

The role of social media in learning English as a foreign  
language: A case study on Iraqi Kurds

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## **Abstract**

The use of social media is finding increasing use in our daily lives. Among the various social media networks, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube are social communication tools, which are extremely interactive and have found popularity as education and learning tools. One of the most significant online developments has been the rise of Social media, which can be taken as an example of online community that has the aim of encouraging the communication that takes place between people and the effect of social media in affecting the identities as well as language of Iraqi and Iraqi Kurds people.

In this research, the findings of the researches taking place in the UK and questionnaires that have been sent to the Iraqi Kurds, have been focused on so that the role of social media in learning English as a foreign language can be explored. For further evaluating the narrative discussions, method of ground theory was required.

It has been indicated by research that social media like Facebook could be effective as a platform for non-formal learning. However, in this study, the focus has been on the Iraqi Kurds people using the social media environment to learn English as a foreign language. This research demonstrates the methods of learning and why Iraqi Kurds want to learn English, questioning whether social media has a positive or negative role in this.

## Table of Contents

<b>Dedication</b> .....	ii
<b>Acknowledgement</b> .....	iii
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b>	
1.1 Overview .....	1
1.2 Research questions .....	3
1.3 The purpose of the research .....	3
1.4 Design of the chapters.....	4
<b>Chapter 2: Background of Kurds</b>	
2.1 Overview .....	5
2.2 Kurdistan's history .....	6
2.3 Kurds in Iraq .....	8
2.3.1 Under Saddam Hussein's regime.....	8
2.3.2 Post Saddam Hussein .....	9
2.4 Kurds and problem with Arabic language .....	10
2.5 Kurdish language .....	12
<b>Chapter 3: Critical Literature Review</b> .....	14
3.1 Introduction .....	14
3.2 Differences between second language and foreign language.....	16
3.2.1 What is a second language? .....	16
3.2.2 What is a foreign language? .....	17
3.3 English as global language.....	18
3.4 Theory of social networking and social media.....	19
3.4.1 Theory of social network .....	23
3.4.2 Theory of social network and Language.....	25
3.5 Positive and negative impact in foreign language learning .....	27
<b>Chapter 4: Methodologies of research</b> .....	31
4.1 Research .....	31
4.2 Research strategy .....	33
4.3 Research design .....	34

4.3.1 Quantitative and qualitative research.....	34
4.4 Data collection.....	36
4.5 Ethical issues .....	40
4.6 Limitations .....	41
<b>Chapter 5: Findings .....</b>	<b>43</b>
5.1 Questionnaire analysis .....	44
5.1.1 Age .....	44
5.1.2 Gender .....	45
5.1.3 Level of education.....	45
5.1.4 Using social media.....	47
5.1.5 Number of years of using social media? .....	47
5.1.6 Number of hours/ day.....	48
5.1.7 Social media platforms .....	49
5.1.8 The purpose of using social media .....	50
5.1.9 Using social media for learning language .....	51
5.1.10 which languages Participants want to learn .....	51
5.1.11 Methods for learning foreign language.....	52
5.1.12 The reasons for learning a language.....	53
5.1.13 Social media as an environment for learning or improvement foreign Language.....	54
5.2 Interview analysis .....	55
5.2.1 Social media is an environment for communication.....	55
5.2.2 Source of the language learning English .....	56
5.2.3 Iraqi Kurds people use social media for learning English .....	57
5.2.4 Iraqi Kurds want to learn English .....	59
5.2.5 Social media and learning English .....	61
5.3 Results and discussion .....	62
5.3.1 The motivation aspect for the Iraqi Kurds to learn English.....	63
5.3.2 Social networking sites and learn English .....	65

5.3.3 Social media and communication .....	67
5.4 Limitations.....	71
<b>Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations .....</b>	<b>71</b>
6.1 Conclusion .....	71
6.2 Recommendations .....	73
<b>Appendices .....</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>82</b>

## List of figures

Figure 1: Kurdistan map .....	7
Figure 2: Actors .....	22
Figure 3: Undirected Ties .....	22
Figure 4: Directed Ties .....	23
Figure 5: Age .....	44
Figure 6: Gender .....	45
Figure 7: Level of education .....	46
Figure 8: Using social media .....	47
Figure 9: Number of years of using social media.....	47
Figure 10: Numbers of hours of using social media per day.....	48
Figure 11: Social media platforms .....	49
Figure 12: The purpose of using social media .....	50
Figure 13: Using social media for learning language.....	51
Figure 14: Which languages participants want to learn.....	51
Figure 15: Methods for learning language .....	52
Figure 16: The reasons for learning a language .....	53
Figure 17: Social media environment for learning language.....	54

## **Dedication**

**To my family, especially to my loving husband**

**Mohammed Ali**

**Thank you so much**

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# **Chapter 1: Introduction**

## **1.1 Overview**

The Social Media, which is often regarded as the Social Network by the users, is a quickly growing form of digital media. The key reason behind this huge acceptance of the platform lies in its capacity to potentially create and maintain online relationships (Abuseileek 2012). This media does not work as a platform for only seeing photos, like it is on Facebook, for catching brief lines of texts, like it is on Twitter, or for posting videos as it goes for YouTube, rather this media work as a platform for interaction, communication and community forming.

In addition to that, the basic motto of the Social networking websites is to enable the users to communicate and network with other users. For inspiring learning of language in the Foreign Language (FL) classes, social communication and self-interaction are used as vital tools. The websites for Social networking are becoming more and more popular, and in case of some of the users they are even able to induce a flow (Chang, Lin and Tsai 2012) which leads him/her to lose the track of time as they get totally engaged in the action of networking (Mcbride 2009:35). So, we can think of Social Networking Sites as an attractive platform for practising Foreign Language (Felix 2003). The learners of new languages can be boosted to provide more time in completing Foreign Language assignments, by the way of involving them in Social Media actions that employ scholastically effective knowledge of the Foreign Language (Mcbride 2009).

So, the way to use social media for promoting education, must be an intrinsic part of the course offered in the teacher education classes; and with the increasing number of social media networks coming up on the web, this education is no doubt

important. As noted by Arnold and Paulus (2010), instructing teachers about the use of social media to encourage students of language, also boosts them to think 1. The practical and scholastic aspects of the education technology, 2. The social sides of the education technology, and also 3. how to go about the latest technologies in connection with education. Introducing the students to the social networking platforms is a vital responsibility of the teachers, and already, many teachers as well as students are using this tool to improve on their abilities to communicate. This approach to language learning differs from the traditional ways in the aspect that here the application of the target language is considered as a way for developing personal connections and relationships and also offers a chance to reach accomplishment (Mazman and Usluel 2010). Application of technology by the teacher, the idea of the student about the benefits of learning, the social impact of learning and also the financial viability are used as innovative and scholastically efficient processes for enhancing learning of language (Chartrand 2012:97).

At the present times, learning English has turned out to be quite vital for the learners of North Iraq who learn Kurdish English as a Foreign Language, as they strive to use it for interacting with the foreigners, but at the same time, they also happen to have lots of difficulties in learning the language. As narrated by most of the researchers working on this subject, anxiety is one of the prime causes for this difficulty, which leads to hesitation during communication (Stevens 2001). Fear of exams, bad assessment, and most of all, the panic of English classes add to this problem (Sharif 2014:2). While learning a new language, concentrating on other aspects, like enunciation, eloquence, conception, lexis, syntax of the language also affects the English learning process.

## **1.2 Research questions**

To have a detailed understanding about the topic under research and to successively arrive at a reply to the issue mentioned, the next questions need to be addressed:

- Is it possible for any social media, like Facebook, to offer any assistance in learning a foreign language like English?
- Why do Iraqi Kurds want to learn English language?
- What is the prime encouraging factor in case of social media supported learning?
- Is the way that lessons are designed and laid out effective in meeting the requirements of the learners?

## **1.3 The Purpose of the Research**

There are a number of reasons behind this research. Social media can play a vital role in communication and sharing of new thoughts, and at the same time it can be effectively used for learning a new language. This study will highlight how the Iraqi Kurds people can effectively use social media for learning the English language.

It is expected that the outcomes of this study will lead to exploration of new thoughts, facts as well as more researches in the future. To meet the goal of this research, that is to explore the importance of social media to the Iraqi Kurds people for learning the English language, citizens of the place will be provided with structured questions and interviews will also be conducted.

#### **1.4 Design of the chapters**

There will be a total of 6 chapters, including, Introduction, background of Kurds, Literature review, methodology, analysis, discussion and inference.

In this introductory chapter, the topic of the study has been introduced, and also the purpose of the study along with the problems to be addressed in this study has been highlighted. The questions of the research, which will be answered during the course of the research, have also been discussed. The second chapter of the study, that is the background of Kurds, will include the history of the Kurdish people and many other information in relation to the Kurds, like, the Kurdish language, the position of Kurds in Iraq and the relation of the Kurds with other Arabic-Iraqis.

Next is the literature review section, which will include an in-depth study of the literatures available on similar subjects.

The fourth chapter of this paper is written on methodology, which will elaborate the process used for performing this research. This section will establish interviewing and structured questioning as the most appropriate method to meet the needs of this research.

Analysis of the selected data along with the answers to the questions asked during the study has been included in the 5<sup>th</sup> Chapter. The Chapter 6 brings conclusion and recommendation to the study by providing a summary of the outcomes of the research.

## **Chapter 2: Background of Kurds**

### **2.1 Overview**

Language is the most vital and widely accepted tool used in spoken interaction. Speaking and writing are the two ways of interaction used in language based communications. It is also established that in human civilization speaking is a common tool and human beings are normally able to speak at least a particular language, but they might not be able to write it (Wallraff 2000). English, being an internationally recognised language, has become the point of interest for people across the world, and the Iraqi Kurds are no exception. Presently, one can communicate with anyone if he/she knows the English language. It is also noteworthy, that the use of Social networking sites, like the Facebook, is becoming more and more popular in the present Iraqi Kurds society. As for example, a group of students of the University of Sulaimanyah, studying in the English, Translation and Interpretation Department has created a Facebook community for sharing their thoughts, works and different other language based elements that can help in learning the language. A member from the group can post an idiom on the page, and ask his/her friends to talk on it; another member can upload a piece of his/her translation on the page and ask for correction and feedbacks from other members of the group; or a student can ask for grammar corrections on a certain piece of text written by him/her.

There are many pages on Facebook created by the Iraqi Kurds people for the purpose of interaction; there are also groups created by teachers for interaction amongst the students. There is also the option for the teachers to create private groups on Facebook for facilitating knowledge sharing amongst the students and

they can also write comments, or ask questions and answer queries of their students through the platform. So, Facebook has the potential to be used as an effective English Language Teaching tool, and the students using Facebook, can also experience a significant improvement in their language within a certain time span (Lie 2010).

One effective feature of the Social networking sites like Facebook is that, the posts and comments made on them are visible for long, and hence the students can easily compare and learn from the collection of posts and comments. In addition to that, as noted by Mazman and Usluel (2010), the level of communication amongst the students is increased through online social networking which offers a secured environment for learning. The learners with low expertise feel more comfortable to interact online, rather than direct in-class discussions that are primarily ruled by the more accomplished students (Arnold and Paulus 2010). Moreover, students can easily team up through social networks which can lead to a healthy competition resulting into better learning. As for example, by the way of participating in discussions, placing questions and asking for opinions and feedbacks on the online networking platform, students can note the growth of their peers, and get inspired for a better performance.

## **2.2 Kurdistan's History**

The term Kurdistan stands for 'the land of the Kurds'. It appeared for the first time in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and a province with the similar name was created by Turkish Seljuk prince Saandjar (Yildiz 2011:5). Kurdistan is commonly used to suggest a system of Kurds fiefs, not just mention the Saandjar- created province.

The lands of Kurdistan have fluctuated historically; however, it is mostly the geographical region around the mountains where the borders of Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey meet (Aziz, 2011). Nebaz (2005) thinks that Kurdistan stretches from the East between the gulf and the Caspian Sea. And Mella (2005:20-21) said that:

Kurdistan's border in the North that goes from Caspian Sea to the west wards Black Sea passing through the Ararat (Aghri) mountains, as far as the imaginary line from Trebizon on the Black Sea shores towards Adana and Alexandrite on the Mediterranean Sea represent the northern and western borders of Kurdistan. In case of southern borderline it stretches from Alexandrite in angular shape. One side of this shape goes straight for Alexandrite toward Mosul and the other side stretches from Mosul to the Persian Gulf passing through Mendeli, Badra, Zerbatiyah and Kut in the South East of Baghdad which was mentioned by Al Mustawfi Al- Qazwini and Matthew the Orfali in between 11<sup>th</sup> and the 12<sup>th</sup> centuries.



**Figure 1: Kurdistan map (ChicagoBoyz 2014)**

Some researchers think that Kurdistan has no official record of population but the Kurds are thought to be the largest ethnic people who have no state in the world. Yildiz (2011:7) thinks that Kurds are present in a large number in Turkey, but they constitute the largest proportion of the total population in Iraq. 15 million Kurds are thought to be present in Turkey (20% of the population); in Iraq 4.7 million (25% of the population); in Iran 7 million (15% of the population); in Syria over 1 million (9% of the population); in Armenia 75,000 (1.8% of the population); and 2, 00,000 in Azerbaijan (2.8% of the population), almost 1 million stay in Europe, especially in Germany.

Most of the Kurds worship Islam. Almost 75% Kurds are Sunni Muslims. The Kurds have different views about devotion and religious practices. Some are Shia Muslims; some are Christians, Jews or Alevi Kurds. A small number of Kurds are Yazidis who blend ancient religion of Persian Judaism, Christianity and Islam (Mirawdali 1993).

## **2.3 Kurds in Iraq**

### **2.3.1 Under Saddam Hussein's Regime**

Though in the year 1945, Republic of Mahabad in Iran was created with the support of Soviet Russia, it was destroyed by Regime in Iran (Mella 2005). Leader Mustafa Barzani of the Mahabad Republic's military established the Kurdish Republic Democratic Party (KDP) to be a rival to the party of Arab Sunni Ba'ath in Iraq. The KDP also became an ethnic resistance organization because the Ba'ath Party captured the power (Case and Siebens 2012:4).



Under the leadership of Mustafa Barzani, the KDP made a contract with government of Bagdad on autonomy for the Kurds and for political representation in the government of Baghdad. In 1974, the main portions of the agreement are not met which led to conflicts (Mirawdali 1993).

To weaken Iraq, the regional rival, Iran supported the Kurds Rebellion in Iraq. The rebellion became weak next year, as a border agreement was made between Iraq and Iran. The agreement excluded the Kurds and ended the support of Iran for them. In 1980, Iraq and Iran engaged in war and at this time, the Iraqi govt. applied anti-Kurds policy but it was highly criticized by the international community (Aziz 2011).

From the Barzani clan the government of Iraq disappeared 8,000 boys and men (CHAK 2007). And also, from 1987 to 1989, the Iraqi government continued the genocide named Anfal campaign over the civilians of Kurdistan, executed and disappeared a lot of people, used chemical weapons, destroyed about 2,000 villages and also rural economy with infrastructure. 182,000 are estimated to be killed in that campaign (Albert 2013). Also in 1988, the government of Iraq dropped chemical weapons from planes on the Halabja city killing almost about 5000 civilians (CHAK 2007).

### **2.3.2 Post Saddam Hussein**

In 2003, the US led a war named Operation Iraqi Freedom which shocked Saddam's regime, but Kurdistan remained stable during the crucial stage of this combat. After the war when the regime fell, for the first time, the Kurds were ready

to enter the national politics with equal rights like the Arab in Iraq. They accepted an occupation administration led by the US and participated in a no sovereign council named the “Iraq Governing Council (IGC)” which was appointed in July 2003 (Katzman 2010:3).

Though the Kurds strove for maximum autonomy, they thought that the participation in the post- Saddam central government would enhance the Kurdish interests. So the PUK and the KDP became “Kurdistan Alliance” and competed jointly for the two main parliamentary elections in 2005. In the national elections in 2005, the Alliance won about 26% of the vote and earned 75 National Assembly seats out of 275(Aziz 2011).

## **2.4 Kurds and Problem with Arabic Language**

The complex relations between Arab and the Kurds are generally addressed and discussed in Baghdad and especially in the Iraqi council of representatives (the Parliament). Both Arabic and Kurdish are recognized as the official languages in the Constitution of Iraq, but Arabic has kept its position better as it is predominantly used in the parliament as the language of communication. So, not only the Arabs but Arabic is used by the Kurds, Turkmen and the Assyrians also as a mode of communication (Polat 2007).

After the upheaval in 1991 and the establishment of the autonomous Kurds region and when many universities were opened in those regions, relations as well as contacts between the Kurds and the Arabs weakened seriously. In the curriculum of the schools, Arabic teaching materials were reduced; English was promoted as a

substitute for Arabic. For all these the new generation would not like to communicate with the Arabs as they had a negative background with regime of Saddam. The lack of the knowledge of Arabic which the new generations have, also originates from the suffering under repression for years and another reason is the isolation of Kurds region from the rest of the country after the upheaval (Aziz 2011). So for these reasons, the Iraqi Kurds people now do not understand Arabic.

On the other hand, it should be noted that English is also promoted by the Kurds government as well as the media. Still, undoubtedly, the new generations have a tendency to learn English. The reason may be many, but the actual fact is that those MPs, who once fought for the rights of the Kurds, are the only people who speak Arabic perfectly. For the past two decades there have been gaps between the Kurds and the Arabs which has made these two nations distant from each other. If any young Kurd wants to make a message in Arabic at present, he or she will take the help of machine translation (Sharif 2014).

Iraq now is a country where the new generations of two major nations the, Arabs and the Kurds have no common language for communication. For this, a communication gap has arisen between these two generations, especially among the new generations. This is also hampering the political as well as the socio- cultural relations between them. This is a major issue and needs immediate attention. It is true that Iraq has been united, but the actual problem will occur when the older generation will be replaced by the new generations in the stages of future politics, may be in the next 10 years (Albert 2013).

## 2.5 Kurdish Language

To understand the evolution of national consciousness, the role of language should be understood both as an instrument of communication and as the basis for national identity. Language sets an ethnic boundary which is necessary; and on the other hand language is also an element that sets the national identity.

The Kurdish language comes from the Iranian branch of the Indo- Iranian group of Indo- European languages. Though there is no relation with the Arabic or Turkish, it is related to Iran's official language, which is actually Persian (Farsi) (Nebaz 2005). The Kurdish language has four main dialects: Luri, Sorani, Kurmanji and Zaza. Each of these dialects has different sub- dialects. These dialects are so different that the speakers of other dialects do not make out each other (Aziz 2011). For instance, the difference between the vocabularies of Kurmanji and Sorani can be described like the difference between the German and Dutch vocabularies. The differences between them are very clear. Both Kurmanji and Sorani have written form but they are written in Arabic and Latin alphabet respectively.

After the First World War, Kurdistan was divided and Kurdish language faced new colonial conditions. The Kurds were not allowed by the allies to set up their own state (Mella 2005). Kurdistan was parted among five new colonial states according to their strategy and economic interests. These states were USSR/ Azerbaijan, Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Syria (Mirawdali 1993). The new national states were created artificially with the support of the European powers in the hands of the Arabs and the Persians. They made attempt to integrate the Kurds culturally where they could not have been able to abolish them at gun point (Yildiz 2011). Language is an important factor in case of national identity. So all the states which were and still

are under military or any other form of non- democratic government do not use Kurdish in spoken or written form, or they use it under extreme control and pressure. For instance, under the reign of Saddam Hussein, the formal language in Kurdistan of Iraq was Arabic; but the Kurds tried to use Kurdish language instead of Arabic as they were well aware of the fact that the decision would be a protest against the imposition of his power on Kurds.

## **Chapter 3: Critical Literature Review**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This section of the study aims to concentrate on the effect of the social networking sites on the lives of people and how exactly this networking is vital for regular actions particularly in case of education and learning. To describe on this, the first thing to be mentioned is that, in the last few years, the social networking platforms has infiltrated into our daily lives and have become a part of our regular activities. The social networking media has not only changed the way of informal communication between people but has also altered the way of professional communication and organizational structures. The base of social media lies on the technology and ideology included in the Web 2.0, which refers to a bunch of Internet programs designed to offer people a platform for exchange of information and views (Arnold and Paulus 2010).

At the same time, Social networking platforms can be efficiently used as educational means for assisting in teaching and learning. A structure based equation model was developed by Mazman and Usluel (2010), which described the way social networking platforms can be used for educational means, and asked for the views of the students about using social media as a platform for education and learning. Using social media for education was found to be effective for interaction, collaboration as well as resource sharing (Absuseileek 2012).

Facebook works as a platform for connecting learners across the world, thus creating a group of learners, which makes an important part in the education of students (Irina 2012). Online social websites like Facebook and others offer a

platform to the teachers as well as to the students to support each other on the courses through the online community built by them.

And also, with the increasing number of social networking site, it is also important to include information about using these platforms on the training programs of the instructors. As noted by Voithofer (2007:11) instructing teachers about the use of social networking sites to encourage students of language, also boosts them to think 1)The practical and scholastic aspects of the education technology, 2)The social sides of the education technology, and also 3)how to go about the latest technologies in connection with education.

It should also be mentioned that according to Harrison and Thomas(2009) there are also negative impacts of social networking media on learning new languages like English. Lucid instructions, discussion on the meaning and supervising the ultimate result are vital for learning of a student and hence interaction along with individual attention is important for proper learning of language (Mcbride 2009). On the other hand, there are also learners who are not able to make proper speech right at the spot thus ruining a conversation. As stated by Felix (2003), in his study, learning English in social media, this platform cannot assist in learning because it holds the student as an end receiver and not as a pursuer of information and skills. Here the student stresses on correlating and uploading information, instead of trying to transform information into proper knowledge. Learning a language is a critical task that cannot be achieved through the restricted choices available with social networking platforms.

## **3.2 Differences between Second Language and Foreign Language**

### **3.2.1 What is a Second Language?**

At a young age, one learns the first language (L1) that is the mother tongue. When one learns an additional language, that language is called second language (L2). The second language can also be called a target language (TL), meaning the language which one aims to learn, and once it is learnt, it no longer remains a target language (Troike 2006:3-4). The term L2 is used specially about those languages which are learnt in a natural environment, either one wants to be habituated with everything in a new country, or because one thinks that it will do good to him, if he learns the language of, for instance the most strong minority in a county or in a region in which he is living (Ipek 2009). It is less typical to learn these languages in a formal setting and it is even less typical to learn these languages out of fun or because of the given curriculum. At the end, they are still the second language. It can be said that a second language is often an official or a dominant language needed for education, employment or other necessary objectives (Kabilan, Ahmad and Abidin 2010). Second language is often acquired by those whose native language is another, meaning any members of the minority group or the immigrants. Still, it is not necessary that the immigrants always acquire the second language. A certain example is that the students who learn different languages in school, those languages may not be usable in the countries where they live (Troike 2006).



### **3.2.2 What is Foreign Language?**

The language that is not native to any place or region is a foreign language. Undoubtedly, this definition may be different in regions and to the individuals within a particular region. There are many countries where there are more than one language or different populations use their own languages. Instruction of foreign language is needed often or it is inspired strongly in primary and secondary education; there are also different procedures of adult language instruction. Several people use two or more languages which are thought to be an asset in many professions (Wallraff 2000).

Felix's (2003) argument was that three differences are made in today's applied linguistics. These differences are related closely with each other. These differences are the differences between language acquisition and language learning, between second language and foreign language learning and between guided and unguided. The main difference between these distinctions is that both acquisition and learning refer to the process of learning in the learner and the consciousness through which he learns. On the other hand, the other two refer to the situation in which the learning occurs, not the learner himself only.

The distinction between the second language learning and the learning of foreign language emphasizes on the learning situation, not on the learning process directly. There are different criteria that are used to make the distinction (Abuseileek 2012). All these differences give emphasis on the community of the learner or on the environment of individual learner.

The primary issues that a language learner learns in the given environment can be summed up like this: In a learning situation of second language, the language is

spoken in the learner's immediate environment and the learner has good chances to take part in the natural communication situations (Ipek 2009).

But, in a learning situation of foreign language, the language is not spoken in the learner's immediate environment, though there may be mass media to provide opportunities so that the respective skills can be practiced (Longcope 2001). The learner has hardly any chance to use the language in normal communication situation.

In this model of difference between second language and foreign language, it can be said that the English language for Kurds people is a foreign language because their first language is Kurdish and second one is Arabic. Because the area of Kurdistan is north of Iraq and this country known as Arabic country, the neighbors of Kurdistan are Iran and Turkey and Syria, and their first languages are Farsi, Turkish, and Arabic. For that reason English is a foreign language; however Kurds people now focus on English like second language.

### **3.3 English as Global Language**

Throughout the world almost 950 million people speak English as a foreign or second language (Troike 2006) apart from the 427 million native speakers of English. When the empire was built in Britain which is also known as the imperialism, English language was spread globally, which was the first stage. Again, the second stage of spreading took place as a result of the USA's political, cultural and economic dominance, which is also known as the neo- imperialism.

"In the year 1922, the British Empire became the largest in history, which covered a quarter of the Earth's land area, with a population of 450 million people. In the

colonies, the main objective of education became the acquisition of the English language" (Raine 2012).

There has been an increasing tendency to develop English as an international language (EIL) for the last few decades (Irina 2012). A new way of communication is implied by the EIL in different nationalities and cultures through a common language. The rise of EIL and World English are linked to the globalization which is marked regularly in the conventional ELT context. This is dominated till now by the standards of native- speaker (Crystal 2003).

Wang and Chen (2013) think that English as a language of global communication will continue to keep pressure towards global stability; it will also create anxieties about the falling standard, change of language and loss of geolinguistic diversity. However, since English transforms from foreign language to the second language status for so many people, it is also expected that English will develop a lot of local varieties (Sharif 2014).

### **3.4 Theory of Social Networking and Social Media**

Online social networking can be described as a way of regular social interaction, as it takes place within a family, communities or amongst friends. There can be social networks of passed out school mates, people working together, or groups of social organizations such as clubs and others that are affiliated and serve various interests (Westaby 2012). Social organizations and the casual interactions make the basis for development of friendship or simple association between people. As suggested by Wellman (1996), in the old-fashioned society one of the prime features of the social groups were direct meetings of people living within a

comparatively smaller area, and this was true for most of the population during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, with the enhancement in mobility options for people and the development of technology, this scenario has altered to a great extent, and now, it is an attractive area for research mainly because there is some expected difference between the social groups and the online communities.

The notion “social network website” is used to define this phenomenon, and it is also presented as social networking website during general public discussions; and often these two terms are applied interchangeably(Cheung ,Chiu and Lee 2010). For the purpose of focusing and the scope of this study we have concentrated working only with the term “Network” and not “Networking” (Chartrand 2012). The term “Networking” stresses on initiation of relationships between two unknown people. Though it is also applicable for these websites, but at the same time it is not the main practice for most of these sites, which makes them different from a number of other online ways of communication (Boyd and Ellison 2008). In most of the social networking websites, most of the members are not actually looking for meeting with strangers and building new relationships, but they are trying to connect with people already a part of their physical social network. By taking this characteristic of these sites as a vital feature we mark them as Social Network Websites (Mcbride 2009).

As per the reporters of wkinomics, Tapscott and Williams (2008:1), the internet is promoting fresh and strong models of production depending on the social structure. These models are emphasizing on association and self-organization and not on control and hierarchical distribution. The reporter duo also believes that with social network platforms it is possible to build communities with people from different cultures which will facilitate information sharing and mutual acceptance. As stated

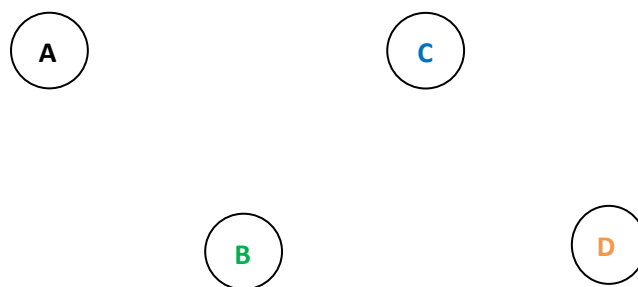
by Freedman (2014:101), social networks have the capacity to determine the way of behaviour of the online users, and the effect of the intuitive and engrossed activities will assist in shaping the media as well as political cultures, however, they will represent only a minority of the population. Till now the most popular act on the internet is related to information and communication, such as searching for a piece of data. Tapscoot and Williams (2008) has opined that the social network platforms, the internet and other digital platforms might have enabled more people to develop and share a large amount of information, but this was not accomplished in exchange of technological structures and media, which still continues to shape, intervene and utilize the expanding demand and aptitude for interaction based communication.

The overall structure of a social network has a major impact in determining the usefulness of the network to the users. A restricted, reduced network might be less effective for the users than networks with open ends that can include people who are not a direct part of the network. Networks that are more open in nature and include several feeble ties and social links, are more expected to offer fresh concepts and scopes to the users than the networks of closed nature including several terminated ties. As for example, a group of friends who perform all their actions only within the group already share the same scopes and information (Kadushin 2004), but a group of friends with link ups with different other networks are expected to have access to more information and opportunities. For the success of individuals, it is more preferable to have links with different networks rather than having many links within the same network. At the same time, people can also work as brokers or connectors for linking two different networks that are not directly connected. This is called filling of the structural holes.

## Definition of the terms:

Actor: An actor is defined as a person who can maintain relations with other people, and particularly in this case, with other individuals or groups selected for study  
Node and vertex are synonymously used with this term.

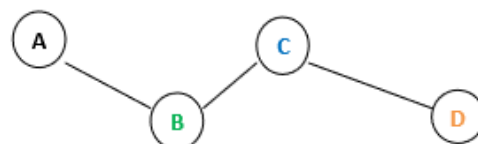
### Actors



**Figure 2: Actors (Denny 2014:2)**

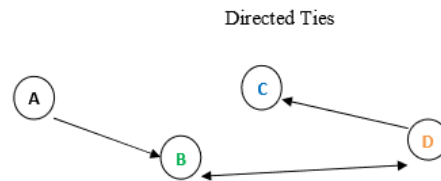
Tie: A tie defines a specific relationship within two actors. This might refer to links such as “studied at the same school” or “loves potato chips or something else they “prefer” or “deal with”. In case the relationship denotes the same thing for the two actors, like, “studied in the same school”, ties can be un-directed. Tie is also denoted as a relation or edge.

### Undirected Ties



**Figure 3: Undirected Ties (Denny 2014:3)**

Ties at the same time can have a direction, like in “prefers”, and can be unidirectional or bi-directional:



**Figure 4: Directed Ties (Denny 2014:3)**

### 3.4.1 Theory of Social Network

Linton Freeman (Denny 2014) has written a summary about social networks and the theory of social network. Durkheim and Ferdinand Tannis can be regarded as the precursors of the social networks who introduced the concept in 1800s. The duo concluded that social groups can be present as private and direct links that connects people with similar morals and views or as measured, official and contributory social connections (Kadushin 2004). As stated by Denny (2014), the explanation put forward by Durkheim was non-individualistic and he argued that social phenomena can be observed when communicating people makes a fact that cannot be hold responsible as the property of the particular individuals. He differentiated between an outmoded society mediated mechanical unity that prevails in case the difference between people are reduced and the contemporary society

mediated organic unity which is formed as a result of collaboration between separated people with autonomous functions.

The theory of social network considers the social relationships as nodes and ties. The individual actor in the networks is considered as the Nodes, and the ties are defined as the connection between these individuals. There can be different types of ties connecting the Nodes (Kajz et al. 2004). To put this in simpler terms, a social network is a plot that includes every related ties between the nodes under study. For defining the social capital of each of the nodes, the network can be used. A diagram of social network, where nodes and ties are represented as points and lines respectively, displays these concepts (Merchant 2011).

As per Wellman (1996), the theory of social network is the study of the impact of social organizations of relationships of a person, group or institution, on the attitude and views of the person, group or institution. Informal stress is intrinsic to the social formation, and the network analysis is a collection of processes for identifying and calculating the degree of the stress. The main point in case of each of the network approach is that the fact should be predominantly realized and studied from the perspective of the features of the links existing between these units and not from the features of these units. It is a relation based approach; and in can of social and communication science these units can take the form of social units such as individuals, organizations, and societies (Kajz et al 2004).



### 3.4.2 Theory of Social Network and Language

Social network theory is different from traditional sociological studies and this the source of the power of social network theory originates which suggest that it is a combination of individual actors, friendly or unfriendly, smart or may be dumb (Kadushin 2004). Social network theory provides an alternate view, where individuals' attributes are not so important as their relationships and ties with other actors within the network. This approach is useful to explain real- world phenomena but not for individual agency, individual's ability of effecting the success; most of it remain within the structure of the network (Denny 2014). If the relationship between language and social categories regarding the native speakers' patterned usage of language to be understood, Milroy and Milroy (1992) brings the social network theory which a method of modeling behaviors that come in sociology.

Social network theory spread due to the necessity of the procedures for examining the issues of local practice and conditions which are sensitive to the local social categories and ties that are contracted locally through which the speakers operate their everyday lives (Carrington, Scott and Wasserman 2005). Social networks are a process to capture the dynamics of the different language behaviors of the speakers, not only as social categories similar to class, gender or ethnicity (Westaby 2012). Considering the difference among the language practices of the native speakers, Milroy wanted to integrate research on the variation in linguistics and society at both individual and community levels with the research on language variation to social class. By this, he wants to combine micro and macro levels and to show that they embody complementary instead of conflicting perspectives (Dornyei 2009).

Networks built of strong ties stand for localized norms of linguistics. Moreover it helps to avoid the pressures expected from the competition with the external norms. In case of dominant and minority languages of bilingual system, both strong ties and exchange networks stand for the presence of minority languages. Conversely, in case of weak networks, shift of language takes place (Westaby 2012). So, network analysis helps to understand the reason behind a particular community's support to a linguistic system which oppose a accepted, mainstream set of norms, and why another system may be not more focused or more sensitive to the external influences (Al- Saleem 2011).

It has been found by different studies that foreign language learners (FL) having engaged in exchange networks with the native speakers will experience not much distance. Whereas, those learners who do not have native speakers in their exchange networks will experience more distance. So the former learners will improve their foreign language. For example, an English learner tries to communicate with a native speaker in social networking sites to correct all the mistakes when they speak with an English native.

In case of English language learning, SNSs are examples of 'disruptive technologies' as described by Godwin- Jones (2008) because they allow English learners to undertake known tasks in different and new ways. One of these features makes the learners able to be engaged in exchange of language through video-conferencing with native speakers of their target language. The peer review feature is also important. It allows learners to correct each other's written submissions on the site. Another trait for SNSs for the learning of English language is the critical mass of hundreds or thousands of learners to be on- line day and night which makes the learners likely to find language exchange partners with relative ease. To add

more, the different studies to set up the affordances of SNSs for learning of English language including the quality of the learning materials, e.g., Livemocha. Harrison and Thomas (2009) investigated positively. Their research highlighted a small group of learners whose conclusion was that language learning like English is offered by SNSs like Livemocha, by supplying environments which allow new modes of active learning.

### **3.5 Positive and Negative Impact of Social Media in Foreign Language Learning**

In the recent years, social networks have been globally accepted as effective platform for academic communications. According to McLaughlin and Lee (2008), there are different functions of communications, sharing of information and joint construction as well as modification.

Earlier it seemed that students were using social media like Facebook and MySpace to keep contact with friends (Lie 2010). Later it was discovered by McBride (2009) that students would exchange informal experiences if the social media is included with collaborative and sharing environment. According to Roblyer et al (2010) in comparison to face- to- face interaction, students like to contact with teachers through social media. This can decrease a sudden embarrassment. It was claimed by Wang and Chen (2013) that an informal learning environment is provided by social media to present relevant topics and the thoughts of guest experts who are not

affiliated with any school or college, and by this they disclose to the students relevant issues of the real world.

Mazman and Usluel (2010) accept that there are three kinds of educational functions of social media: sharing of resource or material, communication and collaboration. Communication is consisted of different actions or activities like to enable the students to communicate with their instructors, participation in class discussions, doing homework and also assignment by teachers, information of links and resources that are related to courses. There are also activities like the participations by people in academic team groups related to their colleges or schools, classes or departments and doing group works by homework sharing as well as sharing of projects and ideas; collaboration is consisted of the activities like exchange of resources of multimedia, video, audio, animated vides, documents (Chen and Yang 2014).

Cheung, Chiu and Lee (2010) thought that as a platform for language interaction, social media can be effective. Godwin- Jones (2008) thinks that relational communications can be benefitted from social media platforms. In their view, the functions of social networking sites are unique and an environment of constructive learning keeping privacy and safety are provided by them. There are some evidences which stand for the effectiveness of social media in English language learning. Lie (2010) and McBride (2009) thought that the active users could develop their skills of writing as well as communication through social interactions with social media. It was discovered by Al –Saleem (2011) that English language learning with the help of social media is effective as social activities help the students to improve competences in verbal communication in the world, since English is a global language.

The instructors and the learners are provided with genuine activities and materials by the online social networks. Thus this inspires constructive learning through fruitful communication (Abseileek 2012). Chartrand (2012) says that the Net-generation learners are inspired to use important learning materials by the social networking sites and also give example; by this the learners go through the authentic usage of the language in case of communication. If online social networks are used for teaching language, it will surely promote English language learning greatly. Some researchers are of the opinion that social networking sites can change the system of education in a positive way which will inspire the students for learning in a better way instead of remaining passive listener in classroom (Arnold and Pulus 2010). Millions of people use YouTube and Facebook which are Web 2.0 tools and these have gained immense popularity in education in the present years.

Again, on the other side, apart from the advantages of social networking in learning and education, there are also some disadvantages of social networking as well in case of learning language. The social networking sites are inspiring the young people to misspell words (Irina 2012). Noticing this, the English Spelling Society's conclusion is that the Internet has brought a revolution in English language making incorrect spelling a rule.

Since people types fast online, it seems that no one feels the urge to use correct English or to check general spelling rules. It means that the young generations who are living on the Internet do not think over the words spelt incorrectly. Kabilan , Ahmad and Abidin (2010) argue that different spellings are used on the Internet increasingly which has taken place because of the fact that people type at speed in rooms of chat and on social media where everybody feels that there is no need to correct the typos or to go through the rules of spelling.

Lucy Jones, a former student of Manchester University said that there have been some effects which they have witnessed by the variations of linguistics on the children who have been born in an age where computer is accessed at a high rate inside and outside schools. These children have no question about their existence (Munoz and Tower 2009). As part of a research, they surveyed a group consisting of 18 to 24 year olds. It has been found that the belief of majority of them is that unconventional spellings are used on Internet as it is fast and it has been accepted. Over one in five (22%) told that they had not the confidence to use or write an email without taking help of a dictionary or spell checker. In spite of the universal usage of the so- called variant spelling, approximately a third (31%) of them told that the alternative non- standard spellings were not acceptable. Two thirds (66%) had the belief that dictionaries must have variant spelling (Vannestale 2008: 36). The Chairman of English spelling Society, Jack Bovill told that there is the huge importance of accurate spelling; however from that recent survey, growth and large scale usage of Internet has brought about new social habits and Internet has become a representative of spelling change.

In the term of language expertise, so many young people use incomplete or short English words which are not found in English dictionary. Some of them use abbreviated terms which become confusing to others often (Munoz and Tower 2009). For instance, they use in their regular vocabulary some words like 'lol' (laugh out loud), 'btw' (by the way) and 'atm' (at the moment); these are the text language. Since, most of the social networking sites use written context message, when students are asked to speak English correctly and professionally, they face problem. There are some who are unable to form proper sentences on spot and when

they make mistake, the total flow of the sentence as well as of the conversation breaks (Felix 2003).

## **Chapter 4: Methodologies of Research**

The aim of this chapter is to fulfil the aforementioned objectives of the research by explaining these dissertation methods used so far. The research has been overviewed in the beginning of the chapter and strategized, designed and encompassed with data collecting method accordingly. Basically, the focus of the research is on the exploration of the role of the social media as mean to teach the English language to the foreigners like Iraqi Kurds.

### **4.1 Research**

The purpose of research is usually to enquire, explain, anticipate and administer a phenomenal observation through a systematic way. There are two methods of research- deductive and inductive (Fox 2009). In the inductive method the analysis and identification are made on the phenomenon under focus according to its structure, basic principles and the underlying process. On the other hand, in the deductive method the verification and hypothesis are made on the observed principles. The former explains the development and the latter explains the validity of the test.

As the meaning and definition of a research work differ from person to person, the past theses did not regard the concord of definition and explanation (Collis and Hussey 1997). However, the purpose of having a methodical follow-up on the perusal and inspection is to enhance the sphere of knowledge (Williams 2007). Additionally, at the same time emphasis is drawn in arranging and assessing the materials of research in a systematic way for weighing the circumstances (Fanning 2005), deciphering the common problems and representing the new phenomenon in an altogether different approach (Kothari 2004). For heralding the good result in the research and in order to achieve it, the researcher has to communicate with people for fetching data for the research keeping the topical approach in mind. As it is stated above the interaction is important in a research as an isolated study is not valued. Quality of the research could be improved by improvement approaches.

As found in the research work of Oliver (1997), where it has been found that interviewee is the ideal example of increasing the value as well as quality of the research. To be more specific, the purpose of the research is to unveil new knowledge to the Iraqi Kurds regarding the role of the social media for learning the English language. So far the speech and idea of this particular research are concerned they vary according to the participants. Participants are completely scattered on the opinion of the importance of English over other foreign languages and the advantage of the social media platform in order to learn it. On the contrary, when an interviewee is asked to answer the questions, he/she is very much tend to talk over other facets of the topic and they expresses then some opinion regarding the role of the social media in Kurdistan. Therefore, it can be concluded that the result of the research can be enriched by the discovery of other new elements.



## 4.2 Research Strategy

One of the significant characteristics in a research is to decide upon the most applicable technique of methodology. The approach must regard the holistic research. It encompasses the selection and duration of the process, collection and analysis of the data and finally utilizing them in solving issues that have been inspected (Bryman 2012). Therefore, the proper identification of the suitable research methodology facilitates the fulfilment of the objectives as well as supports the feasibility of the research (Kothary 2004). The methodology is inherently contained with some components such as strategy, research philosophy, choice, approach and technique. The research is supervised on the whole by the research strategy along with the conducting process of the research. Various organs of research strategy are experiment, action research, ethnography, case study and grounded theory (Pavelek 2013). In the context of real-life, the case study aims to investigate the factual part of a concurrent phenomenon specifically the divider between the context and phenomenon is blurred (Williams 2007). The other way of defining case study would be a planning of conducting research on the basis of several evidencing sources gathered from the exploratory observations (Denzin and Lincoln 1998).

The case study strategy is chosen as the method for this research. It would be implied by the form of interviews and questionnaires focusing the format of the data collection and the kind of disintegrated assessment respectively. The strategy of the case study cannot be matched for conducting a research as it has the immense capability to contemplate over single or complicated research questions within the atmosphere enriched by contextual variables (Kothari 2004). The dependent and independent variables are best suited to the quantitative analysis and producing

those variables are advantage for experiments, secondary information (from the archive), observation and survey (Bryma 2012). The most suitable considerations for the case study are the why and how type inquisitions and the period of the event controlled by the investigator in a very minor way (Oliver 1997). It has been limited significantly and inaccuracy and discrepancy in the observations are likely to be produced due to any kind of misapplication. In order to overcome the silly mistakes of the research strategy, coming up with an applicable design for the case study is a very sensitive issue.

## **4.3 Research Design**

### **4.3.1 Quantitative and Qualitative Research**

It has been opined by many scholars and researchers that a prospectively broader perspective gets ignored if solely any of the quantitative or qualitative research approach is adopted. Thus, a nice combination of these two would successfully encompass the important wider angle of this research work.

The design theorizes and reflects in the synthesis of the qualitative research. And by this line of process the findings of the research can be contemplated theoretically and philosophically by the researchers in order to develop the discipline (Fox 2009). The qualitative research technique is able to excavate the information on a specific phenomenon (Baden and Major 2010:15). Time and place are roughly described in an exuberant manner into the research report. There is a chance to witness the experience of a particular group which has engaged in participating in the

qualitative research. There lies a challenge too in this advantageous position as often the depth is brought forth at the cost of eliminating the breadth of examination (Berg 2001).

Prior answers are set based on their experiences and according to the different perspective of various people depicting the standardized elements of quantitative research (Denzin and Lincoln 1998). Additionally, the method of collecting data in quantitative research data analysis is elucidated (Oliver 1997). In this particular method of research data are collected using several variables such as interviews, past records, questionnaires surveys interpreted graphically (diagrams, tables, graphs, charts etc.). Researchers debate upon it being adhered to the numerical representation of data measurements for those variables which are able to act freely in providing data analysis in a more secular manner (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2009). However, data collection is systemized by descriptive and qualitative techniques in this very approach of qualitative research. The medium of representing this approach is entrusted more in diagrams, drawings and words as any kind of numerical interpretation is eliminated here (Williams 2007).

Qualitative and quantitative research are distinguished from each other stating that the former is evaluated according to concepts, characteristics, meanings, description and definition of elements, symbols and metaphors and the latter in accordance with counts of things and measurements (Berg 2001).

It falls under the issue of methodology when the qualitative and quantitative research techniques are differentiated from each other. The methodology should be chosen keeping it in mind that how aptly they can answer the questions in the research (Bryman 2012). How the informal relationships among the variables are

measured and analysed determines the basis of the quantitative research (Denzin and Lincoln 1998).

#### **4.4. Data Collection**

Primary data helps to run the study stressing much on the questionnaires and interviews. Although emphasizing primary data, secondary data, featuring materials and information, is chosen by the scholars for the inspection of the same subject approaching the study in a differently integrated approach.

The contributors receive the questionnaires electronically via emails and social media networks. This particular technique is applied for data collection as the researchers can gather data in abundance from each participant saving the time. The data acquired from the questionnaires are sorted either by computation or internet software or the conducting authority. The questionnaire technique falls under the category of quantitative research technique availed for collecting data (Baden and Major 2010).

Moreover, the applicable term is critical as per the article for delineating the research work during the preparation of questionnaires as it felicitates the process of availing data that are pertinent and functional. Keeping that in mind, the research is generally introduced with the commencement of the questionnaires simultaneously serving as a crucial objective for its conduct. Along with it the topic of time estimation is incorporated also signifying the results. I prepared the questionnaires ensuring each component to imply upon the thesis so that the participants can discern both the system and the goals of the research. In this way the installation of

an inspiring sense would be possible within the participants to help them to handle the questionnaires more confidently enhancing the research work altogether.

Each participant must be well aware of keeping his/her identity secret and anonymous is very important. I used bold font intentionally to clarify the issue in the sample questionnaire. The introduction in the later part states the importance of transparency. I also commented that the applications solely meant for this research can be used in future comparisons in other research works. In this way, the final decision will evolve. There are both close ended and open ended questions in the questionnaire but the number of close ended questions is more than the open ended questions because the questions being close ended is advantageous for both the researchers and the participants as it helps the former in portraying the role of a researcher and the latter in providing quick and short answers. From the language to the length of the questionnaire consists of a certain concord. The position of the questions has to be in the middle and better to be a few in numbers because all the questions can be answered properly and aptly by the participants. I included only 13 questions to my questionnaire.

The quality of precision, correct grammar and syntax, a positive reflection of the personality of the researcher and simplicity has to be incorporated while writing the questionnaires. However, the authenticity of the questionnaire can be challenged if the participants do not honestly answer and it is very difficult to ensure the integrity. Furthermore, the questionnaires are constructed afterward the occurrence of an event and there are high chances of not being recollected all the details of that event properly (Fanning 2005).

The second technique is the interviews which are entailed in collecting materials. The focus of these techniques is more narrowed into the Kurdish pupils who study at Coventry University and reside at Kurdistan. The type of the interviews is semi structured because, here the data are contrasted and compared precisely procuring data from other interviews (Dawson 2007: 27-28). Data are collected from the technique of interviewing in which the participant and respondent exchange verbally. Descriptive and expansive research along with the survey designs utilizes interviewing technique more widely (Fox 2009: 3). Interviewing has many approaches such as structured and unstructured. In the former one, the participant can act freely and uninhibitedly without having any restriction in topics and the latter only adheres to specific and apropos questions.

As stated by Silverman (1997) the person conducting the interview gains new insight into the why and how of what people think about a particular issue by the conversation during the interview. Pertaining to this particular study interviews will be conducted among the Kurdish population to comprehend why they want to learn English as a foreign language (FL). Further, during the interview a better understanding of the particular person's view can be gauged from their body language, gestures and silent or non-verbal communication (Silverman 1997). The primary aim of this study is to understand the message conveyed by this discussion (Bryman 2012). It helps to pay equal attention to both verbal and non-verbal dialogue that takes between the interviewer and interviewee (Bagnoli 2009). As far this particular study was concerned no difficulty was faced in procuring support from the Kurdish people perhaps due to the fact that the topic in question was quite standard and related to their life with special importance being given to learning the

English language through the use of social media along with ways of utilizing the social media platforms.

All the participants in the study had a clear understanding about the topic. Though on the surface the topic has no political overtones some people in their responses suggested that the reason Kurds wanted to embrace English was because of the differences between the Arabs and the Kurds thus lending a political hue to the topic. Actually, people refrain from commenting on political issues especially in the presence of strangers but since this topic was not related to politics in any way the participants were quite cooperative and frank in their answers. It should be kept in mind that only when the participant is at ease can an interview yields any useful information (Baden and Major 2010). In the final picture it seemed that the Kurdish people have the right to express themselves on a variety of issues including controversial ones.

While conducting the interview, there was no need of a translator as the participants could speak fluent English already; so the problem of language barrier was solved and translation did not take much time. When the final compilation of results is done in a study in which the primary participants and the researcher speak different languages then the limitations of the translation as to how far the original thought of the interviewee has been successfully captured into another language have to be kept in mind (Phillip 1980). The interview is consists of the participants who are the students of Masters and PhD in the Coventry University and they are four in number. Choosing them for the research can be justified as all of them are the users of social media for learning the language English including one having a page on Facebook for teaching English. They belong to almost the same level of education and age group. They are well aware of the history and the difficulties of the Iraqi

Kurds as well the necessity of learning English though it is their fourth language. It is very convenient for me that they are the pupils of the Coventry University as I did not need to go outside Coventry city. They can read and write English very well and there was no problem in communicating, translating and understanding. I clarified their doubts if they have had any.

#### **4.5 Ethical Issues**

Any study must be true to the ethical principles that govern such studies as adherence to them can provide the study with the much needed benefits of credibility, validity and reliance. Total confidentiality has to be maintained and the researcher must make sure that the identities of the participants are not revealed (Silverman 1997). When the final results are tabulated the participants in this study will not be identified, though it is very easy for the primary researcher to identify each participant by assigning each one of them a code or a symbol. Also, before the study was started an informed consent was obtained from each participant.

Ethical considerations are the benchmark for conducting a valid and relevant study. In the present day scenario, strong emphasis is being laid on the ethical honesty of the researchers. The consent letter as shown in the Appendix covers the aims of the study which is actually a master's degree project, promises confidentiality and assures the participants that the information provided by them will only be used for the purpose stated above. It also summarizes the study and the need for such a research along with assuring participants that all personal information will be kept confidential. Further, all participants were informed that the consent was not binding in any form, their participation was voluntary and they could excuse



themselves from the interview at any time. The participants were then requested to sign the consent form to confirm their participation in the study and allow for the allotment of a symbol or code to each one of them so that they could be identified later during final data analysis. Smartphone was used to record the interview and the notebook was used to note down any interesting point of the conversation whose significance could not be captured in an audio recording. Around 25 to 30 minutes were spent on each interview and humor and light hearted banter was used to avoid a dull interview and make the participant comfortable.

#### **4.6 Limitations**

An important factor to be considered before proceeding further is to address the question of validity of the study. It is to be decided that whether the study is valid or not and the methods used are debatable or justifiable.

All studies must bear an address to the validity and reliability as the dependability, credibility and accuracy are based on them. How much a result is able to replicate in a study is referred by reliability in quantitative research. In fact, replication is not expected in the quantitative research. Whereas, in qualitative study replaces commonly validity and reliability by trustworthiness, rigor or terms quality and dependability respectively (Kirk 1986). The quality of the study is evidenced by the various measures of validity.

The design of the study is conditioned by both internal and external validity. In internal validity the level of the test of the hypothesis in the research and its appropriateness for the research query are evaluated (Litwin 1995). The

generalization of the research outcomes expanding beyond the line of immediate setting and sample of the study is possible or not is determined in external validity (Morse et al. 2002).

Though the general perception is that the validity is in no way related to the methods used in research but has a direct connection with the evidence used to reach a final result (Dawson 2002). The other view is that any study can be rejected on the basis of validity and no study method used to reach a final result can guarantee a valid result (Fanning 2005).

The reader must view the result under the lens of limitations of the research as is the case with all studies. The process of an in depth analysis in a research may give rise to further questions whose answers can be found only on further research.

This study did not make the participants uncomfortable as it did not deal with any political issue or government policy as people do not like to comment on such issues. The research deals with day to day activities of people like using the internet and social media for connecting with others. Total confidentiality will be maintained with regards to names and personal information during and after the study. Another limitation of this study is the sample size that participated in the research as it may not be totally representative of the Kurdish population in Kurdistan.

## **Chapter 5: Findings**

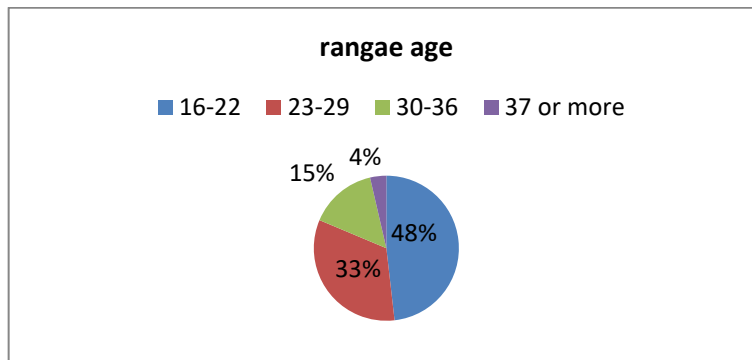
This chapter will discuss the empirical findings of this study that sought to understand how the Iraqi Kurds citizens were using the social media in learning English as a foreign language. The analyzed data will be drawn from the interviews as well as questionnaires that were administered electronically. The answered research questions as well as the interview narratives gathered were significant to me as the researcher as they helped me understand and demonstrate the role of social media in learning English among the Iraqi Kurds. In reference to the interview narratives, they were coded and subsequently framed into a specific theme. Both the questionnaires and the interviews were framed in such a way that they began from the general and narrowed down to the specifics.

The first part of this research dealt with the analysis of the electronically sent questionnaire that sought to discover respondents view on the impact on the role of social media in English learning. However, owing to the time constraints and other factors beyond my control the study findings are based on 34 participants. In reference to interviews, there were four interviewees. The respondents to the study were requested to answer the subsequent questions as exemplified in the charts.

## 5.1 Questionnaire Analysis

### 5.1.1 Age

The respondents were requested to state their age by choosing from the four provided age categories.

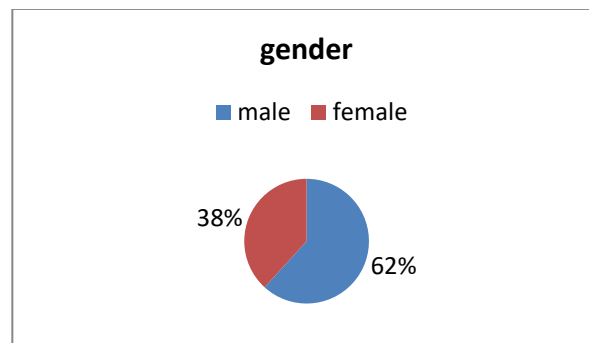


**Figure 5: Age range**

Figure (5) demonstrated that majority of the respondents featured in the first category (see appendix: Age range table). This age category formed 48% of the respondents. This was significant to the study as the said age category is considered to represent majority of the young Iraqi Kurds, school and university students. This was also important as the said age category also signified the ages that mostly use the social media sites. The age category of 23-29 was the second and formed 33% of the respondents while the age category of 30-36 formed 15%. Last but not lease was the age above 37 years that was represented by 4% of the respondents.

### 5.1.2 Gender

This is where respondents were asked to specify to the research the specific gender that they belonged to. The chart provided below gives more clarity to the aspect of gender.

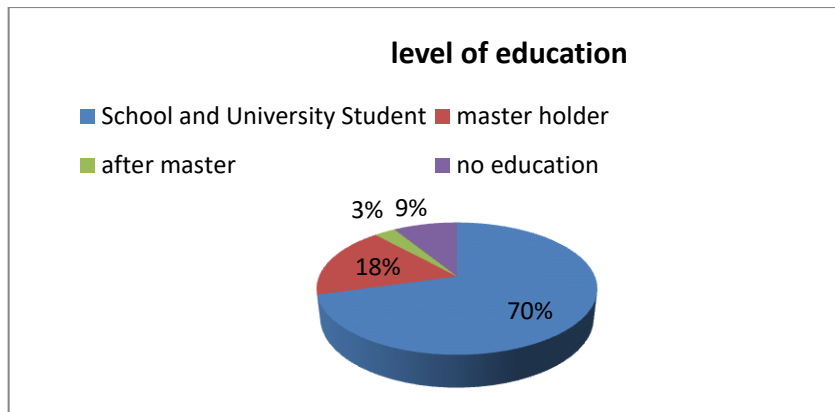


**Figure 6: Gender**

The pie chart (figure 6) exemplifies that the male gender dominated with 21 respondents out of the 34 hence 62% while the female gender had only 38% respondents which translates to 13 out of 34. Whilst analyzing the questionnaire it then emerged that more than half of the respondents were male thus exemplifying the patriarchal society of the Iraqi Kurds. This further indicated that the male gender was more free to use the social media than the women.

### 5.1.3 Level of Education

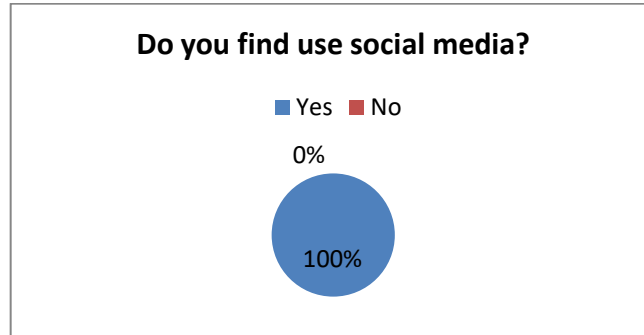
In this question, participants were provided with four divisions of education and asked to state which category they belonged in.



**Figure 7: Level of education**

The pie chart (figure 7) illustrates that undergraduate and school students' category formed the largest category among the participants with a margin of 70% which is 24 out of the 34. Consequently, master holders category was represented by 18% of the participants which is 6 out of the 34. Additionally, the no education category was represented by 9% of the participants which translates to 3 out of the 34 participants. This was a significant finding as it demonstrated that those with no education were also interested in learning English. In respect to the category above master holders there was only one participant who was a PhD holder this formed 3% of the participants. The suggestion drawn here is that the PhD holder was less likely to use social media for learning English language particularly because such people are less likely to spend time in social media networking.

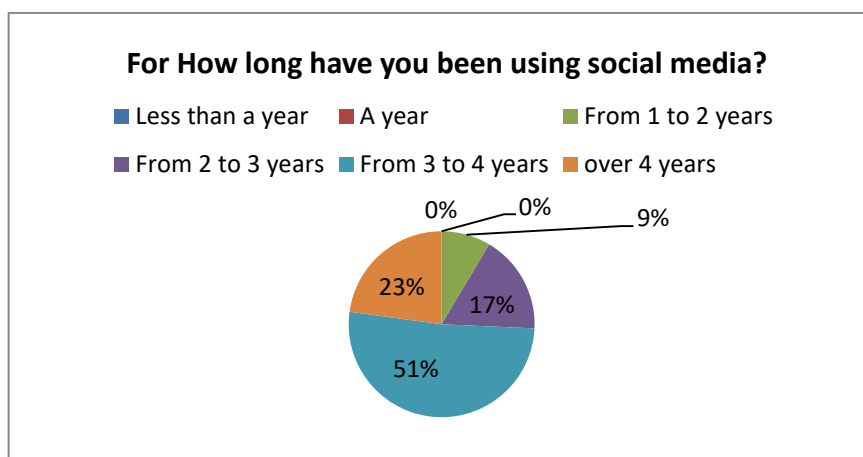
### 5.1. 4 Using Social Media



**Figure 8: Using social media**

The above pie chart illustrates that all the participants used social media. This revealed that social media was not only essential to the participants but was also used on a daily basis.

### 5.1.5 Number of Years of Using Social Media

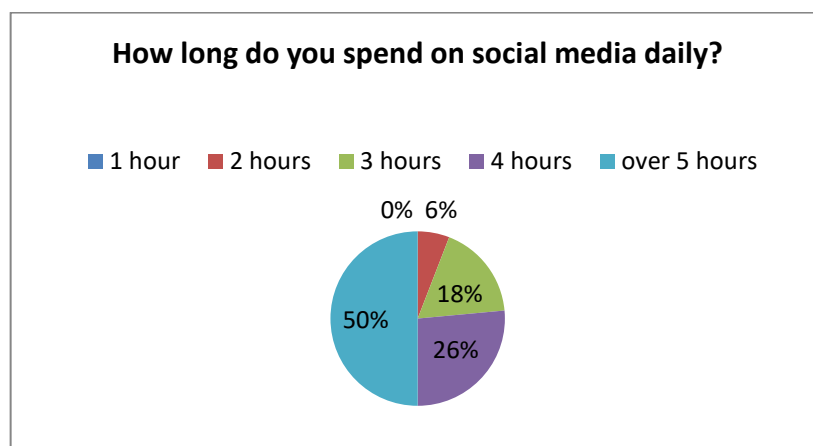


**Figure 9: Number of years of using social media**

From the above pie chart (figure 9) it is evidenced that 51% of the participants had used the social of period of 3 to 4 years while 23% of the participants has used the social media for more than four years. In addition, 17% of the participants stated that they had used social media for 2 to 3 years while 9% of the participants revealed that they had been using the social media for 1 to 2 years. This means that there was no respondent who had not used the social media for less than a year hence represented by the 0%.

#### 5.1.6 Number of Hours /Day

In this question, the respondents were requested to specify the time they spent on social media networks so as to help the researcher in knowing the number of hours per day they spent on social media sites.



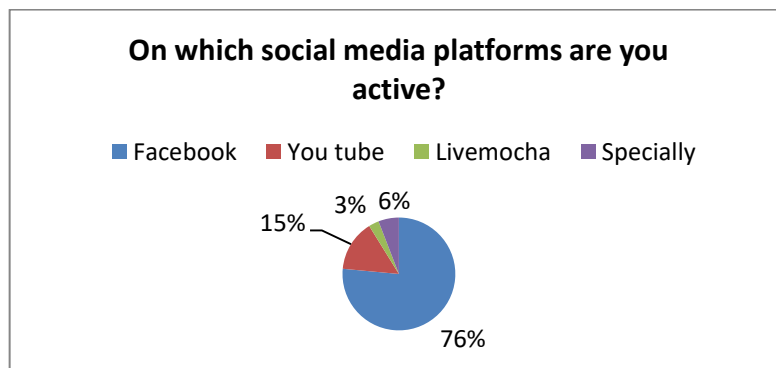
**Figure 10: Numbers of hours of using social media per day**

As demonstrated in the above chart (Figure 10) 50% of the respondents revealed that they spent more than 5 hours on a day using social media while another 26%



said they spent 4 hours a day. Subsequently, 18% of the respondent said that they spent 3 hours daily on social media whereas 6% of the respondents stated they spent 2 hours daily on social media. The interesting finding in this question was that none of the respondents spent less than hour daily in social media instead all of them used more than hour. This confirmed the significance of social media as users embracing it as a new avenue of information. As such utilization of the social media has potential in the aspect of education especially language learning as opposed to just connecting with friends and family.

### 5.1.7 Social Media platforms

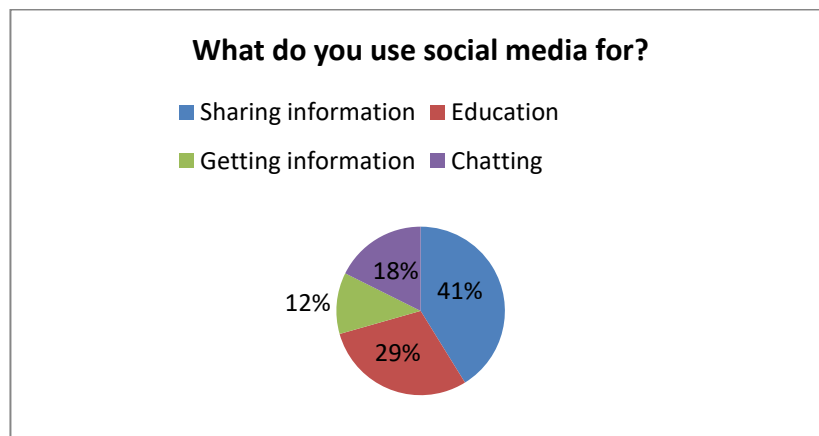


**Figure 11: Social media platforms**

As illustrated in figure 11 above, 26 out of the 34 respondents stated that they used Facebook this formed 76% of the participants. Subsequently, 15% of the respondents which amounts to 5 of the 34 respondents stated they used You tube whereas 6% that is 2 out of 34 used pages of social media. 3% of the respondents stated that used Livemocha as a social media platform. From the above analysis, it

emerged that the most popular social media platform was Facebook followed by You tube that was popular among participants in regard to watching of videos.

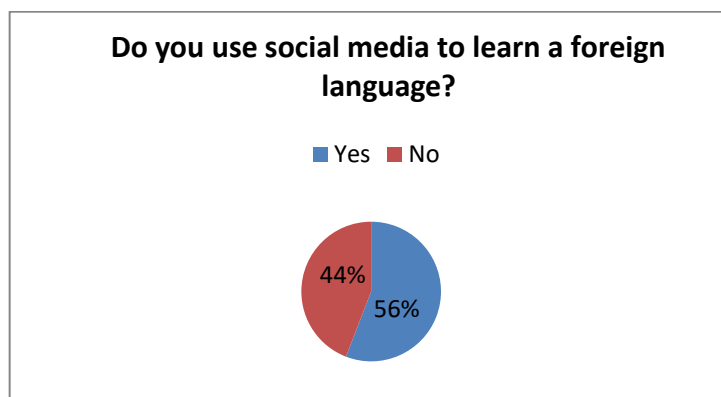
### 5.1.8 The purpose of Using Social Media



**Figure 12: The purpose of using social media**

The above graph shows that 41% of the respondents stated that they used social media to share information with their friends whereas 29% of the respondents stated they used it for education such as learning of language. Consequently 18% of the participants used it for chatting with their families and friends while 12% of the respondents stated they used social media for acquiring information from friends or from different pages.

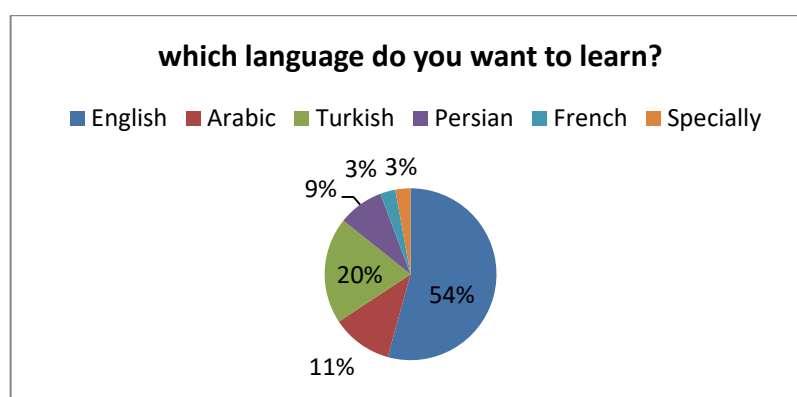
### 5.1.9 Using Social Media for Learning Language



**Figure 13: Using social media for learning language**

The above pie chart (figure 13) demonstrated that 56% of the participants in this research study used social media in learning of language while 44% of the Iraqi Kurds did not use the social media to learn language.

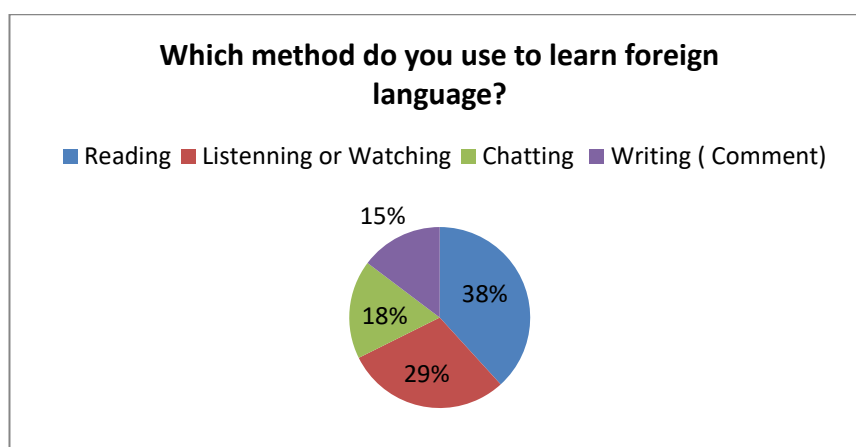
### 5.1.10. Which Languages Participants Want to Learn



**Figure 14: Which languages participants want to learn**

As illustrated above (figure 14) 19 out of 34 of the participants who formed 54% stated they wanted to learn English, 6 (20%) wanted to learn Turkish, 4 (11%) wanted to learn Arabic, 3 (9%) wanted to learn Persian, 1 (3%) wanted to learn French and about 1 (3%) wanted to try and learn any other foreign language.

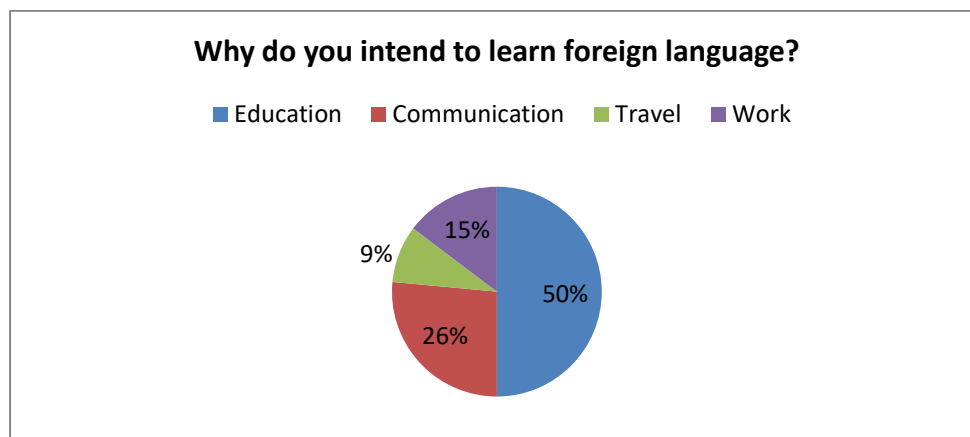
### 5.1.11 Methods for Learning Language



**Figure 15: Methods for learning language**

This question sought to assess the methods that participants utilized in using of social media. In view of learning a foreign language, participants stated different methods for which they used social media. As shown in figure 15, 38% of the respondents stated reading of short stories as well as commenting on their friends while 29% stated listening and watching of varied videos. Consequently 18% of the participants said the used it for chatting while 15% said they used it for writing comments or sharing of short ideas.

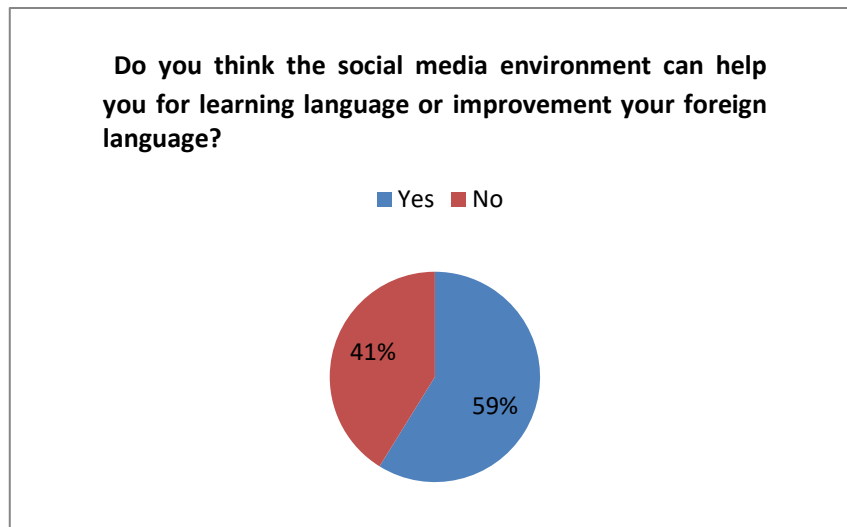
### 5.1.12. The Reasons for Learning a Language



**Figure 16: The reasons for learning a language**

The researcher found out that out of the 34 respondents 50% of them wanted to learn a foreign language for academic purposes. Subsequently 26% of the respondents wanted to learn a foreign language so as to be in a better position in communicating with people from varied cultures and countries precisely because English was an international language. In addition, 15% of the respondents cited they wanted to learn foreign n language for working purposes whereas 9 % stated for travelling purposes.

### 5.1.13 Social media as an environment for learning language or improvement foreign language



**Figure 17: Role of the social media environment on learning language**

As demonstrated above in figure 17, 59% of the participants (20 out of 34) were of the view that that social media was indeed an environment for learning and improving foreign language. This meant that the social media design and plan had the potential of helping learners to learn as well as improve on their foreign language skills. On the other hand 41% of the participants thought that the social media did not create an adequate environment for learning a foreign language. This meant that social media platforms did not have high quality programmes for learning and as such the Iraqi Kurds could not learn much from social media.

## **5.2 Interview Analysis**

### **5.2.1 Social Media is an Environment for Communication**

Facebook emerged to be the most popular social media platform for communication among the participants to the study. To this end, Facebook can be defined as a social media platform that allows individuals to effectively communicate as well as share information with their acquaintances, colleagues and relatives. Facebook is well known for providing its users with a personalized profile that is characteristic of several features such as friends list, photo bums, ability to communicate, share information, apply to social interests groups as well as varied kinds of online games. The four Iraqi Kurds interviews provided several definitions during the interview sessions. However, the general answer in regard to communication in Facebook was that:

Facebook as a social media platform provided an ideal environment for communicating , making friends, sharing photos with people, tagging of updates and photos, sending of messages, chatting, writing on their friends' walls, creating of groups, joining of groups, playing of games, adding varied kinds of applications as well as sharing of ideas in group discussions. During its existence, Facebook has become ubiquitous and is further utilized by millions of users on every day basis.

#### **Participant C highlighted an interesting point about Facebook:**

(The participant was of the view that Facebook in some cultures was some sought of social revolution given that it had changed them from being closed cultures to open cultures).

This was further heightened by participant **B** who stated:

That in the context of gender relations, Facebook had appositve role in modifying the male idea bout females given that initially some men prohibited their sisters, wives, daughters to make communication with other men however in the social media environment this is changing as they get male friends.

**In reference to communication one of the interviewee discussed that:**

The huge revolution in my culture is apparent because in social media platforms such as Facebook people are able to communicate as well as connect with varied gender groups particularly those in the close culture.

It such kind of transformation that was evidenced for the Kurds Culture hence the view that social media provided an opportunity to change the Kurds society.

### **5.2.2 Source of the Language Learning English**

In regard to the source of language learning among the interviewees, the data gathered suggested that Facebook was significant in the learning of language particularly in the aspect of new vocabulary.

For example **A:** Highlighted that I learn new vocabulary especially when other members of the page post a new idiom or vocabulary.

**C** added to the highlight by discussing that apart from posts made on pages they learnt new vocabulary from comments made on their posts. To be more specific participant **C** is quoted saying (when they write an idea or comment on my post, I learn new word from their comments).

Social media for language learning are examples of what participant **B** mentions:



'Disruptive technologies' allow learners to embark on familiar tasks in new and varied ways. One of these features is video conferencing that enable learners to exchange language via video with the native language speakers of the language they are learning.

Further participant **D** stated:

Another groundbreaking feature is the peer review that enables learners to correct each other's written submissions in learning sites. Moreover SNSs for language learning is also being encouraged given the hundreds of thousands learners that are on-line at any given day or night hence making it likely that each learner will find another student online to exchange information with and at relative ease.

### **5.2.3 Iraqi Kurds People Use Social Media for Learning English**

It was evident that the Iraqi Kurds wanted to connect with the native speakers of the language they were learning besides make new friends with them. Language learning in social media was also appealing to them as it was free for example participant **C** said:

As a masters student at Coventry University I had a chance to further improve on my English. However before coming here I had less opportunities of improving my English because though in my country there were some centers for learning the language they lacked in the aspect of professionalism. They were also limiting as private courses are too expensive whereas in the social media especially in

Facebook one can improve his or her English for free due to the numerous pages that offer help such as listening, reading and correct grammar exercises.

Nonetheless participant **B** disagreed by arguing that:

I use social media but it cannot help in improving my English simply because my friends and I are from the same country and hence their level of English was similar to mine and hence cannot aid in spelling mistakes or even correct me when it comes to the grammar rules.

It is significant to highlight that some of the Iraqi Kurd Families came here to live with their children who are studying in schools or universities. As such social media provided opportunities to such individuals who wanted to learn or even improve on their English. For instance participant **A** said that:

As a student of Coventry University I was able to make new friends who could help me improve on my English since they were native English speakers. At the same time I also met some families that were living there hence they could help me and other Iraqi Kurds living in Kurdistan of Iraqi through social media sites given that they has better speaking and writing skills in the language.

In the competitive world, English has grown to become a business language hence becoming a necessity for those seeking to venture into the global workforce. As such the significant of the English language in the global market state cannot be underestimated hence the conclusion that learning and understanding English can transform one's life. In addition participant **D** stated that:

For me, I have no other opportunity to speak English as both my friends and family do not speak English however these pages in social media help me to improve on

my English language. Furthermore, the pages help in comparing cultures especially when somebody posts about different contexts and cultures.

#### **5.2.4 Iraqi Kurds Want To Learn English**

In the development of the Kurds culture, the rise of English has had a positive role as it allows people from different backgrounds to connect hence share ideas and culture with a wider and global audience.

Nevertheless participant **A** claimed that:

The Iraqi Kurds people dislike making a community with the Arab people. This is linked to the negative background that has been associated with the Arabs for many years. As such the English language is preferred as it is a global language that is used in many countries. However, the government is of the view that to change the programme by the ministry of education will help them to improve students' skills in English writing and speaking.

Consequently participant **C** was of the view that:

Given that we have been in conflict with the Arabs for many years the Arabic language is a language of torture to the Iraqi Kurds and do not want to learn it. This means that the Iraqi Kurds do not want to want to learn Arabic as they are not happy with the owners of the language. They however want to learn English as it is modern and can be termed as a universal language of modernity.

**It is significant to mention that the interviewees**

Participant D was of the view that the Iraqi Kurds could try and learn Turkish and English as they needed them in business but dismissed Arabic and Persian Languages as they were not the best in enhancing business in Turkey as well as other English speaking countries. This is stemmed from the fact that many companies in Kurdistan are either American or Turkish.

**Another perspective was from participant who claimed that:**

The Iraqi Kurds did not want to learn a language that had facilitated killings in our area during the regime of Saddam that decided to kill our people and forced us to speak the language he spoke “Anfal”. All the sliders during this time were the Arabic people and because we wanted to uphold our rights and be an independent area the Kurds people were killed for example in Halabja about 5000 Kurds were killed. At the end of it all approximately 182,000 Kurds people were buried and that is why we do not want to learn their language.

Participant **B** on the other hand said:

We still have a problem with Arab in Iraq as they come to Kurdistan where safety is provided by the government but they end up engaging in some terrorists operations. The Arabs who live in Kurdistan cannot fluently speak Kurdish so why would we want to learn their language? It is common courtesy that when one goes to another country he or she should learn to speak the language of the natives but the Arab people do not do that.

**Additionally, participant B thought that:**

Learning English was for positive development in regards to culture as it would allow people from different backgrounds to share their culture and ideas with the global audience. This is because English as an international language that is used in most cultures and between cultures.

### **5.2.5 Social Media and English Learning**

Knowledge sharing is not only easy in social networking sites but it is also self-effacing for individuals as it is based on social media based applications such as wikis, blogs as well as online chat platforms. The aforementioned tools facilitate sharing of information, communication as well online socialization. The use of social networking sites enables individuals to share their opinions by writing or seek other individuals' opinions and feedback on specified issues. In addition, new opportunities for teaching, learning and assessment are provided by the multimedia production that is both in form of audio and video.

Participant **D** who is a teacher of English on a Facebook Page said that:

There are many Facebook pages that are specifically created to help people in the learning of the English language. In our page we post some activities and questions for students on a daily basis.

(A) As a member of the pages said that:

The posts on Facebook are good as they help me improve on my English as they have lessons that are characteristic of quality content, grammar, videos as well as teachers who organize the lessons in a meaningful manner. They are also efficient as when students write a comment or post an answer to the question is the reply and

if there is a mistake they correct them in an effort to help them improve on their English mastery. Moreover, in Facebook we have several friends from varied countries and from different cultures. This kind of multicultural set up helps us to improve on our English as we exchange information and chat with them.

The interview were very crucial the research as they facilitated further comprehension on the role of social media in English learning among the Iraqi Kurds citizens. This is because platforms such as Facebook were noted to facilitate the sharing of information. This is noted as progressive change especially among the closed societies.

### **5.3 Results and discussion**

This section of the research is among the profound parts of the dissertation as it aims at analyzing and evaluating the findings of the narrative interviews. As earlier stated in the methodology section, the interpretation of the interview responses were based on the implementation of the grounded theory. The findings will be classified into different themes. Previous researchers in the field such as Pempek, Yermolayeva and Calvert (2010) as well as Wang and Chen (2013) focused on the aspect of the significance of the role of social media in the learning of English and how individuals could use it for improvement of their English. Among the aspects covered in these researches were the rules of grammar in the English language as well as learning of vocabulary.

This study was however more focused on the more narrowed aspect of determining how the Iraqi Kurds citizens were utilizing the social media in the learning of English as a foreign language. Moreover, the study sought to understand how Iraqi Kurds utilize the social media community in the efforts to try and improve on their foreign language when compared to other possible languages.

### **5.3.1 The motivational aspect for the Iraqi Kurds to learn English**

This section will evaluate the findings gathered from the interviewees on the aspect of learning English as a second language as opposed to a foreign language. The thought process was mostly based on a political background as one of the most apparent issue brought up was the rivalry between the Kurds and the Arab people whereby it was asserted that the Kurds were not interested in learning a language that belonged to a people they had a problem with.

Nevertheless, my topic did not have any political affiliation and as such the questions asked did not focus on the politics between the Iraqi Kurds and Iraqi Arab. However, the issue kept coming up in the interviewees responses whereby the highlighted that Saddam's regime had engaged in an ethnic cleansing that had led to the bad blood between the Kurds people and the Arabs. It is important to mention that Saddam's reasoning for punishing the Kurdish forces was due to their collaboration with the Iranians. Owing to the strong sense of collective identity that spans thousands of years, the Iraqi Ba'ath have always wanted to connect the current Iraq nation-state to the great ancient cities. Albert (2013:221) suggests that this because of their need to create an identity that is hinged on the heroic days of Mesopotamia. This is further expounded by Aziz(2011) who indicated that the

Kurds had always attempted to protect their identity by distinguishing themselves from the overriding ethnic groups of the Arabs. As such the Kurds do not identify themselves as Arabs neither are they Turks or Persians.

To this end, it is plausible to argue that the English language is an opportunity for the Iraqi Kurds to connect with another language except the Arabic language. The English language is further linked to development in regard to education and business aspects. In view of this, Kurdistan of Iraq has initiated programmes to support masters and PhD students in other countries. As such, the ministry of higher education only accepts those students that have a high ability in the English language.

According to the participants one of the most motivational aspects for the Iraqi Kurds to learn English is the opportunity to travel given that English is an international language hence improves their opportunities to travel.

What is more is that learning the English language gives one the opportunity to relate with 'dominant' countries which is essential in the political aspect as students are able to be linked to globally recognized universities that use English as the mode of instruction and research .

According to the survey questionnaire the Iraqi Kurds said that the first language they want to learn is English, Turkish and Arabic respectively. Arabic language is seen as limiting as it does not offer Kurds the opportunity work and relate with foreigners from varied countries in the world.

In addition, the participants indicated that learning the English language was deemed significant in the current times as it provided one with the opportunity to find a more secure job given that Kurdistan is a developing economy. This was



further argued in respect to the fact that the biggest companies as well as businesses such as oil in the region were from English speaking countries.

### **5.3.2 Social Networking Sites and Learn English**

Different methods were used in evaluating how social media was used for learning English. In reference to this study, some of the methods included chatting or speaking, commenting, reading, watching videos and listening.

Motivation and mobilization are the best way to utilize social media in learning of a language. This means that those seeking to learn the language through social media were to be motivated by a given goal. For instance, the Iraqi Kurds used social media to explore new sites, communicating and reading of a new language for the first time.

Social media platforms such as Facebook and Livemoch give their users a sense of belonging to a community given that the users can speak, write, and comment and share information with one other.

The other motivating factor provided by Facebook was the immediate ability to make friends after activating one's account. It is highly encouraging and rewarding for one to be able to communicate with other people who engaging in a similar activity of language learning. When individuals interact with others Livemocha employs video call system and chatting as part of the pedagogical design to further encourage people to interact in the varied ways provided. According to Taylor(2012) the technology available in You tube, Facebook as well as other social media platforms when combined with pedagogy refers to what is called a symbiotic relationship. This symbiotic relationship allows the collaboration of new technologies with learning, pedagogical ideas and vice versa.

Participants in the study agreed that in reference to chatting they felt more comfortable with writing as opposed to speaking or calling. Several reasons were provided for this preference. For example the paralinguistic features of communication can be disconcerting across cultures this is bound to happen when learners use call and video call functions particularly during the first time. First time learners are especially bound to succumb to the pressure to adequately communicate when they utilize video calls. Nonetheless, chatting allows the learners to process the input and output produce before embarking on other avenues of communicating. This study that also found out the communication process was smoother through chatting. This was in tandem in Lie(2010) finding that when the output was incomprehensible during on-line chatting then a request to further clarify was requested. Essentially, the aforementioned feedback is important to the learners as they become aware of the foreign language syntax.

Consequently, the studies evidenced that reading of posts, comments and short story were other ways of learning English as well as improve especially because learners spend close to four to five hours using the social media.

Nevertheless, it was noted that people tend not to thoroughly read the texts on websites and instead scan the words that are often interpreted as the pointers to what is being communicated in the overall structure of a text. Such poor reading process implies that the reader fails to understand the general structure of the text. There is however a difference between texts communicated in websites with embedded images and those with texts only. The complexity stems in social media networking sites as words are not meant to fulfil the same role as they would in text only messages. Instead, they may just work to support the quickly processed images and such scanning of words may not be sufficient to understand such texts.

Despite the aforementioned differences of reading and learning in social media sites, there is no difference from what students are supposed to learn by engaging in SNS hinged activities in the FL classes and the pedagogical goals extended in writing and reading. As an alternative, students are exposed to learning pragmatics, manipulation of symbols as well as the language involved in speech acts within the foreign language SNS environment.

Writing and speaking can be focused on in Facebook. As such teaching of English via Facebook should concentrate in aspects of reading and writing especially because they necessitate interaction between students and the teachers. It provides learners with the opportunity to freely practice English and further be evaluated by teachers who can also grade their work at any given time. This study established that this kind of learning language was convenient to both the learners and teachers. Rapid access to send and evaluate essays or speaking files is among the benefits offered by Facebook.

### **5.3.3. Social media and communication**

Social class, gender role expectations and age shaped the social networks of all participants. Subsequently, the level of education as well as the nature of employment defines the determining characteristics and utilization of social networks.

More often than not online socializing ceases to be about exchanging information and instead takes to making of symbolic gestures. Irina (2012) was of view that the social language used online mostly serves a ritual purpose, Wang and Chen(2013) likened this to grooming while Boyd and Ellison (2008) noted that it is primarily used to uphold social bonds. This in turn means that what matters is not the

language or how much has been written rather what counts is that the profile field has been written on and identifies with certain groups that one belongs to. In reference to SNSs, it is often noted that exchanges are quite brief and use simple language and spelling. Rather than SNS writing seeking to incorporate a process approach to writing it seeks to encourage publishing of thoughts and ideas and once written they remain unchanged to the public view.

Connecting with native speakers is initially difficult as in most SNSs one needs a connection node of a social network otherwise many of the profiles are only viewable if you are friends. This study found out that learning and improving of English language among learners is possible as the participants mentioned that social platforms provide them with a wealth of information on language use especially through watching of lessons and videos.

Iraqi Kurds citizens were also provided with the opportunity to lean the current cultural trends in reference to groups' interests in learning of a specified foreign language. This should be viewed against a background where very few foreign language (FL) instructors as well as native speakers are in a position to provide the current information on new cultures. Merchant (2012) argued that the production of SNSs needed not to be a requirement for students to benefit rather assignments focusing on students' reflections on what they viewed would be more beneficial.

Communicating directly with friends and other individuals within groups was described as great in social media platforms such as Facebook. This proceeded through chatting or speaking while some of the participants mentioned they liked to study through reading posts or short writing as opposed to chatting or speaking. In the context of learning a foreign language the most ideal method of learning is through chatting and speaking as one is provided with the opportunity of listening to

sound or pronunciation of vocabulary which is key in understanding the foreign language under study. In addition, the face to face communication is deemed essential as it helps unknown people to form a community which is in contrast to Kurds culture where speaking to unknown people is difficult particularly for women. Facebook offers immediate communication to its users which in turn report various levels of shyness among the users. Shyness may be a limiting factor to such individuals as they will mostly avoid any form of face to face communication. From this vein Westaby(2012) articulated that online social platforms provided an ideal environment for shy individuals to interact with others.

The usage of social media was associated with varied benefits such as ability to make new friends without necessarily meeting them in Person as well as enhancement of quality social relations. In addition, social media provides users with an ideal chatting environment that in turn grows to become a virtual social support system.

The study also found out that it was important for the Iraqi Kurds both at home and those in diasporas to learn English. More emphasis on those going to other countries as just like other people they needed to learn the language of the country they lived in. This is evidenced among the Iraqi Kurds where about a decade ago they needed to learn English when they went to the UK. To this end they attempted to learn English in centers of learning English as well as in social media platforms. Those with children in schools or university were better positioned as they could be helped by them and in turn encourage of speaking the foreign language in their homes which eventually leads to improvement in English. This has a long term impact as if the parents or the children decided to go back to their countries they could easily get employed in the best places. When the Iraqi Kurds are able to speak English like

the native speakers, they are then better positioned to help other Iraqi Kurds to learn the language in social media platforms such as Facebook pages. They can for example be influential in aspects of correcting grammar, writing short sentences as well as helping the community of Iraqi Kurds living in Kurdistan given that social media has the power to enhance the strength of a community or rather individuals of the same culture.

It is implicit to consider the difference between genders as this study revealed that in some cultures women did not like using the social media and hence when compared to the men they were less engaged in social media platforms. Though they are social media platforms they are more limited to fully post aspects such as their photo. The gender aspect was also significant in respect to the demographic variable as the use of social media among men and women was different. It was noted that women were more likely than their male counterparts to have a personal profile on Facebook but the men were more likely to sustain a personal profile on Facebook. Compared to men who were more likely to use social media to meet new people women were more likely to use social media for the following maintain relationships with friends and family, pass time and entertainment (Sheldon 2008).

The other determining factor to communicating and making of friends with people from varied cultures according to this study was age. Those aged between 18 and 22 were more likely to use social media than those above 37 years. The older age groups were noted to have less ability in staying on Facebook or any other social media platform; they were also noted to spend less time in social media.

## **5.4 Limitations**

This research study was bound to a few limitations such as analyzing of the results where independence of the idea free from the bias of the participants was required. To this end, in this research I used the idea presented by the participant without injecting my own ideas to the subject under study which was the role of social media in learning language among the Iraqi Kurds people.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **6.1 Conclusion**

The final analysis shows that social networking sites have brought a revolution in the lives of people. Sites like Facebook are at present the most popular websites in the world and are growing in popularity every day. A new method of communication has evolved through Facebook which has a great impact on an individual and his or her self-image which is now based on the number of interactions one has on these websites. These websites also provide a different and new platform for inter personal communication.

Cultural limitations and taboos have created a suspicion about people who do not have a similar way of life. Social media can overcome these challenges by providing people with a way to interact with different cultures. As Iraqi Kurds, in

general are a class of friendly people they are keen to meet different people and learn different things from them.

Today, the Iraqi Kurds want to learn English as they feel that this language will help in the development of their nation. Their previous bad experiences and historical conflicts with the Arabs especially due to the actions of the ex- president of Iraq Saddam Hussein have discouraged them from learning Arabic as a second language. The Kurdish government also wants the Kurdish ministry of education to focus more on English.

Kurds realize that knowledge of English creates greater job opportunities, helps in communication while travelling to other nations and it can also be used as the language of choice in teaching institutes both in Kurdistan and outside. English in fact is a tool for them through which they can improve their skills and gain a better understanding of the world thus providing the country with the skilled enterprise it needs.

Iraqi Kurds have found a novel use for social media websites like Facebook by using it to learn English and they do so by browsing many international pages. As a rough estimate it can be said that around 5 hours or even more per day are spent by Kurds in browsing social media websites.

As explained before, social media sites can bring about a cultural change apart from help in learning English as shown by the answers provided by the 4 Kurds who were interviewed face to face and the 34 who gave their answers in electronic form, and also it can be said that these sites have changed their outlook about a lot of issues and have had a positive effect on the culture of the country.



All the social media sites that were researched and analyzed in this study are being used as resources by the participants. The internet should be made freely available to take advantage of this fact. People consider these sites as an open resource that is available to all and can help them in learning English as it was quite well said by an interviewee that since their family members and friends are not well versed in English so to improve themselves they have to rely on sites especially Facebook.

In addition, this research demonstrated that learning the English language is very significant among the Iraqi Kurds as it propelled them to a greater level in terms of developing the country. Further, the study evidenced that this could be done through social media which was new avenue in the quest to improve on English speaking and writing in the target society. The social media as an avenue to learning was noted to be significant among families living in the UK as well as other English speaking countries. The study also revealed that the Iraqi Kurds people were interested in learning English and as such the government had gone ahead to create programmes encouraging the people to study English as it would foster relations between Kurdistan and other countries in the world. In addition, this would encourage the Iraqi Kurds to communicate and interact with other cultures in the globe.

## **6.2 Recommendations**

Further research should focus on the reasons of the phenomenal success Facebook and You tube have achieved despite the presence of innumerable sites on the internet. It would be quite interesting to find why these sites generate so much traffic on the web.

# Appendices

## Appendix A:

The given questionnaire is a part of a study, which has been conducted for the purpose of obtaining a Master of Arts in Communication, Culture and Media at Coventry University.

### **The role of social media in learning English as a foreign language: A case study on Iraqi Kurds.**

The contributions that you make are pretty valuable to the completion of the study.

The responses that you provide will be completely anonymous. It will not take more than 10 minutes of your life.

Thank you so much.

#### **1. Age**

age	Participants	Percentage
16-22	16	48%
23-29	11	33%
30-36	5	15%
37 or more	2	4%
Total	34	100%

#### **2. Gender**

gender	Participants	Percentage
Male	21	62%
Female	13	38%
Total	34	100%

### 3. Level of education

Level of education	Participants	Percentage
School and university student	24	70%
master	6	18%
After master	1	3%
No education	3	9%
Total	34	100%

### 4. Do you find use of social media?

Do you find use of social media?	Participants	Percentage
Yes	34	100%
No	0	0
Total	34	100%

### 5. For how long have you been using social media?

For how long have you been using social media?	Participants	Percentage
Less than a year	0	0%
A year	0	0%
From 1 to 2 years	3	9%
From 2 to 3 years	6	17%
From 3 to 4 years	17	51%
Over 4 years	8	23%
Total	34	100%

**6. How long do you spend on social media daily?**

How long do you spend on social media daily?	Participants	Percentage
1 hour	0	0%
2 hours	2	6%
3 hours	6	18%
4 hours	9	26%
Over 5 hours	17	50%
Total	34	100%

**7. On which social media platforms are you active?**

On which social media platforms are you active?	Participants	Percentage
Facebook	26	76%
You tube	5	15%
livoach	1	3%
specially	2	6%
Total	34	100%

**8. What do you use social media for?**

What do you use social media for?	Participants	Percentage
Sharing information	14	41%
Education	10	29%
Getting information	4	12%
chatting	6	18%

Total	34	100%
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**9. Do you use social media to learn a foreign language?**

Do you use social media to learn a foreign language?	Participants	Percentage
Yes	19	56%
No	15	44%
Total	34	100%

**10. which language do you want to learn?**

Please can you state which language you want to learn:	Participants	Percentage
English	19	54%
Arabic	4	11%
Turkish	6	20%
Persian	3	9%
French	1	3%
Specially	1	3%
Total	34	100%

**11. Which method do you use to learn foreign language?**

Which method do you use to learn foreign language?	Participants	Percentage
Listening or watching	10	29%
Chatting or speaking	6	18%
Writing(comment)	5	15%
Reading	13	38%
Total	34	100%

**12. Why do you intend to learn a foreign language?**

Why do you intend to learn a foreign language?	Participants	Percentage
Education	17	50%
Communication	9	26%
Travel	3	9%
work	5	15%
Total	34	100%

**13. Do you think the social media environment can help you for learning language or improvement your foreign language?**

Do you think the social media environment can help you for learning language or improvement your foreign language?	Participants	Percentage
Yes	20	59%
No	14	41%
Total	34	100%

## **Appendix B: Interview questions and answers**

### **Do you think student can use social media such as Facebook, YouTube to practice English and learn new vocabulary?**

We can learn new vocabulary especially when other members of the page post a new idiom or vocabulary, and also social media allow learners to embark on familiar tasks in new and varied ways. One of these features is video conferencing that enable learners to exchange language via video with the native language speakers of the language they are learning.

### **Social media is useful in helping you communicate with other students as well as with teachers? If so, how?**

Communicating directly with friends and other individuals within groups such as teachers was described as great in social media platforms such as Facebook. This proceeded through chatting or speaking while some of the participants mentioned they liked to study through reading posts or short writing as opposed to chatting or speaking.

### **How useful is social media for you to observe your and others' progress in English?**

Writing and speaking can be focused on in Facebook. As such teaching of English via Facebook should concentrate in aspects of reading and writing especially because they necessitate interaction between students and the teachers.

### **Why do you think Kurdish people use social media for learning English language?**

Social media is an opportunity to speak English because some our friends and our families cannot speak English; however these pages in social media help us to improve on my English language. Furthermore, the pages help in comparing cultures especially when somebody posts about different contexts and cultures.

**Why do Iraqi Kurds want to learn English language and they focus on it more than other languages such as, Arabic, Persian? Why it is very important for them?**

This is linked to the negative background that has been associated with the Arabs for many years. As such the English language is preferred as it is a global language that is used in many countries. On the other hand, that the Iraqi Kurds could try and learn Turkish and English as they needed them in business but dismissed Arabic and Persian Languages as they were not the best in enhancing business in Turkey as well as other English speaking countries.

## **Appendix C: Information and Consent sheet**

**Coventry University**

**Department of Communication and Media**

### **Information and Consent Sheet**

I would like to inform you that I am researching the role that social media plays in the learning of English as a foreign language: A case study on Iraqi Kurds. The thesis will include the interview as a part of it. The interviews will be recorded for collecting the data and after transcribing them, these are preserved in the appendix section of the research.

Naska Saeed Khdir, a Masters' student of the Coventry University of the United Kingdom, studying communication, culture and media, is acknowledging and maintaining the confidentiality of the participants, whose information shall remain confidential and the data they provide will be used for no other purpose than the study.



The duration of the interviews will be around 25 or 30 minutes and no compensation or financial aid for participating in the study to them. If any further explanation about the research is required, the researcher can be contacted either through phone (+44) 7455909347 or through email [nasksaeed@yahoo.com](mailto:nasksaeed@yahoo.com) .

By signing this, I am confirming

1. The information provided above was read and understood by me and that I have the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that the fact that I am participating voluntarily and can withdraw at any given time without giving any reason.
3. I am agreeing to be a part of this study.
4. I have been provided with a copy of the consent form.

Participant's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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