

## Examining EFL teachers' perceptions of using mobile social network sites for language teaching and learning



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### ABSTRACT

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Social technologies are capable to act as a positive but flexible support for teaching and learning process by facilitating idea sharing, communication, collaboration, and sharing of learning materials. This study investigated 397 EFL teachers' perceptions about using Mobile Social Network Sites (MSNS) for language teaching and learning. The present study also explored EFL teachers' perceived barriers to using MSNS for teaching and learning in the context of Saudi Arabia. Drawing on the data from a quantitative survey with Saudi EFL teachers, the findings of this study showed that overall perceptions of the participants were very positive toward using social media to support their teaching practices. Saudi English teachers did not differ in their perceptions based on gender. However, younger EFL teachers comparatively showed a more positive attitude in comparison to the teachers of older ages. Despite the positive attitude of the study participants, they also reported some barriers to the use of social media in the classrooms. The results of this study contribute to the territory of using social media to support language teaching within and beyond classroom activities. This cross-sectional study provides valuable implications to teachers, educators and teacher trainers on implementing MSNS in language teaching and language learning.

**Contribution/ Originality:** The current cross-sectional study contributes to the field by highlighting the positive attitudes of EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia towards using Mobile Social Network Sites (MSNS) for language teaching. Additionally, it identifies perceived barriers to the integration of MSNS in the classroom, providing insights for addressing these challenges and promoting effective use of social media tools in language education.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

There is a rapidly increasing interest in the need to use technology in language learning, as technology has the potential to enhance and support the language learning process in various ways. One of the main reasons for this increase in interest is the growing availability and accessibility of technology. With the widespread use of smartphones, tablets, and laptops, technology has become an integral part of students' daily life, which has led to an increased focus on how technology can be used to support language learning. Another reason for the increasing interest in the use of technology in language learning is the potential benefits it can bring (Ilter, 2015). Technology can provide learners with access to a wide variety of authentic language materials, such as videos, podcasts, and interactive activities. It can also provide learners with the opportunity to practice their language skills through activities such as online discussions, instant messaging, and virtual collaboration. Furthermore, technology can provide learners with the opportunity to receive immediate feedback on their language performance and to track

their progress over time. When language learners actively engage with technology, they can improve their language abilities outside of the classroom (Alanazi & Thompson, 2019; Anderson, Chung, & Macleroy, 2018).

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in the use of mobile social network sites (MSNSs) in language education. Studies have shown that MSNSs can provide language learners with opportunities for authentic communication and interaction with native speakers, as well as access to a wide range of language-learning resources. Research has also indicated that SNSs can be an effective tool for promoting autonomous language learning, as they allow learners to take control of their own learning and pursue their own interests (Bahari, 2022). Additionally, SNSs have been found to be effective in promoting task-based language learning and collaborative learning. Social media platforms have become increasingly popular for teaching and learning English as a foreign language. These platforms offer a range of tools and features that can support language learning. The use of mobile social networking sites for teaching and learning English as a foreign language can be a valuable and effective tool for language learning, offering convenience, customization, real-time feedback, and opportunities for collaboration (Bashori, van Hout, Strik, & Cucchiari, 2022).

There is a growing body of research on the use of social networking sites (SNS) in language learning, and findings have generally been positive. Studies have found that SNS can be effective in supporting language learning in many ways, such as providing opportunities for authentic language use; encouraging learners to be more self-directed and autonomous; supporting collaboration and teamwork; and enhancing learners' motivation and engagement. While several studies have been conducted to explore the potential of emerging technology, especially social media to facilitate and aid the teaching and learning of languages, most of these studies have focused on the views of learners (Arrosagaray, González-Peiteado, Pino-Juste, & Rodríguez-López, 2019; Nugroho & Atmojo, 2020; Webb & Doman, 2020). For example, Blattner and Lomicka (2012) studied employing Facebook in an English class and how the students reacted to it. The findings indicated that the students had a favorable opinion of Facebook's use in English classrooms and that they saw it as a brand-new tool that let them put their newly acquired language abilities into practice.

Understanding teachers' perceptions of using social media to support the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language (EFL) is important for several reasons. Firstly, teachers' perceptions can inform how social media is being used in the classroom and how it can be effectively integrated into language instruction. By understanding teachers' perspectives, researchers and educators can develop more effective strategies for using social media to support EFL teaching and learning. Moreover, by understanding teachers' perceptions, we can gain insight into the potential benefits and challenges of using social media in EFL instruction, and how to effectively support teachers in the use of these tools in the classroom.

This study aimed to examine teachers' voices regarding the use of social media particularly mobile social networking sites to support their instructional practices in the teaching of English as a foreign language in the context of Saudi Arabia. The present study provides clear evidence regarding what Saudi teachers think about using social media in EFL teaching and the challenges they identify for the same. The information gained through this study has theoretical and general implications in the field of EFL as well as it will be helpful in the efficient and effective employment of social media for teaching English in the Saudi context.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Technology has revolutionized the field of education and has had a significant impact on the way English is taught and learned (Bradley & Lomicka, 2000). There are many different technologies that can be used for English teaching and learning, such as online language learning platforms, video conferencing tools, and mobile social networking sites (Golonka, Bowles, Frank, Richardson, & Freynik, 2014). Starting from the definition of mobile social network sites, the following section provides a brief review of the literature on the use of such tools for English language teaching and learning.

### *2.1. What are Mobile Social Network Sites (MSNS)?*

Mobile social network sites (MSNS) are online platforms that allow users to create, share and exchange information, content, and media through mobile devices. MSNS are a subset of social network sites (SNSs) that are specifically designed to be accessed and used through mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets (Faizi, 2018). MSNS have gained significant popularity in recent years, with the rapid growth of mobile technology (Habibi et al., 2018). MSNS provide users with a wide range of features, including text messaging, instant messaging, photo and video sharing, and location-based services (LBS) (Katz & Aakhus, 2002). MSNS also allow users to connect with others, join groups, and share information and media in real-time, regardless of their physical location (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).

MSNS have been found to have a significant impact on the way people communicate and interact with each other. MSNS have enabled users to stay connected with their friends, family, and social networks, regardless of their physical location, time, and device (Manca & Ranieri, 2016). MSNS also provide users with a sense of social presence and connectedness, which can enhance their social and emotional well-being (Khan, Radzuan, Shahbaz, & Ibrahim, 2018). However, MSNS also have potential drawbacks, such as issues related to privacy, security, and online identity (Joinson, 2008). Therefore, it is important for users to be aware of the potential risks associated with MSNS and to take appropriate measures to protect their personal information and privacy (Joinson, 2008).

### *2.2. Mobile Social Network Sites and Learning*

Mobile social network sites (MSNS) have been increasingly used in education to support various learning activities. They provide students with opportunities for communication, collaboration, and access to resources that can enhance their learning experience. These sites are effective in promoting student engagement and motivation in learning activities (Yang & Chen, 2007). These sites can provide students with a sense of autonomy, ownership, and control over their learning, which can enhance their motivation and engagement (Kirschner & Karpinski, 2010). They also allow students to access learning resources and support materials, which can enhance their participation and engagement in learning activities.

MSNS have also been found to be effective in supporting the development of digital literacy and 21st-century skills among students (Warschauer & Matuchniak, 2010). They are capable of giving learners the avenue to ripen and practice digital literacy skills, such as information and communication technology (ICT) literacy, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. Moreover, they have been used to support remote and blended learning during the pandemic by providing opportunities for synchronous and asynchronous communication and collaboration among students and teachers (Klimova, 2018). They can also provide teachers with opportunities to deliver and provide feedback on assignments, quizzes, and assessments, and to monitor the student's progress (Sun & Gao, 2020).

### *2.3. Potential Benefits of Using Mobile Social Network Sites for Language Learning*

There is a growing interest in using technology in language learning at an early age. Learners have a need of motivation in order to be concentrated during their language learning process as they lose concentration easily during the learning process (Ilter, 2015). Utilization of technology is one of the ways to produce a real and enjoyable environment for young language learners if technology is used properly and effectively (Toscu & Erten, 2020). Besides, online, hybrid and blended courses in which Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are integrated are on the rise nowadays in the field of language learning. Such sort of courses aims to offer a flexible learning environment for learners irrespective of age. They are appropriate for different educational and social needs and provide active engagement (Arrosagaray et al., 2019).

Social network sites (SNS), particularly those that can be used on mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets, have become increasingly popular in recent years, and researchers have begun to investigate their potential

benefits for language learning. Warschauer and Matuchniak (2010) found that using SNS to communicate with native speakers can improve learners' language skills, as well as their motivation to learn the language. Another study by Li and Liang (2018) found that SNS can provide a more authentic and interactive language learning experience, as learners are able to use the target language in a naturalistic setting. In addition to the benefits of interacting with native speakers, they also offer a range of other features that can support language learning. For example, they can provide learners with access to a wide variety of authentic language materials, such as videos, music, and articles, which can help learners to improve their reading and listening skills. These sites can also be used to form study groups and language exchange partnerships, which can provide learners with additional opportunities to practice their language skills. Furthermore, they can also be used to support self-directed learning and provide learners with a sense of autonomy and ownership over their learning process (Li & Liang, 2018). They can also provide learners with immediate feedback and support, which can help to boost their confidence and motivation (Warschauer & Matuchniak, 2010).

Research on students' views about using social media for language learning is mixed. Some studies have found that students perceive social media as a useful tool for language learning, as it allows them to interact with native speakers, access authentic language materials, and engage in language practice outside of the classroom (Su & Zou, 2022). Other studies have found that students view social media as a distraction from language learning, and are concerned about the potential negative impact on their language skills and grammar. Additionally, some students may have privacy concerns when using social media for language learning.

#### *2.4. Barriers to Using Mobile Social Networking Sites*

Mobile Social Networking Sites (MSNS) have the potential to be powerful tools for teaching and learning, but there are several barriers that can prevent their effective use in educational settings. One major barrier is the lack of teacher training and support. Hsu and Chen (2018) found that many teachers were not familiar with the features and capabilities of MSNS and felt they did not have the necessary skills to effectively use them in their classrooms. This highlights the need for professional development opportunities that can help teachers become more proficient in using MSNS for teaching and learning. Another barrier is the lack of integration with the existing curriculum and instruction. In a study, researchers found that many teachers were using mobile MSNS in an ad-hoc manner, rather than as a deliberate and integrated part of their instruction (Chai & Teo, 2019). This can limit the effectiveness of MSNS as a teaching and learning tool.

Privacy and security concerns are also major barriers to using MSNS for teaching and learning. Many teachers and students are concerned about the potential for personal information to be shared or misused on mobile SNS (Lu & Chen, 2021). This highlights the need for clear policies and guidelines for the use of mobile SNS in educational settings, as well as measures to protect the privacy and security of users. In conclusion, while mobile SNS has the potential to be powerful tools for teaching and learning, there are several barriers that must be addressed in order for them to be effectively used in educational settings. These barriers include a lack of teacher training and support, a lack of integration with existing curriculum and instruction, a lack of a clear understanding of the benefits of MSNS for teaching and learning, and privacy and security concerns.

The support and attitudes of the users like students and teachers who will be using the technology in question will determine whether any efforts to integrate it into educational programs are successful. Ensuring the acceptability and perceived usefulness of technological tools by teachers is of utmost importance. This is also true for the use of social media to support the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language. Thus, exploring Saudi teachers' perceptions of the use of social media will help to understand if these tools are acceptable and beneficial for English teaching in the Saudi context.

### 3. STUDY QUESTIONS

The aim of this paper was to examine EFL teachers' perceptions about using Mobile Social Network Sites (MSNS) for language teaching and learning. The present study also investigated EFL teachers' perceived barriers to using MSNS in the context of Saudi Arabia. Thus, the present study attempted to answer three specific study questions:

1. How do EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia feel about using Mobile Social Networking Sites for language teaching and learning?
2. Do EFL teachers' perceptions about using Mobile Social Networking Sites differ in respect of their gender or age?
3. What obstacles do EFL teachers believe stand in the way of adopting Mobile Social Networking Sites in Saudi Arabia for language teaching and learning?

### 4. METHODS

A cross-sectional design was used in this survey to achieve its goals. A cross-sectional study is a sort of study that scans the relationship between multiple variables at a single point in time (Kesmodel, 2018). These studies are useful for providing a snapshot of the population at a specific point in time and for identifying potential risk factors for a particular outcome.

#### 4.1. Research Context

The investigation took place in selected 107 educational institutions in different cities of Qassim and Riyadh region. The population of the study constituted 397 EFL teachers of English in public and private sector and teachers of different subjects in international schools where English is the medium of teaching and communications. On the basis of a purposive sampling technique, a total of 107 schools were selected to approach potential participants for the proposed study. A self-administered paper-based survey questionnaire was prepared as the primary source of data collection. However, the survey questionnaire was also made available online for those who prefer to participate online. Data collection was carried out over three weeks. Appendix 1 presents the consent of all participants signed before taking part in the questionnaire.

#### 4.2. Data Collection Tool

A close-ended questionnaire with primarily two sections was used to gather the data<sup>1</sup> for the current investigation. The questionnaire is presented in Appendix 2. The initial half focused on gathering participant demographic data such as their gender, age, experience in EFL teaching, and the type of institution they belong to (public or private). The second section of the survey measured (1) participants' perceptions about using Mobile Social Networking Sites (MSNSs) like Telegram, WhatsApp, Facebook, etc. for English language teaching and learning and (2) their perceived barriers to using Mobile Social Network Sites for language teaching and learning in the context of Saudi Arabia. This section, adapted from the Mobile Social Network Sites Utility Perceptions Inventory (MUPI) (Kavoshian, Ketabi, Tavakoli, & Koehler, 2020), consisted of 36 items formatted on a 5-point Likert scale (1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, and 5=Strongly agree).

The advice of four academics and university professors in the field was sought to confirm the reliability and viability of the Mobile Social Network Sites Utility Perceptions Inventory (MUPI) to be employed in the research context of the current study. Moreover, a small sample of potential participants (n=10) i.e., Saudi EFL teachers helped to pilot the survey tool. Utilizing Cronbach's Alpha coefficients, the internal consistency approach was used

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<sup>1</sup> Datasets analysed during the current study are available from the author on reasonable request.

to complete the reliability analysis. For the male and female subgroups respectively, the internal consistency reliability coefficients were 0.87 and 0.91, exceeding the advised level of 0.7 (Roldán & Sánchez-Franco, 2012).

#### 4.3. Data Analysis

Bearing in mind the kind of research and the fix-set nature of items asked in the survey form, all data were examined quantitatively using SPSS, version 16. Descriptive (that is, frequency, mean, and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (namely, t-test and One-way between subject ANOVA) were used to draw conclusions.

#### 4.4. Ethical Consideration

In each stage of the research process, survey researchers must adhere to ethical conduct norms, especially the regard for human dignity, which is essential to conducting research in an ethical manner. The privacy of research participants is a significant issue related to their protection. It was assured that the participant's privacy is maintained, and the information provided is used only for the research purpose. The survey for the proposed study was anonymous; the participants were assured of the anonymity of the demographic data or any other information that may identify the respondents. Moreover, for respondents, there were no known risks associated with taking part in this study. No questions that might have caused participants to feel uncomfortable in any way were asked during the research study. Nevertheless, it was made clear that they had to dedicate some time (about 15 minutes) to doing the questionnaire.

### 5. RESULTS

A sample of 397 EFL teachers participated in the study by completing the survey questionnaire. Male participation (n=237, 59.7%) was higher than female participation (n=160, 40.3%). The age of EFL teacher participants ranged between 20 to 60 years with an average age of 37.13 years. Dividing the age range into four categories revealed that about 32.5% (n=126) of the participants were 30 years old or younger. Almost thirty percent of the participants' age were between 31 and 40 years. Similarly, about 11% (n=42) were older than 50 years.

**Table 1.** Characteristics of the sample.

Group	N=397 (%)
Gender	
Male	237 (59.7%)
Female	160 (40.3%)
Age (M=37.13 years)	
30 years or younger	126 (31.7%)
31 to 40 years	118 (29.7%)
41 to 50 years	103 (26.0%)
Older than 50 years	42 (10.6%)
Missing	8 (2.0%)
School type	
Public	162 (40.8%)
Private	235 (59.2%)
Teaching experience (M=7.81 years)	
0 to 5 years	119 (30.1%)
6 to 10 years	222 (56.1%)
11 to 20 years	39 (9.8%)
More than 20 years	16 (4.0%)
Missing	1 (0.3%)

These participants comprised proportionately less public (government) school teachers (n=162, 40.8%) than private teachers (n=235, 59.2%). The participants' experience of EFL teaching ranged from 1 year to 30 years with an average teaching experience of 7.81 years. More than fifty percent of the participants (n=222, 56.1%) reported

having six to ten-year teaching experience whereas 119 (30.1%) had zero to five-year experience and 39(9.8%) of the participants had been teaching EFL for 11 to 20 years. Only, four percent (n=16) of the participants reported having more than 20 years of teaching experience in EFL. Table 1 provides a summary of the sample's demographic characteristics.

This study primarily looked at how Saudi EFL teachers felt about utilizing Mobile Social Networking Sites (MSNS) to teach and learn languages. The main results of the current study are presented question-wise in the following:

### 5.1. RQ # 1 - How do EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia feel about using Mobile Social Networking Sites for language teaching and learning?

The first research question intended to examine EFL teachers' perceptions about using Mobile Social Network Sites for language teaching and learning in the context of Saudi Arabia. More specifically, it was interesting to see whether Saudi EFL teachers perceived MSNS as useful and effective for the teaching of the English language. To address this question, study participants' perceptions were recorded through a 5-point Likert scale from "Strongly Disagree" (1) to "Strongly Agree" (5) adapted from Utility Perceptions Inventory (UPI) (Kavoshian et al., 2020).

The data was analyzed by creating a factor score separately for two factors: 1) Advantages for teaching and learning and 2) Communication and collaboration with peers and colleagues. The factor scores reflected an overall positive perception of EFL teachers to accept the idea of using MSNS in teaching and learning English as a foreign language (Advantages factor) as well as the usefulness of MSNS for communication and collaboration with peers and colleagues (Communication factor). Results indicated that participants' perceptions were higher for the Advantages factor (Mean=3.953, Standard Deviation=.731) than for the Communication factor (M=3.349, SD=1.137). Negatively worded items were reverse-coded before taking the averages of the sub-scales so that a higher score value indicates a higher level of usefulness and effectiveness of MSNS for teaching and communication as perceived by the participants of this study. Table 2 provides a summary of descriptive statistics for Advantages and Communication factors.

Table 2. Summary of descriptive statistics for advantages and communication factors.

Gender	Advantages		Communication	
	M	SD	M	SD
Male (n= 237)	3.927	0.716	3.352	1.160
Female (n= 160)	3.992	0.753	3.344	1.105
Overall (n= 397)	3.953	0.731	3.349	1.137

### 5.2. RQ # 2 - Do EFL teachers' perceptions about using Mobile Social Networking Sites differ in respect of their gender or age?

The second research question examined significant differences in English teachers' perceptions regarding the use of MSNS for teaching EFL and communications based on their age and gender. Gender-based differences in the perceptions were tested using an independent sample t-test (see Table 3).

Table 3. Independent t-test results between males and females in three study variables.

Variables	Gender	N	M	SD	T	Sig
Advantages	Male	237	3.93	0.72	-0.876	0.381
	Female	160	3.99	0.75		
Communications	Male	237	3.35	1.16	0.75	0.940
	Female	160	3.34	1.11		

The findings from an independent sample t-test revealed no significant differences exist between males and females in their perceptions regarding the use of MSNSs for teaching and learning EFL (advantages factor),  $t(395)$

= -.876,  $p > .05$ . In addition, the result also indicated that no significant differences exist between males and females in their perceptions regarding the use of MSNS for communication and collaboration among the peers and colleagues,  $t(395) = -.075, p > .05$  (see Table 3). In simpler words, these results suggested that male and female EFL teachers have almost similar perceptions about using social media to support the teaching and learning of English and to communicate and collaborate with their peers and colleagues.

In order to test the differences in perceptions in terms of participants' age, a One-Way between subjects ANOVA was conducted. The Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) result indicated a statistically significant difference in English teachers' perceptions of the Advantages factor of using MSNS based on participants' age;  $F(3, 384) = 68.164, p < .001$ . Post-hoc analysis using Tukey's Honestly Significant Difference (hereafter, HSD) revealed that EFL teachers who are 30 years old or younger have significantly higher scores ( $M = 4.535, SD = .405$ ) for the Advantages factor (using MSNSs for teaching EFL) than the rest of the participants (older than 30 years);  $p < .05$ . (see Table 4 for details).

Similarly, the result also indicated a statistically significant difference in English teachers' perceptions of the Communication factor based on participants' age;  $F(3, 384) = 19.699, p < .001$ . Post-hoc analysis using Tukey HSD revealed that EFL teachers who are 30 years old or younger have significantly higher scores ( $M = 3.885, SD = .959$ ) for the Communication factor (using MSNS for teaching EFL) than the rest of the participants (older than 30 years);  $p < .05$ . (see Table 4 for details).

Table 4. ANOVA results (N=389)

Factor	Levels	N	M	SD	F	Sig
Advantages	30 years or younger	126	4.53	0.40	68.16	$p < 0.001$
	31 to 40 years	118	3.88	0.64		
	41 to 50 years	103	3.58	0.62		
	More than 50 years	42	3.34	0.86		
Communications	30 years or younger	126	3.88	0.96	19.70	$p < 0.001$
	31 to 40 years	118	3.33	1.18		
	41 to 50 years	103	3.03	1.01		
	More than 50 years	42	2.66	1.12		

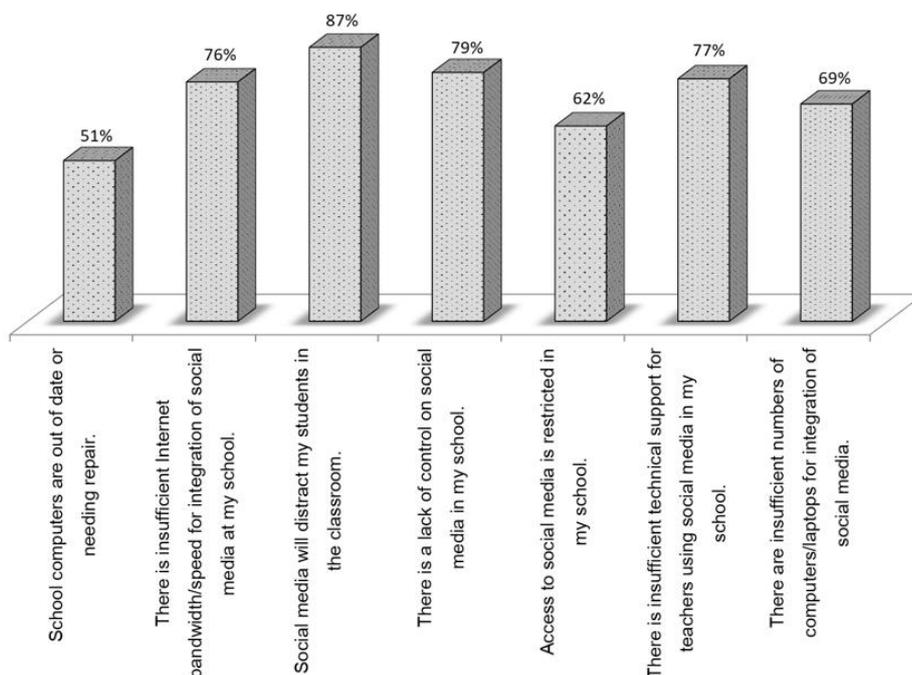


Figure 1. Perceived barriers of using mobile social network sites for language teaching and learning.

*5.3. RQ # 3 - What obstacles do EFL teachers believe stand in the way of adopting Mobile Social Networking Sites in Saudi Arabia for language teaching and learning?*

The third research question attempted to examine participant EFL teachers' perceived barriers of using MSNS for English language teaching and learning. The results indicated that respondents reported a moderate level of perceived barriers with an overall score of 3.483 (SD=1.076) on a scale ranging from 1 to 5. Figure 1 highlights the percentages of the respondents on specific barriers (7 individual items of the scale measuring barriers to using MSNS for teaching and learning). The majority of the participants (87%) thought that social media would distract their students in the classroom (highest concern reported). About half of the participants (51%) thought that school computers are out of date or need repairing (lowest concern).

## 6. DISCUSSION

Literature in foreign language areas suggests that technological advancement is crucial and beneficial for learning a foreign language (Ilter, 2015). This study sought to examine EFL teachers' perceptions regarding the use of social media in teaching and learning English as a foreign language. Another primary intention of the study was to see how effective EFL teachers perceived social media for communication and collaboration with colleagues and peers. The study empirically indicated that EFL teachers perceived mobile social networking sites like Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, etc. as advantageous to be used for teaching and learning of English language in the context of Saudi Arabia. They reported that social media was a great means to exchange TESL-related information, knowledge, and stories with teachers, to give professional support to teachers, to increase students' motivation, and to access online content more easily. EFL teachers were open to the idea of using social media in their instructional practices regardless of their gender. This aligns with previous research that also found the potential benefits of using social media in language education, such as increased student engagement and motivation (Warschauer & Matuchniak, 2010).

However, participant teachers' perceptions significantly differed when compared based on their age brackets. Our research finding suggests that there is a significant difference in the perceptions of EFL teachers regarding the use of social media in English teaching based on their age bracket. Specifically, younger teachers (those with age 30 years or less) were found to have a more positive inclination toward the use of social media in English teaching than older teachers (those with an age of more than 30 years). This finding is consistent with previous research that has found a positive correlation between age and the use of technology in education, with younger teachers being more likely to integrate technology into their instruction (Chen, Liang, & Kwok, 2016; Inan & Lowther, 2010).

One implication for future research is to investigate the reasons behind this age-related difference in perceptions towards the use of social media in English teaching. Factors such as familiarity and comfort with technology, as well as professional development opportunities, may play a role. Additionally, further research could examine the impact of age on teachers' implementation and use of social media in the classroom. In terms of practical application, the finding highlights the potential for professional development opportunities to be tailored to the specific needs of older teachers in order to increase their comfort and confidence in using social media in their teaching. Furthermore, it is also important for schools and teachers to be aware that older teachers may need more support and guidance in using social media in the classroom. Generally, research finding from the current study adds to the growing body of literature on the use of social media in language education, and highlights the importance of considering age as a factor in the perceptions of teachers towards the use of social media in English teaching.

Despite showing a very positive inclination toward the use of social media, EFL teachers reported certain barriers for use of such tools in the context of English teaching in Saudi Arabia. The most highlighted barriers include the distraction caused by social media in the classroom and lack of control over the use of social media in schools. These findings align with previous research that also identified similar barriers to the integration of

technology in education, such as a lack of teacher training and support (Ertmer & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2010; Inan & Lowther, 2010). Its implication for future research is to investigate ways to mitigate or overcome these barriers, such as providing teachers with professional development opportunities to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to effectively integrate social media into their instruction. Additionally, the research could also focus on exploring effective strategies to manage students' use of social media in the classroom to minimize distractions and increase focus on learning.

## 7. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

It is important to recognize the limitations of the current investigation. Acknowledging limitations is an important step in the research process as it allows researchers to be transparent about the potential weaknesses of their study, allows readers to evaluate the study's findings and conclusions in light of these limitations, and makes use of the research findings in a more informed way. Firstly, the current study was based on self-report data, which may be subject to bias and inaccuracies. The study only examined the perceptions of EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia, and the findings may not be generalizable to other contexts or populations.

Further, the study is a cross-sectional study, which means that it can only identify associations between variables at a single point in time, but cannot establish causality or temporal relationships. Conducting a longitudinal study to examine how perceptions of social media use for English teaching evolve over time and how this change is linked to the actual use of such tools. Also, conducting a qualitative study to gain a deeper understanding of the factors that influence teachers' perceptions and usage of social media in their teaching, such as how teachers use social media, how they manage students' use of social media in the classroom, and how they overcome barriers to the use of social media.

## 8. CONCLUSION

This study aimed at exploring EFL teachers' perceptions of using mobile social network sites for language teaching and Learning. To this end, a survey investigation was conducted with language teachers serving in different Saudi institutions. The findings from the investigation established that just like learners, EFL teachers also welcome the idea of using social media to support teaching and learning of the English language in the Saudi context. Although EFL teachers also highlighted some obstacles in using social media for language teaching, given the innumerable promises of social media in this domain, it is recommended that both language learners and teachers should adopt these phenomenal social apps to support the learning and teaching of English as a foreign language.

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**Institutional Review Board Statement:** The Ethical Committee of the Deanship of Scientific Research, Qassim University, Saudi Arabia has granted approval for this study on 13 April 2023 (Ref. No. 23-33-13).

**Transparency:** The author states that the manuscript is honest, truthful, and transparent, that no key aspects of the investigation have been omitted, and that any differences from the study as planned have been clarified. This study followed all writing ethics.

**Competing Interests:** The author declares that there are no conflicts of interests regarding the publication of this paper.

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## APPENDIX

### Appendix 1. Participant consent form.

#### **Project title: Examining EFL Teachers' Perceptions of using Mobile Social Network Sites for Language Teaching and Learning**

Dear Participants,

You are invited to participate in a study titled “**Examining EFL Teachers' Perceptions of using Mobile Social Network Sites for Language Teaching and Learning**”. The survey is designed to conduct research related to English language teachers' perceptions about utilizing social media to support language teaching process. The objectives of this study are:

- To explore EFL teachers' perceptions about using Mobile Social Network Sites for language teaching and learning in the context of Saudi Arabia

- To examine EFL teachers' perceived barriers of using Mobile Social Network Sites for language teaching and learning in the context of Saudi Arabia

This survey form is sent to you for being a potential participant. Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate. If you decide to participate in this research survey, you may withdraw at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you withdraw from participating at any time, you will not be penalized. The survey procedure involves completing an online survey that will take no longer than 12-15 minutes.

All data is stored in a password protected electronic format. Survey responses will be stored electronically on a hard drive or on the cloud. To help protect your confidentiality, the surveys will not contain information that will personally identify you. We do not collect identifying information such as your name, email address or IP address. The results of this study will be used for scholarly purposes only.

If you have any questions about the research study, the principal researcher can be reached at **xxx**.

Please select your choice below. Clicking on the "**Agree**" button below to indicate that:

- I have read the Participant Information Sheet, and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me. I understand and agree to take part.
- I have read the project's Privacy Notice.
- I understand the purpose of the research project and my involvement in it.
- I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any stage and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.
- I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified, and my personal results will remain confidential.
- I understand that any information from the survey questionnaire I get is confidential and that no information that I disclose will lead to the identification of any individual in the reports on the project either by the researcher or by any other party.

**Appendix 2.** Examining EFL teachers' perceptions of using mobile social network sites for language teaching and learning.

Survey Questionnaire

**Q1.** What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

**Q2.** How old are you?

\_\_\_\_\_ years

**Q3.** How long have you been teaching EFL?

\_\_\_\_\_ years

**Q4.** Which type of institution do you teach in?

- Public sector (government)
- Private sector

**Q5.** Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement when thinking about using Mobile Social Networking Sites (MSNSs) like Telegram, WhatsApp, Facebook etc. as a sort of social media in English language teaching and learning. Please read each statement carefully and mark your ideas as 1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = no opinion (neutral) 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
EFL teachers may use MSNSs to share feedback by posting messages to others.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
EFL teachers may use MSNSs to exchange TESL related information, knowledge and stories with teachers.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
EFL teachers may use MSNSs to receive professional support from teachers.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
EFL teachers may use MSNSs to increase communication between teachers.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
EFL teachers may use MSNSs to develop communication skills.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
EFL teachers may use MSNSs to give professional support to teachers.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
EFL teachers may use MSNSs to be involved in a world of information.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
MSNSs allow me to have a more detailed, in-depth conversation with my peers and colleagues in the course.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
MSNSs allow me to comment and discuss ideas with my peers and colleagues more efficiently as compared to traditional face-to-face classes.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
MSNSs are useful for teaching English.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
MSNSs allow me to express my thoughts more clearly and openly.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I believe that the use of MSNSs increases students' motivation.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I feel more comfortable sharing and discussing my ideas on MSNSs than I do in a traditional face-to-face classroom.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I would like to use mobile-based materials and activities in my classroom as much as possible.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Compared to face-to-face classes, I prefer using MSNSs to share and discuss ideas because it is convenient.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I believe that the use of MSNSs positively impacts student higher order thinking skills.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Compared to face-to-face classes, I am more comfortable responding to online discussions using MSNSs.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Social media will distract my students in the classroom.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Social media allows teachers to access online content more easily.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Access to social media is restricted in my school/ institute/university.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Social media should be used as a means to connect with students beyond the classroom.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Social media can better facilitate sharing of experiences, ideas and advice among professionals/ peers.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I know how to integrate mobile resources into existing classroom curricula.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I am confident using MSNSs as a social media as a teaching tool.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I am competent to use mobile-based materials in the classroom.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
There are insufficient numbers of computers/ laptops/tablets/smart phones for integration of social media.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
There is insufficient Internet bandwidth/speed for integration of social media at my school/institute/ university.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
There is insufficient technical support for teachers using social media in my school/institute/ university.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
There is a lack of control on social media in my school.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
School/university computers are not currently functioning (e.g., out of date or needing repair).	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Students can improve their English skills through the use of MSNSs.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Students try harder when they are learning with technology.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Students can be motivated by the use of MSNSs in the classroom.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Students will be more attentive in mobile-assisted English language teaching classes.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Internet resources can replace textbooks.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
It is easy to find ESL/EFL materials on the MSNSs.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

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