

**Computer-Mediated Communication and the Rise of Facebook
English: A Sociolinguistic Perspective to help Libyan English****Department Universities Students****Rima Subhi Husain Taher****University of Gharyan, Faculty of Arts, English department****arra2011@yahoo.com, Dr.RimaTaher@gmail.com****Abstract**

In the era of digital communication, Facebook has emerged as a powerful platform influencing language use, particularly among university students. This study investigates the phenomenon of “Facebook English,” a distinctive digital variety marked by informal grammar, abbreviations, emoticons, and creative lexical formations. Focusing on Libyan English department students, the research explores the relationship between Facebook usage and its impact on academic writing, grammatical accuracy, and perceptions of language formality. Using a quantitative methods approach that includes surveys and statistical analysis, the findings reveal no significant correlation between Facebook use and academic English performance. However, gender and age differences were observed in the use and perception of Facebook English. The study emphasizes the need for language educators to integrate digital literacy and critical language awareness into curricula, enabling students to navigate both informal and academic registers effectively. These findings contribute to the broader understanding of computer-mediated communication and its pedagogical implications in EFL contexts.

Keywords: Facebook English, Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC), Sociolinguistics, Libyan University Students, Digital Literacy, Language Variation, Academic Writing, Informal Registers, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Social Media Linguistics.

Introduction

In the rapidly shifting landscape of digital communication, language has undergone substantial transformation, particularly within social media platforms [1]. Among these, Facebook stands as one of the most influential environments shaping how individuals interact, construct meaning, and negotiate identity [2]. This evolution of discourse, mediated by technology, has given rise to what scholars increasingly

refer to as “Facebook English” a distinctive linguistic variety that blends elements of spoken and written discourse, informal registers, visual symbols, and creative orthographic practices. This paper explores this phenomenon through a sociolinguistic lens, emphasizing its implications for Libyan university students in English departments, who must not only navigate this emergent digital dialect but also maintain a balance between digital fluency and academic literacy [3].

Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC), a term broadly encompassing interactions facilitated by digital devices, has redefined the boundaries of traditional linguistic structures [4]. Unlike conventional written forms that prioritize coherence, formality, and adherence to grammatical norms, CMC particularly on platforms such as Facebook privileges speed, brevity, and immediacy [5]. This has led to the emergence of non-standard linguistic features: abbreviation, code-switching, emoticon usage, syntactic reduction, and new semantic interpretations of existing vocabulary. For Libyan learners of English, this dual exposure to both standard English and the rapidly evolving digital variants presents a pedagogical challenge and an opportunity for critical linguistic awareness [6].

Facebook, with its multimodal capabilities, fosters a language ecology that reflects not only technological innovation but also social practices. From “liking” and “tagging” to “unfriending” and “checking in,” Facebook has introduced a lexicon that is now integrated into everyday vernacular, influencing both native and non-native speakers. This new lexicon often transcends the digital sphere, embedding itself in spoken interaction and, notably, in students’ academic and informal writing. For English learners in Libya, the prevalence of Facebook English can lead to interference in classroom performance, as students internalize informal norms and reproduce them in contexts demanding standard usage [7].

However, this transformation should not be viewed solely through a deficit lens. A sociolinguistic perspective encourages us to examine how Facebook English reflects authentic communication, identity construction, and group belonging [8]. Many of the creative strategies employed in digital contexts, such as using emoticons to replace verbal affect or compressing complex expressions into acronyms (e.g., “LOL,” “BRB,” “IDK”), reveal linguistic adaptability and contextual awareness. When analyzed critically, these features offer valuable insights into how language evolves under new communicative

pressures and afford educators a means to connect classroom instruction with students' real-world literacy practices [9]. In the Libyan context, where English is taught as a foreign language and often perceived as a tool for academic and professional advancement, understanding Facebook English becomes particularly vital. English departments must grapple with how to address this linguistic shift in a way that fosters both digital competence and academic rigor [10]. Rather than marginalize digital language varieties, educators can use them as pedagogical tools to explore issues of register, audience, and appropriateness key concepts in developing language awareness. For instance, classroom discussions that compare Facebook posts with formal academic writing can illuminate differences in tone, structure, and lexical choice, helping students become more conscious language users [11]. Ultimately, the rise of Facebook English is not a threat to language standards, but a reflection of how language continues to evolve in response to social and technological changes. For Libyan university students studying English, the key lies in navigating this dual linguistic world embracing the communicative power of CMC while mastering the conventions of academic discourse [12]. This paper, therefore, aims to examine the features of Facebook English, analyze their sociolinguistic implications, and propose strategies for integrating this awareness into English language education in Libyan universities.

The research problem statement

The rise of digital platforms like Facebook has introduced a new informal language form known as "Facebook English," impacting students' language habits [13], [14]. Libyan university students frequently use this form, which can interfere with their academic writing and communication. The lack of research on its sociolinguistic impact creates challenges for educators. This study aims to explore Facebook English's influence on students' language development and provide strategies for effective teaching.

Research Hypotheses

- H1: There is a significant correlation between the frequency of Facebook usage and the increased adoption of Facebook English features in the academic writing of Libyan English department students.

- H2: Libyan university students exposed to Facebook English exhibit noticeable variations in grammatical accuracy and lexical choice compared to those who engage less with social media.
- H3: The use of Facebook English influences students' perceptions of formal and informal language boundaries, affecting their ability to distinguish between academic and non-academic registers.
- H4: Gender and age differences among Libyan English department students significantly affect the use and perception of Facebook English in digital communication contexts.

Literature review

As of recently, the focus on technology has shifted on people and purposes. Observing the phenomenon of the Internet from a social perspective, the importance of language becomes crucial. Even though technological audio-visual achievements are highly developed, what immediately catches our attention is the linguistic character of the Internet. "If the Internet is a revolution, therefore, it is likely to be a linguistic revolution."¹

The Internet was developed in the 1960s in the USA as an experimental network which quickly grew to include military, federal, regional, university, business, and personal users. It is now the world's largest computer network, with over 100 million hosts connected by the year (2000) [15], providing an increasing range of services and enabling unprecedented numbers of people to be in touch with each other through electronic mail (e-mail), discussion groups, and social media such as Facebook, Twitter, etc.

One cannot but accept the influence of the Internet as a global medium. "The extra significance is even reflected in the spelling, in languages which use capital letters: this is the first such technology to be conventionally identified with an initial capital. We do not give typographical enhancement to such developments as 'Printing' or, 'Publishing, 'Broadcasting, 'Radio', or 'Television', but we write 'Internet' and 'Net'".²

However, the worldwide network still has not reached every corner of the inhabited land, it is mostly present in the more developed countries. The fact does not lessen the impact the Net has on everyday contemporary life.

"What happens, linguistically, when the members of the human race use a technology enabling any of them to be in routine contact with anyone else? There has been much talk of the notion of a 'global village', which is at first sight a persuasive metaphor. Yet such a concept raises all kinds of linguistic questions [16]. A village is a cross-knit community, traditionally identified by a local dialect or language which distinguishes its members from those elsewhere: 'That's not how we say things round here.' If there is to be a genuine

¹ Crystal, D. Language and the Internet, Cambridge University Press, 2001, the UK;

² Crystal, D. Language and the Internet, Cambridge University Press, 2001, the UK;

global village, then we need to ask 'What is its dialect?', 'What are the shared features of language which give the world community of users their sense of identity?'

All social media - predominantly Facebook - have gained popularity over recent years. Besides Facebook, some of these media include Twitter, YouTube, Viber, Skype, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, Flickr, Instagram, etc.

Social media sites provide a means of communication that is highly accessible to users across the globe. In addition, they allow users to participate in a collaborative form of knowledge construction, because they provide tools for creating and sharing information with others. In particular, Facebook is a social networking website that allows people to connect with other users through the exchange of profiles, conversation, photos, and videos. The average Facebook user reports connecting with 130 *friends*, and it is estimated that more than 70 languages are used to *log in* this virtual platform.¹

In the studies of modern communication, some linguists, such as Thurlow and Walther, have created the term Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC), which mainly deals with the linguistic characteristics of the typed text [17], especially with its formal and informal features. For the last twenty years, the branch of linguistics dedicated to CMC has been centered on many perspectives, focusing mainly on the characteristics of emails.²

In the field of English for Academic or Special Purposes, electronic mail has been developed so as to be used with an adequate level of formality in business, academic or personal communication. In academic circles, electronic mail is the most popular utility of CMC used by administrators and academics. However, the downside of emails is that they do not fulfill the needs of everyday informal communication, being only adequate for communicating with teachers and co-workers.

One of the top social networking utilities at present is, undoubtedly, Facebook. It was created in (2004), "as a cross between a tool for meeting new people and a platform for networking with people you already know".³ Facebook has its origins in the University of Harvard, and it was quickly transformed from a private network within the University of Harvard to a service open to everyone in 2006. On this social site, users create an online *profile* by listing personal information and interests, link up with other users and share *updates* of the information posted on a daily basis [18].

The website has plenty of features, such as communication opportunities through private or public text messages (private messages are now even more

¹ https://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/TLEsamples/TLE_Nov11_Article.pdf

² http://www.linguistik-online.org/56_12/perez-sabater.html

³ http://www.linguistik-online.org/56_12/perez-sabater.html

available to access by Facebook's *Messenger* feature), a *chat*, online forums, photos, videos, links, a *Timeline* with a personal *Wall* and *News Feed*, where friends or participants can *post* their messages and comment on topics. It is a constantly-changing social utility. "Now, Facebook is used as a platform for online communities that share interests in many fields: these being political, sportive, educational, scientific, commercial, or entertainment, among others. The typical user spends more than 20 minutes daily and logs in at least once a day".¹

Facebook owes its success partly due to its openness to informal communication. Nonetheless, the rise of social media has brought computational linguistics in ever-closer contact with bad language: text that defies our expectations about vocabulary, spelling, and syntax.²

"As social media becomes an increasingly important application domain for natural language processing, we encounter language that is substantially different from many benchmark corpora. [...] They contain linguistic challenges that are endemic to the medium, including non-standard punctuation, capitalization, spelling, vocabulary, and syntax. The consequences for language technology are dire: a series of papers has detailed how state-of-the-art natural language processing (NLP) systems perform significantly worse on social media text."³

What people speak in their defense for using poor grammar while on social media, usually sounds like this: "'People are unsure of the correct spellings', 'it's faster', 'it's become the norm', and 'people want to represent their own dialects and/or accents'"⁴

People are increasingly conversing online using diverse social sites. They enjoy the immediacy and convenience of engaging in discourse any time, any place, anywhere.

For instance, Twitter is a social networking site that demands more precision of expression than Facebook. This is because each post or *tweet* you can make is limited to 140 characters. Therefore, you must be concise in your messaging. Social media went from a cool way to network to a way of life in a matter of a couple of years. The mass adoption and consumption of information in real-time, abbreviated form has changed the way people communicate now and forever.⁵ Everyday vocabulary influences the words

¹ http://www.linguistik-online.org/56_12/perez-sabater.html

² <http://www.cc.gatech.edu/~jeisenst/papers/naacl2013-badlanguage.pdf>

³ <http://www.cc.gatech.edu/~jeisenst/papers/naacl2013-badlanguage.pdf>

⁴ <http://www.cc.gatech.edu/~jeisenst/papers/naacl2013-badlanguage.pdf>

⁵ <http://thesocialmediamonthly.com/social-media-transforms-the-english-language-collinsdictionary-com-begins-crowdsourcing-new-words>

(and the formality of language) that we find ourselves most confident with and most comprehensive. Having in mind that the contemporary written language is predominantly found on our computers, tablets, mobile phones, and other similar gadgets, it is a safe assumption that our communication evolves partly through our interaction with technology [18].

The newly-formed Facebook parlance represents a mixture of acronyms, abbreviations and neologisms, all of which have grown up around CMC to help us send our messages across the *cyberspace*. This alphabetical mixture raises mostly from our need for fast, straight-to-the-point conversation. For example, emoticons such as ;-), and acronyms like LOL (Laughing-Out-Loud), also add useful elements of non-verbal communication, they depict our current feelings, facial expressions, and even body movements [19], [20].

It is now common to share personal information while interacting with larger audiences. Language styles, therefore, have become more informal and transparent, which has its impact on other aspects of our lives and culture as well.

What is remarkably interesting is the fact that Facebook has had more influence on word meanings and word formations than any other virtual social medium, so we find ourselves fully familiar with the new notions of words such as *friend*, *unfriend*, *follow*, *like*, *status*, *wall*, *page*, *profile*, *log*, etc.

Focusing on the word *friend*, for example, we notice that it has been used as “a contact on a social networking website”, as a noun and as a verb, so it demonstrates how technology affects common words and expands the potency of the language.

However, there are a few examples of not so common words coming back to life, archaic words that have not been used for a long time. Such is the case with the word *unfriend*, which “existed in its noun form as early as the thirteenth century, fell out of use, and then had a revival in the wake of Facebook social dynamics.”¹ The newly-applied meaning denotes the action of removing someone from a list of friends or contacts on Facebook [21]. The presence of Facebook in our everyday lives has become immense. “According to the Daily Telegraph newspaper, if Facebook were a country, it would be the third most populated country in the world, after China and India. Facebook is a global phenomenon, and thus Facebook lingo is arguably a global language.”² David Crystal³ observes five linguistic features which have changed due to technological interference with language: graphic, orthographic (or graphological), grammatical, lexical and discourse features [22].

¹ www.oxforddictionaries.com/2014/06/social-media-changing-language/

² www.oxforddictionaries.com/facebok-a-language/

³ Crystal, D. *Language and the Internet*, Cambridge University Press, 2001, the UK

By nature, people all over the world communicate visually, a feature social media pays special attention to. Images, colours, font types, and designs fascinate our eyesight and nurture our curiosity to see more. Therefore, Internet sites depend heavily on **graphics**. Web designers also use images of gifts, accessories and emoticons with the alphabet to make writing and chatting funnier and more interesting. Currently, people seem to be led by the famous saying "a picture's worth a thousand words" – for instance, we rely on the Photoshop, the Internet graphic program which can edit any picture. Among such graphic tools, we come across Facebook again – it is also the place where the audience gets attracted to the cutting edge techniques by web professionals.

Crystal refers to the general presentation and organization of the written language, defined in terms of such factors as distinctive typography, page design, spacing, use of illustrations, and colour¹. **Graphic features** of the language have a great importance in attracting the attention of Facebook users. In recent years, importance is given to them more than before. Many of Facebook pages post images and wallpapers aimed to take the largest number of *likes* and interests by the users. For instance, tour companies display pictures of tour sites and offer their services through a variety of wonderful pictures, restaurants post pictures of various types of meals prepared there, etc. It is worth mentioning that there are some pages to learn foreign languages, and they rely heavily on the educational photos posted there. These images, in turn help to clarify the meaning of words and disperse them, instilling the information in learners' heads easily in appealing and entertaining way. The use of effects and colors for giving the aesthetic impact on the Facebook pages, helps in making a much larger number of people who are interested to learn [23]. *Cover photo* is a broad picture that shows the top of the user's timeline, or the top of the public Facebook page. *Profile photo* is a small picture square that appears next to the user's name, which appears when the user's comment on any activity is made. A great step to start a *status* that helps and inspires people is posting images or contents dealing with a special case or situation. The users often feel compelled to *click* on the image, *like* it, *share* it, *repost* it, and, of course, if they want, *download* it. The *privacy settings* are different according to each user and what s/he has shared with people. The user can control who sees profile information on his/her page, and then decide what to share with others. Graphic features on Facebook are a great way to entertain people [24]. Through *Graph search*, people explore Facebook more easily. Graph search helps the user to find good results of what s/he is looking for. For example, if the research is for photos of the city of Istanbul, then the user will see photos that friends or users took in Istanbul and

¹ Crystal, D. Language and the Internet. Cambridge University Press, 2001, the UK

have shared with him or with a page about this city. That is one of the reasons why many believe that 80% of Facebook content is shared and reposted, and only 20% is original content.

Facebook page design has got two colors. A line of dark blue and sky blue with bold writing. And if the site visitor is already a registered user, there are two places at the top of the page to be filled in – one is for the user's email and the other is for the unique password. The design remains the same in every country, except in the Arabic countries where everything is adjusted for writing in right-left direction. If the new user is not registered in Facebook database, he has to sign up first.

When analyzing **orthographic features** of the language used in Facebook, one should bear in mind the fact that nowadays a lot of teenagers who write on social networking sites have a very different approach to writing. Twitter, as mentioned earlier, provides the users with writing options limited to one hundred and forty characters, which leads to the usage of individual compressed language which ignores the rules of grammar and spelling, neglects the pronouns, articles, conjunctions, prepositions, and words with expressing emphasis (italics, boldface, etc.) [25]. At the beginning, a new user of this social medium will face difficulty in understanding or knowing what these abbreviated and altered symbols mean or indicate, but once s/he experiences the language of the Net, also known as *chattish*, s/he will rapidly start to understand their meanings and begin to use them. Facebook users shorten words and phrases in a single letter or two. For example, the character U instead of the word *you*, the number 4 instead of the word *for*, abbreviation T2UL8R to denote the phrase *talk to you later*, F2F for *face to face*, and many others [26]. A growing number of language teachers stated that they notice some of these abbreviations in their students' essays and exam papers, so some schools have conducted additional classes to strengthen the proper usage of the English language. The explanation for the tendency to omit letters and words, and add numbers and symbols, lies in the unwillingness to learn correct spelling, laziness, fear of falling into spelling errors, and in saving time [27].

Table.1. some other examples

Abbreviation	Meaning
?	I don't understand what you mean
?4U	I have a question for you
^^	Meaning "read line" or "message above"
@TEOTD	At the end of the day

121	One-to-one (private chat initiation)
143	I love you
1432	I love you too
14AA41	One for all, and all for one
10X	Thank
10Q	Thank you
1CE	Once
1DR	I wonder
1NAM	One in a million
2	Meaning "to" in SMS
20	Meaning "location"
2EZ	Too easy
2G2BT	Too good to be true
2M2H	Too much too handle
2MI	Too much information
2MOR	Tomorrow
2NTE	Tonight
4	"for" in SMS
4AO	For adults only
4COL	For crying out loud
4EAE	Forever and ever
OIC	Oh, I see
CYL8R	See you all later
BBL	Be back later
BRB	Be right back
TYT	Take your time
thx 4 yr txt	Thanks for your text
9c b dere	Nice, I'll be there

Grammatical features of language found in Facebook bring many new aspects in the field of syntax and morphology. It is easily observed that we now encounter distinctive uses of sentence structure, word order, and word inflections.

For instance, the rule of not using a double negative in English is often ignored while chatting on Facebook Messenger. Many users write sentences like “I don’t want nothing from you”, or “I didn’t see nothing”. Also, users often neglect the inflection needed for forming the third person singular in the Present Simple Tense, so they write “She buy shoes like crazy”, “He play basketball for the school team”, etc.

What is also noticeable is the wide use of homonyms, words that share the same pronunciation, but differ in meaning, origin, and usually spelling.

For example, this sentence was found in a Facebook comment: “I where not there, I where sick”. The word *where* obviously replaces the word *were*, and is actually longer in spelling, which suggests that youngsters use it to express their distinctive style and skill in wordplay.

Perhaps the most dominant change in grammar can be found in marking plural noun forms, where the standard suffix *-s* gets replaced by *-z*. English-speaking Facebook users tend to write plurals such as *filez*, *downloadz*, *gamez*, *tunez*, etc. Facebook users succumb to misuse of the verb *to be* as well. Here, for instance, a singular countable word *group* is not followed by *is*, a proper form of the word *to be* in this case: “A group of ladies are talking to each other”. This, however, has its excuse in the collective notion of the noun *group*. Furthermore, not only do Facebook users make changes in the standard English word order (subject – verb – object), but they also tend to completely omit one of these basic components, usually a subject. For example: “Can’t sleep, my tooth is killing me!” Facebook, as a worldwide social utility, provides its users with complete freedom in defining their writing style, which could be the main reason why it has gained such popularity [22]. Some deviant spellings, for example, have become so widely used as to be virtually standard. For example, we can often see a consonant cluster “ph” instead of the letter “f” – Facebook users tend to write *phreak* instead of *freak*, *Phacebook* instead of *Facebook*, and so on. Also, the users mix characters and symbols which resemble letters, such as *c%ol* instead of *cool*. **Lexical features** shed light on the vocabulary usage within Facebook platform. Many words and idioms have received new meanings and are applied in informal conversation worldwide, beyond cyberspace an in real life situations [23]. Some words can shift and expand in meaning, perhaps nowhere has that flux been happening with more speed and agility than in the world of business. Social media marketing and technology are driving much of the shift – particularly of common words that existed for generations with a single, specific meaning but now find themselves with a complexity of depth and meaning that might surprise even the words themselves, that is, if words had the capacity to self-reflect [24]. The aforementioned word *friend* is a good example of this. Many other words have expanded and morphed in our computer mediated world, such as *tagging*, *recommend*, *traffic*, *fan*, *post*, *wall*, *request*, *hacking*, *search*, *viral*, *link*, *visitor*, *surf*, *feed*, *alert*, *tweet*, *find*, *status*, *event*, *notification*, *timeline*, *facelift* (recent Facebook feature), *block*, *remove*, *report*, and so on. For example, the common usage of the phrase *check in* is the act of reporting your presence with a receptionist – generally at airports and hotels. But nowadays it also denotes the act of informing your Facebook friends where you are at any time of the day, which even includes churches, mosques, and hospitals. The other example is the word *block*. The general meaning covers the idea of preventing

someone from going somewhere or entering a place by standing in front of them [24]. On Facebook, you block someone to unfriend them and completely remove their presence on your timeline. People you block can no longer see things you post on your profile, tag you, invite you to events or groups, start a conversation with you, add you as a friend again, nor find you in general search space.

The structural organization of a text, defined in terms of such factors as coherence, relevance, paragraph structure, and the logical sequence of ideas all contribute to **discourse features** that have been changed while using Facebook. The inevitable conclusion is that “Facebook language” is composed of highly colloquial constructions and non-standard grammar usage. How a language varies depends on the age of its users, their gender and region. For instance, the representation of spoken language features seems more common among younger users. The frequency of emoticons has been more represented among younger users, predominantly teenage males.¹ The various aspects of discourse style differ and correlate with gender. Male postings are characterized as more optimistic than female postings. Precisely, in Facebook conversations [24], female users tend to use words implying social isolation and various kinds of repudiation of social norms. Nevertheless, girls use more emoticons (especially the ones which indicate laughter) than boys. Males are significantly more aggressive and tend to choose emoticons representing menace or even smiles (facial expressions) which denote a threat. The style of masculine discourse is characterized by strong assertions among chat groups as well. Their reaction to the information posted on Facebook’s *news feed* is often rebellious and violent, indicating disagreements. In their writings, they tend not to show kindness nor sympathy towards the sad or painful news. In addition, most of male comments do not illustrate personal feelings in writing. They express less politeness [25]. It is worth mentioning that males have a special way of telling jokes to each other. This is done in rather rough fashion, mostly addressing their friends with names of animals. On the contrary, female users joke in a more polite fashion, or address each other by using kind tender names. In comparing with males, females are more likely to use final particles while communicating on the Internet. Final particles can make the tone of speech softer, more polite, so this is why females are more apt to use them frequently. For instance, a Facebook male user writes *I switched the light*, while female users would more likely write *I switched the light on/off*, which is by far more comprehensive in meaning.

¹ Androutsopoulos, J. *Introduction: Sociolinguistics and computer-mediated communication*, Journal of Sociolinguistics 10/4, 2006: 419-438;

In CMC, violent verbs, profanity and offensive vocabulary are used more by males than females. Females, on the other hand, use more emoticons and laughter graphics, as well as neutral and affectionate verbs. Women get more *likes* and *follows* due to their gender, often regarded as objects of sexual desire [22], [23], [24]. Many male users tend to think that a *like* on Facebook equals complimenting a woman in real life. Many women find this offensive. Unfortunately, gender equality remains only an ideology, and male dominance continues even on social media. Nonetheless, writing style differs when it comes to the age of males and females. Facebook chats and comments controlled by young males and females are more alike than different. It is more common for male teenage users to choose more emoticons than females, while younger female users are not using language that is more passive, accommodating, or cooperative. Quite the opposite. The influence of age in virtual interaction has also influenced the use of language. The young usually type texts that depict their minds immediately, so the so called "stream of consciousness" writing is very much applied. For example: "just one more thing, do i want to go to England to teach in a school??? do i? oh well, i'll decide that when i have to"... The proper use of capital letters is often completely ignored, too. The style of discourse varies when the distinction between native and non-native writers of English language is concerned [22], [23]. It is noticed that non-native speakers tend to use formal style more than native speakers do. The stylistic formality of both of them differs according to a Facebook user. Perhaps such a distinction is not only because of the technology which determines the form and content of CMC, but because of the set of cultural and literacy practices that users bring to the medium, attaching them to the form and content of CMC. Non-native speakers among themselves resort to a third language which is not the mother tongue of neither of them, for purposes of easier communication. The third language they resort to is called "a lingua franca". For many years now, this role has been assigned to the English language. The users who share this language are considered as learners [12]. The conversation and style of discourse are diverse because of the various linguistic and cultural backgrounds of the speakers. So, the intercultural and interlinguistic aspects make varieties in English. The choice of using the routine formulae varies according to the expressions which speakers get used to. Native people use various sets of phrases,

whereas the non-natives restrict themselves to stereotype phrases like: ‘How are you?’, ‘Good evening’, ‘Pleased to meet you’, ‘Kind regards’, etc. Moreover, the back-channeling behavior of non-native participants in the Facebook conversations quite resembles what has been observed among British English native speakers. Participants use the same amount of supportive back-channels (e.g. mhm, right, yeah, ouch, blah-blah, etc.), though verbal back-channels are frequently replaced by supportive laughter, by using emoticons or stickers. At the same time, non-native speakers tend to apply sentence completions and restatements into their Facebook writings, more frequently than the natives. Of special interest is the very high amount of cajolers (verbal appeals for the interlocutor's sympathy and/or persuasion, e.g. you know, I mean, you see, let's, etc.), which show high frequency in the written language as well. Some conversation structures and combinations are not a reflection of any culture, but they are a sign of the language learner's pragmatic deficits, and their adaption to the compensatory use of simpler words and structures [13], [14]. So the problems of communication and interaction can be observed in the native and non-native speakers of the language, such as resorting to reduction and compensation, and as differences in the organization of the discourse. Some variations in choosing the phrases of openings and closings during Facebook conversations are caused by the constraints which are conventional and ritualized in some cultures [15]. Being uncertain about the greetings in lingua franca conversations with their interlocutors' mother tongue, Facebook users tend to use only routine phrases that 'they know' are acceptable in both British and American English. During writing messages, users apply many emoticons like smileys, winkies, frownies, and many others. They use them instead of writing some words or phrases to indicate their feelings, attitudes, or relational orientations toward their topics, interlocutors or towards any situations. Non-native participants' conversations showed more frequent usage of emoticons than their native speaker peers. However, the natives have used *smileys* and *winkies* exclusively [16].

It is also a common fashion that non-native Facebook users resort to adding emoticons to cover the lack of vocabulary or the uncertainty of proper spelling. So, this reoccurring usage shows that emoticons have a compensatory function for real or perceived second language shortcomings in using English. Different usage of these emoticons is also influenced by the users' cultural background. For instance, Asian

style emoticons are usually not to be read sideways [16]. A *smiley* is formed mostly like this (*_*), compared to the Western-style :-). Asian emoticons put more emphasis on the eyes, compared to Western emoticons, which denote feelings mainly with the mouth. So, the creativity in emoticons' design has its variants across the world, and its manifestations could be very representative of the users' cultures. Facebook users make emoticons to build and enhance the rapport, therefore, some of these differences come from one culture's expressions of politeness and commonly-accepted facial expressions. In recent years, communication technology has evolved rapidly and has created new forms of *literacies* [17], [48], [49], [50]. Many job interviewers nowadays expect the candidates to be not only computer-literate, but also social media-literate. Facebook, as the most dominant social medium, therefore seems to be a prerequisite for getting the job. Exploring the impact of social media on the language is still a pioneering endeavour, but given the importance and use of such communication, it is to be analysed in future without any doubt. So far, this impact has resided in the field of written language, but David Crystal believes it will spread to oral language as well. Whatever else Internet culture may be, it is still largely a text-based affair.' Spoken language currently has only a limited presence on the Internet, through the use of sound clips; films, and videos; but the use of speech will undoubtedly grow as technology develops, and it will not be long before we see the routine use of interactive voice (and video) dialogues [41], [42], [43], [44], [45], [46], [47], speech synthesis to provide a spoken representation of what is on a screen or to give vocal support to a graphic presentation, and automatic speech recognition to enable users to interact verbally with sites.¹

One of the closing observations is that the usage of *Internet language* has very harsh side effects on the proper usage of grammar and spelling. The conclusion that imposes itself unquestionably, is the incorrectness of language used within Facebook platform. The exceeding importance and, one may daresay - omni-presence, of Facebook has put linguistics into the area of improper language [18] a virtual text that defies the standard norms of vocabulary, spelling, syntax, punctuation and capitalization. As mentioned earlier in the paper, this branch of language change is still developing, and only

¹ Crystal, D. Language and the Internet, Cambridge University Press, 2001, the UK

few linguistic analyses provide us with the reason why social media language is so different from the language norm. The answer to this question might be hidden in the domain of modern psychology, not only linguistics. When it comes to examples used in the paper, the author used her own examples - a collection of comments, chat conversations and abbreviations, as well as her Facebook friends', protecting their privacy along the way. Some of the examples were taken from the Internet - those which frequency is very high [19].

Some linguists, such as Eisentein, suggest that improper language use does not necessarily imply poor literacy of social media users. Sure there are those who are unaware or incapable of using more standard language, but many empirical studies state quite the contrary. These studies reveal that many social media users "pick and choose from the entire stylistic repertoire of the language in a way that would be impossible without skilled command of both formal or informal registers." Any language is formed by inevitable confrontation between linguistic changes and existing linguistic norms [20], [21], [22], [23]. Internet language is no exception. In the future, progress should be made by Facebook officials to prevent language not from linguistic change, but from becoming replaced almost entirely by emoticons, stickers and scarce spelling impossible to interpret by all the categories of Facebook users - varying in age, gender and cultural background.

The research methodology

This study employs a quantitative research method approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to explore the linguistic impact of Facebook English on Libyan English department students. Data will be collected from multiple universities to ensure a diverse sample. The analysis will focus on language usage patterns, attitudes, and academic writing samples. The aim is to uncover sociolinguistic influences and propose pedagogical strategies for improved language instruction.

The target sample

The target sample consists of 150 undergraduate students enrolled in English language departments at selected Libyan universities. Participants will be chosen from second, third, and fourth-year levels to ensure exposure to both academic English and Facebook communication. A balanced representation of genders and age groups will be maintained. The sample aims to reflect diverse linguistic experiences with Facebook English in academic and social contexts.

Results and Discussion

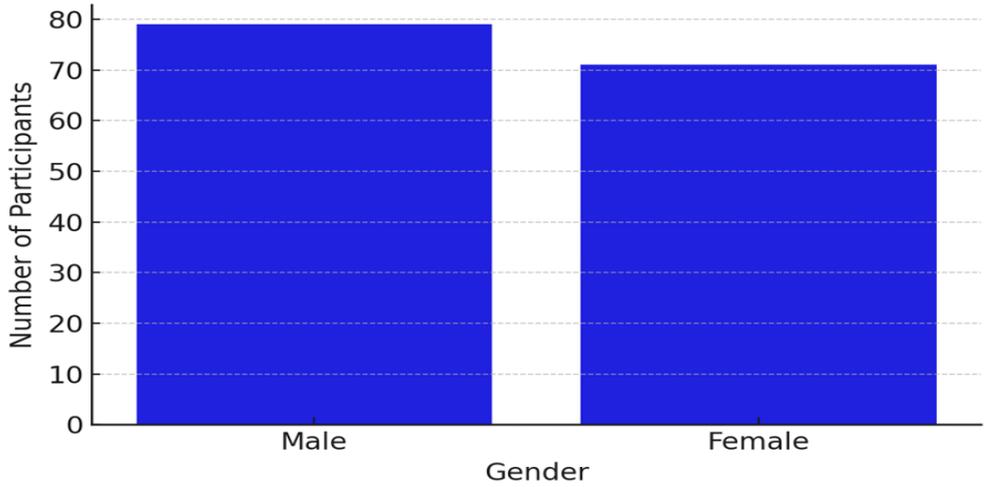


Figure. 1. Histogram of female and male participants in this research study

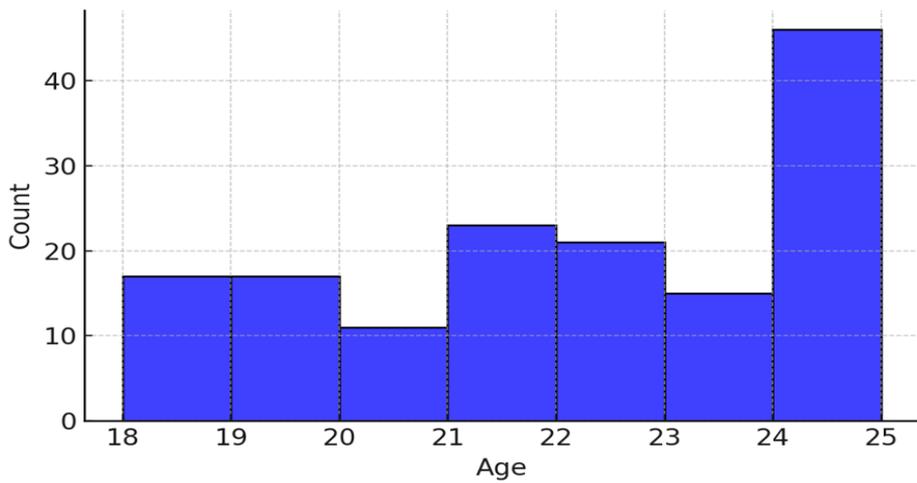


Figure.2. The histogram of the target sample age

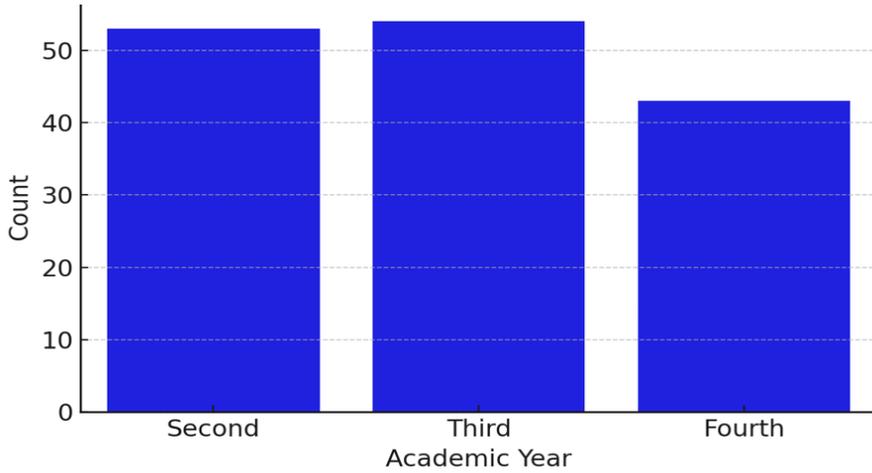


Figure. 3. The histogram of the participants academic year

Variable 1	Variable 2	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Significance (p-value)	Interpretation
Facebook Usage (H1_Score)	Facebook English (H2_Score)	0.029	0.721	No significant correlation

Table.2 Correlation between Facebook Usage and Facebook English Features

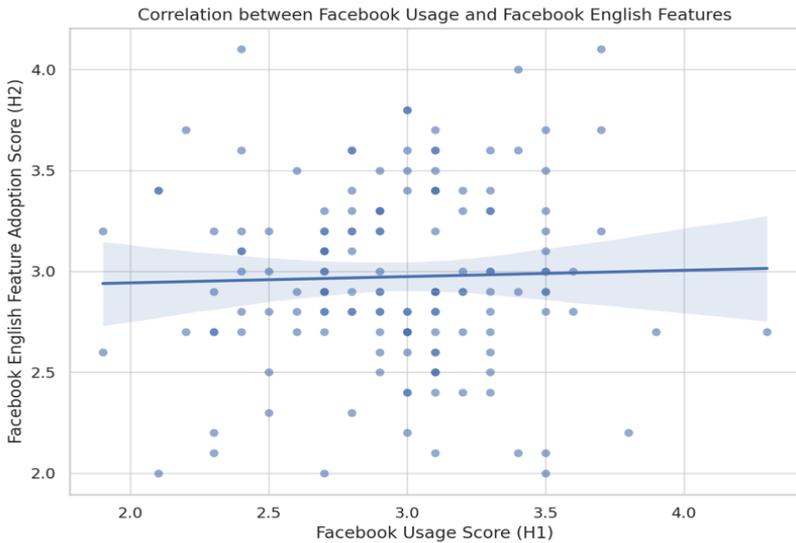


Figure.4. The correlation between Facebook Usage and Facebook English Features . No significant correlation found between frequency of Facebook use and adoption of Facebook English features in academic writing.

Table.3. The results of T-test

Group Comparison	t-value	p-value	Interpretation
High vs Low Facebook Usage	0.103	0.918	No significant difference in grammatical or lexical accuracy

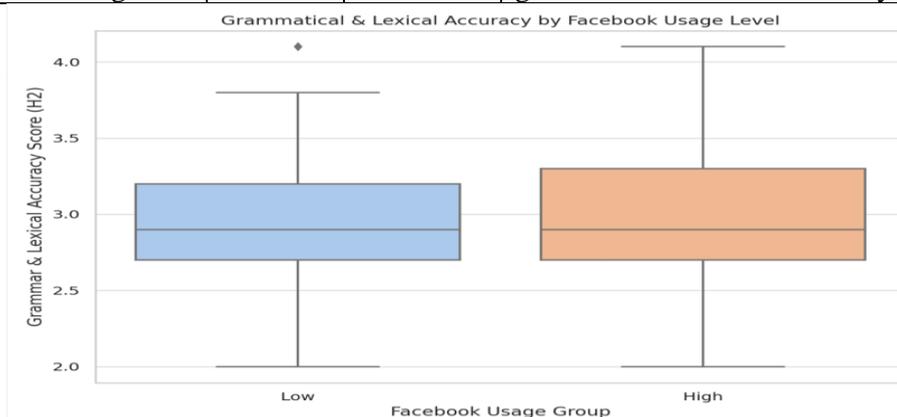


Figure.5. Facebook Exposure vs Grammatical & Lexical Accuracy. Test used is independent Samples t-test (High and Low Facebook Users). No significant difference in grammatical or lexical accuracy between high and low Facebook users.

Table.4. Impact on Perceptions of Formal vs Informal Registers.

Variable 1	Variable 2	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Significance (p-value)	Interpretation
Facebook Usage (H1_Score)	Perception of Formality (H3_Score)	-0.044	0.596	No significant relationship

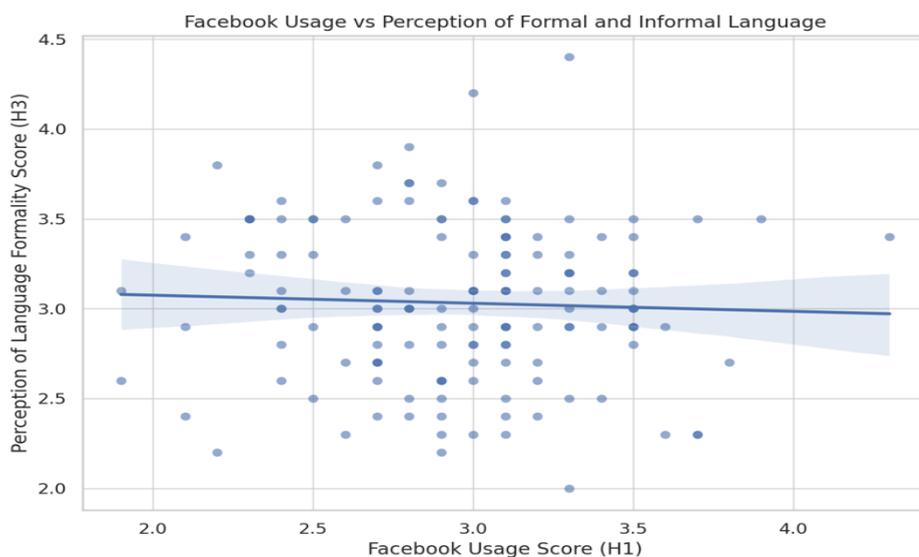


Figure.6. The test used is Pearson Correlation and the result: $r = -0.044$, $p = 0.596$ which remains that no significant relationship between Facebook use and perception of language formality.

Table.5. The test of the fourth hypothesis within the participants gender . Facebook English usage score by Gender

Group	Mean H4 Score
Male	2.89
Female	3.08

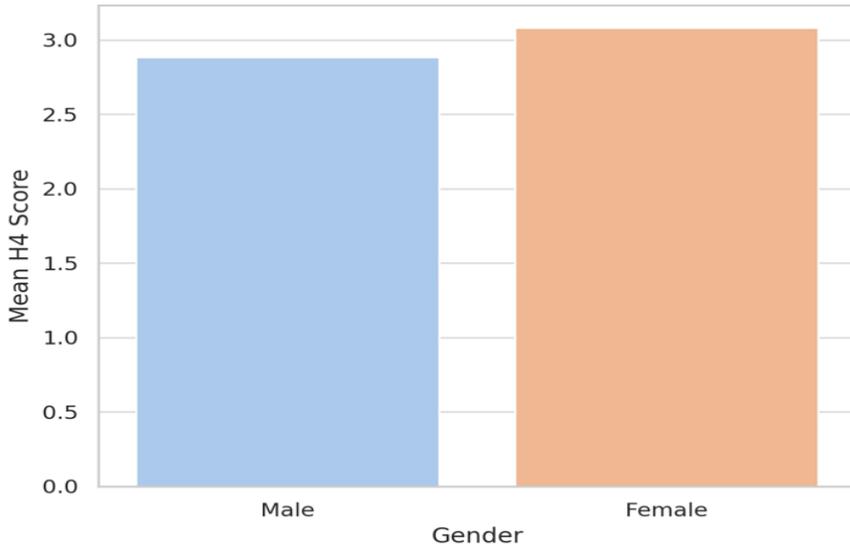


Figure.7. Facebook English usage score by

Gender

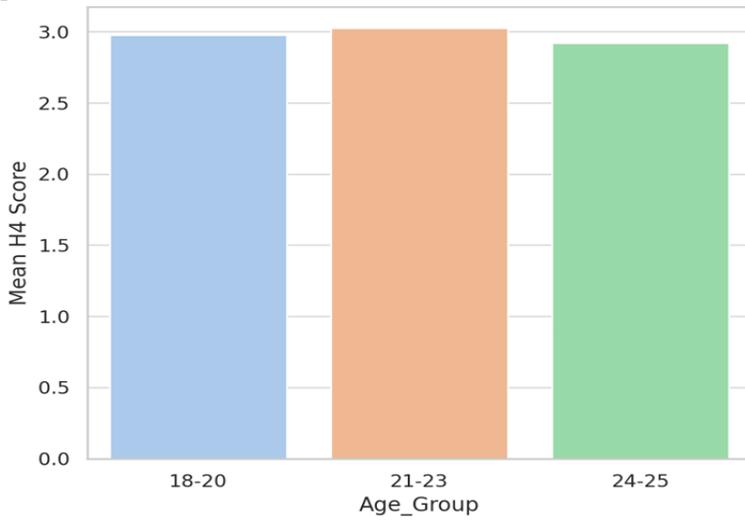


Figure. 8. Facebook English score by age

group

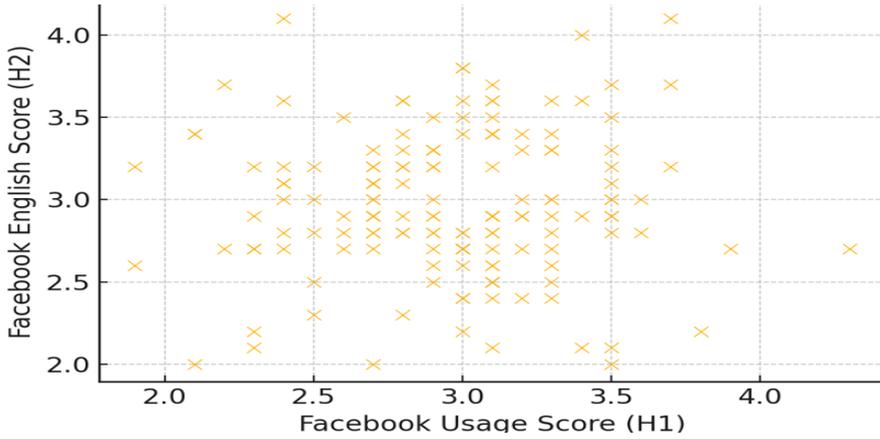


Figure. 9. The correlation of the first hypothesis

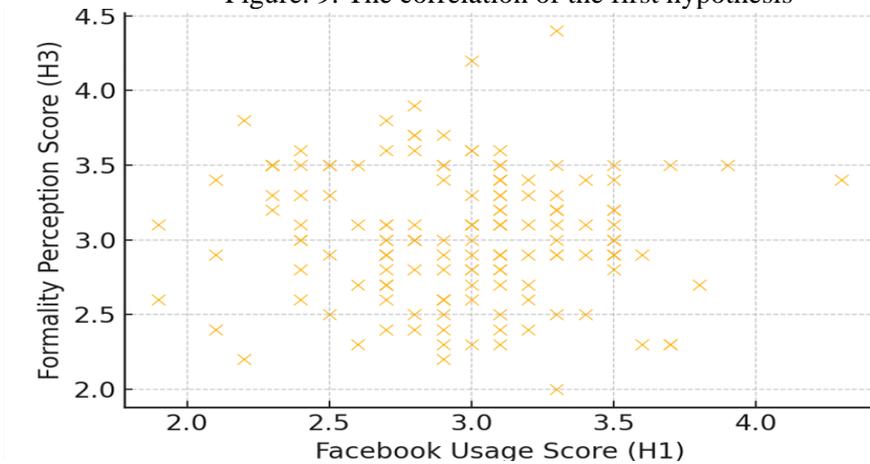


Figure.10. The correlation between the third hypothesis and the first hypothesis

Discussion

The results of this study reveal nuanced insights into the sociolinguistic impact of Facebook English on Libyan university students. Contrary to the initial hypothesis (H1), the correlation between Facebook usage and the adoption of Facebook English features in academic writing was found to be statistically insignificant ($r = 0.029$, $p = 0.721$) as declared in [23], [24]. This indicates that frequent use of Facebook does not necessarily predict a higher usage of informal Facebook English features in academic contexts. It suggests that students may possess the ability to compartmentalize their informal digital language use and maintain a level of academic writing distinct from their social media

interactions as declared in [23], [24]. Similarly, the independent samples t-test assessing grammatical and lexical accuracy between high and low Facebook users yielded no significant difference ($t = 0.103$, $p = 0.918$), refuting Hypothesis 2. This further emphasizes that frequent engagement with Facebook does not inherently lead to a deterioration in standard English proficiency, at least within the sample examined as announced in [24], [25], [26], [36], [37], [38], [39], [40]. It could be inferred that students maintain an awareness of linguistic register and context when transitioning between social and academic environments. Regarding Hypothesis 3, which proposed a relationship between Facebook usage and students' perceptions of formal versus informal language, the correlation was again not significant ($r = -0.044$, $p = 0.596$). This implies that exposure to informal language on Facebook does not appear to shift students' conceptual boundaries of formality in language as announced in [24], [25], [26]. This could be attributed to existing educational reinforcement of academic norms or the students' ability to recognize and navigate register distinctions.

In contrast, Hypothesis 4 found some support. Gender differences in Facebook English usage were evident, with females (mean $H4 = 3.08$) reporting slightly higher usage scores compared to males (mean $H4 = 2.89$) as reported in [22], [27]. While this difference is modest, it aligns with previous sociolinguistic findings indicating that female users tend to engage more actively in expressive and stylistically rich communication on social media as reported in [22], [27], [28], [29], [30]. Additionally, age group analysis revealed that students aged 22 exhibited the highest average score in Facebook English usage (3.12), whereas students aged 25 showed the lowest (2.86). These findings suggest that younger participants might be more immersed in digital linguistic practices, whereas older students may adopt more restrained or formal usage patterns. Overall, while the quantitative data do not demonstrate strong predictive relationships between Facebook use and academic language outcomes, the demographic variations highlight the complex interplay between age, gender, and digital language behavior as documented in [12], [13], [14], [31], [32], [33], [34], [35]. These results underscore the importance of incorporating digital literacy into English language pedagogy not to discourage informal digital expression but to help students navigate and distinguish between varying linguistic contexts as documented in [10], [15], [20]. Future research may benefit from qualitative methods to explore how

students perceive and reflect on their own language use across these domains.

Conclusion

This study explored the sociolinguistic impact of Facebook English on Libyan university students studying in English departments. While initial assumptions posited a strong influence of Facebook usage on academic language practices, the statistical results revealed otherwise. The lack of a significant correlation between Facebook use and students' academic writing performance suggests that many students are capable of distinguishing between informal digital language and the formal requirements of academic contexts. This highlights their ability to navigate multiple linguistic registers effectively. However, demographic trends, particularly regarding gender and age, did show meaningful variation. Female students and younger participants demonstrated slightly higher engagement with Facebook English, which may reflect broader patterns in digital communication styles and generational media habits. These findings point to the evolving nature of language use among youth and the importance of understanding these changes within educational contexts. Ultimately, while Facebook English may not directly degrade academic performance, it presents an opportunity for educators to foster critical language awareness. By integrating discussions on digital communication into language curricula, educators can help students reflect on language appropriateness, audience awareness, and context sensitivity. As digital media continues to shape communication, recognizing and harnessing the linguistic realities of platforms like Facebook will be essential in preparing students for both academic success and real-world communication demands.

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