

LEBANESE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

#SocialMediaAndTheFacilitationOfSecondLanguageAcquisition

By

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A thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of Master of Arts in Education

School of Arts and Sciences

January 2019

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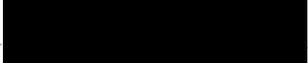
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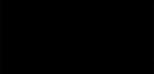
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I dedicate this thesis to my parents, Haifa and Fouad, whose eternal love, unwavering support and passionate encouragement laid the foundations for the discipline and application necessary to complete this work. I simply would not be who I am and where I am today without you.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to express my sincerest and deepest appreciation to my thesis supervisor, Dr. Rima Bahous. Not only has her continuous faith in me and support over the years accompanied me to this pivotal stage in my life, but without her patience and infectious attitude toward both education and research, completion of this thesis would not have been possible. Dr. Bahous' inspiration, mentorship and friendship will always be held near and dear to my heart.

I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Rula Diab and Dr. Mona Nabhani. On one hand, Dr. Diab's immediate interest in and advocacy of my style of writing allowed me to not only pour my voice into this work, but also my heart and soul. I also cannot thank her enough for her indispensable input and guidance. On the other, I cannot stress on how impactful Dr. Nabhani's approach to research methods has been on the systematic construction of this work, and her feedback at every stage has proven to be invaluable.

#SocialMediaAndTheFacilitationOfSecondLanguageAcquisition

Wissam Hamadeh

ABSTRACT

While the concept of utilizing technology in educational settings is nothing new, the technology being applied normally serves one function and is solely educational in purpose. Given that students today are just as modern as the world they are living in, the current trends in teaching and learning may not be unlocking their full potential. Driven by the intent to bridge the gap between modern education and modern technology, this study aimed to explore whether or not social media in its purest, unaltered form could be used to facilitate second language acquisition for English as a Second Language students. It also acknowledged and explored the concerns related to the pedagogical implementation of social media. A qualitative case study was employed in order to gather data from a sample of 149 Lebanese students from the 8th, 10th and 11th grade levels of 3 schools from across Lebanon, alongside 7 English teachers. Data were collected from students through 2 questionnaires and a social media-based activity sheet, and from teachers through semi-structured interviews. The study's results ultimately revealed that second language acquisition can be facilitated by challenging English sub-skills through social media, while the pedagogical implementation of social media was met with an overwhelmingly positive response from both students and teachers. Despite

the positive response, results of the study also suggested that there are valid concerns with the pedagogical implementation of social media. Given that this study is among the first to explore the connection between social media and education in Lebanon, further research at a larger scale is recommended.

Keywords: Social media, Second language acquisition, SLA, Facilitation, Pedagogical approaches

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SLA

Second Language Acquisition

Chapter One

Research Problem, Research Questions and Significance of Study

1.1 Introduction

Contrary to the earliest form of the Internet as a means to display controlled information or text (Handsfield, Dean & Cielocha, 2009) with minimum engagement and user interaction (Scott & Orlikowski, 2012), today's Internet, a user-centered 'Web 2.0' (Hjorth, 2010), is considered to be social in nature. This "new conception of the Web as a collaborative platform has been backed up by the development of a set of online tools, termed social media" (Faizi, El Afia & Chiheb, 2014, p. 64) including blogs, micro-blogs, wikis and bookmarking websites, in addition to social networks and content sharing platforms. Rutherford (2010) divides social media resources into 3 distinct categories: 1) Content sharing and organizing sites such as Instagram, Flickr and YouTube, 2) Content creation and editing websites like Blogger, Wikipedia and WordPress, and 3) Social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and MySpace. While each of the 3 categories highlights a different aspect under the broad umbrella that is social media, there is a common denominator that brings all 3 of these categories together; they all heavily depend on the active engagement of their users to create, edit and share content.

According to Krashen (1981), "language acquisition is very similar to the process children use in acquiring first and second languages" (p. 1), and needs meaningful, natural interaction and communication in the target language, with a focus on

understanding and conveying messages. Not limited to just Second Language Acquisition (SLA), Krashen's Second Language Acquisition Theory implies that while language acquisition does not happen overnight, it does not have to be based around the extensive use of grammatical rules, nor does it require constant drill and practice. Instead, pedagogical techniques that provide language learners with 'comprehensive input' under a low anxiety context that is uninterested in forcing and correcting production, yet focuses on the aforementioned messages that students truly want to hear, will most likely yield the best results (Krashen, 1981).

While social media and SLA are not directly related, the role that social media plays in today's world suggests that by encouraging and utilizing social media resources in an educational context, we have the ability to radically transform modern teaching and learning as we know it (McLoughlin & Lee, 2007).

1.2 Topic statement

This study aims to take a closer look at how the implementation of social media resources as pedagogical tools in Lebanese intermediate/secondary English as a Second Language (ESL) classes could potentially facilitate SLA for ESL learners, while at the same time acknowledging and exploring the notion that there could be concerns about using social media in an educational setting.

1.3 Research problem, statement of purpose and research questions

This study is inspired by both my personal experiences with social media and an encounter I had while briefly teaching English at a private Lebanese school (as part of

my practicum en route to obtaining a Teaching Diploma from a private university in Lebanon in 2015).

My relationship with social media is a rocky one, to the say the least. I was one of those stereotypes who believed that social media and everything related to it was a cancer that was set forth to bring the destruction of mankind as we know it. My stance on social media today is rather different, but it would not be apparent without taking a stroll through memory lane.

While my recollection of the exact date I joined Facebook is rather fuzzy, it was around the time I visited Dubai in 2007 for the (then) annual Dubai Desert Rock Festival. Upon traveling back to Lebanon, I distinctly remember uploading all of the pictures I had taken (of my favorite metal bands and friends I had reconnected with) directly to Facebook. Shortly after that period, Facebook started rapidly advancing into the monstrously large social networking site we know it as today, with applications and embedded features left and right. Considering I had to switch back from high-speed to dial-up Internet back then (due to technical issues), accessing Facebook and its new features became a tedious process that constantly tested my patience. It was not long before I swore off Facebook and deactivated my account permanently.

Other aspects of social media, however, have fared quite better with me. I joined Twitter in 2010, and while my track record of posting tweets over the last 8 years still pales in comparison to everyday Twitter users, I haven't looked back since. While Instagram hasn't sunk its hooks in me like Twitter has, it's still a social application I find myself returning to on a daily basis and one I constantly wish I would invest in and contribute to more.

Despite my involvement with social media over the last decade, it was nothing I had considered a crucial part of my lifestyle, and something I considered quite easy to let go of if necessary. That point of view began to rapidly dwindle around 2015 when my course of life was altered and my role in becoming an English language educator became my main priority.

While carrying out the aforementioned practicum at a local school in order to obtain my Teaching Diploma, the students I had both observed and taught naturally started taking interest in me. It wasn't long before a student asked me if I was on Facebook; a trend that I have since come to understand is common in today's world. I promptly replied "Nope", thinking that would be the last of it, only to find myself being asked if I had a Twitter account. Reluctantly, I gave the student my Twitter handle (my unique username) and later got a notification that I was being followed by said student.

Over time, my immediate "Why would a student want to follow their teacher on social media?" thought process began to evolve as I myself started to evolve as a prospective educator. With the ever-changing landscape of education and a reliance on coming up with new, dynamic, engaging pedagogical techniques that foster 21st century skills in students, my brain began to warp that initial question into one that could play an incredible role in language learning, "How can teachers use social media to facilitate second language acquisition?"

Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to investigate whether or not social media can facilitate SLA, while both acknowledging and exploring the factors that could be of concern with the implementation of social media as a pedagogical tool. With these foundations, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How can the implementation of social media resources as pedagogical tools play a role in positively affecting the acquisition of a second language?
 - i) From a student perspective
 - ii) From an educator perspective
2. What are the factors that could be of concern when using social media in an English as a Second Language setting?

1.4 Significance and rationale of study

While research on the relationship between technology and education exists in abundance, there are some clear gaps in the studies conducted as far as social media is concerned. There appears to be very few studies on social media and language acquisition in an Arab context generally, none of which focuses on a Lebanese setting. More so, the present research under the broad heading of 'Social Media' seems to be more psychological in nature; it is interested in the effects of social media on students under various lenses, including the ratio of time students spent engaging with social media in correlation with academic achievement.

Even from a non-educational standpoint, the idea of Arabs being tech savvy may be farfetched, but there has undoubtedly been a huge influx of Lebanese users on social media in recent years, apparent by the plethora of comments, albeit in Arabic, that emerge on Twitter as reactions to live television shows or sarcastic quips as a result of major political events in the country. In an age where being active on social media is not only starting to become second- nature but is somewhat of a necessity, reaping the

benefits of social media for the advancement of education as a whole seems to be something completely neglected in the region.

With its focus on these specific neglected key factors, this study will be an addition to the existing research on social media and SLA and will provide educators insight into a corner of education and pedagogical approaches that may not be immediately visible to the naked eye. This in turn will stress the importance of change and progress from a pedagogical standpoint and encourage risk-taking, out-of-the-box thinking and prioritizing students' abilities and needs for the betterment of their education.

1.5 Thesis division

This thesis is divided into 6 chapters. The current chapter, chapter 1, served as the introduction to this thesis and included the research problem, the research questions that will drive my study and the significance of the study itself. Chapter 2 will present a synthesis of international literature that defines SLA and social media, while also addressing both of my research questions. Chapter 3 will follow with the methodology involved in my study. The design of the study will be introduced along with my sample, the instruments of data collection, and how data will be analyzed. Chapter 4 will contain all of the results obtained through data collection, while chapter 5 will discuss these results and make sense of them in accordance with my research questions and the literature reviewed. Finally, chapter 6 will conclude the study while also presenting the limitations faced while collecting data and suggestions for further research.

Therefore, chapter 1 introduced the study, the research problem (and my personal connection to the study itself), the statement of purpose, my 2 research questions, the significance of the study, and my rationale for conducting a study on social media and SLA. Chapter 2 is the literature review and presents a synthesis of international literature that defines SLA and social media, while addressing my 2 research questions.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

To explore how SLA and social media can work hand in hand, an in-depth understanding of both SLA and social media as separate entities is first necessary.

Chapter 2 of this thesis presents the theoretical framework that grounds this study and a synthesis of international literature that not only aims to define SLA and social media, but also addresses my research questions.

2.1 Theoretical framework

The names Lev Vygotsky and Jerome Bruner are synonymous with a concept known as constructivism (Cooperstein & Kocevar-Weidinger, 2004; Cholewinski, 2009). This study is grounded in their principles of constructivism, or the constructivist learning theory, in particular. On one hand, Bruner (1966) claimed that the process of learning is not passive, but active; dependent on the building of new ideas and concepts by learners based on both their current and past knowledge. On the other hand, Vygotsky (1978) suggested that cognitive development cannot occur without social interaction between learners, their peers and their teachers in an environment where the teacher acts as a facilitator of knowledge instead of a source of knowledge. Additionally, with Vygotsky stressing the importance of tools to assist in the construction of knowledge (Shabani, 2016), the relevance of the constructivist learning theory to SLA through social media becomes clear.

2.2 Second language acquisition

Before delving deeper into the underlying principles that make up SLA, it must be made apparent that ‘second language learning’ and ‘second language acquisition’ are largely used interchangeably as terms. Krashen (1982), however, makes a clear distinction between them. He states that developing competence in a second language, whether through learning or through acquisition, occurs distinctly and independently of the other. Krashen claims that while 'language acquisition' is a subconscious process where learners are "only aware of the fact that they are using language for communication" (p. 10), while not being aware that they are acquiring a language, 'language learning' is related to consciously knowing the rules of a second language, "being aware of them, and being able to talk about them" (p. 10). Krashen (1985) further backs his claims through his acquisition-learning hypothesis which states that contrary to second language theorists' assumptions that children acquire, while adults are only capable of learning, adults are actually very capable of acquiring a second language, though not necessarily at native-like levels. He suggests that while "child-adult differences in second language acquisition potential do exist, the evidence for a biological barrier to successful adult acquisition is lacking" (Krashen, 1981, p. 81). While it would be easy to simply assume Krashen the standard-bearer of SLA and second language learning, Ellis (1994) highlights the problem of researchers being unable to agree on a concrete term for ‘acquisition’, in part suggesting that while Krashen’s distinction between learning and acquisition may have strong face validity, it could be problematic in terms of “demonstrating whether the knowledge learners possess is of the ‘acquired’ or ‘learnt’

kind” (p. 14). For the purpose of this thesis, the terms ‘acquisition’ and ‘learning’, whether having already been used, or in any further use are completely interchangeable. SLA involves learning any language, to any level, provided that the learning of the ‘second’ language occurs after acquisition of a first language (Mitchell & Myles, 2004). While a second language may indeed be taken in the literal sense, a second language can also be a “third, fourth or even fifth language” (p. 6) and can be both languages one comes into ‘contact’ with within local communities and “truly foreign languages” (p. 5). This is in direct correlation with Ellis’ (1994) statement that claims that “the term ‘second’ is generally used to refer to any language other than the first language” (p. 11). Krashen’s acquisition-learning hypothesis is just one of the hypotheses under the broad banner of his Second Language Acquisition Theory, but the input hypothesis is potentially considered “the single most important concept in second language acquisition theory today” (Krashen, 1982, p. 9). Chao (2013) describes Krashen’s input hypothesis as having distinct characteristics. Firstly, it claims that learners should understand language that contains structure which is just beyond the learner’s current level of competence in order to truly acquire a language. Secondly, context plays a key role in understanding language containing “unlearned grammar structures” (p. 49). Thirdly, speaking should not be taught too soon or directly because learners will automatically produce once they have obtained enough “comprehensible input” (p. 50), and fourth, “Krashen assumed a Language Acquisition Device (LAD), that is, an innate mental structure capable of handling both first and second language acquisition. Input activates this innate structure.” (p. 50) ‘Input’ simply means everything that learners are exposed to, and that is precisely where social media plays a role in language learning (despite Chao not directly mentioning it). Chao (2013) goes on to stress that teachers

need not only expand input channels, but also the materials being used. Authentic, diverse materials should be used to form an "effective communicational process" (p. 51), thus ensuring increased student interest. The importance of diversified teaching methods is also focused on as a way to increase engagement, as is the use of "multimedia tools to enhance students' self-confidence, stimulate interest in learning English, improve teaching effectiveness and achieve the purpose of developing students' pragmatic competence" (p. 52). The importance of creating a suitable mood for learning and reducing anxiety is also stressed upon.

Similarly to Krashen's input hypothesis, Long's (1996) interaction hypothesis proposes that language proficiency is directly related to interaction, whether face-to-face or through other communicative modes. Long suggested that interaction could take place in 2 forms; a strong form and a weak form. These forms could arguably be compared to Krashen's distinctions between 'learning' and 'acquisition', with the strong form implying that interaction itself leads to language development, while the weak form is that interaction simply leads to learners finding opportunities to learn, whether or not they are used productively.

Interaction is undoubtedly connected to SLA and is not necessarily just tied to researchers' theories. Benati and Angelovska (2016), whom have tied SLA to real world application, have noted that interaction through conversation makes "linguistic features salient to learners" (p. 141) thus increasing the rate of acquisition. In a study conducted by Muho and Kurani (2011), results showed that interaction ultimately promotes SLA, with a link found between interaction and learning through 3 major components of interaction: input, output and feedback. Muho and Kurani claim that optimization of interaction leads to an improvement of quantity and quality of these major components.

The results of their research also show that "the complex matter of individual differences needs to be considered carefully" (p. 51). That said, "interactions do not necessarily lead to immediate understanding" (Klein, 1986, p. 50), with misunderstandings playing a role in developing and refining rudimentary understandings over time. With this process of trial and error in interaction and communication, we reach a 'negotiation of meaning', as "people try to understand and be understood" (Klein, 1986, p. 56). Through negotiation of meaning, learners have the ability to control and direct conversations in a way that provides them with input (from their partners) that is more comprehensible. This is done through repetition, which both indicates that learners do not understand, or induces a response from the learners themselves that shows they do not understand. This in turn provokes a natural response from partners to modify their interaction to convey meaning in a more comprehensible way (Klein, 1986).

Output is another section of language development that needs to be focused on in order to understand how SLA occurs, though, as Freeborn (2015) states, "the role of output is not as widely researched as the role of input" (p. 149). Nevertheless, output's role in SLA when associated with social media is just as pivotal as the role of input. Swain (2000) is often credited for recognizing the importance of output, as it "pushes learners to process language more deeply" (p. 99). Much like 'negotiation of meaning', output gives learners the power of control. In fact, it works hand in hand with creating meaning, as in the case of output, learners "can 'stretch' their interlanguage to meet communicative goals" (p. 99), while discovering what they can or cannot do, whether related to speaking or writing. Swain (2000) goes on to suggest that learners' output (that is, meaningful production of language) does play a significant role in language development. This falls in line with a recommendation by Tomlinson (2011) to develop

"activities which try to 'push' learners slightly beyond their existing proficiency by engaging them in tasks which are stimulating, which are problematic, but which are achievable too" (p. 10). 'Noticing' is another aspect of SLA that is promoted through output. Swain's (2000) studies suggest findings that imply that in certain cases, learners may notice their own difficulty in knowing how to precisely express the meanings they wish to convey at the time they wish to produce it. This self-awareness or 'noticing' would give learners the incentive to fill these gaps through various methods, whether by consulting a dictionary, asking peers/teachers or by "noting to themselves to pay attention to future relevant input" (p. 100). This aspect of language production which relies on learners' attention to what they do know or do not know, and their attempts to correct them, once again stresses the importance on output in SLA.

Without exploring the sociocultural aspect of SLA in too much detail, there is a common misconception that cannot be ignored and needs to be addressed. While Krashen's acquisition-learning theory, Long's interaction hypothesis, 'negotiation of meaning', Swain's output hypothesis and 'noticing' may all allude to encompassing the very core of Vygotsky's principle on the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), they actually do not. The Zone of Proximal Development is "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). Quite simply, it is the distance between what a child can do and what they are capable of. While the explored hypotheses suggest that language acquisition and development occurs when learners are pushed slightly beyond their capability, Lantolf and Thorne (2007) explain that with regard to the ZPD, "the goal is to complete the task rather than to help the child develop,

and therefore the task is usually carried out through other-regulation, whereby the adult controls the child's performance instead of searching for opportunities to relinquish control to the child" (p. 209). This is contradictory to the research presented above that states that key elements of successful SLA involve both learner development and giving up control. This is made clearer by the distinction between Vygotsky's ZPD and Krashen's input hypothesis, for example, in terms of accomplishment. While, as mentioned above, the input hypothesis stresses that language development occurs once learners are able to understand input that is slightly above their level, the ZPD simply focuses on what one can accomplish with the help of others and usually through the process of imitation. This is a stark difference from sociocultural theories, which involve mentally processing actions, drawing on past experiences and tapping into cultural resources to make sense of and develop from the support being received (Lantolf, Thorne & Poehner, 2015). Regardless of the contradictions between these aforementioned hypotheses in particular, it must be noted that they are all still grounded in constructivism.

2.3 Social media

Lee and McLoughlin (2010) refer to social media as a set of web-based tools or services that have a plethora of uses that "build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content" (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61), in turn facilitating the sharing of both media and information, while providing opportunities for collaboration and participation (Evans, 2014).

First used in 2004 (O'Reilly, 2007), the term 'Web 2.0', as previously mentioned, is used to describe "information technology that permits users to be active creators and sharers of online information, rather than simply absorbers of information" (Gurcan, 2015, p. 965). This definition of Web 2.0 aligns with that of Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) who describe it as a platform whereby content and applications are no longer created and published by individuals, but instead are continuously modified by all users in a participatory and collaborative fashion" (p. 61). The tools and applications under the broad heading of Web 2.0 allow users to communicate and collaborate in specific, dedicated communities while allowing them to chat, post blogs, play games, share media files and "be a part of other collaborative and participatory activities" (Jabbari, Boriack, Barahona, Padrón & Waxman, 2015, p. 2383).

While, as aforementioned, Rutherford (2010) classified social media in 3 distinct categories, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) broke it down into 6 categories: collaborative projects, blogs and micro blogs, content communities, social networking sites, virtual game worlds, and virtual communities. Additionally, Armstrong and Franklin (2008) add social bookmarking and RSS feeds to their interpretation of social media; the former related to users sharing websites with other users and the latter providing users the ability to quickly view information from a plethora of sources that said users segregate themselves.

Despite the limited knowledge base for a definition of social media (as a whole) in conducted research, social networking in particular has been a focal point for several scholars. Boyd and Ellison (2007) define social network sites as "web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded

system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system" (p. 2), claiming that social network sites are unique in their ability to foster connections between people that would not have necessarily been made otherwise. Srivastava's (2012) own definition of social networking highlights these very points, maintaining that social networks are online platforms that focus on facilitating the building of relations between people with shared interests, backgrounds, or real-life connections. Her definition reiterates that social networks consist of representations of users (profiles), these users' social links and other services that provide opportunities for web-based interaction.

Whether regarding social networking in particular, or social media as a whole, these aforementioned definitions encompass the hypotheses through which SLA occurs.

2.4 How can the implementation of social media resources as pedagogical tools play a role in positively affecting the acquisition of a second language?

2.4.1 From a student perspective

Implementing social media into an educational setting certainly is ambitious. It is one thing to try and implement such pedagogical approaches blindly, but with a sound backing and understanding that social media already plays a dominant role in our students' everyday lives, it can be achieved. While using social media is "not meant to replace or to fundamentally revolutionize the traditional learning process" (Platon, Caranica & Catană, 2018), traditional pedagogical approaches do not suit modern learners (Alfaki & Alharthy, 2014). While costs and technical limitations of

implementing social media resources used to be an issue previously, "these barriers have slowly been fading, and it is now possible to use these online tools to improve students' English ability" (Chartrand, 2012, p. 100). Analysis of data collected by Faizi et al. (2014) revealed that all of the students they surveyed, apart from 5 who do not care for social networking sites, reported to be active on at least one social network; the majority having a Facebook account. 81% of these students reported they use social media resources to enhance their foreign language skills, with 80% of them interested in learning and improving in English over other languages. Tunde-Awe (2015) reveals that study participants agreed that Facebook serves as a suitable environment to enhance student communication skills and confidence when reading and writing. These results correlate with findings by Alsaeid (2017) that reveal that among 283 female undergraduate students at the King Abdulaziz University in Saudi Arabia, 76% liked to use social media for education. Similarly, Monica-Ariana and Anamaria-Mirabela (2014), aiming to use Facebook as a pedagogical tool to explore whether social media had an impact on student development and progress in foreign languages, reported that "students improved in vocabulary performance and confidence (even if slightly) after being exposed vocabulary via Facebook as compared to the case of students benefitting from traditional instruction only" (p. 128). Of 900 participants involved in an experimental case study conducted in Malaysia, Faryadi (2017) found that the control group (those who used Facebook) outperformed students who were not exposed to Facebook in post-tests, and concluded that not only does Facebook help in improving English proficiency but also helped students learn new vocabulary and terminology. YouTube was found to be the most popular social media resource, as confirmed by one student who stated that "I personally think that Facebook and Twitter's time are over... I

think a lot of people use YouTube to watch and learn better English”. These results, in turn, tie in with further findings by Faizi et al. (2014) who note that the majority of the students they surveyed opted to use social networking sites and video sharing sites over social online communities which are dedicated to language learning. A study conducted by Roebuck, Siha and Bell (2013) reaffirms these results, reporting that image/video resources were the most widely used as pedagogical tools, "followed by collaborative authoring tools for sharing and editing documents at 50 percent" (p. 176).

Communication, content delivery, interaction and collaboration were reported to be the most important functions of these tools.

While YouTube may be the force to reckon with in the world of social media resources as educational tools, both Ekoç (2014) and Felea and Stanca (2015) focus on Facebook as a supporting tool for language classrooms. Felea and Stanca (2015) observed that Facebook ultimately changed student and teacher roles in a classroom context. Students began to become independent individuals with increased collaborative skills, while teachers assumed the role of facilitators, simply offering support and guidance.

Similarly, Ekoç's study on Turkish students to understand the dynamics of a social media environment in 2014 proved that communicating through Facebook makes for a much less 'controlled environment', thus enabling a greater sense of togetherness while promoting positive relationships and providing students with collaborative support and help. A study by Montrieux, Vanderlinde, Schellens and De Marez (2015) focusing on the integration of tablets in educational setting yielded similar results, noting that online networks and discussion groups were established through applications such as Facebook and iMessage. These networks and groups increased both the rate at which students shared information with each other and students' inclination to collaborate. Veletsianos

and Navarrete (2012) confirm this by stating that interaction, communication and social connectivity were the dominant themes concerned with the social nature learning experiences, specifically highlighting peer collaboration and support. These opportunities provide students with “a sense of personal involvement, understanding, attachment and subsequent interaction” (Kommers, 2011, p. 3).

In a study that tackles the relationship between Welsh language learning and the use of social media resources, Jones (2015) conducted interviews with participants and confirmed that media sharing, instant messaging/chatting and social networking all help facilitate language learning. As with the results discussed above, media sharing (even in a Welsh context) was found to be the dominant social media resource used by students who felt "that hearing sound and rhythm of the language was very beneficial" (p. 5) to beginner and intermediate language learners. Jones (2015) further notes that writing emails in the target language provides writing practice, receiving Facebook posts in Welsh provides reading practice and applications such as Skype facilitate speaking in the target language; suggesting that the use of social media can be used to tackle the 4 language learning skills. Social media's creative uses were also revealed to develop experienced learners' own learning, while at the same time connecting and supporting learners. This is backed by a study conducted by Venere and Watson (2017) that focuses on study-abroad and at-home Spanish language learners. Results yielded suggested that not only does interaction over social media have an effect on one's own personal intercultural identity; it also leads to the scaffolding of cultural and regional knowledge down to at-home counterparts. This in-depth, real-world knowledge and insight into Spanish culture and society ultimately had an effect on Spanish language acquisition.

In terms of writing in particular, posting on Facebook in target languages has been found to have an overall impact on language learning. Wang and Vasquez (2014) have noted that there was a significant difference in writing quantity (in terms of Chinese characters) between the two groups of intermediate Chinese language learners. Those who wrote weekly updates and comments in a dedicated Facebook group page were shown to be able to produce more characters by the end of the semester. While there was no significant difference between said group and a group that did not post on Facebook, in terms of the quality of their writing, these results show that there is a potential to improve certain aspects of writing performance simply by the inclusion of social media resources in literacy practice both in and out of class.

Student engagement and building relationships between peers and even instructors is positively correlated with the use of social media, as perceived by students themselves, while also factoring in how they positively describe their overall learning experience (Rutherford, 2010); a sign that “it is possible that faculty and administrators could develop educational practices that include using Facebook in ways that maximize both engagement and academic benefits” (Junco, 2011, p. 169). This correlates with findings by Bosch (2009) who revealed that since students were already spending a significant amount of time on Facebook, being able to check class-related material while engaging in personal interaction with their peers was to their benefit. Furthermore, a study by Tudini (2010) on SLA in online settings aligned with key points discussed in the definition of SLA presented in this thesis. Negotiation of meaning and noticing were brought up alongside repair and peer-assistance as being important aspects of online conversations. These results are only heightened by Malerba (2015) who discovered that by analyzing online interactions, solid evidence of "some specific forms of peer-

assistance (mistake correction, metalinguistic talk, word provision, word explanation) learners exchanged once they had found a language partner or created their language partner network" (p. 69) existed.

The anonymity brought about by a lack of face-to-face interaction was also found to play a positive part in engagement as it "allows students to ask questions they might not feel comfortable asking in class" (p. 195). Alfaki and Alharthy (2014) confirm this by stating that the fear of making mistakes and the general tension brought about by classroom activities is not present over social networks. This is also made apparent by Chawinga (2017) who noted that the lack of face-to-face interaction between students using Twitter ultimately increased student participation. While an open ended question asked in class would be sometimes met with complete silence, the same question asked over Twitter would be met with a remarkable response rate.

From a technological standpoint, Gikas and Grant (2013) reported findings that suggest just how ingrained social media already is in our daily lives and the ease it provides, even when compared to other technological advances. They stated that students found it much more convenient to post comments to Twitter immediately on their mobile phones than having to constantly log in and out of a "password protected course discussion board that students could not access from their mobile device" (p. 22) such as Blackboard. This in turn would allow "students to share their thoughts immediately with their classmates within the course of their everyday lives" (p. 22) with the immediacy of Twitter allowing for a faster rate of exchanging ideas when compared to how time consuming discussion boards can be.

2.4.2 From an educator perspective

The relationship between social media and SLA is not limited to just students. From an educator perspective, as Güleç and Güleç (2017) state, 76% of 40 academic staff from 7 universities in Turkey believed that the implementation of social media in language classrooms fully effected lectures positively (even though only 35% actually used social media actively in class), while reporting that 93% of their students, too, were of the opinion that social media was playing a positive role in their lectures. The main motives behind this academic staff's use of social media in lectures were "self-improving, catching-up with technology and engaging more students" (p. 274), highlighting an interesting point that social media can also be tied to language professionals' development. This is stressed by Alhamami (2013) who presents social media as a community for language teachers, claiming that "the difference between social media as professional development tools and other professional development tools is that social media gives the teachers a community to participate with" (p. 187); a space to stay connected with peers around the world, the ability to stay updated with the latest trends and issues in language learning, and a chance to help others in the field while collaboratively solving problems. These results directly correlate with findings by Abdelraheem and Ahmed (2015) who reported that 3 of the top 5 benefits of social media use as perceived by faculty members of 2 universities in Sudan were "Communicating with colleagues and staff to benefit from their previous experiences", "Encouraging students to share information inside the classroom" and "Responding to students' questions" (p. 64). Mazer, Murphy, and Simonds (2007) claim that a teacher's mere presence on Facebook may positively affect students' outcomes simply through a

perceived attempt to build healthy relationships. Additionally, Ventura and Quero (2013) found that Facebook had positive effects regarding university teaching with regard to facilitating teacher resources, with students responding positively to material used and in turn encouraging students in contributing new digital resources. This ultimately enhanced group interaction. Roebuck et al. (2013) arrived at similar conclusions, noting that "it appears the most prevalent functions served by these (Web 2.0) tools are communication, content delivery, interaction, and collaboration" (p. 176). Additionally, Seaman and Tinti-Kane (2013) have reiterated collaboration and convenience as benefits of educators' use of social media by quoting a part-time Medicine Faculty member as having said, "The use of social media allows me to stay in touch with students at times that are convenient for all of us. I find my response times to students' needs is much less using social media" (p. 21). Monica-Ariana and Anamaria-Mirabela (2014) similarly found teachers involved in their study communicating with students about target topics over Facebook, while suggesting that teachers' vocabulary instruction was more appealing to students in this way, thus increasing motivation to improve their English. With regard to instruction in particular, the diverse range of social media applications available allows teachers to cater to their learners' individual learning styles by mixing and matching said applications as seen fit, in order to achieve academic success (Grover & Stewart, 2009).

The reach social media has is not just limited to connectivity between peers and an interconnected 'insider' world of education. Gurcan (2015) stresses the importance of relationships in education and notes that social media has the ability to break down walls, while at the same time building relationships between educational communities and the families of students. In a world where social media exists, gone is the lack of

transparency between teachers and students' parents. With this newly attained transparency, teachers now have a platform to share "continuously in an open way" (p. 968) without parents having to wonder what their children's teachers are like, what they are thinking and what their course of action is throughout the academic year.

2.5 What are the factors that could be of concern when using social media in an English as a Second Language setting?

It would be entirely too easy to claim pedagogical practices that employ social media resources as forward-thinking, state of the art, cutting edge and the 'be-all, end-all' of 21st century approaches, but in reality, especially in light of the recent Facebook privacy concerns, implementation of social media in classrooms is not a joke. There are serious implications that come with doing so, that are not limited simply to trial and error.

Content, interaction and discussions are no longer controlled and protected by the world of academia (Rodriguez, 2011) when utilizing social media. Thus, privacy becomes a concern. As Blyth (2015) states; "Some teachers are aware of repercussions that may or have already occurred from uncensored publicity of personal information on social media, but they are uncertain as to how to proceed" (p. 166). It is noteworthy that he refers to "information" as "data about a person including profile content and bio-data, images, likes and plusses; also reportable ideas, thoughts, events or actions people have or could do" (p. 166). Privacy becomes a bigger problem as it inadvertently associates itself with classroom dynamics, as Blyth (2015) explains; "for good classroom dynamics, teachers foster and encourage an environment of trust, but now we also need to instill a respect for other-people-privacy on social networking sites" (p. 171).

Given that “social media tools are mostly free applications for public use” (Liu, 2010, p. 107), they open the door for more concerns. Gurcan (2015) delves deeper into these potential concerns and risks of using social media, presenting language-related issues such as profanity, vulgarity, obscenities and language that is harassing and derogatory as being completely unacceptable in a school environment. Therein, it is the sole responsibility of the educator to become versed in these platforms before using them in a classroom setting, while ensuring students’ best interests by protecting the learning environment (Liu, 2010). Even if learners are not exposed to the more harmful side of the Internet, basic mobile phone use itself could be an impediment to learning, as discovered by Dehghan, Rezvani and Fazeli (2017). "Chatting with friends, irrelevant games, listening to music, watching clips and movies" (p. 7) have all been listed as distractors to the learning process. A similar concern is also raised by Alshabeb and Almaqrn (2018) who claim that the use of social media in English classes may be a waste of time if students use these applications to chat, for example. However, to combat this, Dehghan et al. (2017) recommend that learners need to be directed to desired objectives through controlling social applications and access to sites. They additionally suggest that students must "become aware of the pedagogical value of the social network being utilized" (p. 7) in order to accept them as learning devices and not just tools for fun and entertainment, though there seems to be a discrepancy between student and teacher perceptions on the role of social media as an educational tool, as indicated by Roblyer, McDaniel, Webb, Herman and Witty (2010) who found that "students seem much more open to the idea of using Facebook instructionally than do faculty" (p. 138). Another issue that could impede social media resource implementation is teacher willingness. When discussing the limitations of using Facebook groups in learning

environments, Ekoç (2014) specifically states that social intimacy and bonding through social media requires time to mature and in turn, care must be taken to ensure a continuously friendly group environment that fosters learning. This relies partly on instructors' skills, personal characteristics and the ability to continuously adapt as needed.

Therefore, chapter 2 of this thesis presented a synthesis of international literature that aimed to define SLA and social media, addressed my 2 research questions and related them to a relevant theoretical framework (the constructivist learning theory).

Chapter Three

Methodology

The foundations of this thesis are built on personal experiences with social media and the aspiration to facilitate SLA through modern, out-of-the-box pedagogical approaches that could be considered second nature to students in an age of technology. This thesis explores whether or not this is truly attainable from the point of view of both teachers and students, while also acknowledging that there are pitfalls related to using social media in an educational setting, and aims to answer my research questions.

Chapter 3 of this thesis serves as the methodology of my study and includes the design of the study itself, the sample selection, a description and breakdown of the instruments that were used during the study, and the way data were analyzed.

3.1 Design of the study

First and foremost, a qualitative case study was employed for my research on social media and SLA. Qualitative studies use words as data (Braun & Clarke, 2013) and unlike quantitative studies do not care about numbers, instead focusing on process, meaning and understanding. Qualitative research is inductive and involves the formulation of theories based on collective data results, while allocating the researcher as the main instrument in data collection and analysis. With the focus of my study being on the relationship between social media and SLA, approaching it through a case study is ideal since case studies are reliant on multiple sources of evidence which function

simultaneously to cover contextual conditions that are relevant to the phenomena being explored in studies, with data intersecting through triangulation (Yin, 2003). This is made apparent through the 3 methods used to collect data in this study from a specific set of teachers and students (all interconnected through 8th, 10th and 11th grade English language classes) from various schools across Lebanon, who have interpreted their experiences with the phenomenon of social media's role in the acquisition of a second language, and made sense of these experiences while giving them a purpose (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

3.2 Sampling

While other researchers may have the benefit of obtaining a convenient sampling for their studies, given my status of not being employed in any educational institutions at the time of writing this thesis, I had to use purposeful sampling; a technique used in qualitative research to choose cases rich with information against potent use of limited resources (Patton, 2002). In my case, the criteria for choosing both the places and participants involved in the study coincided with those listed under the research statement and problem. The sample of teachers had to be English teachers, teaching 8th, 10th and 11th grade English language, while the students all had to be of the same level of education (8th, 10th and 11th grade) and naturally taking English language classes.

Ultimately, my sample consisted of 149 Lebanese students in 7 separate classes from 3 schools across Lebanon; a collective of 22 students from 2 8th grade classes, 62 students from 3 10th grade classes and 65 students from 2 11th grade classes. 7 teachers with

professional teaching experience ranging from 4 years to 20 years were also part of my sample.

To obtain this sample, I first had to contact schools across Lebanon, primarily through email but also by phone. The nature of my study was described in detail, and the 3 schools that were interested in partaking in the study were sent digital copies of my instruments. Given consent by the schools' administrators was only the first step and I had to meet with them to obtain written consent and signed approval. During the process of being given the contact information of each school's relevant English teachers, the schools were requested to send parental consent forms home to each of the potentially participating students' parents. Upon being granted consent from all of the involved parents, meetings with the individual teachers were scheduled, carried out, and the necessary amount of copies of the 2 questionnaires and activity sheets involved in this study and needed for each classroom were handed to the teachers; all of whom also signed written consent forms to partake in interviews once their students completed the second questionnaire. Once that happened, I finally obtained my sample.

It must be noted that while participant assent was initially planned to be obtained from students at a date allocated before any of their involvement in this study, all 3 schools felt it was more convenient if participant assent was obtained alongside the first questionnaire. Thus, on the day students were to complete the first questionnaire at the 3 schools, the participant assent forms were handed out separately, signed by students and returned prior to completion of the questionnaire.

3.3 Triangulation, credibility and trustworthiness

When collecting data, it is imperative that the instruments used produce stable and consistent results. While quantitative research uses validity to check whether instruments are dependable and test what they are supposed to test, and reliability through the ability to reproduce results, ensuring consistency and stability in qualitative studies is somewhat different. Without established metrics in validity and reliability, studies such as my own need to be grounded in credibility and trustworthiness. To establish credibility and prove my results are true and accurate, my study employs the 3 instruments found below; all 3 of which have been piloted and modified according to the feedback received. With 3 sources of evidence to analyze my research questions from multiple perspectives, triangulation occurs, allowing me to cross-check my data and be confident that my findings are accurate. Due to that, my study can be considered trustworthy.

3.4 Data collection

As aforementioned, data for my study were collected through 3 methods: An activity sheet built around using social media as a pedagogical tool, 2 questionnaires (one to be filled-in prior to exposure to the activity sheet, and another once the activity sheets had been completed) and post-activity sheet interviews with teachers. They are broken down in 3 subsections below.

3.4.1 Pre-activity sheet and post-activity sheet questionnaires

2 questionnaires were handed out to 8th, 10th and 11th grade English language learners. While an activity sheet built around using social media as a pedagogical tool was completed by the students directly after completion of the first questionnaire, it was imperative to collect data on their experiences with social media prior to them coming into contact with the activity sheet. This was the sole function of the first questionnaire (See Appendix A) and it was built with interest in whether students are active on social media and how much time they engage with it, if they use social media for any educational purposes and whether or not they would be interested in using social media educationally, and what would their concerns about doing so be. A second questionnaire (See Appendix B) was handed out to students exactly a week after completing their activity sheets. It was aimed squarely at exploring students' experiences with social media as a learning tool. It was built to both gather an overall impression on their experiences and to focus on how they perceived the effect of specific activities on their language learning. The second questionnaire also aimed to explore whether students would be interested in moving forward with such pedagogical approaches. In both cases, the questionnaires were constructed so that "the reader can easily understand, interpret and complete it" (Adams & Cox, 2018, p. 11), employing checkboxes with a variety of responses and no consistent amount of responses throughout, in order to be as flexible as possible. Both of these questionnaires were first piloted on a class of 19 graduate students at a private Lebanese university, all of whom are completing a Master's Degree in Education with TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) as their emphasis. It is noteworthy that the majority of these graduate students are educators as

well. The questionnaires were also piloted on another graduate student who happens to be an elementary teacher from a private school in Lebanon with more than 3 years of professional experience. Feedback from the participants was overwhelmingly positive, and as such, the questionnaires were not edited. The majority of the participants believed that the choice of using a more direct, casual tone (rather than using any complex terms) to address students matched the nature of the study.

3.4.2 Activity sheet

An activity sheet served as a tool to collect data on whether or not students respond well to the implementation of social media as a pedagogical tool. The sheet itself bridged the gap between classrooms with traditional pedagogical practices and those that use social media for educational purposes by functioning as the main instrument for data collection; ultimately directing and guiding the post-activity sheet responses to both the student questionnaires and teacher interviews.

Since the activity sheet was initially created as being dependent on actual, hands-on experience on social media platforms, I felt it was necessary to guide students in creating their own social media accounts if they did not have any. 2 guides were prepared to facilitate the signing up processes on Twitter and Instagram (See Appendix C and D) as a preliminary and precautionary step. Included in both guides are step-by-step instructions on how to sign up on these platforms, as well as instructions for students to share their accounts with their peers and teachers, and an important note for students to

post a specific set of hashtags along with their tweets/posts to ensure their posts (which are made public by default) are not misinterpreted.

A template for the activity sheet was prepared (See Appendix E) entailing social media as a pedagogical tool. Activities on paraphrasing, summarizing, article writing, creative writing and learning vocabulary through the means of social media allowed students to approach these traditional English sub-skills from a different angle. These new approaches could very well be second nature to students and help in eliminating the tediousness of the learning process, thus facilitating second language learning.

To create the template, resources were gathered from across the Internet. With my sample being focused on 3 grade levels, I needed to ensure the 2 articles chosen for the paraphrasing and summarizing exercises were suitable for the entire sample. Moreover, since the 2 separate exercises clearly required responses of different lengths from students, careful consideration was placed in choosing the articles. In order to be as authentic as possible, exercises that called for examples of social media were not fabricated, but rather pulled from social media platforms directly. Both screenshots of a tweet and an Instagram post were incorporated into the activity sheet directly, with careful consideration placed in choosing content that was not only relevant and attractive to my sample, but also was suitable material. The use of the desktop computer view of both Twitter and Instagram over their mobile-centric alternatives was a deliberate choice, with the clarity and formatting of the desktop versions simply complementing the activity sheet better. With all the instances of gathered resources from the Internet, credit was given to the owners of the content.

This template was piloted on the same aforementioned group of 19 graduate students and 1 elementary teacher and was adjusted accordingly based on feedback. Several participants noted the required word count in the 2nd and 5th exercises were overwhelming and suggesting shortening the exercises. Additionally, the instruction in the 5th exercise was a point of contention for several participants who felt that it was simply asking too much from the students. As a result, several of the guiding questions were eliminated to streamline the exercise. While the lengths of most of the instruction on the sheet were found to be a little on the longer side, the general consensus was to keep them as was given the unusual nature of the study.

Although the activity sheet template was provided to the 8th, 10th and 11th grade English teachers ahead of time in order to modify it based on their input (to incorporate subject matter, themes and aspects relevant to their current lesson plans), all 7 teachers chose to use it in the state it was provided to them in. All 149 students were given 45 minutes of their own class time to complete as much of the activity sheet as possible.

3.4.3 Interviews

Semi-structured interviews with the teachers of 8th, 10th and 11th grade English language took place once students completed the social media-guided activity sheets and handed in the second questionnaire. These interviews aimed to obtain specific information (based on both the literature reviewed and new criteria listed in this thesis) from all the respondents, guided by the list of issues that need exploring (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Four of the interviews were carried out face-to-face, with audio recorded on a mobile

phone. Due to busy schedules and time constraints, the remaining 3 interviews took place over WhatsApp voice messages. All 7 interviews were first transferred to a laptop, listened to closely, and then transcribed immediately into a word processing document. The set of questions that guided these interviews (See Appendix F) were constructed in alignment with this thesis's purpose statement and research question (focusing on teachers' pedagogical approaches, experience with technology as a whole, whether or not they are active on social media, their opinion on how they felt students responded to the activities and their concerns about using social media in an educational setting) and were piloted on the aforementioned elementary teacher/graduate student. Modifications were made in terms of clarifying questions and guiding them to match the criteria that my research questions are interested in answering. Namely, several themes were added to the 2nd question, a set of 'Yes/No' questions were used to direct the 5th question and the concerns covered in the literature review were added to the 8th question in order to explore whether or not they also play a role in a Lebanese setting.

3.5 Data analysis

Once collected, the data I had to analyze were in 2 forms: Transcribed interviews with teachers and data generated from both questionnaires. The data were split and organized according to information obtained from teachers and information obtained from students (the latter further organized according to grade level) and analyzed through word processing programs. Common themes, categories and patterns were noted, and in the case of the questionnaires specifically, several instances of pre-activity sheet and post-

activity sheet results were noted for comparison in chapter 5. While simple statistics are found in the results, it should be noted that given that this study is qualitative in nature, it is interested in the narrative yielded from the questionnaires and is not concerned with approaching said results under a more quantitative lens.

Therefore, chapter 3 of this thesis covered the methodology involved in my study. It provided an overview of the design of my study, the selected sample, instruments that were used in my study, and the method data were analyzed.

Chapter Four

Results

This study was an attempt to explore whether or not teachers and students thought social media could be used to facilitate SLA. It also explored the concerns related to the implementation of social media in an educational setting, in the eyes of the same sample. As stated in chapter 3, my sample consisted of 149 students and 7 teachers from 3 schools in Lebanon, brought together as a sample through their involvement with English language classes. On this representative sample, 2 questionnaires were carried out on students and 7 semi-structured interviews took place with the teachers. While an activity sheet was also completed by students, its sole purpose was to direct and drive the responses in the second questionnaire, and thus data collected through the activity sheet were not analyzed. The remaining results obtained through this study were split according to data obtained from students and data obtained through teachers and therefore are presented as such hereunder. Simple statistical analysis was used on the student-related results, while the interviews with the participating teachers were analyzed in terms of common themes, categories and patterns.

4.1 Simple statistical analysis of 2 student questionnaires

4.1.1 How many students own a mobile phone?

Table 1 splits the representative sample of students into 2 sections, according to whether or not they owned a mobile phone at the time of participating in this study.

Table 1. Personal possession of mobile phones.

	8 th grade	10 th grade	11 th grade	Total
Yes	21	62	65	148
No	1	0	0	1

As seen above, the majority of participants involved claimed they owned a mobile phone, while only a single student was not in possession of a phone.

4.1.2 Are the students active on any social media platforms?

Table 2. Whether active on social media platforms.

	8 th grade	10 th grade	11 th grade	Total
Yes	21	61	64	146
No	1	1	1	3

Table 2 splits the sample of students in a similar fashion to Table 1, with interest in how many of the participants who own a mobile are active on any social media platforms.

146 of the 149 students said they were active on social media platforms while the remaining 3 students said otherwise.

4.1.3 Which social media platforms are the students active on?

Table 3 below not only shows which social media platforms the 146 students actively

use, but also provides a general outlook on the popularity of these platforms from a student perspective.

Table 3. Activity on social media platforms.

	8 th grade	10 th grade	11 th grade	Total
Facebook	14	34	28	76
Twitter	5	5	8	18
Instagram	16	51	58	125
WhatsApp	17	52	63	132
Snapchat	3	8	5	16
YouTube	5	17	8	30
Pinterest	1	3	1	5

As clearly seen above, WhatsApp was found to be the most popular social media platform among participating students, with a total of 132 of 146 students claiming they are active on it. Instagram closely followed with 132 students active on the platform, and Facebook can be seen trailing behind with 76 users. 51 students selected ‘Other’ on their questionnaires and listed YouTube, Snapchat and Pinterest (in that order of popularity) as other social media platforms they frequently use, while it should be noted that only 18 of the 146 students active on social media used Twitter.

4.1.4 How much time do students use social media daily?

Table 4. Daily social media use.

	8 th grade	10 th grade	11 th grade	Total
Lot of time	10	28	22	60
Some time	4	24	31	59
Few minutes	3	3	5	11
Notification	4	6	6	16

A considerable amount of time is spent on daily social media usage, as apparent above.

The difference between the number of students who claimed they used social media ‘A lot of the time’ and ‘Some of the time’ was found to be insignificant, with a combination of both options equaling 119 of the 146 participants. Only 11 students from all 3 grade levels claimed to use social media for a few minutes a day, while 16 said they only used social media in response to notifications they received.

4.1.5 Do students use social media for educational purposes?

Table 5. Use of social media for educational purposes.

	8 th grade	10 th grade	11 th grade	Total
Yes	12	45	55	112
No	10	17	10	37

Table 5 above splits the entire sample of participant students according to whether or not they use social media for educational purposes. 112 students were found to already use social media for various educational reasons, while the remaining 37 did not.

4.1.6 For what educational purposes do students use social media?

Table 6 complements the results found in Table 5 by presenting the reasons students claimed they used social media under an educational umbrella.

Table 6. Educational uses of social media.

	8 th grade	10 th grade	11 th grade	Total
Homework	8	34	40	82
Groupwork	6	25	38	69
Complaints	2	22	19	43

While none of the students listed ‘Other’ reasons for their educational use of social media, they were responsive to the hypothetical reasons presented to them in the first questionnaire. 82 of the 112 students who claimed to use social media educationally claimed to do so for homework, 69 stated they partake in groupwork over social media, while 43 students honestly claimed to use social media to complain about school-related issues.

4.1.7 Do students think social media could benefit their education?

Before presenting students with the social media-related activity sheet, they were asked if they believed social media could benefit their education. Table 7 displays their responses.

Table 7. Thoughts on whether social media could benefit education.

	8 th grade	10 th grade	11 th grade	Total
Yes	8	25	44	77
No	2	2	1	5
Maybe	12	35	20	67

The majority of the 149 participants of this study were either sure that social media could play a positive role in their education (77 of 149) or could possibly benefit their education (67 of 149), while 5 students did not think so whatsoever.

4.1.8 Are students interested in finding out if social media could benefit their education?

The entire sample of students was then asked if they would be interested if their teachers incorporated social media activities into their classes. Table 8 presents the results, according to whether students were interested, were not interested, or frankly did not care.

Table 8. Interest in teachers' implementation of social media activities.

	8 th grade	10 th grade	11 th grade	Total
Yes	15	27	45	87
No	1	3	3	7
Indifferent	6	32	17	55

87 of 149 respondents clearly stated they were interested in trying out social media-based activities, while 7 said they were absolutely not interested. The remaining 55 honestly stated they were indifferent to the matter.

4.1.9 Would students have concerns using social media in the classroom?

Table 9. Concerns regarding use of social media in classrooms.

	8 th grade	10 th grade	11 th grade	Total
Yes	14	24	15	53
No	8	38	50	96

The sample of students was asked whether they would have any concerns using social media in their classes and was split according to those who said ‘Yes’ and those who said ‘No’. 53 of 149 students claimed that they would indeed have certain concerns using social media in their classrooms, while the remaining 96 would be willing to use it without worry.

4.1.10 What concerns would students have using social media in their classes?

The 53 students who claimed they would have concerns using social media in their classes were then presented with hypothetical issues (raised in the international literature reviewed in chapter 2) that might be problematic for them. The results can be found below.

Table 10. Types of concerns regarding use of social media in classrooms.

	8 th grade	10 th grade	11 th grade	Total
Lack of privacy	10	18	8	36
Cyber-bullying	1	10	4	15
Waste of time	3	6	6	15

A lack of privacy seemed to be the main culprit, with 36 students agreeing that it would be problematic. Cyber-bullying and worries of the experience ultimately wasting their time were found to be equally concerning too. While students were provided an option to list other concerns, it was left blank across the board.

Tables 1 through 10 provided the results derived from students' completion of the pre-activity questionnaire, which was aimed at exploring said students' experience with social media prior to taking part in this study. It can be seen that not only do the vast majority of participants own a mobile phone, but they are also active on social media. WhatsApp, Instagram and Facebook were found to be the dominant social media platforms amongst these participants, while their interest in other platforms (most notably Twitter) pales in comparison. It was found that students spent a considerable amount of time on social media platforms, with the majority of students claiming the amount of time spent daily on social media included using it for both homework and groupwork. Only 5 students of the 149 total participants believed social media could not impact their education positively prior to taking part in the study, but the majority of

students were interested in seeing how the implementation of social media pedagogically would play out. Finally, most of the participants did not have any concerns regarding the implementation of social media in classrooms, but those who did attributed them to a lack of privacy.

The following tables sum up the participating students' views on learning, having completed the social media-based activity sheets.

4.1.11 How did students react to the implementation of social media as a learning tool?

Having completed the activity sheets, a week later students were asked if they found the experience fun, or if they truly found it to be a waste of time.

Table 11. Reactions to implementation of social media-based activities.

	8 th grade	10 th grade	11 th grade	Total
Engaging	19	55	59	133
Disengaging	3	7	6	16

Table 11 shows that 133 of 149 students enjoyed the activity sheet and found it engaging, while 16 students considered it disengaging and a waste of their time.

4.1.12 Did students find the activities different from practices they were used to?

Table 12. Thoughts on whether activities were “fresh” and “new”.

	8 th grade	10 th grade	11 th grade	Total
Yes	17	50	54	121
No	2	8	2	12
Found no difference	3	4	9	16

The results in Table 12 show that 121 of the 149 students involved in the study ultimately thought the activity sheet brought something new to their classes, while 12 students thought otherwise. The remaining 16 students thought the social media-based activities were too similar to practices they were already used to.

4.1.13 Did Twitter’s character limit help or impede learning?

Having completed several exercises related to paraphrasing and summarizing, students were asked whether or not they believed Twitter’s character limit made these sub-skills easier to grasp. Table 13 presents their opinions.

Table 13. Did Twitter have an impact on paraphrasing/summarizing?

	8 th grade	10 th grade	11 th grade	Total
Yes	15	51	49	115
No	7	11	16	34

The majority of participants clearly found Twitter’s character limit to have a positive impact on paraphrasing/summarizing, with 115 of 149 believing so. 34 participants did not feel the same.

4.1.14 Did students find that interacting with vocabulary under a real-life context on Twitter facilitate vocabulary learning?

Table 14. Did the use of Twitter help with learning vocabulary?

	8 th grade	10 th grade	11 th grade	Total
Yes	16	54	55	125
No	6	8	10	24

Table 14 shows that 125 of the 149 students found that using Twitter’s search function helped in being able to give vocabulary words a definition, while the remaining 24 believed it did not help.

Tables 11 to 14 presented the participating students' views on their learning experiences through social media. The majority of students found the exercises to be engaging and

believed said exercises brought something fresh to their classes, while being different to the approaches they were used to. Additionally, most of the students believed Twitter in particular could play a positive role in facilitating language learning (in terms of the skills needed to paraphrase and summarize, as well as helping in vocabulary learning).

The following 2 tables present students' perceptions on creativity and motivation fostered through language learning via social media.

4.1.15 Can Instagram be used to foster creativity in students?

While the majority of the questions on both questionnaires provided students with concrete 'Yes' and 'No' options, given that creativity cannot truly be measured, a third variable was given to students for this specific question. Table 15 conveys the students' opinions on whether they thought that using hashtags and images on Instagram could increase their creativity.

Table 15. Did Instagram help with students' creativity?

	8 th grade	10 th grade	11 th grade	Total
Yes	6	34	42	82
No	5	8	8	21
Maybe	11	20	15	46

While the majority of students thought that both creating hashtags and interacting with images could positively affect creativity (82 of 149), a large chunk of respondents (46 of

149) were unsure of Instagram’s potential creativity-inducing properties. The remaining 21 did not believe Instagram could increase creativity in students.

4.1.16 Did this experience motivate students to join new social media platforms?

Table 16. Did students join new social media platforms after the activities?

	8 th grade	10 th grade	11 th grade	Total
Yes	0	0	0	0
No	22	62	65	149

A week after completion of the activity sheet, students were questioned whether they had joined any social media platforms they were not active on prior to this experience. 149 of 149 participants answered ‘No’.

Tables 15 and 16 presented results related to creativity and motivation procured from this study. While the students' perceptions on Twitter’s impact on language learning are clear, their thoughts on Instagram's ability to foster creativity are not as immediate without a definite 'Yes' or 'No' answer. Even though over half of the participating students found that the Instagram exercise helped in allowing them to delve deeper into their creativity, a considerable chunk of the total amount were unsure if the exercise helped in being more creative. Student motivation after partaking in this study, too, was questionable, given that all of the students claimed they did not join any new social media platforms after partaking in a pedagogically-charged social media experience.

The final set of tables explore the validity of the concerns raised by the students and their overall perceptions on social media and education moving forward.

4.1.17 Were students' concerns prior to activity still valid?

Table 17. Validity of concerns using social media (post-activity sheet).

	8 th grade	10 th grade	11 th grade	Total
Yes	7	32	6	45
No	11	23	50	84
Uncomfortable	4	7	9	20

Tables 9 and 10 provided the results of whether or not students had concerns using social media in an educational context prior to participating in this study, and what those concerns were. Table 17 directly above presents the results of a question on the students' second questionnaire, aiming to explore if the students' concerns were still valid having completed the activity sheet. More than half of the 149 students stated that their concerns were not valid, while 45 believed their concerns were still valid. 20 students found something off-putting about the experience as a whole.

4.1.18 Having completed the activity sheet, would students like their teachers to use social media more in their classrooms?

As a follow up to the results presented in Table 8, Table 18 provides a post-activity outlook from the perspective of all 149 participating students on whether or not the

experience has piqued their curiosity for more implementation of social media-based activities in their lessons.

Table 18. Interest in more use of social media in classrooms.

	8 th grade	10 th grade	11 th grade	Total
Yes	17	45	52	114
No	2	6	2	10
Indifferent	3	11	11	25

114 of the 149 students were found to be interested in their teachers implementing more social media-based educational activities in their classes, while 10 students stated that they did not want an increase of social media presence. Finally, 25 students claimed they did not care either way.

4.1.19 Overall, do students feel that social media could help in SLA?

Table 19. Overall opinion on whether social media could help in SLA.

	8 th grade	10 th grade	11 th grade	Total
Yes	19	53	58	130
No	3	9	7	19

Table 19 simply splits the representative sample of students into 2 parts. One part consisting of the number of students who felt that social media could help with SLA

overall, and another part presenting the number of students who felt that social media does not have a part to play in education. After this experience had ended completely, 130 of the 149 student sample felt positively about the potential use of social media pedagogically, while 19 left with a negative impression.

Tables 17 to 19 revealed results related to the validity of the concerns previously raised by the students and their overall perceptions on social media and education moving forward. While more than half of the students felt that prior concerns were not valid after participating in the study, the combination of students who felt their concerns were still valid, and those who felt that there was something off-putting about their experiences as a whole is too large to ignore. That said, 114 of the total sample of 149 students were interested in having more social media exercises implemented as part of the approaches being used in their classrooms, with 130 of the same sample of students leaving the study with the belief that social media could ultimately help in SLA.

The next section of results presents the themes, categories and patterns derived from the interviews with 7 teachers of 8th, 10th and 11th grade English.

4.2 Common themes, categories and patterns found in teacher interviews

Analysis of the transcribed interviews with the 7 teachers of the 7 classes that participated in this study produced the following results.

4.2.1 Reasons to change pedagogical practices

While all 6 teachers have had to change their pedagogical practices over the years, the reasons for these necessary changes have been attributed to different factors. Student disengagement was found to be the most prominent factor, and was stated by 3 of the 7 teachers as a driving force for change. Catering to different learning styles was mentioned by 2 teachers, and while not explicitly stated (but indirectly described), self-growth was a factor for 2 teachers. Changing pedagogical approaches to increase motivation was listed by 1 teacher, and the need to integrate more concept-based strategies over content-based ones was mentioned by 1 teacher.

4.2.2 Relationships with technology in general

5 of the 7 teachers suggested that they get along with technology, while the remaining 2 teachers gave off an impression that they were obliged to use technology in an educational setting (1 of those 2 explicitly stating so). While only 2 teachers said they actively use social media outside of an educational setting, all 7 teachers indeed use it for educational purposes.

4.2.3 Which social media platforms do teachers use?

All of the teachers claimed they use WhatsApp purely for communicative reasons. Facebook follows closely with 5 of the 7 teachers stating they are active on it, and Instagram was found to be used by only 3 of the 7 teachers. None of the teachers claimed they use Twitter and no other social media platforms the teacher use were mentioned.

4.2.4 How did teachers react to the idea of social media being able to facilitate second language acquisition?

While none of the teachers stated that they disliked the idea of using social media as a pedagogical tool, 3 of the 7 teachers explained that while they may have eventually warmed up to the idea, they were hesitant at first. Another 3 teachers claimed they liked the idea immediately, and the remaining 1 teacher was apparently more interested in her students' reactions rather than her own.

4.2.5 Did the teachers find their students to be enthusiastic about the experience when it was happening and once it was over?

Having given their students a week to contemplate whether or not they enjoyed the experience of using social media in their classes, 6 of the 7 teachers noted that their students were enthusiastic initially, while 1 teacher boldly proclaimed that "if [the students] were forced to use [social media] academically then they would just stop using social media altogether". Despite the initial enthusiasm noted, all 7 teachers believed their students were not motivated to join any new social media platforms once the experience was over.

4.2.6 Are the teachers interested in implementing social media-based pedagogical approaches for themselves?

5 of the 7 teachers interviewed stated they would like to implement such activities on their own, but 2 of these teachers stated that their school's administration would ultimately have the last word. Of the 2 remaining teachers, 1 teacher was undecided and

1 honestly said that she would not be interested in implementing social media educationally in the current state it (social media) is in.

4.2.7 If social media were to be implemented as a pedagogical approach, what concerns would teachers have?

There was no one concern that could have been deemed the major concern teachers would have implementing social into their lessons, but the teachers had their concerns nonetheless. The time needed for implementation, cyber-bullying and a lack of privacy were each issues for 2 of 7 teachers. 1 teacher mentioned the cost of implementation being problematic. Furthermore, 1 teacher mentioned the lack of a controlled environment as a concern, while another remarked that the Lebanese curriculum's rigid structure and lack of flexibility would be a point of contention. While a single teacher had absolutely no concerns, another 2 teachers would somewhat mirror her opinion, contending that privacy (2 of 2 teachers), time (1 of 2 teachers) and cost (1 of 2 teachers) were nonfactors for various reasons.

The results obtained from the 2 student questionnaires and the results obtained from the teacher interviews do not act as separate entities. The common factors between the 2 sets of results provide a deeper underlying understanding of how social media could function as a pedagogical tool, whether there is a general interest in seeing the concept developed further and what overall concerns could impede the development of a pedagogically-charged use of social media. By comparing the 2 sets of results it can be deduced that social media and technology already play a pivotal role in the lives of both educators and students, with both parties mostly active on the same platforms. Teachers and students both reacted to the proposed approach with an initial reserved attraction toward it, and

both parties ultimately left the study with a similar interest in seeing the concept developed and utilized further. Finally, the causes for concern, too, were shared between teachers and students. A lack of privacy was deemed to be the biggest concern amongst teachers and students, and coupled with other concerns proved that there are deterrents in the desire to see the pedagogical implementation of social media come to fruition.

Thus, chapter 4 clearly presented the results related to this study, in terms of both student questionnaires and the teacher interviews. The following chapter aims to delve deeper into the findings, compare related results even further, and make sense of them in order to determine whether or not social media can be used to facilitate SLA.

Chapter Five

Discussion

This study explored whether or not teachers and students thought social media could be used to facilitate SLA. It also explored the concerns related to the implementation of social media as a pedagogical tool. The results obtained through this study reinforce certain themes and issues brought forth by the international literature reviewed prior to carrying out data collection for this very study, as well as highlight both the use and concerns of using social media pedagogically, specifically in Lebanon, as a response to my research questions. Chapter 5 of this thesis presents a synthesis and discussion of the results according to emerging themes, and bridges the gaps between findings derived from students and those derived from teachers, while delving deeper into discourse produced by teachers that was not necessarily touched upon in the results.

5.1 The positive role of social media in SLA and overall reactions

As a way to elicit a direct response to my first research question, students who participated in this study completed an activity sheet that included several social media-based exercises related to English language sub-skills. After completing the activity sheet, students were given a questionnaire that was aimed at making sense of their experiences with the activity sheet. In every instance, whether related to Twitter or Instagram, the majority of participating students found their interaction with social media to play a positive role on certain sub-skills. 115 of the 149 students believed that paraphrasing and summarizing were made easier through the use of Twitter's character

limit, while even more students found that interacting with tweets assisted in vocabulary learning. While Monica-Ariana and Anamaria-Mirabela (2014) focused on using Facebook as a pedagogical tool, results of my study align with their conclusion that exposure to vocabulary on social sites can improve vocabulary performance when compared to traditional instruction; results which also mirror those by Faryadi (2017). While a chunk of the participating students were unsure if Instagram's implementation as a learning tool was as effective as Twitter, more than half of the students found Instagram to foster creativity in terms of writing.

These findings align with those further found by Faizi et al. (2014), Monica-Ariana and Anamaria-Mirabela (2014) and Faryadi (2017), and suggest that not only does social media have educational properties that can be used to make language learning easier, but that students respond well to them as learning tools. This is only heightened by results procured from both students and teachers regarding how they responded to the entire experience. A considerable spike in positive responses can be seen in terms of both an interest in more implementation of social media practices and an overall opinion on whether social media could benefit education, when comparing pre-activity results and post-activity results. More so, only 1 of the 7 teachers interviewed claimed she has absolutely no interest in using social media pedagogically after participating in this study. This indirectly implies that the remaining teachers too have found educational benefits in social media.

5.2 Concerns with using social media in classrooms

Combining the results attained from students and teachers reveals that a lack of privacy is the main concern related to the pedagogical use of social media. While it can't be ignored that over half of the student participants revealed that any concerns they had in using social media in their classes were no longer valid after participating in this study, the majority of students who still had concerns attributed them to the factors related to privacy that were explored by Blyth (2015). Interestingly, as a counter-argument to Blyth's findings, privacy-related issues do not appear to be a concern for most of the teachers interviewed. In fact, as stated in chapter 4, 2 of 7 teachers argued that privacy should not even be considered a cause for concern, as their perceptions lead them to believe that their students do not care about their own privacy. The discrepancy between results certainly raises questions about how well teachers know their students.

Cyber-bullying and a waste of time were chosen as concerns by an equal number of students, supporting the claims of Alshabeb and Almaqrn (2018) and Gurcan (2015), while 2 teachers explained that cyber-bullying is a modern epidemic, a true reason for concern and a factor that needs to be thought about carefully before trying to use social media pedagogically. While Chartrand (2012) suggested that the cost of implementing social media in classrooms was a dwindling concern, 1 of the teachers agreed with his statement, while 1 felt it was a valid concern even today. Agreeing with Rodriguez (2011) and Dehghan et al. (2017), 1 teacher had issues with the lack of a controlled environment that comes about with the advent of social media-based practices.

Overall, despite the fact that the largest number of participants left this study having no concerns, the combination of students with concerns, those that left the study feeling

uncomfortable, and the concerned teachers is too large to suggest that the implementation of social media pedagogically is fool-proof, and those concerns need to be addressed moving forward.

5.3 Educational uses of social media and activity on platforms

In terms of both teachers and students WhatsApp and Instagram were found to be the dominant social media platforms of choice, with WhatsApp being used by the majority of the participants for communicative and collaborative purposes. Among the 112 students who claimed they used social media for educational purposes, the bulk of these students stated they used it for homework and to partake in group work. These findings correlate with those of Faizi et al. (2014) and Roebuck et al. (2013) who claimed that social networking sites and media sharing sites' properties to facilitate communication, content delivery, interaction and collaboration made them the most popular choices. Given that YouTube was not present on the questionnaire, yet was listed by 30 of 149 students, the results produced from my study further support the above researchers' claims. While Facebook's presence was more pronounced in the literature reviewed (Bosch, 2009; Junco, 2011; Ekoç, 2014; Faizi et al., 2014; Monica-Ariana & Anamaria-Mirabela, 2014; Felea & Stanca, 2015; Tunde-Awe, 2015; Faryadi, 2017), it still maintained a presence in this study, with almost half of the participants stating they are active on it, alongside 5 of 7 teachers. This could possibly be attributed to its potential in affecting students' inclination to collaborate (Montrieux et al., 2015). Following YouTube are Twitter, Snapchat and Pinterest (in that order) with almost insignificant

results, especially in comparison to WhatsApp and Instagram; results which are almost mirrored through the teacher interviews.

Twitter's popularity or lack thereof, is one of the most interesting discoveries obtained through this study. As aforementioned, its presence is next to nothing in terms of students and literally nothing in terms of teachers. While I approached this study with no hypotheses, my introduction to this study presented a personal assumption that Twitter has a strong presence in the Arab world, at least in a non-educational form. While the results derived from the second questionnaire initially implied a possibility of Twitter becoming more popular in terms of students and teachers (suggested through the positive response to the paraphrasing/summarizing/vocabulary exercises), that was not the case.

In fact, this study did not motivate a single student to join any new social media platforms. This result is reiterated in the transcribed teacher interviews, where, in every instance, teachers reported they had not seen any changes from their students. Several teachers attributed that to the fact that being new to the students, Twitter had possibly taken on a purely educational form to them; an implication that directly contradicts the suggestion by Dehghan et al. (2017), who recommend that students need to be aware of the pedagogical value of the platforms they are using. More so, one teacher suggested that had students been granted the chance to use their phones in class, things might have been different and they would have been persuaded in joining new platforms immediately.

Therefore, chapter 5 synthesized and discussed the results obtained through this study, while relating them to the literature reviewed in chapter 2 and in accordance with my research questions. Through this study, the following conclusions were reached: Social media has the ability to facilitate SLA with both students and teachers having shown interest in it being used more in classrooms. There are numerous concerns that need to be addressed before social media can be considered a true pedagogical tool.

Communication and collaboration are currently the main uses of social among Lebanese students and teachers with WhatsApp, Instagram and Facebook considered the most popular social media platforms.

The following chapter will wrap up this study conclusively, present the limitations faced when conducting research for this study and introduce a handful of suggestions for further research.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

6.1 Conclusion

It has been proven time and time again that technology has its place in education, but as technology continues to evolve, so must its educational function. While tried and true formulae continue to work inside classrooms, technological pedagogical approaches employed need to be challenged. Despite its sudden rise and undeniable popularity in today's modern world, social media has secured a place in the lives of most people across the globe. That alone should be reason to motivate educators into exploring its pedagogical properties, not in order to replace current technological approaches, but work side-by-side with them. Given that social media encompasses communication not only through the exchange of media, but words as well, its educational properties, coupled with humanity's now intrinsic utilization of mobile phones and social media platforms could be a focal point in changing the landscape of modern education. While still acknowledging that the use of social media pedagogically is risky and exploring the reasons for concern of its implementation, this study dared to investigate the positive role social media could play on our youth's ability to acquire a second language. Through an overwhelmingly positive response from both educators and students toward the implementation of social media pedagogically, a clear interest shown in seeing the concept developed and utilized further, and the challenging of sub-skills through social

media met favorably, this study can conclude that, with proper consideration and implementation, social media has the ability to positively affect SLA.

6.2 Limitations

There were a couple of limitations that could be considered a hindrance in obtaining appropriate results.

The first limitation is the size of the participating sample. This study was constructed to gather data from as many students as possible, with a minimum of 27 classes being involved. While the study was always targeted at 8th, 10th and 11th grade students, the initial assumption was that I would be able to access 3 sections from each of the grade levels. While it was not guaranteed that every school I would be given access to would have a sample of students as large as I had intended, or even be split into sections, the schools I had initially considered and contacted as part of my purposive sample were indeed organized as such. After weeks of back-and-forth communication and hopeful replies with these schools, the nature of the study coupled with time constraints and various other factors played too large a role and the schools backed out. While the sample of students I ultimately obtained sufficed, having less classes (going from the proposed 27 to 7) meant having less access to teachers. This was a major limitation. Given that this study calls for the activity sheet to be implemented by the teachers themselves and is interested in their overall experiences, randomly contacting teachers for their opinions on social media without hands-on experience with the sheet would have destroyed the study.

The second limitation is the fact that none of the teachers involved in the study chose to convert the sample activity sheet into an activity sheet that was relevant to the material they were covering in class. While the teachers took the study extremely seriously and thus it did not suffer in any way as a result, a more personalized, authentic experience for both the teachers and students may have affected results either positively or negatively and could have possibly eliminated any notions from participants that they were simply participating in a study.

The final limitation was schools' absolute refusal to allow their students to access their mobile phones while participating in this study. It must be noted that all but 1 of the exercises on the activity sheet did not call for actual hands-on use of a mobile phone, and as a solution for that particular question the teachers themselves were given access to a single Twitter account which they displayed in class through use of an overhead projector. However, given the nature of the study being built around the very use of a mobile phone, a huge hit was taken in terms of authenticity, especially in terms of the paraphrasing/summarizing exercises on the activity sheet. Rather than the students themselves typing tweets into their phones and experiencing first-hand what it feels like to hit Twitter's character limit and adjust their tweets accordingly, they were relegated into having to compose their supposed tweets entirely on paper while constantly counting how many characters they were using.

6.3 Suggestions for further research

First and foremost, a study on social media and education (whether generally, or under specific lenses such as SLA) deserves a much larger sample, especially in terms of

teachers. Given that data collection was meant to take place on 3 separate occasions and the activity sheet was also the very reason schools were dropping out/refusing to take part in the study, the entire process of getting in touch with schools needs to occur far in advance of the beginning of a new school year, and with as much transparency as possible.

In addition to a larger sample, and as a result of both data analysis and general observations noted during the entire study, a couple of key areas related to social media and education could be in need of exploration. The first of these proposed areas is related to Twitter directly. Namely, delving deeper into the underlying reasons that make Twitter the least popular social media platform by far for both teachers and students. The second area targets and questions whether or not there is truly a place for mobile phones in both current and future classrooms while taking into consideration the pedagogical advantages and disadvantages of a mobile-inclusive world of education.

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Appendix A

Social Media and Learning? Huh?

This pre-intervention questionnaire is for 8th, 10th and 11th grade English language learners to find out about their relationship with social media.

1. What's your grade level?

- 8th grade
- 10th grade
- 11th grade

2. Do you own a mobile phone?

- Yes
- No

3. Are you active on any social media platforms?

- Yes
- No

4. If you chose 'Yes' above, which platforms are you active on? (Check all that apply)

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- WhatsApp
- Other: _____

5. On a daily basis, how long would you say you spend on social media?

- A lot of time
- Some of the time
- Just a few minutes per day
- Only when I get a notification

6. Do you use social media for any educational purposes?

- Yes
- No

7. If you selected 'Yes' above, why do you use social media for education? (Check all that apply)

- To discuss homework
- For groupwork (assignments)
- To complain about something related to school
- Other: _____

8. Do you think social media could benefit your education?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

9. Would you be interested if your teacher incorporated social media-related activities into your classes?

- Yes
- No
- I really don't care either way

10. If you used social media (for educational purposes) in the classroom, would you have any concerns about it?

- Yes
- No

11. If you chose 'Yes' above, what would your concerns be? (Check all that apply)

- Lack of privacy
- Cyberbullying
- It would be a waste of time
- Other: _____

Appendix B

Social Media and Learning? Huh?

This post-intervention questionnaire is for 8th, 10th and 11th grade English language learners to find out about their experiences with social media as a learning tool in the classroom.

1. What's your grade level?

- 8th grade
- 10th grade
- 11th grade

2. How did you find the implementation of social media as a learning tool?

- It was fun! (Engaging)
- Wow, that was a waste of time! (Disengaging)

3. Did you feel that these activities brought something fresh and new to your classes?

- Yes
- No
- Honestly, the activities didn't really feel any different than our regular exercises.

4. Did you feel that Twitter's character limit helped in grasping how to paraphrase and summarize?

- Yes
- No

5. Did the interaction with vocabulary under real-life, varied and immediate contexts help in understanding words better than just learning their definitions from a textbook?

- Yes
- No

6. Did your self-created hashtags and interaction with images help in allowing you to think 'out-of-the-box' and tap into your creativity when writing?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

7. If you weren't active on social media before these activities, did they change your opinion about social media (on a personal level)?

- Yes, I now use social media!
- No. Everything's exactly the same as it was before

8. If you chose 'Yes' above, which social media platforms are you now using?
(Check all that apply)

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- WhatsApp
- Other: _____

9. Were your concerns with using social media in the last questionnaire valid after this experience?

- Yes
- No
- Something about this experience was uncomfortable

10. Would you like your teachers to use social media more in your classes?

- Yes
- No
- I really don't care

11. Overall, as students, do you think social media could be used to make language learning easier?

- Yes
- No

Appendix C

Quick Guide to Signing Up on Twitter

While you may already have a Twitter account, you are required to have a new dedicated account for our educational activities. Please follow this step-by-step guide to create a new Twitter account.

NOTE: All social media access at school will be done on a computer. However, it is possible to access your accounts on mobile devices at home through apps such as the official Twitter app or Tweetbot.

1. Head over to <https://www.twitter.com> on an Internet browser on your computer.
2. Click the **Sign Up** button on the right side of the screen (under **Join Twitter today.**)
3. Under **Create your account**, enter a name (it doesn't have to be your real name) for your Twitter handle, select **Use email instead**, enter your email address and click the **Next** button in the upper right-hand corner of the box.
4. Click the large **Sign Up** button.
5. Enter a password (consisting of more than 6 characters) under **You'll need a password.**
6. Hit **Skip for now** when prompted to select your interests, suggestions of whom to follow and whether or not you would like to turn on notifications.
7. You may be asked to confirm your email address. To do this, just head over to your own email and follow the instructions sent to you by Twitter.

Congratulations! You now have your very own Twitter account (for educational purposes, of course). Please share your Twitter handle (your name on Twitter) with your classmates and teacher.

NOTE: For the purpose of our educational activities, please add the following hashtags by simply copy-pasting them to **ALL** of your tweets (since the entire world can essentially see your tweets and we don't want any confusion):

#FakeNews #SocialMediaAndEducation #SLA

Appendix D

Quick Guide to Signing Up on Instagram

While you may already have an Instagram account, you are required to have a new dedicated account for our educational activities. Please follow this step-by-step guide to create a new Instagram account.

NOTE: All social media access at school will be done on a computer. However, it is possible to access your accounts on mobile devices at home through the official Instagram app.

1. Head over to <https://www.instagram.com> on an Internet browser on your computer.
2. On the right side of your screen, enter your email address, an anonymous full name, your chosen username and a password in the corresponding spaces.
3. Click the blue **Sign up** button.

That's it! Simple, right? You now have your very own Instagram account (for educational purposes, of course) which you can share with your classmates and teacher. Please note that Instagram on a web browser is severely watered down when compared to the mobile version, but you **CAN** follow each other's accounts and other accounts of your choosing. For our activities, that is more than enough.

NOTE: If you do choose to post on Instagram from a mobile device, please add the following hashtags to **ALL** of your posts (since the entire world can essentially see them and we don't want any confusion):

#FakeNews #SocialMediaAndEducation #SLA

Appendix E

Student Activity Template

1. Twitter gives you a maximum of 280 characters to use in a single post. The following article is obviously longer than that. Suppose you wanted to post the information from the article in a single tweet, but were limited by the maximum character count. In the space on the next page, summarize the article in 280 characters while retaining the gist (its general meaning) and include all the points you feel are essential to the article. Keep in mind that proper spelling and sentence structure is necessary.

Side effects of a low protein Diet

Proteins are indispensable parts of our bodies because they facilitate numerous life processes on a daily basis. Proteins form cell membranes and produce antibodies, hormones, hemoglobin regulating metabolism, digestion, nutrient absorption, visual pigmentation, blood clotting, acid-and base balance. They have to be consumed and synthesized regularly for healthy survival.

If not then would gradually lead to many protein deficiency led disorders. Protein deficiency led disorders cause poor health and even death in extreme cases. Weakness or decreased energy is a result of lack of protein. You feel weak or lethargic when the protein stock of your body gets used up and your body is forced to utilize the muscle tissue by breaking it down into required amino acids. During extreme conditions you even faint. Hemoglobin is also a protein which transports oxygen throughout your blood stream. Lack of it would cut the quantity of oxygen accessible to your system making you feel energy deprived.

Protein deficiency leads to loss of hair. Protein is builder of hair from follicles to strands. Hair is composed of a protein called keratin. Dearth of sufficient proteins would make your body store them, limiting their supply to hair. This starts hair loss coupled with deterioration of hair texture causing thinning of hair. During less intake of protein your body is forced to exploit the existing proteins from muscles which make you lose weight. It destroys your muscles causing weakening of muscles and decreased body mass.

Lack of focus is another attribute of lack of proteins. If one is protein-deprived then his glucose levels are not capable enough to stimulate the brain. A reasonable blood sugar level is crucial to ensure focus. Decreased immunity is a consequence of less protein in body. Proteins are required in the building of immune system of our body. You are prone to catch infections quickly and constantly. Even healing of injuries or wounds gets significantly reduced if you do not have sufficient proteins in your body. It so happens because amino acids are needed to carry out the repair work and a decline in proteins would slow it down.

Pale Skin and Rashes which lead to dry or peeling skin is the outcome of severe protein deficiency. Bloating or swelling up of the stomach happens when cells release their water due to absence of proteins. Proteins get attached to the cells and assist holding water inside them. Ridges of Nails appear like white lines on both nails of the fingers as well as on those of the toes due to paucity of protein in the diet. You will have a troubled sleep if you are not consuming adequate protein. Serotonin deficiency due to lack of certain amino acids makes it difficult to sleep. These amino acids are created by burning the proteins into amino acids. Hence meals devoid of sufficient proteins make it hard to fall asleep causing headache. Proper protein balances water within your body and restricts Edema which is collection of fluid underneath skin and can occur anywhere in the body.

Therefore, proteins ought to constitute a major chunk of your everyday diet.

(Written by deeptiankur and found at <https://www.freelancer.com.au>)

- 2. Exercise 1 was a workout, right? That said, you're feeling extra adventurous today and just found out that prior to November 2017, Twitter actually had a 140 character limit. Crazy, huh? For the following article, summarize the content of the article into 140 characters so that its gist is the focal point of your tweet. Don't worry, this time 'round you're free to use internet lingo and abbreviations. Also, feel free to skip out on any words you don't feel need to be in your tweet.

GIANTS' SKELETONS FOUND.

Cave in Mexico Gives Up the Bones of an Ancient Race.

Special to The New York Times.

BOSTON, May 3.—Charles C. Clapp, who has recently returned from Mexico, where he has been in charge of Thomas W. Lawson's mining interests, has called the attention of Prof. Agassiz to a remarkable discovery made by him.

He found in Mexico a cave containing some 200 skeletons of men each above eight feet in height. The cave was evidently the burial place of a race of giants who antedated the Aztecs. Mr. Clapp arranged the bones of one of these skeletons and found the total length to be 8 feet 11 inches. The femur reached up to his thigh, and the molars were big enough to crack a cocoanut. The head measured eighteen inches from front to back.

The New York Times

Published: May 4, 1908

Copyright © The New York Times

Found at <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1908/05/04/104724033.pdf>

4. Take a look at the following list of vocabulary words:

COMPLACENCY

HYPOCRISY

COARSE

LUMBER

PEDDLER

You're already logged into your Twitter account, aren't you? See that **Search Twitter** space near your account information at the top-right corner of the screen? If you search for the words above on Twitter, you'll get a list of tweets that contain those words. By skimming through the various tweets and understanding the context those words are used in, you can deduce their meanings. Give each of the 5 words a broad definition.

Complacency:

Hypocrisy:

Coarse:

Lumber:

Peddler:

5. Look at the following screen capture of a post from *lostwithpurpose*'s Instagram account:



Come up with 5 unique hashtags that you yourself would have used had you posted the picture above. Write them in the blank rectangle below. What are the common factors that bridge these hashtags? Think of the themes, ideas, colors and mental images that come to you when you think of them. In the space provided below, write a 500 word piece of creative writing (a story, if you will) that is **NOT** related to the image above, but has its foundations built on what inspired you to create those unique hashtags in the first place.

Appendix F

Interview Questions for Teachers Regarding Social Media and the Facilitation of Second Language Acquisition (Post-activity sheet implementation)

1. How long have you been teaching professionally?
2. In your X years as a teacher, have you come across scenarios where you've had to change up your pedagogical approaches? (Whether due to student disengagement, catering to learners of different styles, etc.)
3. How would you describe your relationship with technology in general (both in and out of an educational setting)?
4. Which of the following social media platforms are you active on?
 - Facebook
 - Twitter
 - Instagram
 - WhatsApp
5. Be honest, what was your first reaction to me suggesting the implementation of social media in an educational setting could help facilitate second language acquisition?
6. Now that the social media-based activities have been completed, how would you describe your students' response to them? Were they enthusiastic? Has there been an increase in engagement? Did nothing change? Has there been a different response from students who were already active on social media vs. those who weren't?
7. Would you be interested in implementing pedagogical approaches such as these going forward?
8. What are your concerns about using social media as a pedagogical approach? (Privacy-related? Hesitance to change? Time and cost of implementation?)

Appendix G

Transcribed Teacher Interviews

Teacher 1

1. I have been teaching for 6 years now.
2. Yes, I have definitely had to change my approaches due to a couple of reasons. Student disengagement is an obvious problem, but I also had to vary my methods of teaching to include attractive warm up exercises. They help motivate my students before introducing new lessons.
3. To be frank, I have what can be considered a ‘normal’ relationship with technology. The same kind of relationship I presume most people, not necessarily teachers, have with it. That said, I mostly use it in an educational setting.
4. I am present on Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp. All of them except for Twitter.
5. To be honest, I like the idea. I used to ask my students to study quotes and post them on Facebook or WhatsApp, so they’d be able to memorize them. This is a completely different approach using the same technology!
6. I can tell you that they were enthusiastic and interested on the spot, but I haven’t realized any differences over time, unfortunately. Nothing has changed.
7. Yes, why not! It is somewhat breaking traditional methods of teaching. There’s nothing wrong with that.

8. Time and cost of implementation are issues of course, but frankly, I think there are too many objectives that can't be tackled using social media under any circumstances.

Teacher 2

1. I have been teaching since 1998. So...20 years. Yes, I'm that old! *laughs* I started young. I can't tell you how old I am though.

2. Definitely! Everyone is different and one must be able to accommodate all sorts of learners. However, I can tell you that over the past 20 years I certainly didn't use your technique.

3. My relationship with technology? Well, we are friends. Not close friends though. What I mean by that is I use it when I'm in need. For example, I sometimes use it in my work because it facilitates some issues, such as communication. Outside of work I'm really not that interested in using social media.

4. I'm not active on any of these social media platforms except for WhatsApp. Even with WhatsApp, I only use it if it is urgent.

5. At first I found it to be a weird idea, but after thinking quite a bit I now have enough curiosity to try and apply it myself.

6. Well, they were responsive and enjoyed the challenge of something unusual...but it doesn't seem like anything changed over time. I mean, the time between doing the activity sheet and completing the second questionnaire. My conversations with certain students led me to believe none of them have joined any new sites, but maybe they would join Twitter, for example, if teaching through social media became the norm.

Wouldn't that mean social media would then become a traditional teaching technique?

This is very confusing!

7. I previously said I'm curious to apply it. That is still true. However, I anticipate that I'm going to encounter many challenges and maybe even failure.

8. The Lebanese curriculum is a problem. However, if the Lebanese curriculum can be changed and be more flexible, I think social media can be applicable in an educational setting. That is because we can't deny that technology has a significant role in our lives. Another problem I believe is concerned with the students themselves. I think they will be interested in moving forward with the idea because, as I said, these apps have a great impact in controlling their life...but they won't apply it correctly. Social media is a form of recreation for them and I do not think they will be able to separate the fun side of social media from the potential educational side. This would, of course, be a problem.

Teacher 3

1. I have been teaching for 4 years.

2. Yes, I had to change my pedagogical approaches in order to integrate more concept-based strategies rather than content-based ones that let students reflect and inquire further.

3. In an educational setting, we are obliged to use technology because we have to apply and foster 21st century skills in our students. Outside of an educational setting, though? Not really. I'm not really a tech person. I consider myself to be somewhat old school.

4. You can find me on WhatsApp, Instagram and Facebook.

5. I was a bit hesitant, to be honest. Schools usually do not implement social media in educational settings because you can't control what is happening.

6. Usually students' engagement increases when you implement activities that are 'outside the box'. My students were naturally enthusiastic to express their point of views and opinions using social media-based activities, but I don't think anything changed later on.

7. Yes...if administrators encouraged such an approach. Educational stakeholders usually set barriers to what teachers are supposed to do and not to do.

8. Cyber-bullying, privacy, and time are all concerns of mine. Cyber-bullying is a modern problem being dealt with over the entire world and I don't know if I would be comfortable essentially welcoming it into a school setting. A lack of privacy and the Internet go hand-in-hand, so why it would be an issue doesn't need to be explained. Lastly, I think it would take a considerable amount of time and effort to sculpt social media into a purely educational form.

Teacher 4

1. I've been teaching professionally for 8 years.

2. As a teacher, I always have a Plan B in order to let my students engage with and participate in my classes. That is why I've already changed my pedagogical approaches several times.

3. I always have the curiosity to know more. That's why I always use technology.

Sometimes for personal reasons, while others for educational ones. However, I use it for educational reasons more to be on the same track with my students.

4. Actually, I don't have a Facebook, Twitter or Instagram account. I am active on WhatsApp most of the time.

5. My first impression was “Wow! That's interesting”. I like it because it targets our students’ way of thinking and lifestyle.

6. Students like to use social media, so whenever you ask them to do such things they are enthusiastic. Students these days don't like to read books or even hold a paper. Sadly, I don't think this experience was a trending topic at the water fountain over the last week. Maybe if they engage more with it?

7. For sure I'm interested in implementing pedagogical approaches such as these going forward. We need individualized learners who work hard in order to be knowledgeable.

8. I'm not going to lie and say privacy is a concern of mine...because it is simply not a concern of my students. Social media is already in their lives and these proposed approaches will simply be taking advantage of what students are already using. Let us not pretend that, especially on Instagram, people don't love sharing their lives with everyone. Of course it is a little different since we're talking about using social media in school, but with proper supervision, it shouldn't be a problem. Cyber-bullying, however, is definitely a concern because students are potentially at risk of being cyber-bullied at any moment they are on the internet. This needs to be carefully thought about before implementing social media in schools, if it were to ever happen.

Teacher 5

1. Twenty years. *pauses to think* Yes, I've been teaching for 20 years.
2. Of course. Not only is education evolving, but so are our students. If you are doing exactly the same thing you were doing 5 years ago then I can guarantee you do not care about being a teacher or are thinking about each and every one of your students.
3. The first few years teaching I did not really care about technology. I used to only use it for typing. As the years went by and technology advanced, I developed a very good relationship with technology. I'm not going to go into too much detail but, for example, I encourage my students to use the ActivBoard on a constant basis.
4. I use WhatsApp and Facebook; Facebook to a lesser extent. I don't really care for Twitter, to be honest.
5. When you first suggested that social media could be used to teach English I was a little shocked, but then I started to warm up to the idea. I think it could have many benefits when used properly.
6. Unfortunately, no...nothing has changed. My students' use of social media is very far away from being academic and I believe if they were forced to use it academically then they would just stop using social media altogether.
7. That's a tough question. To be quite honest, I already tried using WhatsApp as an educational tool. I made a group on WhatsApp and encouraged my students to use it as a means to get bonus points. What did they do? Leave the group one by one, of course. I was the only person left! I'm not opposed to using such approaches but it all comes

down to my students. While I think social media could benefit their education, do they feel the same?

8. Privacy? Surely you are joking. My students only care about keeping their lives private from their mothers and fathers...and maybe their younger siblings. Otherwise they do not care about sharing where they are going, what they are doing, what they last ate, etc. At least if they had to use social media in school, privacy would be less of a concern. In terms of other concerns, all new teaching approaches take time and effort to use properly. I fail to see why using social media would be any different. Students already have phones and all these platforms are free of charge anyway, so money would not be a concern. However, if you forced the school to handle the costs of each student owning a phone just to engage in social media-based exercises, it would most likely be a nightmare. *chuckles*

Teacher 6

1. I have been a teacher for 13 years.

2. Of course I have had to change my teaching approaches. Teaching is not easy. It requires constant adapting, especially when you are new. When one thing does not work, you try something else. If that works, great! But just because it works, you cannot rely on it. The students will turn on you.

3. I have a good relationship with technology in the classroom and out of the classroom. Kids these days love technology, so using it always grabs their attention. Especially if it is new technology. I try to use it whenever possible. Outside of the classroom, I use WhatsApp and *pauses* Oh, wait... that's question 4.

4. As I was saying, I use WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram when I am home. Well, not only when home. WhatsApp is a necessity nowadays. Nobody uses the telephone anymore! Insta and Facebook on the other hand is just to stay in contact with friends and family.

5. To be honest, I do not know how I felt. I was just waiting to see how the students would react.

6. The students seemed to enjoy the sheet at the time. Of course there is the odd student who does not really care about anything related to studying, but I think the majority found it interesting. However, at least from my class I know nobody has been asking if they can use their phones yet. For studying, I mean. They always want to use their phones. I do not think anything changed.

7. You see, I think technology has a place in education, but we use technology that has been made for educational purposes. I think social media is too new at the moment. Now? Most definitely not. Maybe I will use it in the future if it has been proven to work.

8. Privacy, of course. It is always an issue when giving students access to the Internet.

Teacher 7

1. How long have I been teaching? This is my 6th year as a teacher.

2. Yes, yes...of course. Student disengagement is the main problem, I believe. Especially now in this age. Students are very hard to please.

3. I have *a* relationship with technology. It's neither good, nor bad. I use what we have in the classroom. Every now and then I'll access YouTube from the class computer. You

know, standard things. Outside of the classroom I don't really bother with technology. My son is at that age of video games and whatnot, so I leave technology to him.

laughs

4. I have WhatsApp and Facebook. Are they considered social media? I thought they were social networks. The others, no. I don't use any of them.

5. I found it interesting. Since I'm not familiar with Twitter and Instagram...I think you introduced me to them and I can see why you are trying to use them to teach. Nice idea.

6. The students certainly seemed interested too, but I think they were confused at first. Perhaps even hopeful that they would be able to use their phones in class. I don't think anything changed though. Maybe if they actually were allowed to use their phones, they would have joined new platforms on the spot?

7. You know what? Why not. Provided we can convince administration to allow students to use their phones. One day. Maybe.

8. I would have no concerns. If we reach a point in education where students are actually allowed to use these technologies, then I'm sure these issues would not exist anymore. Someone would have already solved all of these problems. If there was anything to worry about then we would not be using social media in the class. Simple as that!