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INVESTIGATING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STUDENTS' L2 GRAMMAR COMPETENCE AND SOCIAL MEDIA USE

Hicham Laabidi
Department of School of Arts & Humanities of Meknés, Moulay Ismail University, Morocco
h.laabidi@umi.ac.ma

Soukaina Ouahbi
Department of School of Arts & Humanities of Meknés, Moulay Ismail University, Morocco
soukaina.iu@gmail.com

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Abstract: Social media has been gaining popularity in the educational sector recently. Whether scholars support its educational use because of its benefits or whether they reject its use because of the stigma surrounding it, the use of social media has become quite a trend in the educational field. This study investigated the use of social media in relation to the grammatical competence of third year Moulay Ismail University, school of arts and humanities' English department students. The two variables in question in this study were investigated quantitatively through the use of a survey that consisted of; first a grammatical test to test the students' grammatical competence and second some statements that students had to answer; the statements were based on a 5 scale Likert scale. The findings of this study showed that the use of social media does influence the grammatical competence of Moroccan learners. Moreover, the different statistical tests proved that the two variables have a significant relationship.
Keywords: *Social media; grammatical competence; e-learning; Moroccan learners; undergraduate students*

INTRODUCTION

A stigma that relates the use of social media and the downgrade of students' academic competencies (especially the grammatical aspects) is highlighted with recent headlines. According to results obtained using the method of K. Yang, more than half of the students surveyed (76%) are extremely in favor for internet usage (Lavrinenko et al., 2019). Those students who have internet attachment can be observed to have mood and anxiety disorders, negative feelings regarding school work, appearance, family, friends, the attended school, or life, gender roles, sexual relationships, body image disturbances, obesity, and so on (Tkacová et al., 2022). In addition to older studies from 2014, 2015 and 2016, recent studies like Lavrinenko et al., (2019) Li et al., (2020) Maqableh et al., (2021) and Marengo et al., (2022) relate social media to terms like addiction, negative impact, and students' poor academic performance.

Limited data that is collected in a Moroccan context and that concerns the use of social media and the grammatical competency of students exist. Therefore, the investigation of the positive side of social media use on the grammatical competence of students is important for readers and educational parties in order for them to form a holistic image about this relationship.

The investigation of the relationship between the use of social media and the grammatical competence of students was based on two theoretical pillars. The theories in question are the constructivist theory of learning and technology, and the collaborative learning theory. These theories support the characteristics that suggest that social media as a form of technology can promote learning and enhance students' experiences inside and outside of the classroom.

"…[L]earning is rooted in processes of exploration, inquiry, interpretation and meaning-making" (Selwyn, 2012). This theory of learning suggests that learners are a vital part in the process of learning; they are the ones responsible for building their knowledge through their own experiences and interactions with the world. Learners are the ones to seek information and try to make meaning out of it. Technology in this theory of learning operates as mediator between the learner and the information. Technology can

*Corresponding Author:
h.laabidi@umi.ac.id

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help students explore, inquire and make meaning of information. David Jonassen (1994) in Selwyn, (2012) further supported this claim by developing seven principles on how technology can be of great help in the learning process from the constructivist view. The principles are as follows:
Technology can

- Expose students to real world situations instead of textbook fabricated scenarios
- Present authentic and meaningful materials instead of materials that try to mimic the real world through abstract instructions
- Prepare students for the real world by presenting authentic and complex input instead of diluted input
- Present the ability of exploring different representations of the real world
- Push students towards creativity through stressing the importance of knowledge construction instead of knowledge reproduction
- Create a supportive collaborative learning environment instead of a competitive one
- Push students to be reflective on their experiences and processes of learning

These principles can be applied to up to day social media platforms. Through social media, the learners can be exposed to new information all the time as the social platforms are ever so dynamic. Learners can also easily explore authentic and genuine material and compare it with non-authentic one. Social media can also offer a space where students can be inquisitive, creative, and reflective.

When students work together in groups of 2 or more towards a unified aim, they are working collaboratively (Roberts & Netlibrary, 2004). Students would work together to understand a section of the lesson, solve a problem, or to create new learning outcomes. However, for students to be working collaboratively and not cooperatively, they need to respect each other's contribution to the final product. This means that this type of learning does not neglect the individual aspect while emphasizing collaborative work; it rather enriches the gained end knowledge that students achieve at the end. In collaborative learning the end results matter and so does the student's individual input in the process of learning. As mentioned by Paz Dennen (2000) in Roberts & Netlibrary (2004) in collaborative learning, knowledge is attained and built through social interaction; this social interaction can be carried also through social media.

LITERATURE REVIEW

It can be very challenging to define what a grammatical competence is seeing how the definition of the term competence alone is still a 'fuzzy concept' (Le Deist & Winterton, 2005) despite the numerous attempts of many scholars. The process of defining the term competence in relation to applied linguistics cannot take place without the mentioning of the contributions of Noam Chomsky, as it all began when Chomsky introduced the term in his work *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (1965). He differentiated between the knowledge of language and the use of that language, having the term competence mean the learner's knowledge of a language.

With development in the field of applied linguistics the term competence also witnessed some expansion and change as it branched out to many other concepts that included the ability, skill and so on. According to online dictionaries such as Competence Noun - Definition, Pictures, Pronunciation and Usage

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Notes | Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary at OxfordLearnersDictionaries.com (2022) and Merriam-Webster (2019); competence is related to doing something and being competent. The term competence was also discussed in relation to practical performance by scholars like Sparrow and Boam (1993) and Mitrani et al. (1992). Hartle also provided a practical definition of the term competence as he depicted it to be 'a characteristic of an individual that has been shown to drive superior job performance' (1995, p.107). This definition includes performance as well, indicating that the competence of a learner is not limited to knowledge but is also related to outcomes and performance.

The grammatical competence of a learner seems to include the syntactic, semantic and phonological aspect of the language system (Radford, 1988). Therefore, in order for a learner to be grammatically competent they firstly need to know how to combine words and make sentences that are grammatically correct and sound. Secondly, they need to have a hunch that enables them to differentiate between well-structured sentences and ill-structured ones semantically. Lastly, they need to have a good sense of the phonological aspect of sentences' structure.

According to Council (2001) in Artunduaga (2013) the grammatical competence is the ability to understand and use the grammatical structure of a language and the ability to recognize the well-formed sentences that comply with the grammatical structures of the language in question. Therefore, from all of the above definitions, a general definition can be made. In order for a learner to be grammatically competent, they need to have 3 skills. The first one is to be able to comprehend the target language structures. The second one is to be able to use those structures and the third one is to be able to distinguish between the well-formed sentences and the ill-formed ones in the categories mentioned in the previous section and that were introduced by Radford (1988).

The various perspectives of social media make it hard to create an agreed upon a definition. Howard and Parks (2012) defined social media as " (a) the information infrastructure and tools used to produce and distribute content; (b) the content that takes the digital form of personal messages, news, ideas, and cultural products; and (c) the people, organizations, and industries that produce and consume digital content" (p. 362).

According to Carr & Hayes (2015) "social media are Internet-based channels that allow users to opportunistically interact and selectively self-present, either in real-time or asynchronously, with both broad and narrow audiences who derive value from user-generated content and the perception of interaction with others" (p. 8). This means that social media are platforms that exist on the internet and can be accessed by everyone through the internet that allow the people who use it to interact with each other and each other's content. They also get to present a version of themselves to a certain audience.

E-learning is a type of learning where students rely on informational systems to obtain knowledge (Salehudin et al., 2021). This type of learning can happen inside and/or outside of the classroom environment, and its goal is to enhance the learning process and education for both parties but especially for students and to make

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it possible to create connections between students and teachers through digital platforms. With the rise of social media, its popularity and the increase in its usage, it became a considerable mean of learning (Lee et al., 2011). Thus, it can be said that social media creates new learning opportunities that cannot be found in the traditional learning experience.

In all academic settings, communication between the teacher and the students need to be present (Faizi et al., 2013). For example if a student cannot comprehend a section of a certain lesson, they need to communicate that concern to their teacher, and the teacher needs to communicate effectively an explanation. social media plays a vital role in this issue as it provides a channel through which communication takes place. Be it online learning or distance learning, students can express their concerns towards a section of the lesson in real time. There will be no place for confusion as students will be able to obtain feedback, correction, explanation etc in a much faster way by using a social medium. For example, if a teacher gets asked a question repeatedly by students from different classes he/she can post the question and the answer on their twitter feed or Facebook feed for every student to see.

According to Faizi et al. (2013) social media can enhance the educational system by providing a channel of communication between the administrative staff. With the use of social media coordinating administrative issues would be very quick and manageable. Social media can also be a bridging medium between students especially in out of class communication (OOC) Kim (2017). Students can work collaboratively on lessons for better understanding. Students can provide their own understanding of the lesson to their classmates and work to create a unified mastery of the subject in question.

Social media is highly frequented by digital natives as a source of information. Herring et al. (2007) noted that individuals would use the English language alongside other languages to express themselves on social media and sometimes even without the full comprehension of the language. However, this enthusiasm for the use of the English language on social media does not reflect positively on students' grammatical competence academically. Heng (2020) addressed the issue of social media and students' grammatical competency by noting that the frequent use of the platforms would push students towards an informal use of language. Students would use abbreviations and slang words in the academic context.

Other scholars like Maros and Taufek (2019) adopted a different stance in regards to the usage of social media and the development of students' language. They argued that the use of social platforms and the use of slangs do not affect the academic grammatical competence of students, but it rather builds a sense of identity. Students are aware of the contexts in where they are producing texts into, they are aware that it is not appropriate to use slangs academically.

METHOD

The current work sought to investigate the relationship between the use of social media and the grammatical competence of Moulay Ismail University English department sixth semester students. To better orientate this process of investigation the current study relied on the following research questions.

- Is there a relationship between the use of social media and the

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development of students' grammatical competency?

- Does social media play a huge role in the exposure of students to the English grammatical structure?

This study was based on a quantitative approach. The reason behind the choice of this approach laid first in the fact that the researcher aimed to test certain hypotheses concerning the use of social media and the grammatical competence of third year Moulay Ismail University students. The second reason was that to measure variables in question (the use of social media and the grammatical competence) in terms of statistical procedures. The quantitative approach allowed the researcher to analyze the data attained numerically and arrive at broader understanding of the phenomenon. The third reason for the choice of this approach laid in the lack of numeric data that is generated from a Moroccan context following a quantitative approach. A lot of recent studies that investigated the relationship between social media and the development of grammar in a certain population like Andrade & Andersen, (2020), Yuliah et al., (2020), Lumban Tobing & Pranowo, (2020) and Aniasih et al., (2022) to name a few, relied on approaches that were either mixed methods or a qualitative in nature. Scholars were mostly interested in the attitudes of students in relation to their grammatical development and social media.

The target population of this study was third year students of Moulay Ismail University, school of arts and humanities who belonged to the department of English. The total number of the sample was 288 students. The population was chosen because they were the students who were considered grammatically well off as they were required to write a thesis of their own by the end of the year, yet they still belonged to an undergraduate program where they still benefited from grammar courses and were still in the process of mastering a solid grammatical competence. In other words, the third-year students were chosen because they were assumed to have a grammatical knowledge that would enable them to pass the ESL test, yet that knowledge was still in the process of development as they didn't reach a full mastery of English as a second language. The students' knowledge could still be affected by outside factors or variables like the use of social media.

As for the sampling methods, convenience sampling was opted for in this study. This type of sampling did not call for a sampling framework, or a lot of time when the sampling process begins. Most importantly this type of sampling granted the researcher access to the participants that would have not been reachable if the researcher relied on probability sampling. The convenience sampling that was used in this study relied on volunteer (opt-in) panels (Fricker, 2008).

This study relied on a survey that consisted firstly of a grammar test section that was adopted from an ESL test sample for the year 2021 and secondly of multiple statements where the participants would express their agreement or disagreement to different statements on a 5 scale likert scale.

The grammar test used in the study was an ESL test that according to Mattern & Packman (2009) was developed by College Board which is a not-for-profit membership association founded in 1900. The Board is composed of more than 5,600 schools,

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colleges, universities and other educational organizations. Among its best-known programs are the SAT®, the PSAT/NMSQT® and the Advanced Placement Program® (AP®). The grammar test that the study used covered the following areas of grammar:

- Nouns, pronouns, and pronoun case structure
- Sentence structure, including prepositions, parallelism, and sentence fragments/run-ons
- Subject-verb agreement
- Adjectives/adverbs, including modifiers and comparatives
- Verbs, including verb tenses and regular and irregular verb forms
- Subordination/coordination

In consideration of the theoretical framework and the review of literature the second section of the survey was designed to contain statements that were presented to the students to then agree or disagree with (on a 5 scale likert scale). The statements in the second sections of the survey were also divided into subsections, as each subsection was dedicated for a research question.

For the reliability of the research instrument Bryman (2012) suggested that for a test to be reliable the results need to be repeatable. For the case of the survey and especially the Accuplacer ESL test Johnson & Riazi (2015) in their study argued that the test takers who varied in terms of gender and ethnic background had similar performances, indicating that the content of the test were not '*problematic'* and that the test results were repeatable. However, an issue that was highlighted by Johnson & Riazi (2015) was for timing. Some test takers voiced their concerns in relation to the timing of the test as "they could not do their best" in the time slot they were given (Johnson & Riazi, 2015, p.55). To account for this issue; the participants in the current study did not have a specific time period to be bounded by. The test takers for this study had the possibility of completing the test according to their own timing, in order to achieve their best results.

Mattern & Packman (2009) conducted a predictive validity test assessment for the Accuplacer test. After the correcting for statistical artifacts of measurement error, range restriction, and unreliability test were conducted, Mattern & Packman (2009) concluded that the Accuplacer test showed an estimation of true validation. Even for the scoring of the Accuplacer tests, the scores were provided by College Board alongside the test.

For content validity of the instrument that tested the students' grammatical competence, Al-Saleemi (1987) classified the grammatical system of any language into 3 universal categories; unit, structure, class and system. Unit is concerned with the grammatical unites of the language like sentences, clauses, phrase, words, and morphemes. Structure is concerned with the organization of the different units of language and how the addition or omission of one unit can be manipulated. Class is concerned with the 'restrictions' that dictate the placement of unit in a structure. Lastly system is the category that is concerned with presenting the different possibilities available for one slot in a sentence.

All of the above categories suggested by Al-Saleemi (1987) were incorporated in the ESL test either through filling in the blank with a word or phrase from the provided suggestions or through choosing the best way to combine two separate sentences through choosing 1 option through the suggested combinations.

To ensure the internal validity of the research instrument, different statistical tests (multiple chi-square tests and multiple symmetric measures tables) were conducted to establish that the independent variable which is social media use has an effect on the dependent variable which is the grammatical competence of students.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Statistical tests were carried out through the previously mentioned research tools to provide answers for the research questions. However; before tackling the research questions it was needed to establish and differentiate between grammatically competent students (those who passed the grammar test) and grammatically incompetent students (those who failed the test). Moreover, it was need to note the number of students in both categories who are more prone to social media use. Hence, we have the following table:

Table 1. *Grammatically Competent * Usage of Social Media Cross Tabulation*

		Usage of Social Media			
		Always	Often	Sometimes	Total
Grammatically Competent	Yes	150	24	18	192
	No	54	30	12	96
Total		204	54	30	288

The options of "rarely" and "never" were not chosen making up 0% each. With "always" being the most voted option, it can be deducted that the participants of this sample are heavy users of social media, thus they spend a lot of time on social or refer to it a lot. Out of 192 grammatically competent participants 150 of them had a high frequency of social media use (always). And out of 96 grammatically incompetent participants 54 of them also had a high frequency of social media use. Seeing that this study investigates the relationship between social media use and grammar as a crucial language component, these numbers hint at the possibility that language acquisition or learning may be no longer strictly related to traditional means. Language learning and language acquisition are starting to utilize to digital means be it intentionally or intentionally. Although this study provides a glimpse into the nature of the relationship between the variables, future work is needed to seek the depth of this relationship and its influence on other language components.

Results

This section of the survey is divided into 2 smaller sections that answer the research questions. Each research question is answered through a section from the research instrument that was developed accordingly ranging between 1 statement from the survey to 3 statements in the survey per research question where students chose a stance on a 5 scale likert scale. The study relied on 2 hypotheses that were as follows:

1. **H1** there is relationship between the use of social media and the students' grammatical competence
2. **H2** the use of social media does expose students to l2 grammar

The first research question investigates whether there is a relationship or an association between social and the grammatical competence of students. This research question was answered through 3 statements. The questions relied on a likert scale questionnaire to gather some measurable data for the study. The questions utilized in the questionnaire were ones that were developed according to the literature. Following the insights from the theoretical parts of this study on the variables in question, the objectives and aim of the study, the questions used in this study were not adopted from a previous work but they were developed specifically for this study by the researcher to yield optimum insight on the issue in hand. Using the questions as guide, students expressed their agreement or disagreement with on a five scale likert scale. The results of the first statement came as follows:

Table 2. *I learn about English from Social Media*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	18	6,3	6,3	6,3
	Agree	150	52,1	52,1	58,3
	Neutral	54	18,8	18,8	77,1
	Disagree	60	20,8	20,8	97,9
	Strongly disagree	6	2,1	2,1	100,0
	Total	288	100,0	100,0	

52,1% of the sample agreed with the statement. This means that 150 out of 288 participants of sample learnt about English as

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a language from social media. With the added percentage of the value "strongly agree" to the value of "agree" more than 58% of the sample are in favor with the statement. These results could be of huge benefit to language learning programs. With 52.1% of the participants agreeing that they learn English through social media, it could be very acceptable to foresee the inclusion of social media as a tool of learning and teaching in EFL environments. These results could have a big implication on the type of materials and means used to teach and learn English. This percentage also showcase the rise of digital learning modes that are may start overthrowing the traditional means of language learning. Although it is to note that because the participants are from the English department, they could be overexposed to the English language on social media due to their academic orientation. It is important here to consider this fact as a limitation regarding the study's sample. Future works are encouraged to rely on an academically diverse sample to avoid this potential issue. The previous percentage of agreement overshadows the percentage of the participants who disagree as they make up 22,9%. The results for the second statement were as follows:

Table 3. *I gained knowledge about grammar from social media*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	36	12,5	12,5	12,5
	Agree	126	43,8	43,8	56,3
	Neutral	54	18,8	18,8	75,0
	Disagree	60	20,8	20,8	95,8
	Strongly disagree	12	4,2	4,2	100,0
	Total	288	100,0	100,0	

43,8% of the sample agreed that they do gain knowledge about grammar from social media. With the added percentage of the value "strongly agree" to the value of "agree" more than half of the population are in favor with the statement with 56,3% out of 100% of the sample. This means that for more than half of the sample the use of social media enabled them to gain knowledge about grammar from social media. Although that the two previous statements somewhat associate the variables of grammar competence and the use of social media, it cannot be confirmed. The next statement and the final one of this section will provide a chi square test to make it possible to reject or accept the first null hypothesis that states there is no relationship between the two variables. The last statement's results were as follows:

Table 4. *Grammatically Competent * The Use of Social Media Cross Tabulation*

			Social media had a great contribution in my grammatical development					
			Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Grammatically competent	Yes	Count	30	90	48	24	0	192
		Expected Count	32,0	92,0	44,0	20,0	4,0	192,0
	No	Count	18	48	18	6	6	96
		Expected Count	16,0	46,0	22,0	10,0	2,0	96,0
Total		Count	48	138	66	30	6	288
		Expected Count	48,0	138,0	66,0	30,0	6,0	288,0

In the table above it is to note that biggest numbers were for the values of agreement and they were mostly by grammatically competent participants. 90 grammatically competent participants voted for "agree" and 24 grammatically competent participants voting for disagree. It is also to note that the observed counts do not match the expected counts. To test whether the association between the variables is significant, a chi-square test was conducted:

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	15,996[a]	4	,003

a. 2 cells (20,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2,00.

The Pearson chi-square value was 15,996[a] indicating that there is association between the variables. The sig value of the Chi-Square test is less than 0.05 being 0.03; therefore stating that the results are statistically significant. This significance made it possible to reject the null hypothesis (the use of social media does not affect the grammatical competence of students) and accept the alternate hypothesis H1: social media does affect students' grammatical competence. These results should be taken into consideration as they provide important implications to professors and to students themselves. Through using social media

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students' grammatical competence was altered, therefore we can say that social media is a very powerful tool that could be used for good or for bad. Social media could either enhance or worsen the grammatical ability of students. It is advised for future research to look into the possibilities in which social media could be included into class activities or language syllabuses as a crucial element that could help alter students' grammatical competence. After accepting that there is an association between the variables, to test the size of the effect the symmetric measures table can be referred to

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	,236	,003
	Cramer's V	,236	,003
N of Valid Cases		288	

The table above is a 2 by 2 table; thus phi's value was referred to. The value in question is 0.236 and according to Pallant (2010) the use of social media has a moderate effect on the grammatical competence of the participants in this section.

The second research question investigated whether social media plays a huge role in the exposure of students to the grammar system of English as a language. The results of the statement were as follows:

Table 5. *I use social media to follow English speaking people*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	84	29,2	29,2	29,2
	Agree	138	47,9	47,9	77,1
	Neutral	42	14,6	14,6	91,7
	Disagree	18	6,3	6,3	97,9
	Strongly disagree	6	2,1	2,1	100,0
	Total	288	100,0	100,0	

The biggest percentage in this table was 49.9% which is almost 50% of participants who agree that they use social media to follow people who speak the English language. This means that almost 50% of the sample agrees that they are exposed to English through social media. Moreover the next big percentage only supported this claim as 29.2% of the sample strongly agrees with the statement. It is also important to note that the least chosen stance in this scale is the strongly disagree with only a 2.1%.

To reject or accept the hypothesis related to this question, H2: social media plays a role in the exposure of students to the grammar of the English language a chi-square test was done, the results are as follows:

Table 6. *Grammatically Competent * The Use of Social Media Cross Tabulation*

			I use social media to follow English speaking people					
			Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Grammatically Competent	Yes	Count	50	101	23	12	6	192
		Expected Count	56,0	92,0	28,0	12,0	4,0	192,0
	No	Count	34	37	19	6	0	96
		Expected Count	28,0	46,0	14,0	6,0	2,0	96,0
Total		Count	84	138	42	18	6	288
		Expected Count	84,0	138,0	42,0	18,0	6,0	288,0

This table showcased that: Firstly the observed count does not match the expected count (the numbers we would expect to see if there was no association between the two variable), hinting that there might be association between the variables. Secondly it is to note that the highest votes for agreeing with the statement came from grammatically competent students. Again with these results it is noticeable that social media platforms are allowing the participants to be in close digital contact with people who speak the English langue. These numbers made the implication that social media plays an active role in creating a place where students with high grammatical competence come in contact with the English language. However it is not clear whether it is grammatically competent students are the ones to seek English speaker online, or if it is the constant and heavy contact through social media with English speaks that made students grammatically competent. Future works are encouraged to investigate this issue as this study did not focus on it. But since this study focused on the relationship between social media use and grammatical competence, the significance of the association between the two variables was tested through a chi-square test that was conducted:

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Table 7. *Chi-Square Tests*

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	10,248[a]	4	,036

a. 2 cells (20,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2,00.

The Pearson chi-square value was 10,248[a] indicating that there is association between the variables. The sig value of the Chi-Square test is less than 0.05 being 0.036; therefore stating that the results are statistically significant. This significance made it possible to reject the null hypothesis (social media does not expose students to the grammar of the English language) and accept the alternative hypothesis H2: social media does expose students to the grammar of the English language. After accepting that there is an association between the variables, to test the size of the effect the symmetric measures table can be referred to

Table 8. *Symmetric Measures*

		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	**Phi**	,189	,036
	Cramer's V	,189	,036
N of Valid Cases		288	

The table above is a 2 by 2 table; thus, phi's value was referred to. The value in question is 0.189 and according to Pallant (2010) the use of social media has a small to moderate effect on the grammatical competence of the participants in this section. Although the moderate effect of social media use on students' grammatical competence, there was still a development in students' skills. As an implication, social media should be used by stakeholders in language learning programs to develop students' grammatical competence. Furthermore, social media could be used by teachers in activities that take place outside of the classroom or even inside of the classroom through gamification or task or project based approaches where students can make use of social media to carry out certain tasks yet at the same time enhance their competence in regards to grammar. Language educators are also encouraged to investigate other language components that could be also affected by social media use.

Discussion

This study relied on a sample with 288 participants, males and females who belonged to the third year of the undergraduates' program in the English department of Moulay Ismail University. The survey that was used to gather data for this study was designated to the gather data for research questions accordingly.

For the results for the frequency of use of social media, all the participants use social media; therefore, the options of "I never use social media" or "I rarely use social media" were not selected. Matter of fact the highest frequency of use that the participants agreed with was "always". However, the results of the cross-tabulation test showed that out of 192 grammatically competent participants 150 of them had a high frequency of social media use "always", and out of 96 grammatically incompetent participants 54 of them also had a high frequency of social media use.

Thus, the results of frequency of use in relation to the grammatical competence of students in this study did not show any significant results that would either support or defy the claims represented in the review of literature.

The first research question asked whether there is a relationship between the use of social media and the grammatical competence of students. The data gathered for this question was attained through 3 statements, for the first statement 58% of the sample agreed that they learn about English from social media. However, this knowledge could've been for any of language aspect be it grammar, vocabulary, pragmatics etc. to further narrow the scope of the investigation of this research questions participants were asked specifically about grammar; and for this statement 56,3% of the sample agreed

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that they learn about the grammar of the English language through social media. Finally, the participants were asked about the development of their grammatical competence and the use of social media. The results for this statement showed an association between the variables as 120 grammatically competent student agreed that the use of social media did have a great contribution in the development of their grammatical competence, while only 72 disagreed with the statement. The Pearson value also showed an association between the variables of social media use and the grammatical competence of students. The sig value for the chi-square test also rejected the null hypothesis and confirmed that there is a relationship between the use of social media and the grammatical competence of students. The sig value for the chi-square test also rejected the null hypothesis and confirmed that there is a relationship between the use of social media and the grammatical competence of students.

The second research question asked whether social media plays a huge role in the exposure of students to the English language. The data for this question showed that there is a statistically significant results and that there is an association between the use of social media and the grammatical competence of students. The results of the chi-square test and the sig value which was inferior to 0.05 allow us to reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis that suggests that social media does expose students to the English language. It is to note as well that most of the participants who agreed that social media does expose them to the English language system were grammatically competent. This research question provided the study with data that support the principles suggested by David Jonassen (1994) in Selwyn, (2012) in the theoretical framework section. Social media can in fact play a role as a medium in the learning process from the perspective of the constructivist view through exposing students to authentic and meaningful material. Furthermore, this study was a reminder to stakeholders to start using social media as a mean to teach language and to students to learn language through. With the development in the field of teaching and learning and with the rise of online learning modes it is only appropriate to start using interactive platforms like social media that offer real and authentic materials. It is through these platforms that teachers could provide activities that could account for different learners and their different learning style through different types of assignments, different task that could be carried out online and so on. The call for such means of learning is not a new trend as seen in the theoretical part of the study, and these results only reinforce that need. Future works are still needed however to tackle the other language components to then come up with a holistic approach to language learning through certain platforms like social media.

CONCLUSION

This work investigated the relationship between social media use and the grammatical competence of students. To verify whether the use of social media does indeed affect students' grammar competency, this study followed a quantitative approach to attain numerical data for there was a lack of scholars who tackled this issue quantitatively. The study also benefited from a convenience design that made it possible to reach a high number of participants as they were difficult to contact directly due to timing issues. A survey that was made up of a demographic section, a grammar test, and Likert scale statements was chosen to arrive at the desired data that would serve the purpose of this study. Descriptive statistics as well as inferential statistics provided the study with in depth analysis of the issue studied.

Through the interpretation and discussion of the findings, it can be said that social media use and the grammatical

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competence of students do in fact have a relationship where social media influences the grammatical aspect of students' language. Given the fact that most of the participants who agreed that social media does expose them to the English language system were grammatically competent, this study managed to confirm that students do use social media to learn about English as a language and to learn about English as a grammatical system. Additionally, this study showed that social media helped students improve their grammatical competence while providing them a space where they can express themselves freely thus having a positive influence on their grammatical competence.

The results of the study confirmed the influence of social media on the grammatical competence of third year students, additionally; it presented the positive attitudes that students hold in regard to social media use, as they seek its help for academic purposes to develop their grammatical competence for the better, and yet they also seek self-expression on social media platforms. The majority of the sample for this study that was made of 288 students regarded social media as mean where they could be exposed to English as a grammatical system and as language.

The contribution of this paper could be summarized in the fact that it provided a positive image of social media in relation to learning and teaching. It also opened the door for the serious consideration of social media as a teaching/learning tool in our Moroccan academic setting. Through this paper, educators who hold a traditional view in regards to the use of technology and virtual social means are ought to reconsider the use of social media as mediator of knowledge between them and the students, as well as between the students themselves.

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