

Research Article

Examining EFL Kurdish Students' Views of Facebook for English Language Learning: A Quantitative Inquiry

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Article Info	Abstract
Article History	Past research has shown that university students generally spend a significant amount of time on social media, and Facebook (FB) is the most popular platform among them. The purpose of this study was to examine the EFL Kurdish undergraduates' views regarding using FB in English language learning. The participants were from five public universities in the Kurdistan region of Iraq (KRI). Employing a survey research design, 300 English-majoring undergraduates voluntarily filled out a close-ended questionnaire in order for them to offer insights into the issue. The research findings revealed that most of the students agreed that FB is useful for language learning purposes and enhanced their English language as well. It was also revealed that students felt that FB could be used as an online environment to improve their English language skills overall. Furthermore, the use of FB as an online platform for learning English had no gender statistically significant difference. Limitations and future research suggestions are discussed in the article.
Received Mar 29, 2025	
Revised May 25, 2025	
Accepted May 26, 2025	
Keywords	
Social media	
Facebook (FB)	
English language learning	
EFL Kurdish students	
Kurdistan Region - Iraq	



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1. Introduction

Despite the limitations of online education, the coronavirus pandemic has resulted in a significant increase in the demand for online learning, as indicated by Elhawa et al. (2024). That said, online learning is becoming more significant in the future of education. Past research on English language learning has suggested that social media can be effective and efficient in teaching (Mukminin, et al., 2022). Other research findings have claimed to have English language instruction through online learning (Williams et al., 2024). To add, Barrot (2021a) reported that social media, including FB, has been utilized by learners to learn foreign languages for the last 12 years, and the majority of them were English speakers from various nations. Similarly, Slim and Hafedh (2019) found that FB is usable as a platform for language learning. In addition to these studies, Annamalai (2016) asserted that students strongly recommend the idea of using FB as a platform for language learning.

Through a survey study, Bicen and Uzunboylu (2013) concluded that “teachers suggest that this learning environment not only helps improve students' teamwork skills but also helps them to achieve better

learning results." The potential of academic benefits of FB at the postsecondary level have been presented as a compelling argument. This is a supplement to learn through social media. It is believed that they had a low stress and anxiety level while working online due to reduction of their affective filter (Ibarra, 2018). Additionally, Sabatino (2014) examined the use of digital gaming on FB to boost students' writing proficiency. Her study highlighted the fact that incorporating gaming into composition allows students to use transferable skills, such as multitasking, problem solving, collaboration, and communication from their daily lives to their own writing. She advocated for the use of gaming and digital literacy in the writing process.

Based on Slim and Hafedh's (2019) understandings, investigations are still needed to generalize data on the influence of FB on language learning. Similarly, according to Barrot's (2021b) study, the sampling process was not random, so he suggested that for further research, samples should be chosen randomly in a representative method. Likewise, literature review has shown that there are still necessary investigations, as Annamalai (2016) pointed out that a greater number of participants in future studies would still result in more generalized data and better understanding of the process. Moreover, the number of samples in this study was increased due to the limitations of Dizon's (2016) study to have a better understanding and deeper insights into the issue. Therefore, studying a sample of EFL Kurdish university undergraduates, the aim of this study is to comprehend the phenomenon of language learning through social media, and to present a comprehensive picture of FB as an environment for English language learning. As such, the present study addresses the following three research questions.

1. What are the general attitudes of students towards FB as a platform for language learning?
2. Do students believe that FB is an online environment that aids their English language learning? If so, in what ways?
3. Are there gender differences in the use of FB as an online platform for learning English?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Facebook and English Language Learning

Numerous studies have been carried out on how to use FB for educational and language learning purposes. Does scientific evidence support the use of FB in language learning? While some studies found negative consequences for FB, other studies found otherwise. For example, Faizi et al. (2014) stated that social media has had a constant impact on the educational process, particularly FB, has captivated their attention of people, especially for learners and instructors. This is an environment for learning languages. In addition, recently technology, including social media like FB, has mostly employed interaction between people, including students and their instructors. Previous studies have showed that students studying English as a second or foreign language have been using FB, and it has gained popularity among them. FB has a variety of browser communication components, including asynchronous and synchronous conversations.

The number of teachers is increasing who begin to view social media as a component of foreign language teaching. Social connectivity in schools is not only tolerated but also encouraged by these changes. These changes also extended education beyond the confines of classroom (Arzu, 2014).

Previous studies discovered several websites that illustrate and aid teachers in utilizing FB for classroom teaching and learning articles on FB that range in length and depth can be found on educational and personal websites that discuss its benefits and drawbacks, reasons to use FB for teaching and learning, and other teaching concepts. Its unique features include feed, online games, and chat, to name a few. FB makes it possible for users to communicate and engage with anyone from anywhere in the world using their preferred language. To participate in activities and services on FB, it's necessary to understand English because most of its features are in English (Northcote & Kendle, 2001).

According to Roblyer et al. (2010), university students are more intrigued by the possibility of using FB for their habitation studies, even with homogeneous technologies. AbuSa'aleek (2015) found that most of the students use FB as their daily activities for language learning, the amendment and enhancement communicated that FB is usable, and feasible, and could be advantageous. Participants believed that FB, a learning online environment, promotes, supports, and encourages English language learning. Moreover, the data indicates that students have a positive attitude towards this learning methodology. The majority of English FB Learners hold the belief that FB can serve as an online environment that can increase their motivation and confidence in general. Additionally, they believe that FB normally enhances their foreign language proficiency. Also, Faizi et al. (2014) found that most participants preferred using these internet-based programs because they helped them improve their language skills in the four language skills: listening, reading, speaking, and writing. These educational advantages may lead us to conclude that social media technologies can enhance the language learning process as highlighted by Al Jahromi (2020).

2.2. The Impact of Facebook on English Language Learning

Due to FB's ability to provide flexible settings for connecting and exchanging knowledge, student's sentiments towards teaching on the platform were generally positive (Slim & Hamedh, 2019). Kabilan et al. (2010) have showed that incidental learning can be used to learn English on FB. The reason for this is that the technology behind FB and its distinctive features may encourage students to participate in significant language-based tasks, even if their primary reason for joining FB is to socialize. If structured correctly as a part of an educational initiative, FB technology and features may support and create an online community

of learners that can effectively and meaningfully learn the English language.

Among others, Dizon (2016) suggested that the experimental group that utilized FB as a language learning platform was able to achieve a substantial increase in each writing fluency after taking the courses using FB as a platform. Similarly, participants in AbuSa'aleek's (2015) study reported that FB, as an online learning environment, promotes, supports, and encourages them to acquire English language skills. Furthermore, they believe that FB typically improves their language proficiency in second language learning process. The data indicated that the students had a positive attitude towards this learning paradigm. According to the vast majority of EFL learners, FB could be an online platform that can improve students' motivation and confidence in general.

Some qualitative research findings have indicated that using FB groups can be a way to combine learning and management. Making announcements and comments that pertain to the class and writing assignments to aid students in learning. Their positive outlook towards using FB groups as a teaching tool was due to their particular, trendy, and benefits. This helped them become more motivated to learn English virtually and improve their positive attitudes towards learning languages (Simpson, 2012; Tananuraksakul, 2014).

2.3. Facebook-based Language Learning Theory

Northcote and Kendle (2001) asserted that online learning activities such as conversing in online forums like FB, are essential for learning, and students can learn practical online skills in a more accidental, informational way by searching for information online. For language learners, it would be advantageous to have abilities like critical resource analysis, FB, and information filtering and interpreting.

Several studies have investigated the use of FB tools or online applications for teaching and learning. The nature of learning in reading comprehension and vocabulary studies is explained by incorporating ideas from incidental learning particularly those studies and to clarify the motives behind these learning patterns and behaviors (Akbulut, 2007; Chun & Plass, 1996; Shahrokni, 2009). Similarly, Harasim et al. (1997) observed that when members of online communities, such as FB, change ideas, they are translated into words that are shared and developed upon by others' reactions, the use of thinking abilities and significant educational experiences occur. In this regard, FB users can conduct meaningful interactions with people who speak different languages in either synchronous or asynchronous modes, as well as having access to an impressive amount of valuable and genuine information on various subjects, which can enhance socio-pragmatic awareness and competence in second language learners by providing meaningful interventions

and can promoting cross-cultural understanding. Bloch (2008) states that despite the presence of anecdotal evidence regarding students' writing, little research has been conducted on the impact of FB profiles on their writing. As such, the present study examines university students' perceptions on FB and English language learning, in particular in the context of KRI where there is a lack of research on how FB might be a useful venue for EFL Kurdish students to enhance and improve their English language learning process.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Methods

Utilizing a survey research design, 300 undergraduates (156 males and 144 females) in five public universities in KRI served as participants of the study. To answer the research questions raised in the introductory section, we specifically decided to randomly consider and choose students of English departments, so they offer their views of FB and English language learning. We employed simple random sampling technique to attain a representative sample from a population because this way, we were able to offer each student an equal chance and opportunity of being selected, and to minimize bias, making the sample more representative of the population and allowing for more reliable conclusions to be drawn from the study (Acharya et al., 2013; Bhardwaj, 2019; Singh, 2003).

3.2. Instrument

The quantitative data were gathered through a previously developed questionnaire by Kabilan et al. (2010). The questionnaire composed of 16 items, and it was intended to explore the student's perception of FB as a tool for language learning and enhancement. In the questionnaire, Section A focuses on the demographic information of the students, which included their year of study, and gender. Likewise, Section B is the actual section that enquires the student's practice on FB such as the enhancement of their confidence, language, modification and motivation through FB, and their approach to learning languages using FB. The questionnaire uses the five-point Likert Scale where 1 is equal to 'strongly disagree' and 5 to 'strongly agree'.

3.3. Data Collection and Analysis

To gather the quantitative data, we utilized Google form using the above-mentioned questionnaire. Using the questionnaire allowed us to gain a better and wider overview of the data that could be generalized (Kabilan et al., 2010). That is, we gathered the quantitative data so we can present a general picture of how EFL Kurdish university students might use FB as helping tool to improve their English language learning. Similarly, by sending the Google form link to the participants, we were able to save time during the data

collection process. Throughout the data collection process, we received assistance from multiple lecturers and students who assisted us get in touch with their university and peers to reach out to their students and classmates to ask them to fill out the questionnaire.

It is important to note that ethical approval was given by Koya University prior to data the start of data collection. Also, we followed ethical principles strictly throughout the research. All the participants were verbally informed about the purpose of the study. Last, the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants were made sure at all times, causing no harm to the participants.

After the data collection process was completed, the collected data was analyzed to determine the results of the quantitative data. The demographic data were scrutinized in terms of percentage to demonstrate the items included in the questionnaire. Analyzing their perspectives of FB as a platform for language learning involved using frequency and percentages in SPSS. To analyse the quantitative data, we utilized frequency, percentages and mean scores to show the students' views on FB as an online venue for learning English.

4. Results

Administering a survey research design, the analysis of the data collected yielded a number of notable and important results. Therefore, to address the results and show the students' views on FB as an online environment for English language learning, descriptive statistics were used as depicted below in Table 1.

4.1. Practicing Language Skills

In this study, as illustrated in Table 1 above, most students reported that using FB has made their reading and writing skills better in a way they found it helpful, which is 58.3% of the participants agreed, FB is a suitable tool for practice writing with the mean score of 2.51. According to 61.4% of the participants, it is believed that practicing their reading English skills was improved with the mean score of 2.48. Hence, FB is generally viewed positively by EFLs students as a platform for online English language learning. (AbuSa'alek, 2015).

4.2. Motivation and Confidence in Language Learning

Concerning the improvement of English communication abilities and self confidence in writing and reading through FB, the result of the present study showed that encompasses agree and strongly agree, 50.7% agreed that their English communication skills have been improved by FB with the mean score of 2.63. While 52.9% view that their confidence in writing in English was increased by FB with the mean score of 2.63. Although improving self-confidence in reading leads to a much higher level (67.7%) with the mean score of 2.11.

Table 1. Students' Perception of FB as an Online English Language Learning Environment

Items	Strongly disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly agree (%)	Mean score
Practice writing in English	9.3	11.7	20.7	37.0	21.0	2.51
Practice reading in English	10.7	12.7	15.3	36.7	24.7	2.48
Enhance students' English communication skills	14.0	12.0	23.3	24.7	26.0	2.63
Enhance students' confidence to write in English	11.3	15.3	21.3	29.0	23.0	2.63
Enhance students' confidence to read English materials	0.0	13.3	19.0	32.75	35.0	2.11
Enhance students' confidence to communicate using English	8.0	12.0	26.7	27.3	26.0	2.49
Enhance student's motivation to communicate using English	8.3	20.7	16.0	30.0	25.0	2.57
Enhance students' motivation to read English materials	11.3	12.0	15.7	33.0	28.0	2.46
Enhance students' motivation to write in English	12.0	13.0	21.7	32.0	21.3	2.62
Make learning English more interesting	12.7	11.0	18.3	30.7	27.3	2.51
Learning English	9.7	13.3	17.0	31.3	28.7	2.44
Learn new words in English	12.7	13.7	18.7	24.3	30.7	2.53
Inculcate a more positive attitude towards learning English as a second language	10.7	14.0	15.7	32.7	27.0	2.49
Inculcate a more positive attitude towards English as a language	11.7	15.0	21.7	28.7	23.0	2.64
Make learning English easier	11.7	12.0	19.7	32.7	24.0	2.55
Tolerate language mistakes	10.3	15.3	26.0	26.3	22.0	2.66

Moreover, the students were asked about their motivation for using English for communication, the results obtained when the strongly agree and agree are combined indicating that 53.3%, indicating that many young people have benefited from FB as a result of this rate being higher than the average with the mean score of 2.49. Although, 55.0% of them believed that the use of FB could enhance their desire to speak English with the mean score of 2.57. Whereas 63.0% of the students reported that they were more motivated to read with the mean score of 2.46. Our results reveal that it is possible that their educational environment allows them to take advantage of everything to improve their reading skills and read materials wherever they choose. Also, the data showed that 53.3% of students were motivated to write in English through FB, which was related with the mean score of 2.62. The reason for this is that they might have had a similar experience with FB.

4.3. Learning Language Materials

Furthermore, it was discovered that FB users are convinced that FB enhances the excitement of language learning when both agreeing and strongly agreeing are present, showing 58% of the participants with the mean score of 2.51. Based on the findings of our descriptive analysis, it was revealed that learning new

English words through FB is interesting that they do not forget them. As a result, FB is a tool that can help students learn or improve their English language when 60% of the students agreed with the mean score of 2.44. These finding showed that when it comes to learning new English terms, using FB as a platform, 55% of the participants agreed that they have used FB to acquire new vocabularies with the mean score of 2.53.

4.4. Positive Attitudes towards English Language

The descriptive analysis showed that the participants had a positive view when there is a combination of agreement and strong agreement with 59% of the students agreeing with that notion, and they feel that FB could assist them in developing a positive attitude towards English as a second language with the mean score of 2.64. Moreover, the findings indicate that 51.7% of the students support the idea of instilling a more positive attitude towards English as a language with the mean score of 2.64. These results indicate that FB promotes a positive attitude towards language learning among university students. In addition, when it comes to the use of FB to simplify language learning for students, and the opinion of students regarding that matter, 56.7% of the students agreed that FB simplifies their studying process (mean score of 2.55). The last matter concerns allowing language mistakes and is not likely to garner positive feedback with 48.3% of the participants agreeing that FB tolerates language problems as the least favorable view with the mean score of 2.66.

4.5. Gender Differences

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to determine whether there is a difference in FB as an online venue for EFL Kurdish university students between males ($M = 40.0385$, $SD = 12.855$) and females ($M = 40.5972$, $SD = 14.303$), $t(98) = -.356$, $p \geq .05$. The results of the analysis indicate a not significant difference between male and female, indicating no statistically significant difference between the means of the sample in males and females. It's probable that the reason for this is that both genders can use FB for different purposes in the context of KRI. These results show that gender does not have any impact in using FB as an online platform to improve English language learning as shown in Table 2 and Table 3 below.

Table 2. Gender Differences in FB as an Online English Language Learning Venue

Group Statistics					
	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Average Mean	Male	156	40.0385	12.85597	1.02930
	Female	144	40.5972	14.30307	1.19192

Table 3. Independent Sample T-Test

Independent Samples Test										
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances					t-test for Equality of Means			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Average Mean	Equal variances assumed	3.460	0.064	-0.356	298	0.722	-0.55876	1.56814	-3.64480	2.52728
	Equal variances not assumed			-0.355	288.029	0.723	-0.55876	1.57485	-3.65843	2.54091

5. Discussion

The purpose of this quantitative contribution was to report the EFL Kurdish university students views on using FB for improving and enhancing their English language through a random sample in five public universities. Administering a sample of 300 Kurdish undergraduates, we employed a questionnaire survey to answer three research questions. To this end, simple descriptive and inferential statistics were performed to analyse the results of the study.

Throughout the findings of the present study, we found out that FB can be utilized to enhance language skills, especially in reading and writing. The literature review showed that the findings of this study were relevant. This finding is supported by the findings of Kabilan et al. (2010), and the students pointed that FB is an excellent place to improve their English reading. Slim and Hafedh (2019) revealed that a substantial number of students agreed that FB could be a suitable online platform to practice English writing. Most students thought that FB could be utilized to enhance their motivation to communicate in English. Similarly, there are other students who believe that FB boosts their motivation to read English. Some students are of the opinion that FB can assist them in their writing endeavors.

There are those who believe that FB encourages them to read in English. It is probable that this is because most content on FB are in English. Consequently, students are highly motivated to use English, particularly when it comes to writing and reading skills. They also explain how conversing in English can be influenced by engaging in direct engagement with fluent English FB friends. In addition, this conclusion is in line with the findings of Kabilan et al. (2010). According to their research, FB has the potential to increase student motivation to learn English and their desire to practice writing on FB.

Our findings also showed that there was no statistically significant difference between males and females in using FB for language learning, meaning that gender does not have any impact in using FB for language learning. This means that both males and female students have used FB to learn and improve their

English language. these results are in line with those of the past when reporting using FB in English language learning. Overall, this contribution reports using FB by university students in the context of KRI, offering valuable insights into the issue. As such, this study shares a foundation for future research in conducting similar research but focus on other aspects of the issue in pursuit of offering deeper insights and understanding into the issue of FB and English language learning.

6. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that students make use of FB to learn English. The study showed that students' use of FB is advantageous for learning English, specifically reading and writing, and providing new vocabulary in foreign languages to new learners of any language. Videos and Messenger proved to be the most efficient methods of language learning on FB. This study discovered that FB had both beneficial and detrimental effects on language acquisition for EFL Kurdish university students. This study suggests that educators should encourage students to use social media for educational purposes instead of entertainment and time-wasting, because FB might make language learning simpler than ever before, especially when people are at home. To demonstrate, using videos on FB can enhance English language learning. Moreover, Messenger Application can be utilized to converse with others in order to exchange ideas and gain from each other's experience. In conclusion, the majority of the participants stated that YouTube is an essential resource for learning English and a valuable resource for learning various components of English.

The present study has indicated that learning English through FB is possible if used as a source of interaction and motivation as FB assists language learners to engage in interactive and meaningful activities that support language learning. Therefore, based on the findings of the study, FB can be utilized as an online venue for English language learning in an effective and meaningful so they can be the owners of their English language learning process. Last but not least, the present study contributes valuable insights to the ongoing discourse on using FB in the English language learning process.

7. Limitations and Future Research

Although the present contribution offers seminal findings, there are a number of limitations that need to be taken into consideration. First, interviews were not conducted with language lecturers to elucidate insights into the issue of English language learning through FB. That is, future researchers are recommended to include language instructors. Second, to have more empirical data, it is equally important to conduct experiment research to study casual relationships and measure the real impact of using FB use on

English language learning outcomes. More specifically, future experimental research can be done to examine the effectiveness of various technologies and social networking sites in improving English language learning, permitting more precise and specific comparisons and evidence on what technologies can be more effective. Last but not least, it is essential if future research projects on this matter can consider measuring language learners' enhancement and observing their language learning process employing vivid methods of measurement.

Data Availability Statement: Data are available upon request.

Funding: The authors declare that no funding was received for this research.

Declaration of Competing Interest: The authors declare that they have no known competing of interest.

Research Involving Human Participants: This study adhered to the ethical guidelines of the Declaration of Helsinki and National Laws. The study approved by Ethical Committee of Koya University. Participants were informed about the research regulations. Written Informed consent was obtained from all participants.

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