sup>, \*Asghar Ali<sup>2</sup>, Ahmed Al Zaabi<sup>3</sup>, Sumaya Akter<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Associate Professor, Curriculum and Instruction Department, College of Education, United Arab Emirates University, UAE

<sup>2</sup>Researcher, Institute of Agricultural Extension, Education and Rural Development, University of Agriculture Faisalabad

<sup>3</sup>Researcher, International business, Ghazali Shafie Graduate School of Government, University Utara Malaysia

<sup>4</sup>Lecturer (Bengali) Department of English, University of Information Technology and Sciences (UITS), Dhaka, Bangladesh

\*Corresponding Author's Email: [asgharali2878@gmail.com](mailto:asgharali2878@gmail.com)

DOI: <https://10.71145/risp.v2i1.134>

### Abstract

Based on the value of learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and how teachers can motivate EFL students, the current study examines social media's impact on EFL students writing and speaking skills. Data was collected from 45 EFL teachers and 124 students at universities in the United Arab Emirates. The study findings showed that respondents exposed to the latest technology and social media significantly influenced their speaking and writing skills. Thus, teachers must focus on enriching their teaching process by appropriately using social media that promotes a global understanding of the effectiveness of communicating in English.

**Keywords:** English Writing Skills, Speaking Skills, EFL Teachers, EFL Students, Social Media

### Introduction

In recent decades, English as an international language has become increasingly important (Hosseini & Seifoori, 2019). However, the learning process has always been complicated for both students and teachers. In particular, students must grasp diverse skill sets covering listening and speaking abilities (Genc, 2016), while teachers must effectively deal with related issues, including the inspiration for learning a foreign language. Further, the traditional methods of teaching and the reluctance to adapt to a more favorable learning environment for learners have complicated the situation (Saidouni & Bahloul, 2018). In order to motivate students toward learning a foreign language, teachers and instructors should use methodologies that enhance the learner's interest in the new language (Alizadeh, 2016). Without using such strategies, students will have difficulty learning, since many factors may restrict their communicative competence (Kakar & Pathan, 2017). According to Namaziandost et al. (2019), in this digital age, simply speaking, writing, and

memorizing is insufficient for students. Instead, there is a need to utilize social media and similar tools to help them better understand the learning materials.

There has been considerable research on English speaking and writing skills (Bravo et al., 2017; Novikova et al., 2018; Sabirova & Khanipova, 2019; Setiyadi et al., 2019; Sundari, 2017). However, few studies have focused on both aspects in a single work. Moreover, while previous researchers have focused on enhancing the educational standards of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners (Dehghan et al., 2017; Reinhardt, 2019; Taskiran et al., 2018; Xodabande, 2017), especially with the inventions of new technologies, social media use during education purpose (both teaching and learning) has proven to be essential for communicating with different people around the world. Therefore, the study examines social media's impacts on EFL learners' writing and speaking abilities, focusing on teachers and students at United Arab Emirates (UAE) universities. The current study's findings will influence EFL teachers to enrich their teaching processes and improve the learning motivation of their students.

### **Literature Review**

Previous EFL research has observed an inordinate number of changes in the approaches to teaching and learning, and how teachers and students behave in classroom situations. Additionally, Nasri et al. (2018) stated that the goal of previous researchers was to increase the efficiency of EFL learners when acquiring the language and its related skills. In this regard, the EFL teaching process has been greatly influenced by technological innovations and learner-friendly tools such as computers, audio/video recordings, and social media. As for the latter, it has become one of the best tools in EFL education. Specifically, simply having a basic understanding of a language is insufficient for fulfilling a person's language ability (Namaziandost et al., 2019; Nasri & Biria, 2017), since he/she must be proficient in speaking, understanding, writing, and listening. Hence, social media and the Internet can enable teachers to effectively teach their students in a stress-free environment.

### **Speaking Skills**

In society, speaking is the basis of communication between people. The term itself refers to "the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols in various contexts" (Chaney, 1998, p. 13). It has also been defined as a volatile process of understanding a language and sharing information (Brown, 1994; Burns & Joyce, 1997). Speaking skills have occupied a significant and delicate place throughout the history of language teaching, with more recent research on such skills in teaching a foreign language (Hosseini et al., 2017). In general, speaking the English language does not only focus on pronouncing words. Thus, teachers dedicate significant time and energy for improving the language proficiency of learners through four important skills: speaking, reading, writing and listening. Speaking, in particular, has garnered the attention of researchers aiming to assist students and teachers in their professional and business development.

### **Writing Skills**

In communication with people, writing is considered an important tool for sharing information. However, in the EFL context, learners start to write English words at a relatively late stage, compared to their first language (Nalliveetil & Mahasneh, 2017). Moreover, since it is difficult for EFL learners to write in the English language, it is necessary for language teachers to take the appropriate steps to assist their students in improving their writing abilities.

Although all four language skills are deemed equally crucial for gaining proficiency in EFL, writing is used more than others in the classroom since teachers use it to assess their students'

performance levels (Mohammad & Hazarika, 2016). For example, EFL language teachers utilize various writing activities, such as paragraph writing, taking notes, writing tests, etc., to improve their students' writing skills and to make the EFL teaching-learning process more fruitful (Nalliveettil & Mahasneh, 2017). However, previous research has given limited attention to writing skills in English language learning (Marzban & Jalali, 2017).

### **English Class Issues as a Foreign Language**

Since it is compulsory for EFL teachers to make their students effectively learn the English language, they tend to focus on certain difficulties such as oral expressions. Meanwhile, when giving oral presentations, the teachers usually remain the center of attention, without actively including the learners in discussions. This can hurt their learning motivation and competency in practical life circumstances. According to Baker and Westrup (2003), in today's world, having proficiency in the English language can lead to success in one's educational and professional lives. There are also many other factors, such as psychological issues, inhibition, and anxiety, that prevent learners from reaching oral expression proficiency. Hence, teachers can adopt various methods to motivate their students toward learning a foreign language and its related skills (Namaziandost et al., 2019), one of which is social media.

### **Use of Technology in English as a Foreign Language Classrooms**

Previous literature has highlighted the rapid growth in the utilization of technology, such as the use of Internet, in EFL classrooms (Aziz et al., 2013). In this regard, traditional teaching methods in such classrooms can produce obstacles for students in the process of learning, whereas the use of technology can reduce the ambiguity and anxiety levels of EFL students, thus facilitating their learning process (Akinola, 2015; Haigh, 2010; Levy, 2009; Namaziandost & Shafiee, 2018; Pichette, 2009).

### **Social Media**

The phrase "social media" comes from the term "social networks," in which the word "social" refers to the connection among people, while the word "networks" is the extent to which different computer systems are linked to one another (Eren, 2012; Namaziandost et al., 2018). In EFL classrooms, social media (as a learning tool) has been frequently used among teachers and learners, attracting researchers regarding its usage and effectiveness in such classrooms (Hashemifardnia et al., 2018; Paliktzoglou & Suhonen, 2014). In recent years, educational institutions have promoted using social media, such as Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, blogs, etc., in classroom activities. Such usage takes the knowledge of a foreign language beyond traditional methods. Hence, it is vital to examine the hurdles students face under conventional learning methods and re-consider the use of social to stimulate EFL students to improve their speaking and writing skills (Gibbins & Greenhow, 2016; Hashemifardnia et al., 2018).

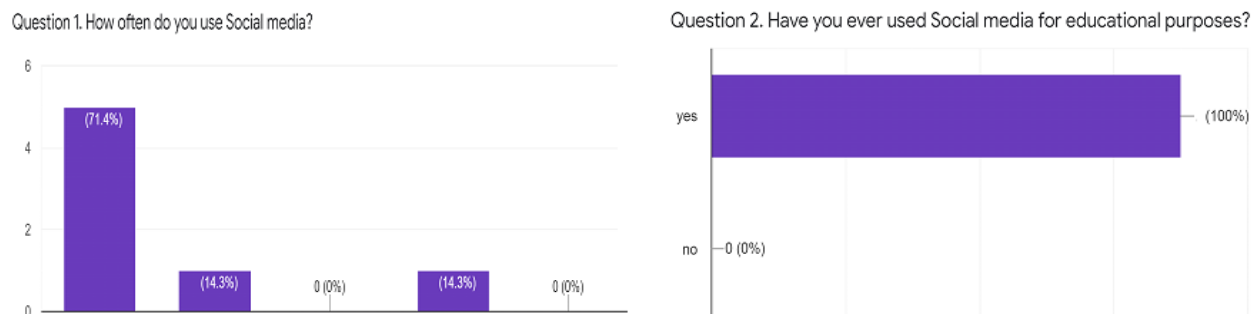
### **METHOD**

The present study utilized two Google surveys that focused on teachers allied with EFL (N = 45) and students of EFL (N = 124) at UAE universities, respectively. Overall, a total 75 of teachers were recruited via email and other social media networks, after which 45 completed questionnaires were received. The students were chosen according to their participation in different social media groups. In total, 2,500 students were recruited, after which 124 completed questionnaires were received. The surveys, administered during the 2020-2021 academic year, consisted of two parts. Since research instruments are considered the backbone of any study (Dornyei & Ushioda, 2011), we used two questionnaires from Namaziandost and Nasri (2019). The first part contained the

demographic features of the respondents. In contrast, Part 2 included different questions regarding social media usage by teachers and students and social media’s impact on the speaking and writing skills of learners of the English language.

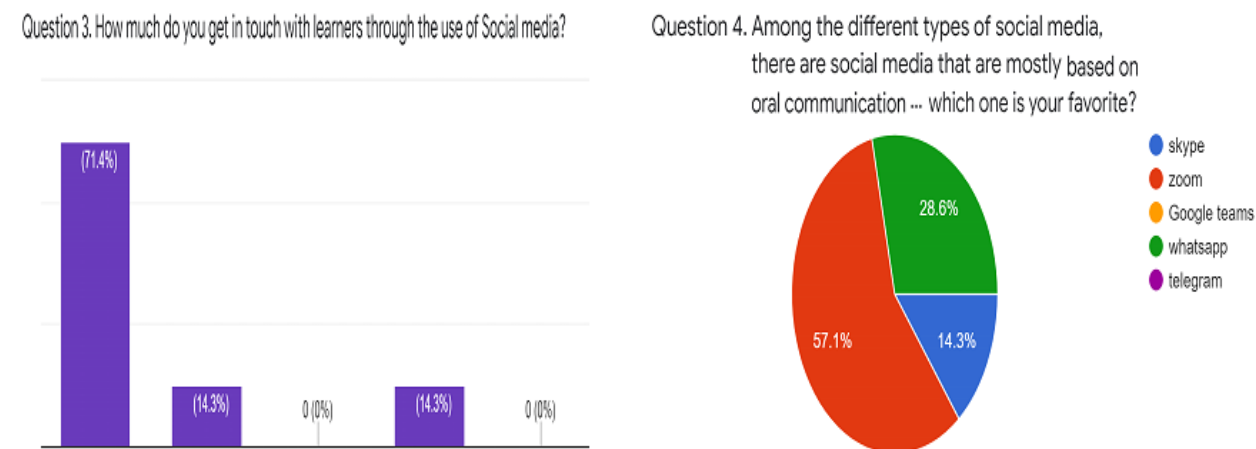
## RESULTS

A total of 45 completed questionnaires were sent by the EFL teachers. This questionnaire was developed to understand EFL teachers' and learners' social media usage. This questionnaire consisted of seven questions.



**Figure 1:** The teachers’ answers regarding the frequency of using social media, and whether it was used for educational purposes

As shown in Figure 1, the first question determined how often the teachers used social media, based on the Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). In response, 71.4% stated that they always used social media, whereas 14.3% said that they rarely used such platforms. The second query was explicitly related to using social media for educational purposes, based on a yes/no format. In response, 100% of the teachers replied “yes,” implying that those teachers who rarely used social media still used it for educational purposes. This reflects the importance of social media in teaching activities.

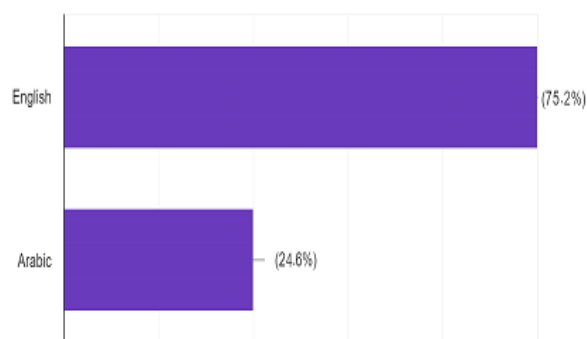


**Figure 2:** The teachers’ answers regarding their interactions with learners through social media, and their choice of social media platform

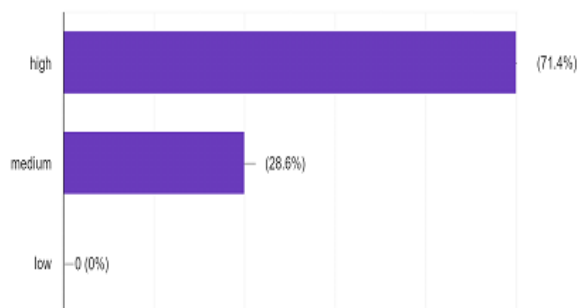
Concerning the third question, it determined whether the EFL teachers benefited from social media in terms of interacting with the learners. As shown in Figure 2, 71.4% of the teachers replied that

they frequently interacted with their students through social media, whereas 14.3% stated that they rarely interacted with their students through such platforms. As for the fourth question, it determined the teachers' preferred social media platforms. In response, 57% of the teachers selected Zoom, 28.6% selected WhatsApp, and 14.3% selected Skype. Conversely, none of the respondents used Telegram or Google Teams for sharing the educational materials/activities with their students. This reflects that, in the UAE, the most common social media platforms for educational purposes are Zoom, WhatsApp, and Skype.

Question 5. Which language is mostly used when using these tools?



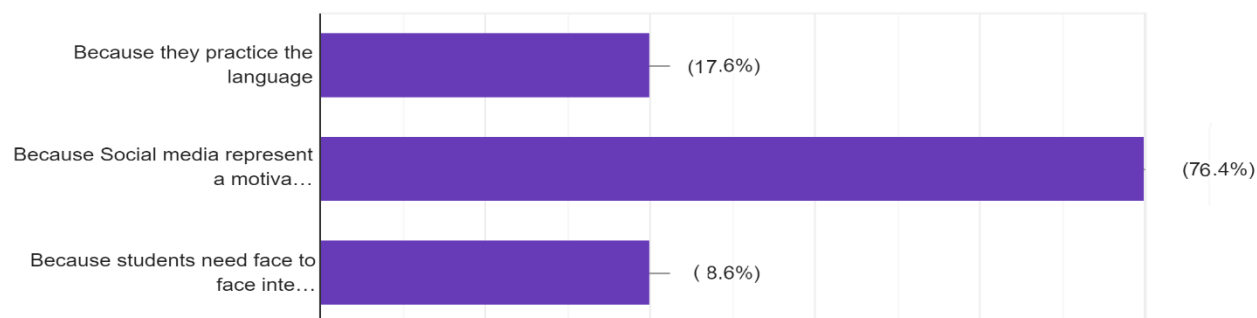
Question 6. To what extent can Skype, zoom, Google teams, WhatsApp and Telegram be helpful to students? and why?



**Figure 3:** The teachers' answers regarding their use of language, and the helpfulness of social media platforms in educational activities

The fifth question determined which language was utilized by the teachers while using social media. Findings revealed most teachers (75.2%) used English as the primary language when speaking, while 24.6% used Arabic. The sixth question concerned the usefulness of social media platforms in educational activities. In response, the majority of the teachers (71.4%) mentioned the social media's high impact on facilitating students in academic activities, such as the level of language practice in terms of speaking and writing, whereas 28.6% reported the medium impact of social media on the achievement of educational goals. Interestingly, no one selected the low impact of social media on educational effectiveness.

Question 7. Why Skype, zoom, Google teams, WhatsApp and Telegram be helpful to students?



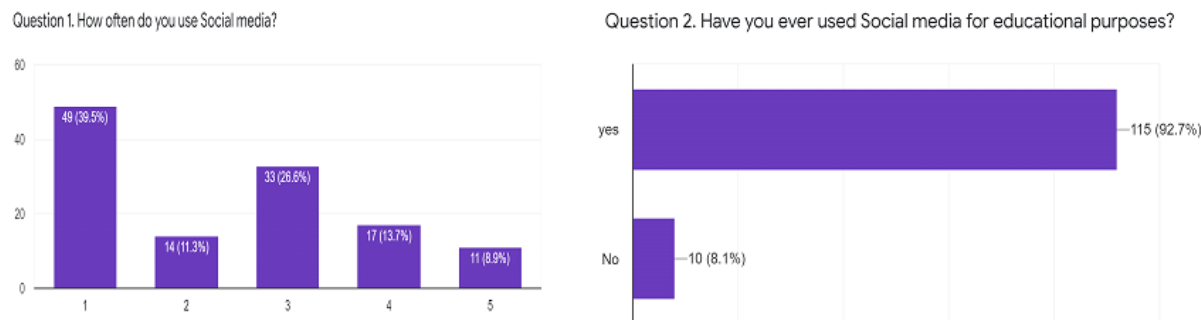
**Figure 4:** The teachers' answers regarding the reasons for using the social media platforms

Finally, the seventh question focused on the reasons for using the platform of social media platforms among teachers. According to the findings, most teachers stated that social media influenced the students' language practice, including their writing and speaking. Specifically, 17.6% of the teachers stated that social media platforms were helpful for the students because they

practiced the language, while 76.4% stated social media acted motivational factor for the students to speak and write English in their conversations. Moreover, 8.6% felt that the students needed face-to-face interactions when studying, which is why social media platforms were preferred.

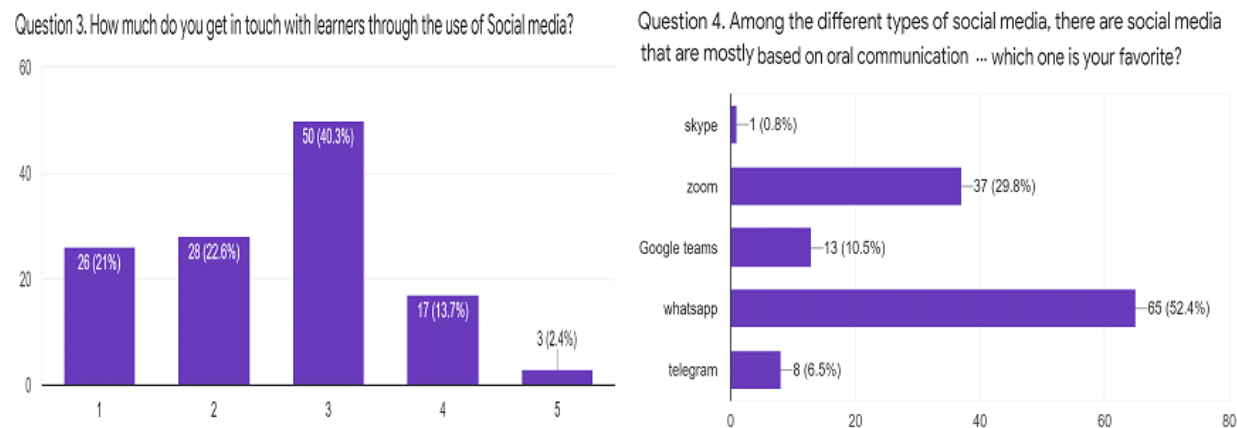
### Descriptions of the Student Questionnaires

The survey questionnaires, consisting of six questions, were completed by 124 students. The findings are as follows.



**Figure 5:** The students’ answers regarding the frequency of using social media, and whether it was used for educational purposes

The first question included two objectives. The first was to involve the student in the issue so that they might think about what questions would be asked later. The second was to determine how much the students relied on social media. As per findings, 39.5% of the students said they frequently used social media, whereas 8.9% rarely used such platforms. Concerning the second question, it was critical to understand whether students ever used social media platforms for the purpose of education. The findings indicated that 92.7% used social media for study purposes, whereas only 8.1% did not use such platforms for studying.

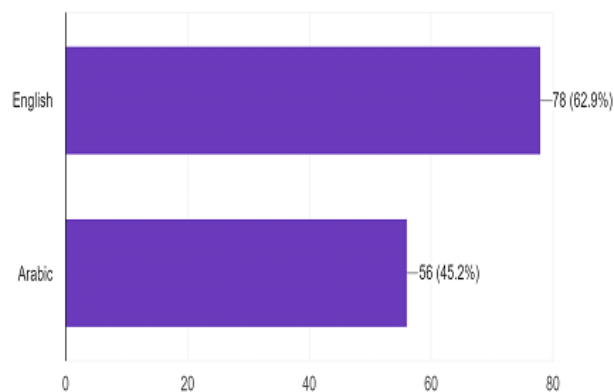


**Figure 6:** The students’ answers regarding their interactions with learners through social media, and their choice of social media platform

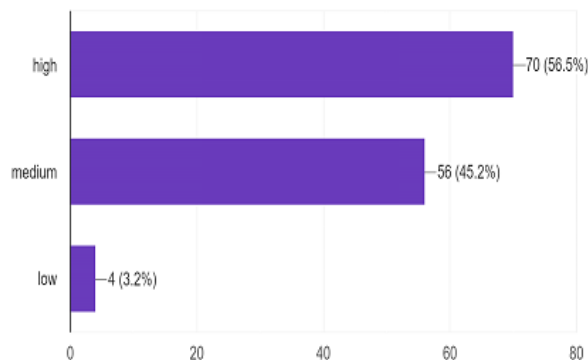
The findings of the third question was mixed, with 21% of students stating that they frequently interacted with their teachers and 22% stating that they interacted with their teachers most of the

time. Conversely, three students (2.4%) never interacted with their teachers via social media. The fourth question determined which social media platforms were preferred by the students. According to the responses, WhatsApp was the most popular (52.4%), followed by Zoom (29.8%) and Telegram (6.5%). In contrast, the platform used the least by the students was Skype (0.8%). All of these responses greatly differed from those of the teachers.

Question 5. Which language is mostly used when using these tools?



Question 6. To what extent can Skype, zoom, Google teams, WhatsApp and Telegram be helpful to students? and why?



**Figure 7:** The students' answers regarding their use of language and the helpfulness of social media platforms in educational activities

The fifth question determined the language most often used by the students while using social media. Based on the findings, 62.9% used English as primary language for verbal communication on social media platforms, while the rest used Arabic. Interestingly, several learners selected more than one choice, which indicates that they flipped between languages based on the demands of the speaker. The sixth question determined the EFL students' opinions about using social media in educational activities to improve their verbal skills. According to the findings, the most students (56.4%) said social media improved their speaking competence to a high degree, 45.2% stated that it improved their speaking and writing abilities to a medium degree, and four students stated that it improved their speaking and writing skills to a low degree.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

First of all, university professors are aware of the advancement in information and communications technology and its application in education. Meanwhile, Zoom, WhatsApp, and Skype have gained significant attention among teachers compared to other social media platforms. Additionally, teachers see that social media usage can have a positive impact on their students' ability to improve their language skills due to the encouraging and supportive atmosphere it offers. The teachers also consider "virtual classrooms" to be highly beneficial experiences that can improve students' writing and speaking talents via dialogs with native English speakers.

In contrast, social media has become a essential part of students' lives. In this regard, the incorporation of online interactions in English classes can create an enjoyable environment, while improving their writing and speaking abilities. Among the students in this research, WhatsApp and Skype were the most popular platforms, which makes sense since communication on the former is not only simple and fast, but it is also one of the world's most widely used platforms of social

media . Moreover, English was the oftenly used communication language among students at social media sites and attending “virtual classrooms.” In response to the question regarding using social media to enhance speaking abilities, most students mentioned its utility in improving their speaking and writing skills.

In sum, this research focused on the efficacy of social media usage in improving the writing and speaking skills of EFL learners’ . Based on survey questionnaires, the findings supported our hypothesis that learners can enhance their verbal communication skills if they appropriately utilize social media. It is worth noting that social media is more than a fun tool/activity. Such platforms also play an essential role in research and education. Furthermore, the ongoing development in social media has shifted some aspects in the roles of teacher-student toward clearness and flexibility. Consequently, teachers may implement new methods in order to sustain with technological advancements.

### **Conclusion**

The ccurrent study’s results indicated that the use of social media is becoming very popular among students and teachers day by day. Aside from joining people together and shortening distances, social media platforms has created a comfortable place to improve their self-confidence by sharing their thoughts without any fear of humiliation or classroom/teacher pressure. As a result, such platforms are very useful for sstudentsto overcome their communication falws both in speaking and writing.

### **Recommendations**

Following an examination of the data from the survey questionnaires of study, we propose the following suggestions:

#### **For teachers:**

- Instructors are encouraged to utilize social media to plan speaking exercises in classroom.
- Teachers should teach their students to use social media to gain exposure to real language.
- Instructors should use video clips from social media in their classes to increase students’ enthusiasm to speak.

#### **For students:**

- Learners should use social media responsibly to improve their speaking and writing abilities.
- Learners should connect using social media with native speakers in order to improve their speaking abilities.
- Learners should be engaged in the study materials since they will assist them in learning English when using modern technologies.
- Learners should learn from taking video courses on social media and utilizing different social media platforms.

#### **For administration**

- The management should provide essential resources to develop public speaking abilities.
- The management should provide the necessary tools to assist students in improving their writing abilities.
- Social media can be regarded as effective teaching tool for oral and written courses.



## References

- Akinola, O. T. (2015). social media as a weapon mass instruction in training library and information science. In A. Tella, *Social Media Strategies for Dynamic Library Service Development* (pp. 175-202). IGI Global.
- Alizadeh, M. (2016). The impact of motivation on English language learning. *International Journal of Research in English Education*, 1(1), 11-15.
- Aziz, S., Shamim, M., Aziz, M. F., & Avais, P. (2013). The Impact of Texting/SMS Language on Academic Writing of Students- What do we need to panic about? *Elixir International Journal*, 12884-12890.
- Baker, J., & Westrup, H. (2003). *Essential Speaking Skills: A Handbook for English Language Teachers*. London: Continuum.
- Bravo, J. C., Intriago, E. A., HolguĆn, J. V., Garzon, G. M., & Arcia, L. O. (2017). Motivation and Autonomy in Learning English as Foreign Language: A Case Study of Ecuadorian College Students. *English Language Teaching*, 10(2), 100-113.
- Burns, A. & Joyce, H. (1997). Focus on speaking. Sydney: National Center for English Language Teaching and Research. Retrieved July 27, 2019 from [http://www.cal.org/caela/esl\\_resources/digests/Speak.html](http://www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/digests/Speak.html)
- Chaney, A. L. (1998). *Teaching Oral Communication in Grades K-8*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Dehghan, F., Rezvani, R., & Fazeli, S. (2017). Social networks and their effectiveness in learning foreign language vocabulary: A comparative study using WhatsApp. *CALL-EJ*, 18(2), 1-13.
- Eren, Ö. (2012). Students' Attitudes towards Using Social Networking in Foreign Language Classes: A Facebook Example. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, 288-294.
- Genç, G. (2016). Can ambiguity tolerance, success in reading, and gender predict the foreign language reading anxiety? *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 12(2), 135-151.
- Gibbins, T., & Greenhow, C. (2016). students' out of school writing practices in an educational Facebook application. In I. R. Association (Ed.), *Social Media and Networking: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools and applications* (pp. 1011-1027). Hershey, Pennsylvania, USA: IGI Global.
- Haigh, p. (2010). *Social Network Websites: Their Benefits and Risks*. London: Optimus education e-books.
- Hashemifardnia, A., Namaziandost, E., & Rahimi Esfahani, F. (2018). The Effect of Using WhatsApp on Iranian EFL Learners' Vocabulary Learning. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research*, 5(3), 256-267.
- Hashemifardnia, A., Namaziandost, E., & Sepehri, M. (2018). The effectiveness of giving grade, corrective feedback, and corrective feedback-plus-giving grade on grammatical accuracy. *International Journal of Research Studies in Language Learning*, 8 (1), 15-27.
- Hosseini, E. Z., Nasri, M., & Afghari, A. (2017). Looking beyond teachers' classroom behavior: novice and experienced EFL teachers' practice of pedagogical Knowledge

- to Improve Learners' Motivational Strategies. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research*, 4(8), 183-200.
- Kakar, S., & Pathan, Z. (2017). Exploring the motivational strategies practiced by Pakistani EFL teachers to motivate students in learning English language. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 7(2), p117.
- Khoshlahn Hosseini, F., & Seifoori, Z. (2019). The Relationship between Iranian EFL Learners' Ambiguity Tolerance and the Accuracy of Their Task-based Oral Speech. *Journal of English Language Pedagogy and Practice*, 11(23), 85-102.
- Levy, M. (2009). Technology in use for second language learning. *The Modern Language Journal*, 93(1), 769-782.
- Marzban, A., & Jalali, F. E. (2016). The interrelationship among L1 writing skills, L2 writing skills, and L2 proficiency of Iranian EFL learners at different proficiency levels. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 6(7), 1364-1371.
- Mohammad, T., & Hazarika, Z. (2016). Difficulties of learning EFL in KSA: Writing skills in context. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 6(3), 105-117.
- Nalliveettil, G. M., & Mahasneh, A. (2017). Developing Competence in Basic Writing Skills: Perceptions of EFL Undergraduates. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*, 6(7), 323-341.
- Namaziandost E., & Shafiee, S. (2018). Gender Differences in the Use of Lexical Hedges in Academic Spoken Language among Iranian EFL Learners: A Comparative Study. *International Journal of Research in English Education*, 3(4), 64-80.
- Namaziandost, E., & Ahmadi, S. (2019). The Assessment of Oral Proficiency through Holistic and Analytic Techniques of Scoring: A Comparative Study. *Applied Linguistics Research Journal*, 3(2), 70-82.
- Namaziandost, E., Abdi Saray, A., & Rahimi Esfahani, F. (2018). The effect of writing practice on improving speaking skill among pre-intermediate EFL learners. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 8(1), 1690-1697. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.17507/tpls.0812.16>
- Namaziandost, E., Nasri, M., & Rahimi Esfahani, F. (2019). Pedagogical Efficacy of Experience-Based Learning (EBL) Strategies for Improving the Speaking Fluency of Upper-intermediate Male and Female Iranian EFL Students. *International Journal of Research in English Education*, 4(2), 29-41.
- Namaziandost, E., Rahimi Esfahani, F., & Ahmadi, S. (2019). Varying levels of difficulty in L2 reading materials in the EFL classroom: Impact on comprehension and motivation. *Cogent Education*, 6, 1-9.
- Namaziandost, E., Saberi Dehkordi, E., & Shafiee, S. (2019). Comparing the effectiveness of input-based and output-based activities on productive knowledge of vocabulary

- among pre-intermediate EFL learners. *Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education*, 4(2), 1-14
- Nasri, M. & Biria, R. (2017). Integrating multiple and focused strategies for improving reading comprehension and 12 lexical development of Iranian intermediate EFL learners. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature*, 6(1), 311-321.
- Nasri, M., Biria, R., & Karimi, M. (2018). Projecting Gender Identity in Argumentative Written Discourse. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature*, 7(3), 201-205.
- Novikova, I., Popova, L., Satilova, L. M., Biryumova, E. V., Guseva, A., & Khukhuni, G. T. (2018). Lexical and semantic representation of the linguistic and cultural concept “Rest” in the English, German, and Russian languages. *Opción: Revista de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales*, (85), 237-256.
- Paliktzoglou, V., & Suhonen, J. (2014) Facebook as an assisted learning tool in problembased learning: *The Bahrain case International Journal of Social Media and Interactive Learning Environments*, 2(1), 85-100.
- Pichette, F. (2009). Second Language Anxiety and Distance Language Learning. *Foreign Language Annals*, 42(1), 77-93.
- Reinhardt, J. (2019). Social media in second and foreign language teaching and learning: Blogs, wikis, and social networking. *Language Teaching*, 52(1), 1-39.
- Sabirova, D. R., & Khanipova, R. R. Y. (2019). Innovative approaches to teaching and learning english as second and english as foreign language in multilingual education. *Humanities & Social Sciences Reviews*, 7(6), 45-48
- Saidouni, K., & Bahloul, A. (2018). The Use of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning in EFL Teaching and Learning Practices and Readiness. *Trans Internet Journal for Cultural Studies*, 22
- Setiyadi, A. B., Mahpul, M., & Wicaksono, B. A. (2019). Exploring motivational orientations of English as foreign language (EFL) learners: A case study in Indonesia. *South African Journal of Education*, 39(1).
- Sundari, H. (2017). Classroom interaction in teaching English as foreign language at lower secondary schools in Indonesia. *Advances in language and Literary Studies*, 8(6), 147-154.
- Taskiran, A., Gumusoglu, E. K., & Aydin, B. (2018). Fostering foreign language learning with Twitter: Reflections from English learners. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education*, 19(1), 100-116.
- Xodabande, I. (2017). The effectiveness of social media network telegram in teaching English language pronunciation to Iranian EFL learners. *Cogent education*, 4(1), 1347081.