The Effect of Social Networking sites on The Development of The EFL Learners’ Writing Skill: The Case of Master Two English Language Students at the University of Mostaganem

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Dedication

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To my sweetheart brother: Abdelrahman and my lovely sisters: Bouchra and Salsabil, I cannot thank you enough for the love and the support you gave me.

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Abstract

The widespread of social networks in all domain of life has led to its integration into the educational context because social networks show a great potential for enhancing both teaching and learning experiences. This research aims to investigate the impact of social networks on the EFL students’ writing skill, the potential of it as a tool to enhance the students writing, and how it can be applied to serve that purpose. Our research starts with the theoretical framework that shed the light on the most important concepts that are related to our issue of concern. Next, in order to answer our research questions, we opted for a research methodology that includes a questionnaire that was directed to the second year master students and an interview for the teachers in the department of English at the university of Mostaganem. The results obtained show that social networks can be an effective tool to enhance the students’ writing skill only if it was used appropriately, furthermore, teachers can use social networks as a supplementary tool to enhance the students’ writing outside the classroom and they should raise their students’ awareness about how to use social networks to serve that purpose. Eventually, this study aims at proposing some of the practical strategies to both students and teachers on how to apply social networks in order to improve the writing skill.
List of abbreviations

SNSs: Social Networking Sites

SN: Social networks

FB: Facebook

EFL: English as a foreign language
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General Introduction

Over the last century, Teaching English as a foreign language has been regularly updated with a new approaches, methods, techniques and materials. These changes are based on the social, political, economic and philosophical aspects of the period that students are living in. Technological innovations have also been implemented in the educational context in order to facilitate and enhance the teaching/learning process and to meet the demands of the present-day society.

In our modern society, social networking sites and from its emergence start taking a huge part of people’s life, it has almost changed every aspect of their life whether in their personal relationships, works or even entertainment. people are using social networks for different purposes ranging from communication to collaboration with each other, and due to its popularity among students and teachers, social networks becomes a part of the educational system and the teaching of English as a foreign language too.

the majority of the students are meeting in the social networks to communicate or share their life’s update with their friends or for exchange information, documents or course related materials with their classmates. This use of the social networks demands writing, since most of the social networks are designed to support the written communication, therefore, the students are producing a great amount of writing on these sites using the English language and as a results this writing has the potential to be used as a way to improve the formal writing of the EFL students. Thus, this study will investigate the effect of the writing that the students are producing in the social networks on the students’ formal writing.

Through the experience we had as EFL learner, we have noticed that the majority of the EFL learners at the university of Mostaganem write only in the exams, or in some assignments given by their teachers, whereas outside the classroom the writing process is almost absent, but nowadays things have changed, these students are using the social networking sites (especially Facebook) almost every single day, which means that these platforms are given them space to express themselves and to communicate with each other using the English language thus, we saw that social networks are considered to be a great opportunity that learners can use to both practice and enhance their writing skills.

As a result, the aim of this research is to investigate first, whether social networking sites are affecting the EFL writing skill positively or negatively. Second, how social networks can be used to improve the students’ writing skill. Third, how can teachers make use of social
networks as a supplementary tool to improve their students’ writing either inside or outside the classroom.

for the sake of the research, we are going to hypothesise that social networks enable the EFL learners to write and express themselves freely more than they can do in the classroom, and therefore, their writing skill will be improved.

this thesis is divided into three chapters, it starts with the general introduction followed by the first chapter which is the literature review. In this chapter, we will introduce the term social networks by giving its definition and explaining its history, types and how it is used in both the educational context and the English language teaching/learning context. Next, it will explain the relationship between social networks and the writing skill.

The second chapter will be devoted to the practical part of this research, in this chapter, we will describe the sample of both the students and the teachers that we have chosen to work with and the reason behind their choice and the gathering data tools that we select to use, and finally we are going to analyse all the collected data within this chapter.

The third chapter will be about the findings of this research and it will also suggest some recommendation for both teachers and learners on how to make use of social networking sites to enhance the writing skill.
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Introduction

Social networking sites (SNSs) are no longer entertainment tools that connect people with each other. Nowadays, social networks are being implemented in the educational context, since it provides the students with a great authentic source of information as it allows them to connect, learn and get feedbacks from knowledgeable peers, teachers and even academics that they may not be reached in any other way.

In this chapter, we will first give a general overview of the term social networks by providing its definition, history and the most used social networks worldwide. Next, we will look into the implementation of social networks in both the educational and the English language learning context. After that, we will show the relationship between social networks and the writing skill, by first exploring the development of writing from traditional writing to the modern or the digital one. Then, we will provide some theories that support the use of social networking sites to develop the writing skill. Finally, we will review some of the different studies that support the implementation of social networks into the writing classroom.

1. Understanding social networks

Since their appearance social networks have taken a great part of the people's life. In the following section, we will shed the light on the notion of social networks by providing some different definitions, describing its history, and listing the most popular social networks worldwide.

1.1. Definition of social networks

According to Haigh (2010), social networks are online communities that allow their users to communicate and share photographs and music with each other. It allows them to share how they feel and what they are up to. Therefore, the aim of Social networks is to build social relationships where people can interact with each other and post their life events and photos. Another definition claimed that:

To the average user, a social network is a simple application that lives within our desktop or web browser. It consists of a log in page, a user account, profile and a bunch of games and tools to make the time we spend with our friend’s fun. However, there is a lot of sophisticated hardware and software that must constantly run to enable these applications to function (Ryan, 2011, p.07).
In the same view, Issa et al (2016) defined social networks as a virtual and online application by which users can create either personal or public accounts to connect with their friends who share the same interests. These social networks facilitate the exchange of ideas and information and the communication among the users. Additionally, it allows them to write and post articles in order to get feedbacks from their friends.

Undoubtedly, social networks are very interesting platforms where each user has a personal profile that allows him to interact with other users, therefore, the aim of the social networks is to reinforce the social relationships between people. To support this view, Mislove (2009) asserted that the essential role of any social network is to maintain and strengthen an existing social tie or even create a new one.

According to Lewis (2013), there are two classifications of social networks. Some social networks are designed based on content areas for instance, students of English, people from the same city or lovers of football and there are the large communities such as Facebook and YouTube which are places for self-expression that is not related to a specific interest, but within this large communities we can find smaller groups of interests.

From all the previous mentioned definitions, Social networks can be defined as online platforms where users can create their personal profiles and share their life updates and their interests with their friends. Furthermore, Social networks are a great tool for communication where users can communicate with each other and meet new friends.

1.2. History of social networks

Historically, the site Classmates.com that was first introduced in 1995 is the first modern site that aims at bringing ex-classmate together in the USA and therefore it is considered to be the first website that links users together but still they could not communicate with each other. Followed by the SixDegrees.com in 1997 which was the first site that allows its users to connect with other users and therefore is the first website that meets the definition of social networks (Mislove, 2009). After that in the early 2000s, Social networks began to grow more in the popularity as many users started to connect to the internet (Boyd and Ellison, 2008). Other social networks have appeared in the next years, According to Buzzeto-more (2012) a giant shift in the history of social networks occurred when both MySpace and Facebook were introduced in 2003 and 2004 respectfully, as they both allow their users to send messages, communicate with friends and make new ones, share their interests and promote events. Next, there was the emergence of YouTube in February 2005
which is described by her as the world's largest video sharing website. A year after that in 2006, the microblogging service twitter was launched, and the list goes on because as stated by Mislove (2009) new social networks are being created regularly and therefore it will be impossible to have a complete and updated list of them.

1.3. Types of social networks

The following list is the list of the most popular social networking sites as it is reported by Alexa which is a website that provides web traffic analytics for different websites by collecting data from the internet users in order to measure the performance of each website. We have chosen only the SNs that support writing since our work is only concerned with social networks where students can write in.

1.3.1. Facebook

It is commonly agreed that Facebook is the leader of social networks in the globe. According to Facebook from their newsroom page, there are 1.79 billion monthly active users as of September 30, 2016.

Facebook was first founded in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg, and it was designed to be as closed social network which is available only to the Harvard university students, and afterward the access was extended to other universities and companies, and years after that, it became available for everyone who is above the age of 13 (Akinola, 2015). According to Collier (2010), Facebook is a place where people can find their friends, family, their old-school friends and even people with mutual hobbies and interest. Buzzeto-More (2012) added to the previous definitions that in Facebook, users can add each other as friends where they can exchange messages either by writing or by using voice calls and they can also update their profile status and join groups of their interest like school or college group. A further definition of Facebook is given by Abram and Pearlman (2010), they described Facebook as a powerful tool that helps enhance and manage the social relationships between people and they listed some of the benefits that Facebook can give its users, such as allowing them to stay up to date with their friends and making it easy for them to share their recent success, photos of vacation or what they are thinking of.

1.3.2. Twitter

Twitter has become one of the most popular social networks on the internet today, because as it is reported by twitter on their company page, there were 313 Million Monthly Active User and 1 billion monthly unique visits to the site on June 30, 2016. According to
Buzzeto-more (2012), Twitter is both a microblogging service and social networking platform, whereas to collier (2010) it is like the short messages services SMS but on the internet. The users of twitter can post messages which are called tweets, these tweets are limited to 140 characters only. Twitter allows its users to stay connected with people they know and businesses or organisation they are interested with (Akinola, 2015). As claimed by Fitton et al (2010), Twitter is a powerful social network that allows its users to keep up with people and share ideas and information with friends or strangers (depend on the user choice) in 140 characters. To sum up, Twitter is a social network where its user can share a thought, photos and videos within the limit of 140 characters.

1.3.3. Instagram

Instagram is a photo sharing social network that was lunch on October 06, 2010. Instagram introduced themselves on their website as:

Instagram is a fun and quirky way to share your life with friends through a series of pictures. Snap a photo with your mobile phone, then choose a filter to transform the image into a memory to keep around forever.

As reported by Instagram in their press page, the number of their users has grown to more than 600 million Instagrammers in 2016. According to Pagana (2015), Instagram facilitates the sharing of the photos, it helps its users to share their life events with their friends and family through pictures. Landsverk (2014) explained the content of Instagram by saying that in Instagram, the users can share pictures with text to describe those pictures, they can also comment and like their friends’ photos too. Therefore, Instagram is an easy social network which is based on the sharing of the pictures that describe a personal experience of its users.

1.3.4. LinkedIn

LinkedIn defined themselves in their site as “the world's largest professional network with hundreds of millions of members”. LinkedIn helps their users to build and maintain their professional networks by helping them to find and connect with their colleagues and classmates. Elad (2008) stated that unlike the other social networks that focus more on the social aspects of their users, LinkedIn focus more on the professional side as it helps its users “to coordinate their professional identity on the internet” (p.1) in addition to that, Rutledge (2010) described LinkedIn as the world's dominant Social networking site for business, and
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according to him, LinkedIn allows its users to find jobs or promoting their business, it also helps them to connect with their current or former colleagues or classmates and join groups to discuss issues that are related to their field of works. Another benefit of LinkedIn is that it can provide its user with all types of valuable information as the skills that are required in a specific industry or the past employees of a particular company (Elad, 2008). As it is reported by LinkedIn in their press page they have more than 433 million users.

1.3.5. Tumblr

Tumblr is both social networking site and microblogging service, which was founded in 2007. As it reported by Tumblr, there are 332.2 million users. Smith (2011) defined Tumblr as “a blogging site intended for short text posts, brief extracts from other blogs and websites, and bits and pieces of media, such as single photos, brief video clips, and short sound clips.” (p.5). In the same view, Matteson (2011) stated that Tumblr is a platform that allows its users to post text, images, videos, links, quotes and audio to their tumblelog. Tumblelog is the personal profile of each user (as cited in Yunus & Salehi, 2012). One of the reasons for the population of Tumblr is the variety of the multimedia that it allows sharing, we should also mention that the users in Tumblr can follow each other without mutual confirmation.

The widespread of social networks and their impact on human life made a lot of researchers and educators thinking whether social networks should be implemented in the educational context or not.

2. Social networks in education

Many pieces of research and books have supported the integration of the technological tools into the educational context, and social networking sites are among them since they are becoming more familiar with both students and teachers. Therefore, it should be used to supplement the learning in the traditional classroom environments.

2.1. The use of social networks in the educational context

The widespread of social networks has led the researchers to investigate their effect in promoting learning. In most of the time, the application of social networks in education should be in the higher education context, since the young students will not be able to use it appropriately and since most of the social networks have limited the age of their users to be above 13 years and sometimes more (depend on the social networks), but that does not
neglect the fact that it may also be used with younger learners as long as it is adopted properly.

According to Smith (2007), schools should reflect the world that we live in, and since we live in social world then, the students should be taught how to engage and collaborate in that world. Issa et al (2006) stated that the majority of the universities especially in the developed countries have introduced the social networks in their syllabus because to them SNSs will help the learners to construct their knowledge by themselves, foster their independent learning and improve their personal and professional skills. Krutka & Carpenter (2016) believed that social networks give the opportunities for students to interact with knowledgeable peers, community members and academics and they explained that by saying that nowadays students are evolved in discussion in the social networks with different educators in order to do their assignments, therefore, the students are not just relying on their teacher’s information but they are bringing an authentic audience to their work. In addition to that, Buzzeto-more (2012) explained that involving learners in groups will have a positive impact on their educational achievements, she also showed that Social networks can help in teaching collaboration, acceptance, and tolerance. Moreover, she believed that when teachers use social networks to supplement teaching and learning in the traditional classroom this will create a creative, authentic and flexible learning experience. Furthermore, Issa et al (2016) said the implementation of the social networks into the educational context will make the students more responsible for their own learning and it will encourage them to be involved and engaged in negotiation and discussion with the other students and teachers.

As a conclusion of the previously mentioned information, social networks are being implemented in the educational context due to its importance as a facilitator to the learning process, as it raises the opportunities for learner-learner interaction and teacher-learner interaction. Additionally, it gives equal opportunities for participation in the learning process.  

There is still an open debate about whether social networking sites should be implemented in the educational context or not. Therefore, we are going to present both the advantages and the disadvantages of this implementation.

2.2. The advantages of social networks in education

According to Srivastava (2012), social networks increase the collaboration between the students, it helps them in improving their creativity because they are always receiving
feedbacks from their peers and teachers about what they are posting or writing. Another advantage is that the students will be more motivated to use these sites because they are already familiar with them in their daily life. In addition to that, Zaidieh (2012) highlighted the necessity to use some forms of entertainment while giving lessons in order to raise the students’ motivations and for him, social networks are easy to use and they are enjoyable for the students, therefore, it adds some kind of entertainment in the classroom. He added that social networks can be fast in terms of accessing, updating and editing and it also aids in reducing the stress of the students and overcoming the limit of space and time since it is available at any time. Issa et al (2016) believed that social networks allow more interaction, discussion, participation and debate between the students with each other and with their teachers in different assessments or activities that are given in the classroom. He summarised the benefits of social networks in education in the following point: first, the opportunity for collaboration between the students. Second, the enhancement of the communication skills. Third, the exposure to the cutting-edge knowledge and finally the acquisition of new acquaintances.

2.3. The Disadvantages of social networks in education

Many researchers discussed some of the concerns and disadvantages of using Social networks in education. Buzzeto-more (2012) stated that one of the concerns is that the students might become fully dependent on the online socialisation. A further concern to her is the internet addiction disorder. While according to Zaidieh (2012) there are two disadvantages of using social networks in education the first one is that social networks can cause lack of motivation to the students if they were in front of computers for a long time and the second one is for the students who prefer face to face communication rather than the written one, in that case, they will not be involved in the learning process. Additionally, Srivastava (2012) discussed some of the drawbacks of using social networks in the educational context. First, she said that checking the social networks while studying will make the students concentrate less on their task at hand because of the distraction that is brought by the social networks. Next, SNs might consume time, as the students spend hours looking at pictures and videos shared by their friends which will be a hard for the teacher to make them concentrate on a specific activity. Furthermore, social networks users are in the most of the time neglecting grammar and spelling which may affect the writing of the students in these spaces.

To sum up, the application of social networks in the educational context have both advantages and disadvantages. Therefore, the teachers should be aware of all these aspects to
keep everything under control. Now we are going to explore the use of social networking sites in the English language teaching and learning.

2.4. The use of social networks in English language learning

Social networks are used both formally and informally in the English language learning context. Formally through the application of these social networking sites into the educational environment and informally through the independent use of the learners.

2.4.1. Social networks and the formal learning of English

According to a definition provided by Sockett (2014), the formal learning of a language is the learning that takes place in language classes that anyone can attend either through the school system or privately. These classes give much important to the aspect of language learning. Lomicka and lord (2016) comments on the use of Social networks in the formal language teaching and learning by saying that:

language teaching and learning can benefit tremendously from the incorporation of various aspects of SNS. Regardless of the theoretical approach to the acquisition of second and foreign languages that one adopts, the features of the social tools …. open the door for students to engage in and with the target language in ways that were not possible before. Instructors that are well informed about these social sites and are able to develop pedagogically sound activities for their students are in the best position to foster linguistic and cultural development in their classes (p.265).

To supplement this quote a study was done by Eren (2012), in the Gaziantep University in turkey to investigate students' attitudes toward the use of social networking sites, Facebook in particular, into the English language learning classroom. The findings of this research suggest that social networking site can be an effective educational tool for the English language teaching and the students' attitude were positive since most of them welcomed the use of social networks in their learning process and the majority of the students confirm that what they are sharing in their Facebook groups is helping them to improve their language skills.

Furthermore, social networks give the learners a chance to practice the language that they are learning outside the classroom, according to Chartrand (2012) social networking sites are not just giving motivation for the Net-generation learners but it also allows them to
experience the language communication in the real life which will promote the acquisition of the language (as cited in Shams, 2014).

Espinosa (2015) stated that the English language teachers should be updated with the current technology in order to keep up with their learners, and she took a Facebook as an example of a powerful instructional tool and she said that if it was used appropriately, it will enhance the development of communicative competence of the learners’ language, it can also develop their practice of language skills through chatting with native speakers. In addition to that, McBride (2009) suggested that if the teachers can make the English language learners interact more in the social networks, then they will be more engaged in authentic communicative context more than it might be in the classroom, whereas for Liu et al (2013), social networking sites allow the EFL learners to exchange ideas as it serves language interaction.

As conclusion, social networking sites can be a very effective tool to promote language learning in general and the English language learning in particular as long as it is used appropriately in the language classroom, because it allows the learners to make a real communication with both native and non-native speaker, as a result, their communicative competence will be improved. Another important aspect is that social networks will increase the learners’ motivation and consequently it will make them more engaged in the language learning process.

2.4.2. Social networks and the informal learning of English

The informal learning of a language has been defined by Sockett (2014) as the learning which takes place in a non-academic context, this learning involves the use of different sources like textbooks, websites or CD-ROMs which are used to learn the language independently.

Social networks can be seen as one of the tools of the informal learning of the language, Kurata (2011) explained that many studies have shown that one of the best ways to learn a language is to practise that language and communicate with it beyond the classroom. He added that social networks are a perfect space where the learners of the language can have social interaction in real life situation in order to enhance their flexibility toward the target culture. Additionally, Procter-Legg et al (2014) discussed one of the potentials that social networking sites can provide to the informal learners of a language which is to provide them with an active learning community to interact, share, practice all their language knowledge.
Furthermore, the informal learners can use social networks to find tools that serve their personal language learning needs (Horwitz, 2012, as cited in Liu et al., 2013).

Sockett (2014) said that the informal learning environments are used with leisure, and therefore the learners’ motivation will be high and their anxiety will be low. He added that social networking sites are designed to make the learners interact and use that language either with written or oral stimuli and therefore to him social networks are a great context to practice and compare the learners’ production with the one of the other language users.

To summarise social networks can be an effective tool for the informal learning of the English language as it provides the learners with real-life communication where they can practice their language with high motivation and less anxiety.

As we saw before Social networking sites can promote both formal and informal learning of language, but now we are going to explore whether it has the same effect on the writing skills of the EFL Learners and whether it helps in improving the writing skills of the learners or not.

3. Social networks and writing skill

Writing becomes widely used in the social networks since most of the social networks are designed to encourage its users to use written language more than the oral one. In this section, we will focus on the relationship between Social networks and the writing skill, and how writing and writing process have changed due to the emergence of new technological tools. Next, we will provide some theories and different studies and research that support the view that social networks help in improving the EFL learners' writing skill.

3.1. The writing skill

Writing skills is one of the productive skills that should be mastered by the English language learners to facilitate their communicative competence performance. The emergence of the internet and the social networks has led to the emergence of a new kind of writing which is the digital writing.

3.1.1. The development of writing from traditional to modern writing

The emergence of new technologies has changed the writing spaces and Consequently the nature of writing. According to Baron (2009), the writing due to the technology becomes easier to learn and use. Greenlaw (2012) stated that from the beginning of the 2000s it was a dramatic shift in the writing since many people start developing an online content and as a
result, even the people who were not writing at all now start writing in the different web spaces such as blogs and social networking sites.

Devoss et al (2010) stated that there is a big a transformation in the way people write especially with today’s network connectivity which allows people to share, distribute and archive what they wrote using the internet-based technologies. They proposed the term digital writing to describe the modern writing in the digital spaces, they said that digital writing is more than just a text which is produced with a computer, but to them digital writing is a “compositions created with, and oftentimes for reading or viewing on, a computer or other device that is connected to the Internet” (p.23).

Greenlaw (2012) stated some of the major differences between the online or the digital writing and the offline/printed writing which are the multimedia and the hypertext, for him online writing is not limited to text, table or figure as the case of the offline writing, but in the online writing, the writer can use a variety of multimedia such as photos, videos and audio segments to support what he wrote. Another difference is the use of the hypertext which is a text that allows you to access to other texts he said that through the hypertexts one can jump around the web according to his own interest. He also stated that the online writing is more dynamic than the offline writing because online writing can be updated frequently.

The emergence of the new digital writing brought some modification to the writing, the writing tools and even the writing process that was known before. The digital tools helped in making the writing process easier to perform and hence it facilitates writing.

3.1.2. The evolution of the process of writing

According to Oshima and Hogue (2006), writing is not one action, it is a process which has different steps, which are: prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing.

First, prewriting, which is the first step of the writing process where the writer needs to select a topic and find information about it. The prewriting stage is the attempt of the writer to draw out his ideas, it includes listing, free writing, diagramming, among other writing activities (Muller Moore & Lan Cassel, 2011). The next step is drafting which when the writer puts his thought and ideas into sentences and paragraphs (Vanderpyl, 2010). According to Rog and Krop (2004), drafting is the process where the writer puts his plan into action, and start writing his ideas in paper or computer in a form of sentences and paragraphs. Then, the next step is Revising, at this stage, the writer needs to read what he had produced and check the
content, the order of the information and if something is ambiguous in order to improve his piece of writing. And finally, the final step is editing which is the process where the writer starts to correct his mistakes such as grammar or spelling mistakes in order to improve his writing style (Harmer, 2004).

According to Devoss et al. (2010) the new digital tools and environments have affected the writing, therefore, they suggested that the writing process in these environments is effected too, consequently they propose some modification on the writing process. First, in the prewriting step, they said that recently there are some different computers programs and websites that facilitate the planning of the writing by providing mapping and outlining tools. Next, in the drafting stage, they explained that there are some different word processing software that allows the writers to save different versions of their drafts, it also allows them to make changes on them and compare these changes automatically. In the revision step, they pointed out to the fact that digital spaces allow the writer to share their drafts and receive comments, feedbacks and suggestions for revising from others. Next, in the editing step, they also showed that they are different word processing applications that help the writer to check grammar, spelling, punctuation and other writing conventions. Finally, in the publishing stage, they stated that the digital tools and environment have expanded publication opportunities by allowing all sort of text to be distributed on the internet easily.

To summarise, due to the availability of the different digital tools and spaces, the writing process has been affected and modified. Nowadays writers can choose from a variety of this tools and spaces to facilitate their writing process.

3.2. The relationship between social networking sites and the writing skill

The popularity that the social networks obtained and the widespread of the digital writing in these spaces made teachers and writing instructors thinking of the possibility of using social networks in order to enhance the students writing either inside or outside the classroom.

3.2.1. Writing in the social networks

As it was previously mentioned, people use social networks to share their life’s updates, stories, experiences, thought and ideas and communicate with each other and with the world around them, and of course, none of it will be possible without writing.

According to Vie (2009) students are producing a great amount of writing in the Social networking platforms through messages, comments and their personal profiles, hence the
amount of writing that the students are producing in these sites show the potential that these spaces can have to impact the learners’ writing, to support this, Purcell et al (2013) said that students outside the classroom are engaged in many forms of writing using different digital tools and platforms such as Social networks therefore, today’s students are writing more than any prior generation did, and although is debatable whether these digital spaces are affecting the students writing positively or negatively, the fact that these platforms provide opportunities to practice writing anytime, anywhere should not be neglected. They also stated that students don’t like to write when teachers ask them to do so, unlike the social networks where the students write because they love and enjoy writing. that is to say, in social networks students are talking about themselves, expressing their ideas through writing. Therefore, we should not neglect the downside of technology on language such as the use of the informal language but we should focus more on the upside which the fact that students are writing more than ever before.

3.2.2. Theories about the social networks and writing

The implementation of social networks into the writing classroom and the advantage of using social networks to develop the EFL Learners’ writing skill are being supported by two important language learning theories, which are the bandura’s 1977 social learning theory and Vygotsky’s 1978 social constructivism theory.

These theories are built on the belief that the learning process occurs through interaction with social environments. According to Vygotsky, "the individual is inseparable from his/her social context and consequently, cognitive development is viewed as an essentially sociocultural activity" (as cited in Erben et al, 2008), based on that everyone constructs his own knowledge by interacting with his environment. Social networks as Malia (2014) mentioned can create the appropriate environment to learn language through observation before acquiring understanding and observation is one of the most important aspects of the social learning theory, and since smith (1982) have argued that we can only learn to write by writing (as cited in Andrews and Smith 2011), social networks will give the chance to the language learners' to practice writing and construct knowledge by interact with their peers and teachers, because social networking sites are becoming more familiar to the students and then it should be integrated into the writing classroom (Alison et al,2009).

Now, we are going to explore some of the different studies that were done by different researchers in different countries in order to see the impact that social networks have on the
writing skill, and whether it can be used as a tool to improve the writing skill of the EFL Learners.

3.2.3. Social networks as a tool to improve the EFL learners’ writing skill

Many pieces of research and studies were done to investigate whether social networking sites can be used to improve the EFL learners’ writing skills or not, therefore we have listed some of them.

A research was done by Ping and Maniam (2015), the aim of this research was to explore whether Facebook group discussions affect the writing performance of Malaysian college students’ or not. The findings of the study showed that all the learners had a positive attitude toward the use of Facebook group discussion to improve their writing performance outside the classroom, where the students will gain more confidence as they share their ideas and receiving responses and feedbacks from their peers by writing comments, and this will lead to the development of their English writing. This shows the positive attitudes of the EFL learners towards the use of Facebook groups in teaching writing.

Another study was done by Bozkurt et al (2016) to investigate whether the microblogging service twitter is effective to improve the creative writing of the EFL learners of Anadolu University in turkey. The study found that this microblogging service (twitter) will help in improving the creative writing of the students since they are limited with the length of the tweets, therefore they are forced to select their words carefully to express their ideas appropriately and this will help in improving their creative writing.

Kurniati (2015) examine the effect of using Tumblr as a tool to enhance the EFL Learners’ writing and she found out that using Tumblr improve the students’ score in writing and hence their writing skill. A further study was done by Yunus and Salehi (2012) to examine the use of Tumblr as a tool to improve the students' writing skills. The research found out that Tumblr is an effective tool to teach writing inside and outside the classroom, it helps the students in organising their ideas and get them involved in the creative writing. They also mentioned how the constructive feedbacks that students receive on Tumblr will help them in improving their writing. In addition to the previous studies, Sockett (2014) added that in SNSs the feedbacks that the learners receive, the native speakers’ utterances and other forms can be used to support the learners’ written interaction which will help later in their formal writing.
From all the above studies, one can conclude that although there are some worries about having some undesirable effects like the use of the informal writing in the formal writing but still if the social networks were used appropriately it can have a positive effect on the learners' writing. Social networks can be a very useful tool to implement in the writing classroom because it increases learners' motivation to write, it raises their creative writing and as a result, their writing will be improved.

Conclusion

This chapter has been devoted to review what scholars and researchers claimed about our topic of interest. We first gave definitions of some of the key terms of our research, we gave the definition of the term social networks and we provided it history and listed the most used social networks in the world. Next, we explored the use of social networks in both the educational context and the English language learning and teaching context. After that, we saw the development of writing from traditional to the modern one. After that, we looked into the relationship between SNSs and the writing skill and whether social networks can be used as a tool to improve the writing skill of the EFL Learners. Finally, we support this view with different researches and studies that showed how social networks can affect the writing skill.
Chapter Two:
The Methodology
and Data Analysis
Introduction

As it was previously mentioned, the aim of this study is to investigate the impact of social networks particularly those based on writing communication on the EFL learners’ writing skill. The researcher wanted to explore whether these social networks are affecting the EFL Learners writing positively or negatively and whether the social network can be used as a tool to enhance the students’ writing either inside or outside the classroom.

In the first part of this chapter which is the methodology, we will try to describe the data collection tools. In this research, the researcher has chosen both questionnaire and interview as gathering data tools and the objective of this choice will be explained afterwards. Then, we will explain the choice of the population of both teachers and students and the objectives that lied behind that choice and finally we are going to analyse all the data that was gathered to interpret it later on.

1. Methodology

In this section, the researcher is going to give a detailed account of the research methodology that we have followed. We are going to present both of the population and the gathering data tools and the reasons behind their choice.

1.1. The population

The population of this study is from the Department of English at the university of Mostaganem, the population contain both students and teachers and because it was impossible for us to investigate with all the students and teachers, the sample was chosen. The choice of the sample will be explained in the next section.

1.1.1. The students

The choice of the sample of the students was based on the observation that was done by the researcher, where we observe the Facebook groups that are created by students of the department of English at the university of Mostaganem from all the different levels and specialities. In this groups, students are sharing and discussing course-related materials with their classmates. As a result of that observation we have found that the master two students are more active in writing in these groups than the others levels, therefore we have chosen them to be our population since they will be more beneficial to our study, thus a sample consisted of 110 master two students from all the different eight specialties was taken.
1.1.2. The teachers

In the present study, the interview is administrated to nine (9) teachers from the department of English at the university of Mostaganem. Six of them are teachers of the writing expression module and the other three are teachers of the population that we have selected.

The selection of such sample is based on the consideration that the teachers of the writing expression module will be more beneficial to us since our main concern is to develop the students’ writing skills. We also interviewed master two teachers’ because we wanted to check and confirm the data that was gathered from our sample of the students especially in the case of question twelve (see Appendix 1)

1.2. Data collection tools

In order to gather more reliable data, the researcher has chosen to work with two different kinds of data collection tools which are the questionnaire for gathering quantitative data and the interview for gathering qualitative data. It should be mentioned that the researcher wanted to opt for a test as an extra data collection procedures where we wanted to create a group in one of the social networks that are mostly used by our sample and present in this group some of the writing techniques and then make them write a free topic from their own choice using the previous writing technique that they were presented to and then evaluate their writing and compare it with the one they produce in the classroom but due to the lack of time and the preoccupation of the sample with their dissertations it was impossible for us to organize the test with the sample.

1.2.1. The students’ questionnaire

In this study, there were two reasons behind the choice of the questionnaire to gather data. The first one is the large number of the population and also to reach as many students as possible in order to minimise the bias. The second reason is that questionnaire allow us to collect and compare data with the one received from the teachers.

the questionnaire consists of seventeen mixed questions, open-ended, close-ended and multiple choices questions. It is organised in three section as follow

the first section: personal information (Q1-Q3): the aim of this section is to provide us with some of the personal information about the participant such as gender, age, level and speciality.
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The Methodology and Data Analysis

The second section: EFL students’ and Social Networking Sites (Q4-Q8): the aim of this section is to gather general information about the use of social networking sites from the EFL students, we wanted to know the student’s familiarity with social networks, the time they spend using it, the purposes that they use social networks for and finally whether they use the social networks to support their learning of English or not.

The third section: social networking sites and the EFL Learners writing skill (Q9-Q17): this section is the main concern of our study, it aims to find out how much the students are writing using English while using social networks it also aims to understand whether the EFL learners think that social networks are helping them in improving their writing skill or not and if they are willing to accept it as a supplementary tool to enhance their writing.

1.2.2. The teachers’ interview

In this study, we have chosen to interview the teachers of writing since our main concern is to enhance the students’ writing skills, and we opt for the interview in order to get in-depth information that might not be available otherwise, the interview is a semi-structured interview which is consisted of twelve questions. The aims of these questions were to explore the teachers’ beliefs and attitude towards the effect of social networks on their students’ writing and whether they may see it as a tool to improve the EFL learners’ writing skill.

2. Data analysis

This section will be devoted to the analysis of data that the researcher has gathered from both the teachers and the students. These data will be presented in form of tables and graphs.

2.1. The analysis of the questionnaire

In the following section, we are going to analyse each question of the questionnaire and highlight the aim that lies behind the choice of each question.

Question 01: Gender

This question will help us to determine the gender of our sample so as to see later whether both boys and girls are familiar with the social networks and whether both of them use it for the same purposes.
The students who participated in this study were 110. From the above table and graph, we can remark that they were 25 males which represent 23% of the whole sample and 85 females which represent 77% from the whole sample.

**Table 1: students' gender**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 1: students' gender**

Knowing the ages of our sample is very beneficial to our study since we can observe whether all the ages are familiar with social networks or only specific ages are familiar with it.
Chapter two
The Methodology and Data Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 2: students' age*

The results show diversity in ages, ranging from twenty-two to forty-five. The average age of our population is 23 years which constitute 40% of our sample.

**Question 03: level and speciality**

In the department of English at the university of Mostganem there is eight different speciality of the master studies, therefore, the researcher tried to take participants from all different specialities to take different views and ideas from the students in order to find out whether all the students using social networks for the same purposes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speciality</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Didactics and applied linguistics</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British civilisation</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British literature</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psycholinguistics issue to language teaching</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied linguistics</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter two

The Methodology and Data Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literature and civilization</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>9%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sociolinguistics</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English language and linguistics</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3: students' speciality**

Question 04: are you familiar with social networks

This question aims to see whether all the students are familiar with social networks and use them or not.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4: the students' familiarity with social networks**

From the results obtained, it was noted that all of 110 students making up 100% of the population are familiar with the social networks and have an account in it.

Question 05: which one of the following social networks do you use regularly

In this question, we gave the participants the opportunity to choose more than just one answer, we aimed to know all the social networks that are used by the students regularly to find out which one or ones are used more than the others.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Social networks</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tumblr</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LinkedIn</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 5: the social networks that are used by the students regularly**
As a result, all of the 110 participants making up (100%) have a Facebook account and use it regularly, therefore Facebook is the most used social network by our sample. In addition to Facebook, 43% of the participants indicated that they use Instagram. 13% students said that they use Twitter regularly. Whereas for LinkedIn, 9% of the students said that they use it and finally 7% of the students said that they use Tumblr regularly.

We should mention here that we ask the students to name other social networks they use and most of them have named the following: WhatsApp, Viber, Imo, Skype. and just to clarify, these applications are not social networking sites, because they do not meet the definition of social networks that is stated in the first chapter.

On the other hand, other students have named other social networks that they are using such as google plus, academia, we heart it and hello poetry.

**Question 06: how many hours per day do you spend on these sites**

The aim behind this question is to see how much students are attached to the social networks and how many hours per day they spent on these sites.
Starting from the graph above, we can see that 30 participants making up (27%) of our sample admitted that they use social networks for more than 6 hours per day, while 28 participants (26%) said that they use SNs from two to four hours, whereas 25 participants (23%) said that they use social networks from one to two hours per day. only 8 participants (7%) said that they use social networks for less than one hour per day. As a result, students are spending too many hours per day using these sites.

**Question 07: for which purposes, do you use social networks**

This question seeks for obtaining information of the purposes that the students are using social networks for, and the following results were obtained.
The largest number of the students (70%) indicated that they use the social networking sites for the purpose of communication and chatting with friends. 25 students (23%) answered that they use social networks to share their activities and what they are doing while 9% of the students have answered that they use social networks to meet new people. Finally, only 5 students (4%) said that they use social networks to play games.

Question 08: do you use social networks to support your learning of English

This question is intended to see whether students are using the social networks to support their learning of the English language or not. We also aimed to know how they are using them to develop their four language skills.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 6: the students’ use of social networks to support their learning of English*

The students’ responses revealed that 77% of the students use social networks to improve their English language learning whereas the rest 23% said that they do not use social networks to support their English learning.

We asked the students to clarify how they use social networks to support their learning of English and too many different answers were received, but the most important and the repeated one are the following:

The majority of the students agreed on the point that in social networks they can practice their English outside the classroom they can use their English to chat with their friends or native speakers either by voice calls or by typing which will enhance both their listening, speaking and writing skill.

Other students have said that in the social networks they are visiting pages or groups that are specialised in a different domain such as linguistics, civilisation...etc. where they can find
new and updated information and they can also read some different articles related to their field of the study.

**Question 09: how often do you write in English while using social networks**

The aim behind this question was to find out whether the students are writing in English while using the social networks or not and we also aimed to know their frequency of writing in English.

![Bar chart showing the students' frequency of writing in English while using social networks.](chart)

**Figure 5: the students' frequency of writing in English while using social networks**

As a result, to this question, the majority of the students making up 47% of the sample admitted that they often write in English while using social networks, and this is might be to the fact that not all of their friends in the social networks know the English language, therefore, they might use other languages to communicate with them while 34% of the population said that they are always writing in English. 14% admitted that they sometimes writing in English, while only 5% said that they rarely write in English in the social networks.

**Question 10: where do you write more**

The aim of this question is to confirm the result of the previous question, we wanted to know where students write more in English, is it in the classroom or in the social networking spaces.
Figure 6: the space where students write more

This question shows a close result between the two options that was purposed to the students. 52% of the students said that they write more in English in the classroom than they do in the social networks, while the other 48% said they write in English in the social networks more than they do in the classroom.

Question 11: while writing in social networks do you usually use some form of abbreviations such as u=you, BRB = be right back …etc.

While writing in social networks, some people might use some forms of abbreviations while they are writing or communicating with each other therefore The aim of this question was to know whether the students are using some of the informal forms of abbreviations while writing in social networks because that will help us later to find out the effect of that use on their formal writing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: the students’ use of the abbreviations in the social networks
As it is shown from the table 80% of the students admitted that they use the abbreviations while writing in social networks while the other 20% said that they do not use this kind of abbreviations.

**Question 12: have you ever faced a situation where you wrote one of these abbreviations in formal exam paper by mistake?**

In this question, we wanted to know whether the use of the abbreviations while writing in social networks is affecting the formal writing of the participants. Therefore, we wanted to know if they have ever faced a situation where they used one of the abbreviations in a formal paper by mistake.

![Figure 7: the students’ use of abbreviations in their formal writing](image.png)

As a result to this question, 74% of the students admitted that they had never used the informal abbreviations while writing on a formal paper, while the other 26% admitted that they have faced a situation where they wrote one of these abbreviations in a formal paper by mistake.

**Question 13: while writing in social networks do you use online or the keyboard autocorrection?**

This question aimed to see whether the students are using the autocorrection to check and correct their spelling mistakes, capitalization or any other typing errors.
The result shows that 61% of the participants use the autocorrection to correct their spelling mistakes when writing in the social networks, whereas 39% of the participants do not use the autocorrection.

**Question 14: do you believe that using this auto correction is helping or preventing you from learning the correct spelling of the words**

The aim of this question was to explore the students’ beliefs about the use of autocorrection, we wanted to know if they are aware of the benefits of using this correction, therefore, we asked them whether they are thinking that using the auto correction is helping or preventing them from learning the correct spelling of the words.
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As a result for this question, 80% of the participants said that the use of the autocorrection is helping them to recognize and correct their spelling mistakes on the other hand 20% of the participants said that using the autocorrection is preventing them from learning the correct spelling of the words.

**Question 15: do you believe that writing in social networks is affecting your formal writing positively or negatively**

This question is the focus of our study, we aimed to see the participants’ attitude about the social networks and their writing skill and whether they think that social networks are improving their writing or harming it.

![Figure 10: the students' opinions about the effect of social networks on their writing](image)

The result of this question shows that (79%) of the participants believes that social networks are helping them in improving their writing, on the other hand, (21%) of the participants saw that social networks are affecting their writing negatively. We asked the participants to justify their answers in both cases and the following justifications were received.

Those who have chosen that social networks are affecting their writing positively justify their choice by saying that: with practice comes perfection and at least they are writing in social networks, another group said that in social networks they are able to meet new words and new expression that can be beneficial to them and that can be used in their formal writing. Another group have said that while writing in social networks they may correct themselves...
and correct their spelling mistakes either by observing the writing of others or by the feedbacks that they are receiving from their friends.

Whereas for those who have chosen that social networks are affecting their writing negatively, they justify their choice by saying that writing in social network is informal and students may write in any form they like which may affect their formal writing, another justification is that the use of the abbreviations can make the learners forget how the words are correctly spelled.

**Question 16: will you support the use of social network as a supplementary tool to enhance The EFL Learners’ writing skill**

The aim behind this question is to see whether the EFL Learners are willing to accept the use of social networks as a tool to improve their writing skill either by themselves or by their teachers.

![Bar Graph](image)

**Figure 11: the students' attitudes towards the use of social networks as a supplementary tool to enhance the writing skill**

As it is showed in the graph above, 85% of the students answered that they support the use of the social network as a tool to improve their writing skill, while 15% of the students did not support the use of social networks.
Question 17: do you consider social networks a motivational tool if the EFL Teachers start using in it either inside or outside the classroom? And why?

The aim behind this question was to know the students’ attitude towards the use of social networks to teach them writing and whether they consider it as a tool that will raise their motivation and make them write more correctly, we ask the students to justify their answers.

![Figure 12: the students' attitude towards social networks as motivational tool to enhance their writing](image)

As an answer to this question, 91% of the students said that they do consider social networks as motivational tool if their teachers start using it to teach them writing and they explain their view by saying that social networks are very attractive tools that they are all familiar with and using in it to teaching writing is a new idea. Other students said that if their teachers were observing their writing in the social networks then they will be more motivated to enhance their writing style, they also said that in social networks spelling mistakes will be less since they can recognise their spelling mistakes easily. Another group of students making up 15 students said that social networks will be enjoyable and entertainment learning atmosphere where they will be more relax to write.

whereas only 10 students (9%) said they do not consider it as a motivational tool because to them social networks are not formal teaching setting and if the students start using it, they might forget their formal English. Two students said that it will distract the students’
attention and another two participants said that the students will not feel the need to write correctly in this sites.

2.2. The analysis of the interview

As we said earlier, the interview consisted of eleven predetermined questions but some have arisen during the interview in order to get more clarification from the respondent’s answers.

**Question 1: How long have you been teaching English at university?**

The aim of this question is to know the experience of the EFL teachers at the University of Mostaganem. The average of teaching is between 3 to 10 years. Only one teacher has been teaching at University for 14 years.

**Question 2: As a teacher, how would you evaluate the writing of the students in our department?**

The aim behind this question is to evaluate the level of the students’ writing in the department of English in the university of Mostaganem. As an answer to this question, six of the teachers said that there are differences in the level of the writing of their students, for the reason that there are students that have a very good level of writing with a small number of mistakes and there are other students that have a poor level and need to be developed. whereas two teachers describe the level of writing of their students as being poor, and one teacher described it as being average.

**Question 3: Are you familiar with the social networks? and which ones do you use regularly?**

This question aimed the see the familiarity of the teachers with the social networks, and which one or ones do they use regularly, this will help the researcher to see whether the teachers are updated with the same technologies that are used by their students or not.

In answering this question, seven teachers have said that they are familiar with social networks, six of them have a Facebook account and use it regularly and one of them use LinkedIn, while the other two said that they are not familiar with social networks and they do not use it at all.
Question 4: Do you believe that social networks are helping the learners in improving their English language since they can meet native speakers there?

In this question, we wanted to see the teachers’ attitude towards the use of social networks to develop the English language, and whether they think that social networks can help their students in improving their English or not.

The results of this question show that the majority of the teachers (seven teachers) believe that social networks can help the students in improving their English as long as it is used appropriately and effectively. While the other two teachers did not believe that social networks are helpful in improving one’s English.

Question 5: Do you agree that social networks are the only space where the students can write in English outside the classroom?

This question is intended to find out the opinion of the teachers about the space of writing of their students outside the classroom.

Six teachers disagree with the idea the social networks are the only space where students can write in outside the classroom. They explained that the students are not aware of the other opportunities and the alternatives where they can actually write. Whereas two teachers believed that students are spending too many hours per day on the social networking sites, therefore, it is the only space where they are writing in English outside the classroom, and finally one teacher said that she did not think that they are writing in English at all, she believed that they are using either French or Arabic to write there.

Question 6: Do you think that social networks are helping students to share their thoughts and exchange ideas and information through writing?

This question aimed to assess the teacher awareness about the amount of writing that is produced by their students in the social networks.

As an answer to this question, all the teachers had the same point of view, they all agreed with the fact that social networks are helping the students in sharing and exchanging information with each other through writing.

Question 7: To what extent do you agree with the fact that in social networks students will write more freely without being under any kind of pressure as it might be in the classroom?
In this question, we aimed to see whether the teachers believed that their students are writing more freely in the social networks more than they do in the classroom.

The result shows that six teachers agree with that by saying that the students are really expressing themselves through writing more than they do in the classroom. One teacher also explains that social networks are becoming like their diaries where they can write all that they want or feel. On the other hand, three teachers disagree with that by saying that they are writing more freely because there are no rules to govern their writing and because they can write in any style they like since their writing is not evaluated or assessed.

**Question 8: In the social networks, students might use some form of abbreviations such as the letter u to replace the word you, or the letters SMTH for the word something and so on. So, have you ever met a situation where you found some kind of these abbreviations while correcting your students writing or exams papers?**

This question aims to double check and confirm the results obtained from the question twelve in the students’ questionnaire, we wanted to know the effect of the use of the abbreviations by the students in their formal writing.

As a result of this question, all the teachers claimed that they have met these kinds of abbreviations while correcting their students’ writing, but most of them explained that it is rarely and used by a small number of the students.

**Question 9: While writing in Social networks, students sometimes are relying on the autocorrection, do you think that this autocorrection is helping the students to improve their spelling mistakes or prevent them from learning the correct spelling? why?**

For this question, eight teachers said that the auto correction will help the students in learning the correct spelling of the words only if they are aware of their mistakes and learn from them, otherwise, if the students are doing it unconsciously it will not help them at all. On the other hand, one teacher has said that the autocorrection will make them lazy since it corrects all the mistakes for them.

**Question 10: Do you think that writing on social networking sites is affecting the writing of the students positively or negatively?**

This question aims to see the teachers’ attitudes towards the effect of social networks on their students writing.
Six teachers believed that social networks can affect the writing of the students positively only if they are aware of how to use it to serve that purpose otherwise it won’t help them at all and it will only destroy their writing skill. While two teachers believed that social networks are affecting the students writing negatively since they are using abbreviations while writing there and one teacher said that she is not quite sure of the answer.

**Question 11: What is your attitude towards using social networks as a supporting tool to enhance the students writing either inside or outside the classroom?**

Seven teachers welcomed the idea of using social networks as a supporting tool to enhance the students writing, but only outside the classroom since we are bit far from using it inside the classroom because of the lack of the equipment for that. Whereas the other two teachers did not support the use of it and they said that they support more the traditional way of teaching.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, we have presented the research methodology that the researcher has followed. We first presented the population of both students and teachers and the gathering data tools, namely, the questionnaire and the interview, and we also explained the reasons for their choices. After that, we have started the analysis of the data that we have obtained so that it can be discussed in the final chapter of this work.
Chapter three:
Discussion and
Recommendations
Introduction

Before starting the discussion and interpretation of our findings, we are going to give a brief summary of the findings of both the interview and the questionnaire. After that, we are going to shed the light on some suggestions and recommendation that can be used by both students and teachers in order to help in enhancing the EFL students’ writing skill using the social networks.

1. Summary of the results

In the following section, we are going to give a brief overview of the data that was gathered from both the students’ questionnaire and the teachers’ interview so that we can start our interpretation of the results.

1.1. Summary of the questionnaire findings

To start with the students’ questionnaire consisted of three sections. In the first section, which is the students’ profile we have found out that girls overpopulated boys and that the students who have answered the questionnaire were aged from 22 to 48 and they were all master two students.

In the second section of the questionnaire, we have surprisingly discovered that all of the participants from all the different ages are familiar with social networks and use it regularly. The majority of them are spending more than six hours per day using these sites. In addition to that, we have found out that Facebook is the most popular and the most used social networking site among students but also, they are using other ones such as Instagram, twitter, LinkedIn. When it comes for the reasons that the students use social networks for, we have discovered that most of the students use social networks to communicate and chat with their friends or share their activities and what they are doing. Whereas for the academic purposes of the use of the social networks, the majority of the students told us that they use social networks as a supporting tool to enhance and develop their four language skills, by practising their English with native speakers or friends or joining pages and groups that are concerned with the development of the English language. They are also following pages that are specialised in the domain of their study such as linguistics or civilization where they can read new and updated information about their field of interests.

When it comes to the third section of the questionnaire which is the main concern of our work, most of the students admitted that they write in English while using social networks,
and the amount of the writing that they produce in the classroom and in the social networking sites are approximately the same. They also admitted that while writing on these sites they are using some forms of informal abbreviations, which is according to them are not affecting their formal writing at all since they can differentiate when to use each form of writing. Another benefit from writing in the social networks is the use of either the online or the keyboard autocorrection. The majority of the students have said that they are using this auto correction and they believe that it helps them in learning the correct spelling of the words. Accordingly, the largest part of the students believes that writing in social networks is affecting their writing positively, they justify that by saying that social networks provide them with a place where they can write outside the classroom, they also explained that while surfing the social networks they might read new expression and vocabularies that can be used in their formal writing. Whereas for the minority that has chosen that social networks are affecting their writing negatively they explain that by saying that the use of the informal abbreviations might make them forget how the words are actually spelt and they also consider social networks as an informal setting of writing so they will not have to follow any writing rules. Finally, most of the students support the use of social networks as a supplementary tool to enhance the students’ writing and for them, it is a motivational tool to write since they are all familiar with. Therefore, they will be more relaxed than the classroom. They also welcomed the idea of using social networks by their teachers either inside or outside the classroom to develop their writing.

1.2. Summary of the interview findings

The years of the experience of the teachers that we have interviewed ranges from 4 to 14 years. According to them, there are differences in the level of their students’ writing and this is due to the fact that there are students of a good level of writing and others with a poor level that needs to be developed.

Concerning the use of the social networks by the teachers, it was found out that the majority of the teachers have a Facebook account but unfortunately not all of them. Similarly, to the students, most the teachers believe that social networks can be a great tool to improve one’s English but only if the students know how to use it appropriately.

When it comes to the writing skill most of the teachers are aware of the amount of writing that is produced by their students in these spaces since the students are exchanging information and ideas through writing there. Furthermore, most of the teachers admitted that
the frequency of using the informal abbreviations in the formal examination paper by the students is somehow rare but a still there is some cases where the students use them in their formal writing. From another part, there is also the use of the online or the keyboard auto-correction that is used by the students while writing in social networks. The majority of the teachers believe that using this auto correction is a good way for the students to recognise their mistakes and learn the correct spelling of the words. Finally, most of the teachers have said that the social networking sites will enhance the students writing only if they are aware of that and they use it for the purpose of enhancing their writing. Otherwise, it will not help them at all and it might only affect their writing negatively. Additionally, most of the teachers welcomed the idea of using social networks as a tool to enhance the students writing either inside or outside the classroom.

2. The interpretation of the Main Results

After the analysis of the findings of both the questionnaire and the interview, the researcher has collect a considerable amount of data about the effect of social networks (especially those where the students can write in) on the students’ writing skills and how possible it will be to implement them as a tool to enhance the students’ writing. Therefore, in the following section, we are going to discuss the main results that were collected from each research instrument.

The main results that can be taken out from the findings of the students’ questionnaire are the following:

first and foremost, all the students from all the ages and genders are familiar with social networking sites and use them regularly and as the results show social networks become a daily habit among the learners where they spent too many hours per day using it. The use of social networks by the students should not be seen as a negative act only because our findings show that the majority of the students use the social networks for educational purposes too.

Regarding the influence of social networks on the writing of the students, our study discovered that in most of the time students use the English language to write in order to communicate with their friends or other people, to share and exchange information and to express themselves and share their thoughts and ideas with the world, which means that the students are producing a considerable amount of writing in the English language while using these sites. This kind of writing can be regarded as a positive factor that might enhance the students writing if it is used effectively.
When it comes to the use of the informal abbreviations while writing on these sites, the students make it clear that the use of these abbreviations is not affecting their formal writing at all since they know when and where to use them. Therefore, it can be said that the students are aware of the context in which they use these abbreviations so it will not harm their formal writing. Besides that, the writing of the students in these sites are always checked and corrected by the online or the keyboard autocorrection which is according to the students is helping them to learn the correct spelling of the words, hence, the use of the autocorrection that is provided by the social networks is good way that helps the students to enhance their spelling mistakes while writing.

The majority of the students believe that social networks are affecting their writing positively and this is due to the fact that social networks are almost the only place where they can write outside the classroom, and at the same time they can apply all the language rules and the writing technique they receive from their teachers in the classroom. In addition to that, most of them welcomed the idea of using social networks as a tool to develop their writing skill and they also claimed that social networks are a motivational tool for them to write more if the EFL Teachers start using it inside or outside the classroom.

On the other hand, the main result that can be taken from the findings of the teachers’ interview are the following:

Similarly to the students, most of the EFL teachers use the social networks and are aware of the quantity of writing that is produced by their students there. The majority of the teachers believe that as long as the social networks are used effectively by the students then, it can be a very effective tool that enhances the students’ writing. When it comes to the implementation of social networks as a supporting tool to enhance the students writing, there were two different opinions with the teachers. Those who use social networks which supported the use of it as a tool to enhance the students writing while and those who do not use it and did not think that social networks are an effective way to teach writing and they prefer to follow the traditional way of teaching.

As a summary and as an answer to our research questions, the social networking sites are affecting the students writing positively and if it is used appropriately by them, it can help the students in enhancing their writing skill. in addition to that, social networks can be used as a supplementary tool either inside or outside the classroom to promote the students’ writing.
3. Suggestions and Recommendations

In an attempt to help the students to develop and enhance their writing skill by using the social networking sites, we are going to give some practical suggestions for both students and teachers on how they can take advantage of social networks and start using it as a tool to learn and teach the writing skill.

3.1. The use of social networks to improve the writing skill

Since it is difficult to implement social networks into the language classroom due to the unavailability of the materials and the equipment for that, the following suggestions will be explained by focusing on the use of social networks as a supplementary tool outside the classroom. We should mention here that although our findings show that the majority of the students welcomed the idea of using these sites to support the instructions that are given to them in the classroom. Teachers should not oblige their students to participate with them since not all the students are connected to the internet outside the classroom, but rather they can make it an optional decision for those who want to improve their writing skill.

In this section, we are going to propose some practical technique on how both teachers and students can use the social networking sites to develop the writing skill. We have chosen Facebook, Instagram and Twitter because they are the most used social networks according to the findings of our study.

3.1.1. The use of Facebook

According to our Finding, Facebook is the most used social network by both students and teachers and therefore both of them should start thinking in a way to take advantage from the writing that is produced there. To start with, the teacher can create a private group for his students. In this group, the teacher can provide them with documents, articles, links to support the instruction that is given to them in the classroom, he can also give them some guidance and advice based on their mistakes. This Facebook group allows the students to practise their writing skill outside the classroom where they can exchange feedbacks and opinions about their writing. There are plenty of activities that can be done in this Facebook group and we will explain some of them in the following sections.
3.1.2. The use of Twitter

Twitter can be a powerful tool to foster the creative writing of the students since the users of twitter can only use 140 characters in each tweet they write, which will force the students to think for the right words and the most appropriate expressions to express themselves within the allowed number of characters and as a results it will make them more creative in their choice of their words. In addition to that, since the number of characters is limited twitter can be an effective tool for summarising thoughts and limit the students’ words and help them to get to the main idea directly without using unnecessary words or expressions.

From another part, teachers can also use twitter to share with their students links, videos, article or any other resource that might help in improving their students’ writing. They can also use the hashtag (#) to make the materials easy to access by the students. A hashtag is a symbol that can be used in the social networks to organise particular topics, so as long as the teacher give a particular hashtag for the students. It will be easier for them to share, write a comment and find the content of that hashtag.

3.1.3. The use of Instagram

In Instagram, the students are supposed to share pictures from their daily life or their experiences, therefore it is a platform that relies more on the visual aspect. In Instagram students need to write a brief description for each story they post, hence if the students want to improve their writing they should start writing more while posting the pictures they want to share. Alrubail (2016) purposed the story telling with Instagram as a technique to help the students to foster their writing and their creativity. In this activity, the teacher is going to ask the students to choose a photo that means something to them whether it be a person, place or thing, then he/she will ask them to say something about that image and why they have chosen it and what significance it has for them, he can also set a word limit so the answers of the students would not be too long or too short. After that, the teacher can evaluate and correct his students writing and provide them with some feedbacks. To conclude, the storytelling activity is a productive way that both teachers and students can use in Instagram to produce more writing and develop it.
3.2. Suggestion for the students

Since social networks become a daily habit among the students, the following section will be devoted for some suggestions that the students need to follow while using social networks in order to improve their writing skill.

3.2.1. Practice more writing

It is widely agreed that with practice comes perfection and writing make no difference. The more students write the more they are likely to develop their writing skill because as it is stated by Liach (2011) practising writing and producing extensive quantities of writing is the best way in which students learn to write. In agreement with this view, Ramet (2007) stated that the best way for the writer to develop his writing is to write, even if he is going to delete what he wrote at the end of the day he added that writing anything every day will enable the writer to build up a commitment to produce a full piece of writing later on, and since our findings demonstrate that social networks are almost the only space where the students write in English outside the classroom. Therefore, social networks can be an effective place where the students can practice their writing skills by writing and sharing their experiences or stories or whatever they want to write about. The students have the choice to share their writing with their friends or keep it secret for themselves since social networks give the students the choice of their posts’ privacy. Eventually, this writing that is produced by the students will help in generating more writing and as a result the writing process will be much easier for the students and also it will help further thought to be evolved (chandler, 1995). Appendix 3 shows some of the writing that is produced by the students of the department of English at the university of Mostagenem in one of the social networks.

3.2.2. More reading

Reading is also an effective solution that will enhance the students’ writing. As it is stated by Donovan (2013) the best way to improve the writing skill is either by writing or reading, various studies were done on the effect of reading in improving the writing skill. According to Kirin (2010), “a reader will instinctively pick up vocabulary and language structures while reading and should be able to make use of them in their writing work.” (p.286) thus reading and writing are essential for each other, without one the other cannot exist, as it is stated by Llach (2011) “The process of learning how to write is closely linked to learning to read” (p.42) because the human brain is like sponge that soak up everything we observe and experience and what we read is no exception. (Donovan, 2016). Social networks
are big platforms where the students can find all the kind of the reading they need. In Facebook for instance there is a plenty of updated articles from different famous magazines and newspapers that will from one part make the learners aware of what is going on in the world around them and from another part it will expand their vocabulary and exposed them to the language input that the students might use in their writing. Additionally, in the social networks, students might read their friends writing too, they can read different documents and articles that are posted on different pages which they are following based on their own interest. To support that, Gibbins and Greenhow (2016) said that Facebook is a tool that raises the students’ motivation to read in English and eventually the students’ confidence in writing will increase. An example of the kind of reading that students might find in the Facebook will be illustrated in appendix 4.

There are other social networks where the students can read in, such as academia and SlideShare. These two sites are full of different slides, pdf documents and books that the students can read which will both enhance their reading and expand their knowledge, therefore, their writing skill will be affected and improved too because as it said by Llach (2011) “It seems that (extensive) reading leads to vocabulary expansion, thus providing the means of expression to be used in writing” (p.41).

As a conclusion, reading skill has an impact on the writing skill of the students, therefore the students should start reading in the social networks to expand their vocabulary and the words' usage so it can be used in their writing later on.

3.2.3. The benefits of observation

Observation is a technique that is central in the development of the writing and the critical thinking of the students. Moore and Lan Cassel (2011) defined observation as “a systematic and highly focused method of examining texts that require sustained concentration, note-taking, and perception so that you can see more in what you are observing than the casual observer would see.” (p.51). Therefore, observation is more than just reading, it is a technique that allows the students to get in deep with the text and observe the conventions, the mechanics and all the other techniques that are used by the writer. The observation will help the students in expanding their writing knowledge, it will help them in acquiring new expression, words usage, forms of writing and punctuation, it will also provide them with materials for their own writing. Social networks are a beneficial space where the students can practice observation. In this space, the students can read and observe the different writing,
documents or articles that are posted by either their friends or pages and groups they are following. In short, students should observe all the kind of writing that is available in the social networks in order to support their writing skill.

3.2.4. The use of Grammarly

Grammarly is a platform that enhances the English language writing, it can be either downloaded to the students’ or the teachers’ computer or added as an extension to the web browser. Grammarly will automatically start detecting all the typing errors whether it was grammar, punctuation, sentence structure and spelling. Hence, as soon as the students will start writing on any social networking sites they use, Grammarly is going to check their mistakes and give the explanation of each mistake, therefore, it is a successful tool to enhance the students writing while they are writing on the social networks or any other sites. Accordingly, all the students should start using this software as it will help them in reducing their writing mistakes and improving their writing. (See appendix 5)

3.2.5. Use less informal abbreviations

There has been a growing concern among educators about the increasing use of the informal abbreviations by the students while writing in the social networks, they are worrying that this practice will damage the students’ formal writing. Many studies such as (crystal,2008; Thurlow,2002; baron 2008) showed that the use of these abbreviations is not affecting the students writing since the students are conscious of the context in which they are writing (as cited in Azziz et al.,2013). To support these views our findings also showed that the use of these abbreviations is not affecting the students’ formal writing since they know when to use them. But still it will be better if the students reduce their use of these abbreviations and start using the complete form of the words, this will help them to be more familiar with how words are spelt and consequently, their spelling mistakes in their formal paper will be decreased. To sum up, reducing the use of the informal abbreviations and writing the full spelling of the words while writing in the social networks are beneficial to the students so they can learn the correct spelling of the words.

3.2.6. The use of the process of writing

Another contributing factor that will enhance the students writing is the use of the process of writing, as it was mentioned in the first chapter the writing process consisted of different stages which are: planning, drafting, revising and editing. According to harmer
(2004) no matter what is the content, the type and the medium of writing, any writer should follow these four steps.

The use of the writing process is very effective and beneficial to improve the students’ writing. It allows them to organise and plan their ideas, draft them, revise what they had produced in order to check their mistakes and finally it allows the students to edit their piece of writing in order to achieve the best quality of writing. According to Devoss et al (2010), the writing process in the digital spaces become much easier to proceed since they are too many software that will revise and edit the mistakes of the students.

It is highly recommended that the students use the process of writing while writing in the social networks because if they start using it there, it will develop a good habit in them that will make them eventually using the same process while writing their formal paper.

3.2.7. Writing to each other

Writing to each other is a good technique that provokes the students’ engagement with writing. It’s basically to make the students write to each other in the classroom, either by sending questions, letters or emails for each other (Harmer, 2004). Whereas for outside the classroom and due to the social networks, students are already writing to each other whether in the chat conversation or each other profiles’. Therefore, if the students start writing for each other using the English language this will help them in building a habit of writing in English which will reduce the students’ writing anxiety in their formal writing and will help in making the students more familiar with the writing especially those who are not used to write. Appendix 6 shows how the students are writing to each other using the English language in the social networks.

3.3. Suggestions for the teachers

Since we are bit far from integrating social networks into the language classroom, the following suggestions will highlight how the EFL teachers can use social networks as a supplementary tool to develop their students writing outside the classroom.

3.3.1. Joining social networks

Nowadays both teachers and students are using social networks to interact with each other in order to expand their learning and teaching experiences, but still, not all of the teachers are using them, therefore, we are going to highlight the benefits of using social networks for teachers.
Social networks are not helpful for the teachers only in term of interacting with their students, teachers can have a lot of advantages from using it. First, it allows them to share ideas with each other that will enhance their teaching experience in the classroom. Second, social networks can also be used as a tool to connect teachers from different countries in order to discuss and share with each other the different teaching techniques and ideas that are used by them. Another benefit is that social networks keep the teachers aware of all the seminars and the conferences either in their area or from all over the world.

Whereas for using social networks in term of supporting their teaching, Social networks can enhance classroom activities as it allows the teachers to connect with their students and stay in touch with them, answering their questions or updating them with a new information. (Fuglie, 2014).

As a conclusion, using social networks by the teachers is helpful to enhance their career by both connecting them with other teachers or with their students to support both learning and teaching experiences.

3.3.2. Raise the students’ awareness

It is very important that the teachers support their students’ writing and motivate them to write more, and since the majority of the students are writing only in the social networks while they are outside the classroom. Thus, there is a big necessity for the teachers to raise their students’ awareness about how they can take advantage of this kind of writing to improve their formal writing. First, the teachers should always clarify to their students what is formal in writing and what is not, in this way the students will not be confused about how to write in both spaces. Second the teachers should always advise their students to practice either the mechanics or the techniques that they provide them with in the classroom, and the social networks can be the best space for that practice, because if the learners start practicing what they learned in the classroom by writing a free topics from their own choices, this will be a good technique to support their writing skill. Finally, the teachers should advise their students to stick more to the formal writing while writing in social networks and as a result, their use of the informal abbreviations will be reduced. To sum up the teachers have a big role in raising their students’ awareness on how to use social networks to develop their writing skill.
3.3.3. The use of Facebook group discussion

There are several advantages to be taken when looking at the impact of the Facebook group discussion on the students writing. A study was done by Ping and Maniam (2015) to investigate the effectiveness of Facebook group discussion on writing performance. The findings of this study revealed that Facebook group discussion is helping the students in expressing their opinions and sharing knowledge with each other and as a result, there were some improvements in the students’ writing performance. Similarly, the EFL teachers can use the same technique where they can choose a topic to discuss with their students in the Facebook group they have created. This topic can be the same topic that the students will write about in their next meeting in the classroom.

The exchanging of ideas, information and opinions between the students and their teachers in the Facebook group will help the students to expand their knowledge and will make them see things from different angles, which will provide the learners with a great background knowledge that they can use in the classroom writing. In brief, Facebook group discussion will expand the students’ knowledge by providing them with different views and ideas that will help their writing performance.

3.3.4. Boost students’ confidence

Another important point that will enhance the students writing is to increase the student’s self-confidence about their writing. It has been claimed by ALrubail (2016) that writing in the social networks will boost the self-confidence of the students since when they are writing there they will receive encouragements and positive feedbacks from their peers or teachers which will make them gain confidence in themselves and as a result they will be more encourage to write and share their writing with other people. In addition to that, social networks give an opportunity for the students to show their creative writing in order to establish an online portfolio for their writing and since there are too many people in the social networks this means that their work is going to reach a wider audience and consequently a wider channel of feedbacks and encouragements will be open which will help students in enhancing their writing skill, therefore the EFL teachers should support their students with positive encouragement in order to create a supportive and constructive writing environment where the students are producing more accurate writing.
3.3.5. **Audience and constructive feedbacks**

There are a lot of advantages that the students can take from the audience that read their writing in the social networks because unlike the traditional writing such as journal or diary which are meant to be somehow a private, in the social networks, students are writing because there is always an audience that is going to read them so, the aim of their writing is to reach a particular audience when their writing is posted, and whenever their writing is read by more audience the students will produce and write more so the first suggestion in here that students should always comment on each other writing and support the writing that is produced by their classmates additionally, they can also provide them with some constructive feedback.

From another hand, teachers should also encourage their students to produce more writing and share it with them on the social networks, because when the students feel that their writing outside the classroom is being valued they will be motivated to produce more. Students might write about anything they want as long as they are following the correct grammar, the writing conventions and the mechanics of writing. After finishing their writing, students can post it in their writing group where they can receive constructive feedback from their teachers because “Giving constructive feedback is an important communication skill for the teacher to use since it increases self-awareness identifies options for alternative behaviour and this encourages development” (Smith, 1997, p.87). As a conclusion, receiving constructive feedback from their teachers and their classmates will help the students to identify their area of weaknesses in order to improve them.

3.3.6. **Using the multimedia tools**

Unlike the classroom, the teachers in the social networks have a great opportunity to use the multimedia tool such as videos, pictures, audio or slideshow that can be combined with writing assignments or activities. According to Fouda (2008) multimedia tool “represent the consolidation of all elements of technology as they combine sound, image, video, drawing & text with a high quality in addition to the interactive environment” (as cited in Aloraini 2012).

The teacher can support his instruction that was given in the classroom with extra multimedia tool. Similarly, this multimedia tool provides the teacher with a variety of activities that will help him in stimulating the students writing. We are going to give some suggestions on activities that can be done by the teachers in the social networks using the multimedia tools.
First, the teacher can give a simple story to his students in a small video and ask them to summarise it while he can check their language and mistake. Another possibility is that the teacher can give them a picture or a group of pictures where they can describe it in either sentences or small paragraph (see appendix 7), or he can give them a picture that tells a particular story and the students need to guess that story. This activity will enhance both the students writing and their creativity. The teacher may also share a music video and ask the students to write a story about that song, this technique will motivate the learner and stimulate their creativity to produce more writing. The Teacher might also ask the students to share with the group a picture that means something to them and they should justify their choice and what significance has the picture to them in small paragraphs. As a conclusion, the use of the multimedia tool in the social networks will give the teachers a variety of choices that stimulate the students’ writing.

3.3.7. **Story completion**

Story completion is a good technique that the teacher of writing can use in the social networks to promote students writing, he can choose a beginning of a story and post it in the Facebook group and ask each student to write a single sentence to complete the story in the comment and the next students will complete the story based on the previous comment by his classmate in this way all the students will participate in the creation of the story. This activity will be so motivated to the students because they are finishing each other sentences and ideas to create their own story. The students might also complete the story independently without relying on their classmates’ ideas.

3.3.8. **Collaborative writing**

Social networks are a successful tool for collaborative writing. Collaborative writing as Harmer (2004) said “allow the students to learn from each other, it gives each member of the collaboration access to other mind and knowledge” (p.73). In the same view, Alrubail (2016) stated that collaborative writing in social networks will make the students generate stronger ideas that will lead them to find convincing evidence that will help them to be creative in their composition. Facebook, for instance, has a potential to make the learners practice writing with each other outside the classroom where they can meet easily to exchange their writing or ideas in order to correct each other mistakes.

According to Williams (2014) the amount of time that the students can devote to writing and revising during class is limited therefore and with some encouragements from their
teachers, students can meet easily in the social networks where they exchange ideas, pieces of writing and correct each other mistakes outside the classroom they might also work on pieces of writing together. Collaboration with other classes can also be a good technique to promote the students writing in the social networks it can be by sharing the students writing with other classes and reading other classes writing.

3.4. What to avoid

When using social networks for educational purposes, many teachers do not wish to mix their personal life with their professional one therefore, it is preferable for the teacher to create a private group on the social networks where he and his students can meet and connect with each other at any time without the necessity of adding each other in their friends list. Because if they both get access to each other updates and photos, it might cause some privacy issues. Therefore, teachers should pay attention to the privacy of their personal information.

On the other hand, students should also know how to communicate with their teachers while using social networks in order to do so, they should be familiar with “the Netiquette” which is “appropriate behaviour expected of people who use the internet. This can involve everything from using appropriate language in your communication to being considerate of other people’s needs and feelings” (Howells, 1997, p.165) so they can know what is appropriate and can be said to their teachers and what is not.

3.5. Other recommendations

- Although the social networks are only available for the EFL teachers to use outside the classroom, but the university officials should start thinking about making some educational changes in order to implement social networks in the classroom.
- The EFL teachers should be trained on how to use the latest technologies among them social networks in order to serve educational purposes to enhance their performance of the materials.
- The EFL Teachers should think of the different ways in which social networks can be used to enhance all the four language skills and not only the writing one which is the concern of our work.
- Social networks give the students the opportunity to meet or speak with famous writers from all over the world where they can take advice from them on how to improve their writing performance.
• In the Facebook groups that are created by the teachers, the teacher can host other teachers either from the same university or from other ones, where the students can ask them for any information that might help them with their studies or in improving their skills.

• While using social networks outside the classroom, the teacher should focus more on the shy and untalkative students in order to encourage them to participate in the classroom in the same way they do behind the screen.

Conclusion

All in all, social networks can be a useful and an effective place where the students have a plenty of choices to improve their writing skill. In the last chapter of this study, we have first given a summary of both students’ and teachers’ findings. Then, we have interpreted those finding in order to find answers to our research questions. Next, we have given some suggestions on how both teachers and students can use social networks to improve the writing skill, those solutions can be practised by the students and teachers outside the classroom because of lack of the logistics and the equipment within our university.
General conclusion

Developing the students’ writing skill has always been the main concern of the foreign language teachers. Therefore, the aim of this research is to discover the effect of social networking sites on the development of the students’ formal writing. It also aims to discover the most practical and convenient strategies that both students and teachers can apply in order to enhance the writing skills by using social networks.

This study first, begun with a general overview of the social networking sites, afterwards, the focus was directed toward the use of the social networks and its usefulness in both the educational and the foreign language teaching setting. Furthermore, the researcher explained the relationship between the social networks and the writing skill as he describes how writing has changed due to the technological inventions.

The second chapter of this study which is the practical part was divided into two sections; First, the researcher gave a detailed description of both the population of the students and the teachers and the research instruments that he used to collect data which are the questionnaire and the interview. Second, the researcher starts analysing the data that he had gathered in order to interpret it.

The third and the final chapter of this study was devoted to the interpretation of the findings, moreover, the researcher provided some suggestions and recommendation on how social networks can be applied to promote the students’ writing skill.

The findings of this study revealed the positive attitude that both the EFL teachers and learners have towards the use of the social networks as a supplementary tool to enhance the writing skill. The results have also shown that social networks are affecting the students writing positively since they are using it to practice their writing skill outside the classroom.

As a conclusion, social networks can be an effective tool to teach the writing skill if it will be integrated into the formal academic setting. furthermore, it can also be used outside the classroom with guidance from the EFL teachers in order to be used appropriately for the sake of enhancing the students’ writing.
Bibliography


Aloraini, S. (2012). The impact of using multimedia on students’ academic achievement in the College of Education at King Saud University. Journal of King Saud University – Languages and Translation, 75–82.


Appendices:

Appendix 1: Students’ Questionnaire

Questionnaire for EFL students at Abdelhamid Ibn Badis University, Mostaganem

Dear student,

This questionnaire aims to explore your beliefs and views towards the effect of social networking sites on the EFL Learners’ writing skill. You are kindly requested to answer the questions below by ticking (√) your choice(s) in the corresponding boxes or complete your own information whenever necessary. Thank you very much for your precious contribution.

SECTION ONE: Personal information
1) Gender: Male □ Female □
2) Age:
3) Level and Speciality: ………………………………………………………………….

SECTION TWO: EFL students and Social Networking Sites
4) Are you familiar with Social Networking Sites?
   Yes □
   No □ why not? ……………………………………………………………………………………
5) If yes, which one of the following do you use regularly? (multiple answers are possible)
   Facebook □ Instagram □ Twitter □ Tumblr □ LinkedIn □
   Others □ specify……………………………………………………
6) How many hours per day do you spend on these sites?
   Less than hour □ 1-2 hours □ 2-4 hours □
   4-6 hours □ more than 6 hours □
7) For which purposes, do you use social networks?
   Communicate or chat with friends □ Meet new people □
   Share your activities and what you are doing with your friends □ Play game □
8) do you use social networks to support your learning of English?
   Yes □ no □
   If yes, how? ……………………………………………………………………………………
   ……………………………………………………………………………………

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SECTION THREE: social networking sites and the EFL Learners’ writing skill

9) how often do you write in English while using social networks?
   always ☐  sometimes ☐  often ☐  rarely ☐

10) where do you write more in English?
    In the classroom ☐  In the social networking sites ☐

11) while writing in the social networks, do you usually use some abbreviations such as: u = you, BRB= be right back, lol= laugh out loud …etc.?
    Yes ☐  No ☐

12) have you ever faced a situation where you wrote one of these abbreviations in formal or exam paper by mistake?
    Yes ☐  No ☐

13) while writing in social networks do you use online or the keyboard autocorrection?
    Yes ☐  No ☐

14) do you believe that using this auto correction is?
    helping you in learning the correct spelling of the words ☐
    preventing you from learning the correct spelling of the words ☐

15) do you believe that the writing in social networks is affecting you formal or academic writing
    positively ☐  negatively ☐

why?.........................................................................................................................................................................
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16) will you support the use of the Social networks as a supplementary tool to enhance
    The EFL learners’ writing skills?
    Yes ☐  No ☐

17) Do you consider Social networks a motivational learning tool if the EFL teachers start using in it either in or outside the writing classroom? and why?
    ............................................................................................................................................................................
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Appendix 2: The teachers’ Interview

The aim of this interview is to explore the impact of social networks particularly those based on written communication on the EFL Learners’ writing skill in the department of English in the university of Mostaganem

1. How long have you been teaching English at university?
2. As a teacher, how would you evaluate the writing of the students in our department?
3. Are you familiar with the social networks? and which ones do you use regularly?
4. Do you believe that social networks are helping the learners in improving their English language since they can meet native speakers there?
5. Do you agree that social networks are the only space where the students can write in English outside the classroom?
6. Do you think that social networks are helping students to share their thoughts and exchange ideas and information through writing?
7. To what extent do you agree with the fact that in social networks students will write more freely without being under any kind of pressure as it might be in the classroom?
8. In the social networks, students might use some form of abbreviations such as the letter u to replace the word you, or the letters SMTH for the word something and so on. So, have you ever met a situation where you found some kind of these abbreviations while correcting your students writing or exams papers?
9. While writing in Social networks, students sometimes are relying on the autocorrection, do you think that this autocorrection is helping the students to improve their spelling mistakes or prevent them from learning the correct spelling? why?
10. Do you think that writing on social networking sites is affecting the writing of the students positively or negatively?
11. What is your attitude towards using social networks as a supporting tool to enhance the students writing either inside or outside the classroom?
Appendix 03: An example of the Students’ writing in the social networks.

Boubekeur Boucher
May 2 at 6:50am
Good morning. I hope everything runs out fine. Who is fond of taking up teaching job? And who is not?

Mohamed Ali
I am extremely fond of teaching, it's a fun job if you are competent and honest enough.
Like  Reply 3 hrs

Sa FA
Good morning. Actually I love teaching and I'm looking forward to be a teacher but still have some worries because I think it is really hard job which demands great responsibility.
Like  Reply 1-2 hrs

Boubekeur Boucher
Happy morning, Go ahead. Don't worry about anything. You will certainly get a great satisfaction in teaching.
Like  Reply 1 hr

S Oul Taker
Good morning sir
Well the job of teaching is my dreams since I was a little girl, and I confirmed that when we had our training. So yeah, it is a good thing to share what you know with the others.
Like  Reply 1 hr
Appendix 4: Reading sample from Facebook.

Stuck on reading comprehension? Here are a few strategies that really work! #ReadingComprehension #ESLstrategies
http://amp.gs/YAr6

The ABCs of A B C: Reading Comprehension Strategies That Work
Reading. It’s a little word that encompasses so much. As one of the core skills in learning English as a second language, you know it’s important. But exactly what...
BUSYTEACHER.ORG

It’s important to read books. but it is just as important to remember what you read and put it to good use.
I’d like to share three reading comprehension strategies that I use to make my reading more productive.

How to Read Better: 3 Reading Comprehension Strategies I Use
Finishing a book is easy. Understanding it is harder.
JAMESCLEAR.COM
Appendix 5: Grammarly

A Better Way to Write

Buying a car

For years I have been driving an old used car with a lot of mileage and I hate it. It gets me where I need to go, but I’m tired of fixing leaks and broken parts all the time. It’s annoying every time I need to take it to the mechanic. Even when they take care of everything, I know I’ll just end up going back there in a few weeks.

I have finally decided that I am not going to do it anymore. I have decided to buy a new car! Unfortunately, I have a problem. I have no idea what car to get. Do I want something fast? Do I want something big? Do I want something stylish? Something economical? I have so many choices that I don’t even know where to begin. I am not sure if I will be able to make the decision on my own. I don’t have not a lot of money, either, so I probably don’t have many options.

After I did some research, I knew that I would need some expert advice. Eventually, I went to a local dealership to check out some new models. I
Appendix 6: Students writing to each other describing an experience they had

Pretty Yamicha
March 5

Good morning dear classmates. today I went to middle school. How about you.. I wish you all the best.

Like Comment

S Oul Taker, Fatima Hlibat Errehem and 10 others

Mohamed Ali me too, it was horrible hhhhh, how was it for you?
Like · Reply · March 5 at 12:29pm

Nesrine Cicina I went to a highschool. It was ok for me. nice teacher but very busy schedule.
Like · Reply · March 5 at 12:33pm

Koko Bissane Not yet 😷 consultation
Like · Reply · March 5 at 12:36pm · Edited

と発見 失われた Mine was so boring that i decided to skip the afternoon classes cz they r still correcting the exam papers of their learners
Like · Reply · 3 · March 5 at 12:34pm

&B と発見 失われた replied · 37 Replies

Boubekeur Boucher Great So you performed or you just observed how to present lessons. Best of luck, Miss.
Like · Reply · 1 · March 5 at 12:50pm

Za Za I went to secondary school, and it was ok for me, but the classes were toooooo noisy
Like · Reply · 3 · March 5 at 12:52pm

Boubekeur Boucher You have to be so capable to handle learners. Just be confident, competent, and patience.
Like · Reply · 1 · March 5 at 12:53pm

&Boubekeur Boucher replied · 3 Replies
Sa FA It was boring. I went to a secondary school I attended two sessions with 2nd Adabiyyin and both were about corrections 😞
Like · Reply · 1 · March 5 at 12:57pm · Edited

S Oul Taker I went to middle school. It was good, exciting and the teacher is so nice 😊
Like · Reply · 1 · March 5 at 2:05pm

Like · Reply · 3 · March 5 at 2:06pm

Boubekeur Bouicher Have you really started your training?
Like · Reply · 2 · March 5 at 2:12pm

S Oul Taker Yes we started today
Like · Reply · 1 · March 5 at 2:12pm

Boubekeur Bouicher Is it a new experience for you?
Like · Reply · 2 · March 5 at 2:13pm

Vanisa Nadjm Oh my god what a experience my head was about explode the classes were so noisy
Like · Reply · 1 · March 5 at 4:51pm

Boubekeur Bouicher replied · 7 Replies

Sournia TK it was an experience that I will always remember 😊
Like · Reply · 1 · March 5 at 9:07pm
Appendix 7: An example on how to use the multimedia tool to stimulate students’ writing.

Hello,
will you please describe this picture in one or two sentences.

Salsabila Chaimaa: It is the place that I want to spend my rest of my life.

Amina Mehal: very relaxing. just looking at it makes me feel better. we really need to go to such a place after this hell we’re going through.

Golden Rose: it reminds me of the saying: no man is an island! although we all want to stay in such place but it will be very hard for us to live there alone. we always need a company.

Mohamed Ali: it's one of the nicest and most gorgeous places on earth, but fortunately not the only one, it’s breathtaking.

Mër İrem: I felt peace inside of me when I looked at it, it looks so beautiful and quiet.

Na İma: This place is an other heaven on earth where you can feel that you are owning the world.