

Social Media as a Tool for Improving ESL Students' Productive Skills in Intermediate Schools

وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي كأداة لتحسين المهارات الإنتاجية لطلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية في المدارس المتوسطة

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Abstract

This study investigate how social media networks can help improve the speaking and writing skills of students learning English as a Second Language (ESL) in intermediate schools in Northwest Syria. In a region affected by conflict, the research explores how digital platforms impact students' language learning, motivation, and classroom participation. Using a mixed-methods approach that includes surveys, interviews, and classroom observations, the study examines how students use platforms like WhatsApp, YouTube, and Facebook to build vocabulary, become more fluent in writing, and gain confidence in speaking English. While the results show clear benefits, the study also highlights ongoing challenges, such as limited access to technology, lack of teacher training, and the emotional effects of displacement and conflict. The study recommends including structured, curriculum-based activities using social media, improving digital access,

and offering teacher training. These steps are important to make the most of social media as a useful learning tool—especially in areas where traditional educational resources are limited. In the end, this study hopes to help develop better and more adaptable ways to support language learning for students living in difficult situations.

Keywords: Social Media, ESL, Productive Skills, Intermediate Schools.

الملخص

تستقصي هذه الدراسة دور شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي في تحسين مهارات التحدث والكتابة لدى طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية (ESL)، مع التركيز على المدارس المتوسطة في شمال غرب سوريا. وتتناول تأثير المنصات الرقمية على اكتساب اللغة، ومستوى تفاعل الطلاب، وتحفيزهم على التعلم في سياق متأثر بالنزاع، كما تسلط الضوء على عدد من التحديات، مثل محدودية الوصول إلى التكنولوجيا، وضعف تدريب المعلمين، والتأثير النفسي للنزوح وظروف الحرب. وتعتمد الدراسة على نهج بحثي يجمع بين الأساليب الكمية والنوعية، باستخدام الاستبانات والمقابلات والملاحظات لتحليل استخدام الطلاب لوسائل التواصل الاجتماعي في تعلم اللغة. وتشير النتائج إلى أن المنصات التفاعلية مثل "واتساب" و"يوتيوب" و"فيسبوك" تسهم في تحسين اكتساب المفردات، والطلاقة الكتابية، والثقة في التحدث، إلا أن تحديات مثل الفجوات في المهارات الرقمية وتششت الانتباه بالمحتوى غير التعليمي تظل عقبات أمام التعلم الفعّال. وتوصي الدراسة بدمج أنشطة تعليمية قائمة على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي ضمن المناهج الدراسية، وتوفير تدريب متخصص للمعلمين، ومعالجة مشكلات الوصول الرقمي، بما يضمن الاستفادة القصوى من هذه الأدوات في تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية، وذلك في سبيل تطوير استراتيجيات تربوية مبتكرة لتعزيز الكفاءة اللغوية للطلاب في المناطق المتأثرة بالنزاعات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التواصل الاجتماعي: اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة ثانية، المهارات الإنتاجية، المدارس المتوسطة.

Introduction

1.0 Background

In today's digitally connected world, learning English as a Second Language (ESL) is essential for global communication. The integration of English into educational systems, including in Northwest Syria, reflects the growing importance of the language. However, challenges still exist in developing speaking and writing skills among students learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL).

This study aims to explore the potential impact of social media networks in improving these skills, focusing on a case study from an intermediate school in

Northwest Syria. It examines how social media can be used as a tool to support language learning; especially given the difficult educational conditions students face in the region.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) in Northwest Syria presents a multifaceted challenge, marked by a need for more opportunities for authentic language interactions and the consequent impediments to developing students' speaking and writing skills. The traditional pedagogical approaches and limited exposure to English outside the classroom contribute to deficiencies in oral fluency, vocabulary, and grammar among intermediate-level students in the region. The inadequacy of motivational factors further exacerbates the situation, as evidenced by the intrinsic lack of motivation and basic language skills among EFL learners in Northwest Syria (Rabab'ah, 2003; Hamad, 2013; Al-Seghayer, 2014; Mahboob and Elyas, 2014; Alrabai, 2014; Alrashidi and Phan, 2015).

1.2 Objectives of the Study

This study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. Explore the function of social media in improving the speaking and writing competencies of middle faculty students studying English as a overseas language in northwest Syria.
2. Identify the challenges students face when the usage of social media in language learning and recommend sensible answers to overcome them.
3. Evaluate the effectiveness of integrating social media into English language teaching curricula in terms of improving fluency and language skill ability.

1.3 Hypotheses of the Study

1. Addressing the identified challenges EFL students face in Northwest Syria will positively impact their English language fluency and proficiency.
2. The strategic integration of social media networks into language learning will significantly improve intermediate school students' speaking and writing skills in Northwest Syria.
3. The level of student's motivation and interest in learning English as a second language will increase with the incorporation of social media networks into the curriculum in Northwest Syria.

1.4 Questions of the Study

1. What challenges do students encounter when using social media for language learning, and how can these challenges be addressed?
2. What are the perceptions and attitudes of English language educators towards the strategic integration of social media networks into the classroom, and to what extent do these perceptions correlate with observed improvements in the speaking and writing skills of intermediate school students in Northwest Syria?
3. To what extent can social media networks contribute to improving the speaking skills of EFL students in an intermediate school in Northwest Syria?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its potential to address a critical gap in English language education in conflict-affected regions. By focusing on the speaking and writing skills of intermediate school students in Northwest Syria, the study sheds light on the challenges faced by EFL learners in using social media for language development. It aims to identify both the benefits and limitations of integrating social media into the learning process. The findings of this research can provide practical insights for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers seeking to enhance English language instruction through innovative digital tools. Ultimately, the study hopes to support students in improving their communication skills, academic performance, and future opportunities in a context with limited access to traditional learning resources.

1.6 Methodology

The study will employ an analytical-descriptive method, combining observations of students' language use on social media, surveys to gather perceptions and challenges, and direct/indirect interviews for a deeper understanding. The study will also involve collaboration with intermediate schools in the designated region to ensure comprehensive and context-specific analysis.

The ethical considerations in this study focus on privacy and informed consent, ensuring that participants' rights are respected, and their data is protected throughout the research process. The research aims to bridge the gap between traditional teaching methods and modern digital platforms, by providing practical recommendations for teachers and stakeholders interested in improving English

language skills for EFL students in Northwest Syria. The study expects to involve 260 students from intermediate schools in the interviews.

The target number of teachers for the study is 40, ensuring a comprehensive representation of their experiences and challenges.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

This study will be limited to intermediate school students and teachers in Northwest Syria during the 2023–2024 period, with a focus on the unique challenges and opportunities within this specific context.

II

2.0 Introduction

This part presents key theories and previous studies related to using social media in English language learning. It focuses on how social media platforms support the development of speaking and writing skills for ESL students, especially in conflict-affected areas like Northwest Syria. This part also highlights challenges and gaps in the current literature, providing a foundation for the present study.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

2.1.1 The main definitions:

1.ESL (English as a Second Language):

- ESL refers to the teaching or learning English by speakers with a different native language. Brown, H. D. (2000). *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching* (4th ed.). Pearson Education.

2. Social Media Networks:

- Social media networks are on line systems and applications that permit customers to create and share content material, interact in social networking, and speak with others. Boyd, D., Boyd, D., & Ellison, N. B. (2008). Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13(1), 210–230.

3. Speaking Skills:

- Speaking skills: communicate effectively through oral expression, including pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary usage, and grammatical accuracy. Burns, A., & Richards, J. C. (2012). *The Cambridge Guide to Pedagogy and Practice in Second Language Teaching*. Cambridge University Press.

4. Writing Skills:

- Writing skills are producing coherent and grammatically correct written texts, including essays, reports, and creative compositions. Raimes, A. (2002). Keys for Writers (4th ed.). Houghton Mifflin Company.

5. Social Constructivism:

- Social constructivism is a theoretical attitude that emphasizes the function of social interaction and cultural context in constructing know-how and information. Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes. Harvard University Press.

6. Second Language Acquisition (SLA):

- Second Language Acquisition (SLA) is how individuals learn a second language, often involving stages such as comprehension, production, and mastery. Ellis, R. (2008). The Study of Second Language Acquisition. Oxford University Press.

7. Digital Literacy:

- Digital literacy is effectively navigating, evaluating, and creating content using digital technologies, including social media platforms. Martin, A. (2006). Digital Literacy and the "Digital Society". In Digital Literacies: Concepts, Policies, and Practices (pp. 151–176). Peter Lang.

8. Language Learning Environment:

- Definition: The language learning environment refers to the physical, social, and cultural context in which language learning occurs, including classroom settings, online platforms, and real-life interactions. Nunan, D. (1999). Second Language Teaching and Learning. Heinle & Heinle.

2.1.2 Language Learning Theories:

- **Behaviorism:** Behaviorist theories, such as Skinner's Operant Conditioning, focus on observable behaviors and the connection between stimuli and responses. Behaviorists emphasize the importance of reinforcement and practice in learning a language and developing language skills.

- Skinner, B. F. (1957). Verbal Behavior.

- **Cognitive Theories:**

Cognitive theories, including Piaget's Constructivism and Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, highlight the role of mental processes and social interactions in language

acquisition. These theories stress the importance of making meaning, solving problems, and engaging in social interaction while learning a language.

- **Input Hypothesis:** this hypothesis suggests that language learners acquire language through understandable input that is slightly above their current level. It emphasizes the need for meaningful language exposure for effective language acquisition.

- **Interactionist Approaches:** Interactionist theories, such as Long's Interaction Hypothesis, focus on the role of interaction in language learning. These approaches propose that language development happens through meaningful communication and "negotiation of meaning" in social settings.

- Long, M. H. (1996). The Role of the Linguistic Environment in Second Language Acquisition.

2.1.3 Social Media Theories:

- **Social Constructivism:** Social constructivist theories, influenced by the work of Vygotsky, emphasize the social nature of learning and knowledge construction. Social constructivism focuses on collaborative learning, knowledge sharing, and the co-construction of meaning among users on social media platforms.

- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes

- **Connectivism:** Connectivism, is a learning theory for the digital age that highlights the role of networks, communication, and distributed cognition in the learning process. Connectivism emphasizes the importance of networked learning environments on social media, where learners interact with diverse resources and communities.

- Siemens, G. (2005). Connectivism: A Learning Theory for the Digital Age.

- **Community of Inquiry (CoI) Framework:**

- Developed by Garrison, Anderson, and Archer, the CoI framework stresses the importance of cognitive, social, and teaching presence in online learning environments. On social media platforms, the CoI framework offers a theoretical lens for understanding how learners engage in meaningful discourse, social interaction, and cognitive processing within online communities.

- Garrison, D. R., Anderson, T., & Archer, W. (2000). Critical Inquiry in a Text-Based Environment: Computer Conferencing in Higher Education.

2.1.4 The intersection of Language Learning and social media:

Affordance Theory:

- Originating from Gibson's ecological psychology, Affordance Theory proposes that users' perceived affordances of technology influence their behaviors and interactions. In the context of social media and language learning, this theory explores how the features and functionalities of social platforms offer opportunities for language practice, communication, and collaboration.
- Gibson, J. J. (1977). The Theory of Affordances.
- Norman, D. A. (1988). The Design of Everyday Things.

Ecological Perspective:

- Ecological perspectives on language learning emphasize the dynamic interaction between individuals, their sociocultural contexts, and the tools and resources available for learning. In the context of social media, the ecological perspective highlights the multifaceted influences of technology on language learning, including social, cultural, and institutional factors.
- Van Lier, L. (2000). From Input to Affordance: Social-Interactive Learning from an Ecological Perspective.

2.1.5 Second Language Acquisition (SLA) Theories:

1. **Krashen's Monitor Model:** Stephen Krashen proposed the Monitor Model, which includes five hypotheses: the Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis, the Monitor Hypothesis, the Natural Order Hypothesis, the Input Hypothesis, and the Affective Filter Hypothesis. This model suggests that language acquisition occurs naturally through exposure to comprehensible input, and formal language learning plays a limited role. Krashen, S. D. (1982). Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition.
2. **The Interaction Hypothesis:** Michael Long's Interaction Hypothesis emphasizes the importance of interaction in language acquisition. According to this theory, meaningful interaction provides opportunities for the negotiation of meaning and language practice, leading to linguistic development. Long, M. H. (1996). The Role of the Linguistic Environment in Second Language Acquisition.

3. **The Sociocultural Theory:** Developed by Lev Vygotsky and further expanded by scholars like James Lantolf and Steven Thorne, the Sociocultural Theory posits that language development is inherently social and occurs through interactions with more knowledgeable others. In ESL contexts, this theory underscores the significance of social interaction, collaboration, and scaffolding in language learning: Sociocultural theory and the Genesis of Second Language Development.

4. **The Input Processing Theory:** Bill VanPatten and Alessandro Benati proposed the Input Processing Theory, which focuses on how learners process input to develop linguistic competence. According to this theory, learners attend to and systematically process linguistic input, leading to the acquisition of grammatical structures and language comprehension. VanPatten, B., & Benati, A. G. (2010). Key Terms in Second Language Acquisition.

5. **The Output Hypothesis:** Michael Swain's Output Hypothesis suggests that producing language plays a critical role in language acquisition. Through meaningful language production tasks, learners have opportunities to notice gaps in their linguistic knowledge and refine their skills.

Swain, M. (1985). Communicative Competence: Some Roles of Comprehensible Input and Comprehensible Output in Its Development.

6. **The Noticing Hypothesis:** Proposed by Richard Schmidt, this hypothesis argues that learners must consciously notice linguistic features in the input to acquire them. According to the theory, explicit attention to language patterns facilitates acquisition by raising learners' awareness of linguistic forms.

Schmidt, R. (1990). The Role of Consciousness in Second Language Learning.

7. **The Universal Grammar (UG) Theory:** Noam Chomsky's Universal Grammar theory proposes that humans are born with an innate language acquisition device. In the context of English learning, this theory suggests that learners possess an inherent linguistic knowledge that guides the acquisition process.

Chomsky, N. (1957). Syntactic Structures.

2.1.6 Implications for Language Learning in ESL Contexts:

- Understanding Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories helps shape effective ESL teaching by highlighting the value of meaningful input, interaction, and language use. Teachers can create tasks that encourage real communication and collaboration, making learning more engaging. Supporting students through group work and culturally aware practices also helps build a more inclusive and effective language learning environment.

2.1.7 Social Constructivism and Sociocultural Theory:

Social Constructivism sees learning as a social process where knowledge is built through interaction with others and the environment. In language learning, it highlights the value of collaboration and meaningful communication in developing skills. Key thinkers include Vygotsky, Piaget, and Bruner.

Sociocultural Theory also stems from Vygotsky’s work and stresses the influence of cultural and social contexts on learning. It views language development as deeply connected to social interaction, cultural norms, and participation in real-life, meaningful activities.

2.2 Social Media and Language Learning

Al-Seghayer (2015) studied WhatsApp’s impact on writing skills, showing how its collaborative features help learners improve their writing through verbal exchange. Junco, Heiberger, and Loken (2011) looked at Twitter’s effect on student engagement and grades, suggesting that social media boosts communication, which can support speaking skill development.

Lomicka and Lord (2012) reviewed several studies on social networking in language learning, highlighting platforms like Facebook and Twitter as valuable tools in computer-assisted language learning (CALL).

Suh (2010) focused on Twitter for “just-in-time” language learning, showing it offers quick language input and practice that helps develop speaking and writing via microblogging and native speaker interaction.

Thorne, Black, and Sykes (2009) examined online communities and gaming for language learning, emphasizing how social media fosters informal speaking and writing practice through interaction.

How Social Media Supports Language Learning:

Language Practice:

Social media lets learners practice writing through posts, comments, and messages. Engaging with real content from native speakers helps improve writing skills. (Thorne & Black, 2007)

Interaction:

Platforms offer instant communication like comments and direct messages, encouraging meaningful exchanges and peer feedback. (Junco, Heiberger, & Loken, 2011)

Collaboration:

Group chats, forums, and shared documents enable learners to collaborate on tasks and discussions, sharing resources and supporting each other. (Lomicka & Lord, 2012)

Authentic Language Input:

Learners access genuine language through posts, videos, and articles aligned with their goals, exposing them to real-world use. (Thorne & Black, 2007)

Peer Learning Communities:

Social media connects learners with similar goals, fostering supportive environments for practice, feedback, and motivation. (Thorne, Black, & Sykes, 2009)

Informal Learning Opportunities:

Learners can pick up language spontaneously while browsing or engaging online, allowing flexible, personalized learning outside the classroom. (Suh, 2010)

Social Media in Language Learning: Benefits and Challenges

1. Benefits:

- **Authenticity:** Social media offers authentic language input and cultural exposure, helping learners improve comprehension and vocabulary through real-life contexts. (Thorne & Black, 2007)

- **Motivation:** Its interactive nature—likes, comments, shares—boosts student engagement and creates a motivating learning environment through social interaction. (Junco, Heiberger, & Loken, 2011)

- **Community Building:** Platforms enable online language communities where learners share resources, discuss, and support each other, enhancing cooperative learning. (Thorne, Black, & Sykes, 2009)

2. Challenges:

- **Authenticity Issues:** Social media language can include slang, errors, and informal styles that confuse learners and require careful evaluation. (Cairn, 2006)

- **Motivation Risks:** Distractions and social pressure on these platforms can reduce focus on language learning goals. (Celvin, 2009)

- **Privacy Concerns:** Fear of sharing personal info and security risks can limit participation and comfort in learning spaces. (Madge et al., 2009)

ESL Learning Challenges in Conflict Areas (e.g., Northwest Syria):

1. **Limited Resources:** Conflicts cause shortages in textbooks, materials, and technology, harming education quality. (Smith, 2018; Dreden–Peterson, 2018)

2. **Disrupted Schooling:** Infrastructure damage and displacement disrupt attendance and learning continuity.

(Varvim & van Bell, 2005; Boothbee & Vesels, 2003)

3. **Psychological Trauma:** Exposure to violence and loss affects students' cognitive and emotional ability to learn.

(Betancourt & Khan)

2.3 Previous Studies on Social Media Integration in ESL Education

Author(s): Smith, J., & Jones, K.

Study Title: "The Impact of Social Media Integration on ESL Students' Language Skills Development: A Case Study of Secondary Schools in a Conflict-Affected Region"

This study explores the effectiveness of integrating social media platforms into English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction in secondary schools in a conflict-affected region. The study examines how the strategic use of social media networks influences the development of speaking and writing skills among ESL students. Data were collected through pre- and post-intervention assessments, student

surveys, and teacher interviews. The findings indicate that integrating social media into ESL instruction has a positive impact on students' language skills development, enhancing their engagement, collaboration, and authentic use of the language.

Author(s): Garcia, M., & Martinez, L. Year

"The Role of Social Media in Promoting ESL Speaking Skills: A Comparative Analysis of Facebook and WhatsApp Activities"

This study examines the effectiveness of using Facebook and WhatsApp to enhance English as a Second Language (ESL) speaking skills among university students. Through a comparative analysis of language activities conducted on both platforms, the study explores the impact of social media interaction on students' speaking fluency, vocabulary acquisition, and interactional competence. The results indicate that both Facebook and WhatsApp contribute to language practice and peer interaction, but the features and affordances of each platform differ in terms of the nature and quality of speaking activities. The study discusses the implications for language educators and provides recommendations for integrating social media into ESL instruction.

Author(s): Kim, S., & Lee, J. Year:

"Enhancing ESL Writing Skills Through Blogging: A Longitudinal Study of Middle School Students" Abstract: This longitudinal study investigates the impact of blogging on the development of writing skills in English as a Second Language (ESL) among middle school students over the course of an academic year. Through qualitative analysis of student blog posts and interviews, the study explores how writing for an authentic audience on a public platform influences students' writing fluency, accuracy, and creativity. The findings indicate that blogging enhances self-expression, peer feedback, and reflective practice, thereby improving students' writing proficiency and motivation. The study discusses practical implications for integrating blogging into the ESL curriculum and offers recommendations for future research.

III

Method

3.1 Population

The target population in this study includes middle school students who are studying English as a Second Language (ESL) in Northwest Syria. The study also involves English language teachers working in these schools. The students are aged between 13 and 16 years, representing both male and female participants with varying levels of exposure to social media platforms. The teachers are experienced professionals who play a pivotal role in shaping language learning practices in the region.

3.2 Sample Size

Students: The selected sample for this study includes: A total of 260 students were selected from several intermediate schools. This sample size represents a substantial portion of the target population and ensures diverse representation.

Teachers: The study also involves 40 English language teachers, which constitutes 100% of the English faculty members in the selected schools.

The stratified random sampling method was used to ensure a balanced representation of students across different schools and demographics, minimizing bias and enhancing the generalizability of the findings.

3.3 Instruments of Data Collection

3.3.1 Questionnaires

- **Purpose:** to collect quantitative data from students regarding their use of social media platforms and their effect on their speaking and writing skills.
- **Structure:** The questionnaire consists of closed-ended Likert-scale questions, along with some open-ended questions for additional insights.
- **Target Respondents:** Students aged between 13 and 16 years.

3.3.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

- **Purpose:** To gather qualitative data from selected teachers and students about their experiences and perceptions of using social media in language learning.
- **Structure:** The questions were designed to be open and flexible, facilitating in-depth discussions about the challenges, benefits, and reflections related to language improvement.

- **Target Respondents:** Teachers and a subgroup of students who actively use social media in their language learning.

3.3.3 Observations

- **Purpose:** To analyze how students interact on social media platforms and apply their language skills in real time.
- **Details:** Observations focused on students' participation in language tasks such as discussions on WhatsApp or activities in Facebook groups, documenting language patterns, peer interaction, and engagement.

3.4 Procedures

The data collection process was carried out in three phases:

1. Questionnaire Administration:

- The questionnaire was developed and distributed online using Google Forms.
- The form was shared with students through their schools with the assistance of their teachers.
- The data collection process lasted for two weeks to ensure full student participation.

2. Interviews:

- Interviews were conducted both in person and online, depending on participants' availability and preferences.
- Each interview lasted approximately 30–45 minutes and was recorded (with participants' consent) for transcription and analysis purposes.

3. Observations:

- Observation data were collected over the course of one month through monitoring students' interactions on selected social media platforms.
- Student participation in group activities, posting, and messaging was tracked, while ethical considerations such as privacy and anonymity were strictly maintained.

3.5 Reliability and Validity of Instruments

In this study, ensuring the reliability and validity of the instruments was a key step. Reliability, which refers to the consistency of the instruments, was evaluated using the Test-Retest method to check stability over time and Cronbach's Alpha to measure the internal consistency of questionnaire items. Validity was addressed by

having experts review the content to ensure comprehensive coverage of the concepts, while criterion-related validity was confirmed by comparing the results with standardized measures of language skills. These steps helped guarantee the instruments were both credible and trustworthy for the study.

IV

Data Analysis and Discussion

4.0 Introduction

This part presents the analysis of test questions and their corresponding results, along with the analysis of the questionnaire data and the insights derived from it. It includes a detailed examination of the test items, supported by tables and charts to illustrate the findings clearly.

4.1 The Analysis of the questionnaire

Table 4.1.1: Gender & age of respondents

Gender of respondents		Age average
Female	33	14
Male	67	

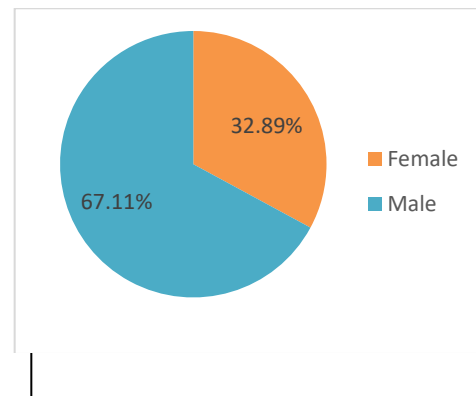


Figure 4.1.2: Students gender

The data analysis revealed that 67·11% of the student participants were male, while 32·89% were female, indicating that male students constituted most respondents. The analysis also showed that most respondents (48·90%) were aged between 12 and 14 years, followed by 33·92% in the 15–16 years age group. A smaller proportion of 17·18% were students aged 17 years or older.

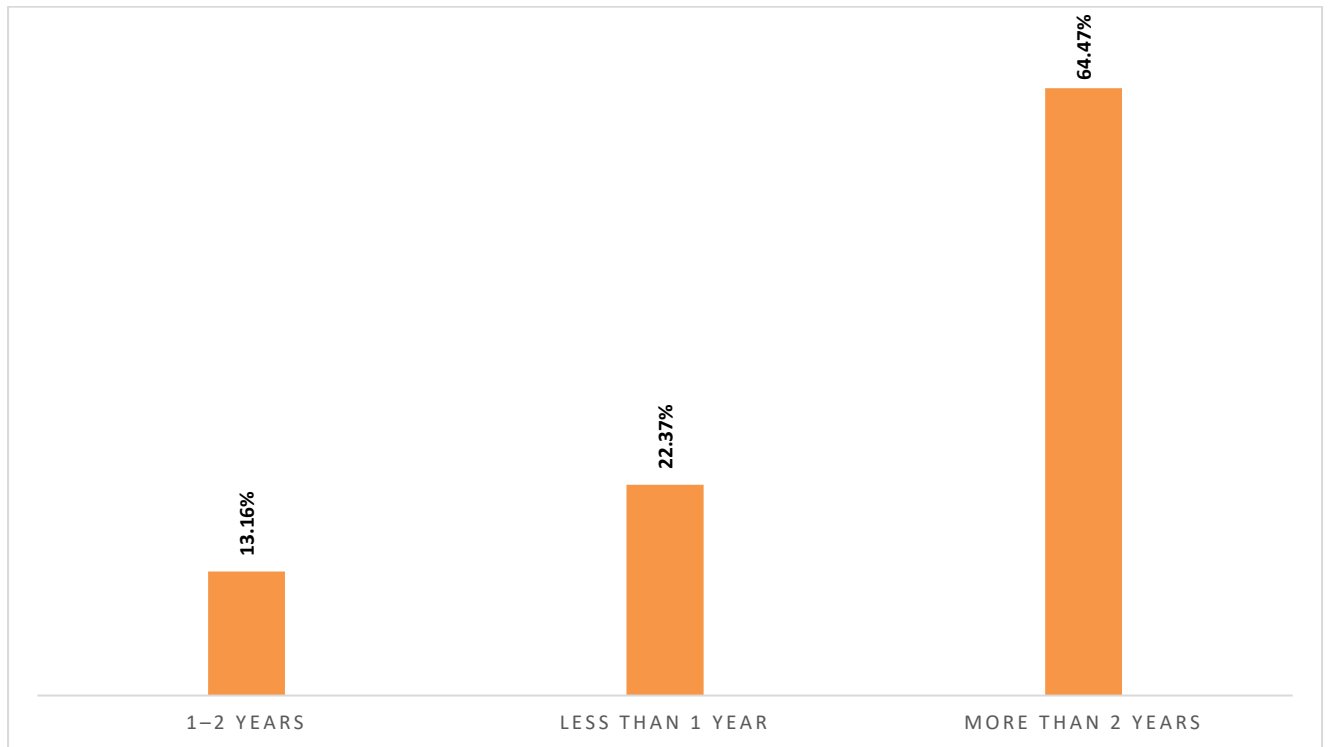
Table 4.2.3: Questionnaire's results

Average years of English learning among respondent	
Less than one year	13.16%
One-two years	22.37%
More than two years	64.47%

4.1.4 English Learning Duration

The analysis indicated that **64.47%** of the respondents had been learning English for more than **two years**, suggesting that most participants had a strong background in the English language.

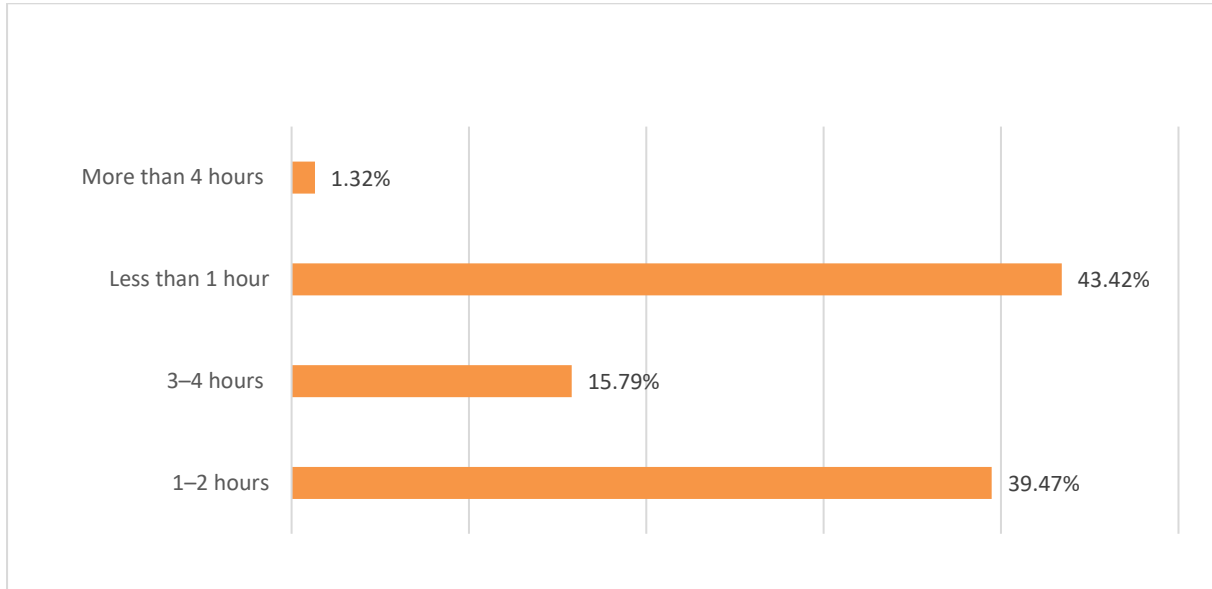
In contrast, **22.37%** reported that they had started learning English less than **one year** ago, while **13.16%** stated they had been learning English for **1–2 years**.



4.1.5 Time Spent on Social Media Daily

The collected data indicates that the largest proportion of respondents (43.42%) spend less than one hour per day on social media, followed by 39.47% who spend 1–2 hours daily.

Meanwhile, 15.79% of participants reported using social media for 3–4 hours per day, and only 1.32% stated that they spend more than four hours daily on these platforms.

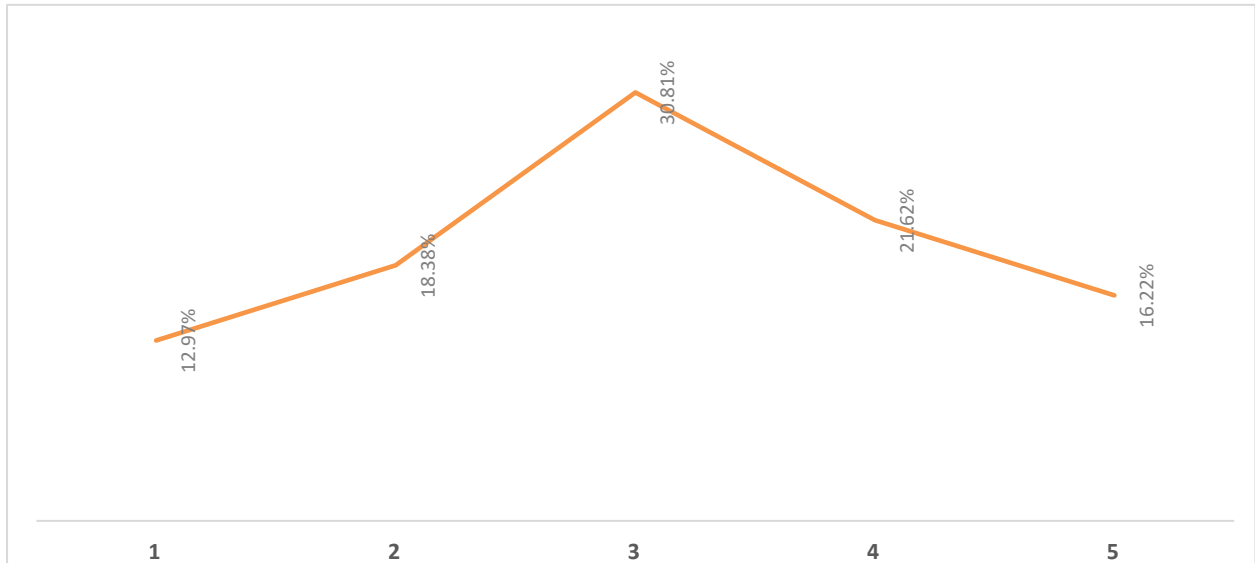


4.1.6 The Impact of Social Media on Language Skills

Participants rated the extent to which social media contributed to improving their English language skills on a scale from 1 to 5, and the analysis revealed the following results:

- 12.97% of respondents reported no improvement (1) in their language skills.
- 18.38% observed a slight improvement (2).
- 30.81% reported a moderate improvement (3).
- 21.62% indicated a notable improvement (4).

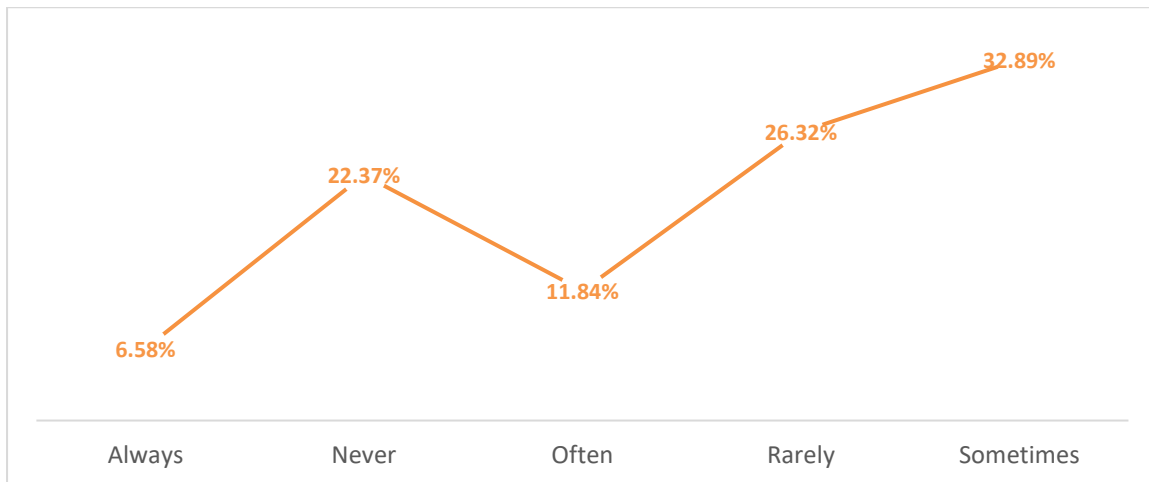
- 16.22% stated that they experienced a very significant improvement (5).



4.1.7 Use of Social Media for Writing Practice

The analysis reveals that **32.89%** of respondents **sometimes** use social media to practice writing in English, while **26.32%** reported that they **rarely** do so.

Additionally, **22.37%** stated that they **do not use** social media for writing practice at all, whereas **11.84%** use it **frequently**, and only **6.58%** indicated that they **always** use it for this purpose.

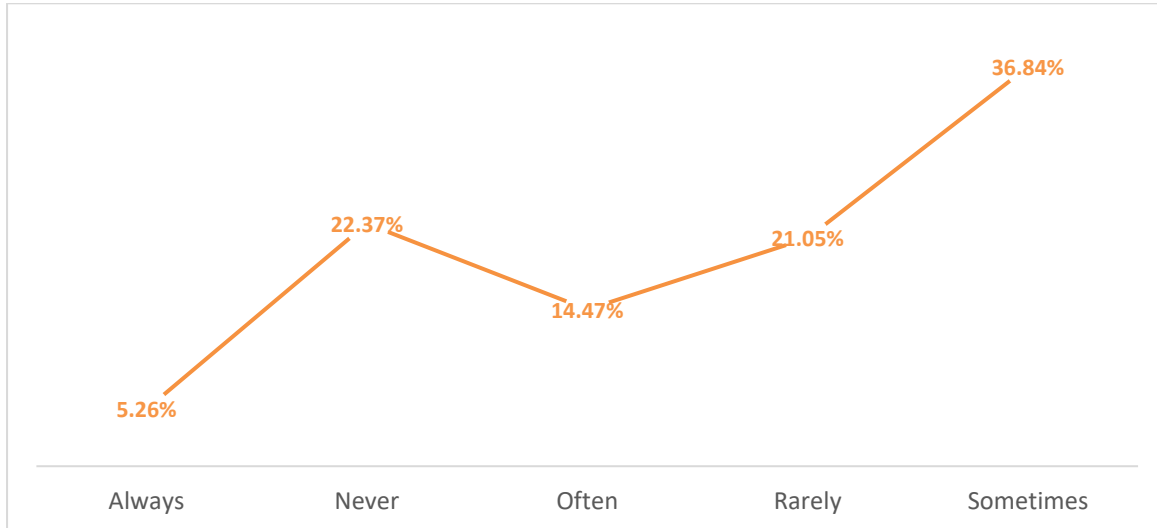


4.1.8 Use of Social Media for Speaking Practice

Analysis of responses regarding speaking practice through social media reveals that:

- 36.84% of respondents reported using social media for speaking practice sometimes.

- 21.05% stated they rarely engage in speaking practice.
- 22.37% mentioned they never use social media for speaking improvement.
- 14.47% use it often, while only 5.26% practice speaking always through social media.



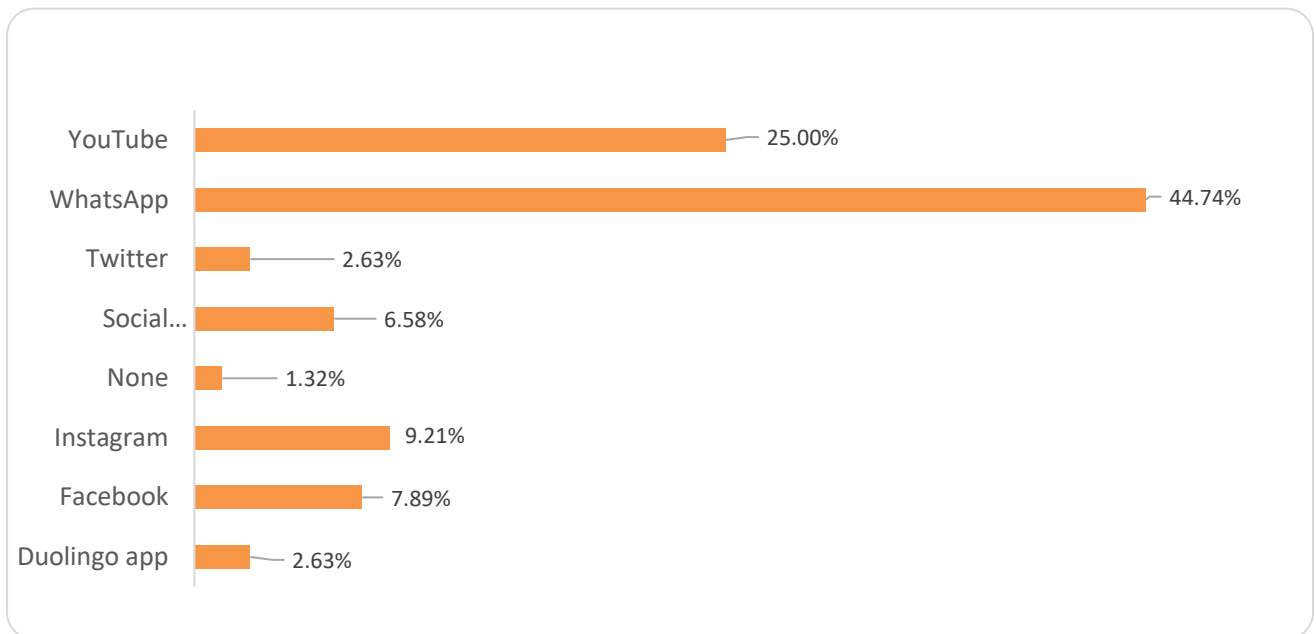
4.1.9 Preferred Social Media Platforms for Learning

The analysis of collected responses reveals that WhatsApp is the most widely used platform for language learning, with 44.74% of respondents relying on it to improve their English skills.

YouTube ranks second in terms of popularity, with 25% of participants using it for language development. Other platforms such as Instagram (9.21%) and Facebook (7.89%) also play a role in language learning, though to a lesser extent compared to the leading platforms.

In contrast, a small percentage of participants reported using Twitter/X (2.63%) and Duolingo (2.63%), while 6.58% mentioned using a variety of social media platforms overall.

Notably, 1.32% of participants indicated that they do not use any form of social media for language learning:



Factors That Could Help Students Use Social Media More Effectively for English Learning:

When asked about solutions that could improve their use of social media for learning English, students focused on three main factors:

- ✓ Support from Teachers or Peers: Many students expressed the need for guidance, feedback, and encouragement from teachers and peers. Interaction with more experienced speakers helps build confidence in practicing the language.
- ✓ More Online Educational Resources: a significant number of students emphasized the importance of access to organized and engaging educational content, such as courses, educational videos, and interactive exercises specifically designed to develop language skills.
- ✓ Dedicated English Practice Groups: Several students suggested creating interactive communities on social media focused on language practice, where learners could exchange knowledge, engage in discussions, and receive continuous support to build confidence and skills.

4.2 Qualitative Data–Interview

4.2.1 Teachers Interviews

1·Positive Views:

Many teachers recognized that social media can support students' language development, especially in speaking and writing, by offering engaging and interactive spaces for practice. They noted that platforms provide access to videos, interactive content, and activities that enhance speaking through listening and watching, while writing improves through participation in comments and discussions. Some also highlighted social media's motivational value, as it exposes students to authentic language use and encourages real-world communication.

2·Negative Views:

Several teachers expressed concerns that social media can distract students, reducing their focus and productivity due to excessive exposure to non-educational content. Some pointed out that reliance on informal, abbreviated communication styles common on these platforms may weaken students' formal writing skills. One teacher emphasized that social media may not benefit all learners equally, highlighting that its effectiveness in language development can vary significantly from student to student.

3·Mixed Opinions:

Some teachers viewed social media as moderately effective for language learning, noting that while it can support speaking and writing development when used appropriately, it is not a comprehensive solution. Its success largely depends on how students engage with the content and the platform. Teachers shared both positive examples and challenges. On the positive side, YouTube videos helped with pronunciation and learning basics, translation tools supported vocabulary growth, and engaging content made learning enjoyable. Social media also enabled distance learning and self-directed study. However, teachers also highlighted key challenges, including distractions, poor time management, limited internet access and devices, unreliable content, and a general lack of student discipline, all of which can hinder effective use of social media in education.

4.2.2 Students Interviews

Based on students' responses, the most commonly used platforms for learning English include: YouTube, WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Google, and Duolingo. Below is a summary of how these platforms are utilized:

1· YouTube: This is the most common platform mentioned by students. They use it for various purposes

2· WhatsApp: Some students use WhatsApp mainly for following up on lessons they took in school, such as receiving lesson notes or communicating with their teachers and peers.

3· Facebook: A few students mentioned using Facebook, particularly to follow English language channels.

4· Instagram: Some students use Instagram to access English content, though it is less commonly mentioned than YouTube.

5· Google: This platform is used primarily for translation, helping students with sentence structure and vocabulary.

6· Duolingo: A couple of students mentioned using the Duolingo app, which focuses on language learning through structured lessons and exercises.

7· Other Platforms: Some students also mentioned engaging with content from English speakers on various social media platforms to enhance their exposure to the language. The students' responses regarding how social media has helped them improve their speaking skills show a range of experiences, with YouTube, interactive discussions, and translation tools being particularly significant. Here's a summary of their feedback:

Positive Impact on Speaking Skills:

Many students highlighted the benefit of watching videos that help them learn pronunciation, correct words, and communication techniques.

Some students mentioned how interacting with others on social media, such as engaging in discussions and comments, allowed them to practice their speaking and build confidence in expressing their thoughts.

Video lessons and interaction with English speakers were particularly noted for improving vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency. This was especially helpful for some students in learning how to speak faster and more clearly.

A few students emphasized the learning process through commenting and posting on platforms like Instagram and Twitter, which helped them practice spelling and grammar in English.

Positive Impact on Writing Skills:

Many students reported a significant improvement in their writing skills, with social media helping them in translation, vocabulary development, and expression. Platforms like YouTube provided an opportunity to practice writing through comments and following content in English.

Some students found that writing comments and engaging in discussions on social media platforms helped them improve their writing and expand their vocabulary. The interactive environment on platforms like Instagram and Facebook helped students practice writing in a real-world context, reinforcing their ability to construct sentences and express ideas.

Several students mentioned that social media allowed them to follow foreign content, which aided in learning how to write correctly by seeing examples of natural English writing.

1. **Limited or No Improvement:**

A few students stated that social media had little to no impact on their writing skills, indicating that they did not see any noticeable improvements.

Some noted that while social media helped with vocabulary and translation, the overall improvement in writing was minimal.

A couple of students also said that their writing skills were not greatly affected by their use of social media, possibly due to the nature of their interactions (e.g., limited use of English).

2. **Specific Platforms or Features Mentioned:**

YouTube was frequently mentioned as a useful tool for improving both reading and writing skills, with students watching English-language videos and attempting to replicate writing styles.

Writing comments, engaging in discussions, and interacting with English posts helped some students to enhance their writing style and grammar.

For some students, the focus was on learning through translation, which involved using social media for written text translation.

V

Findings & Recommendations

Results

1. Social media platforms were found to significantly enhance ESL students' speaking and writing skills in intermediate schools in northwest Syria.
2. Students exhibited higher levels of motivation and engagement when language activities were conducted via platforms such as WhatsApp, Telegram, Facebook, and Instagram.
3. The use of voice and video features contributed to the improvement of students' pronunciation, fluency, and spontaneous speaking in realistic contexts.
4. Writing through informal digital platforms (e.g., blogs, chat groups, and comment threads) helped develop grammatical accuracy, vocabulary use, and textual coherence.
5. Many teachers expressed willingness to integrate social media into ESL instruction; however, they lacked sufficient digital literacy and pedagogical training.
6. The absence of reliable infrastructure, including access to devices, internet connectivity, and electricity, was identified as a major barrier to the effective use of social media in ESL classrooms.

Recommendations

1. Speaking-focused tasks such as voice messages, storytelling, and pronunciation exercises **should be incorporated** into ESL instruction through accessible social media platforms.
2. Writing activities via blogs, discussion forums, and social media interactions **ought to be integrated** into the curriculum to enhance students' written expression and collaborative learning.
3. Targeted teacher training programs **must be developed** to build educators' capacity in using social media for language teaching, with emphasis on content creation, classroom management, and digital feedback.
4. Institutional policies and digital codes of conduct **should be established** to ensure safe, ethical, and goal-oriented use of social media in educational settings.

5. Infrastructure support, including the provision of smartphones, stable internet, and alternative energy sources, **needs to be prioritized** in order to enable equal access to digital learning tools.

6. Digital communication and media literacy **should be embedded** gradually into ESL curricula to align language instruction with 21st-century skills and real-world communication contexts.

5.3 Conclusion

This study highlights the potential of social media to enhance English learners' speaking and writing skills, while also pointing to several areas for future research. Researchers could examine how specific platforms like TikTok or YouTube Shorts impact pronunciation and vocabulary retention, or conduct long-term studies to assess sustained improvements in writing. Investigating how factors like age, gender, and socioeconomic status affect engagement can lead to more inclusive strategies. Comparative studies between conflict-affected and stable areas may reveal contextual challenges, and exploring teachers' roles can inform better training and support systems.

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