

Approaches to Crafting English as a Second Language on Social Media: An Ethnographic Case Study from Saudi Arabia

Nada Bin Dahmash

College of Applied Studies and Community Service
King Saud University
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Abstract

Saudi female undergraduates perform various activities in English, their second language (L2), on social media. They engage in different types of writing and reading on social media in everyday life. But little is known about the material resources and concrete activities they drew on as they read and write in English on their preferred social media. This ethnographic case study aims to examine the material resources and concrete activities of a group of Saudi female undergraduates majoring in English Translation in a university in Saudi Arabia as they use English on social media. This study particularly aims to answer this research question: What material resources and concrete activities do Saudi female undergraduates employ as they read and write in English on social media? A total of eleven female Saudi undergraduates took part in this research. Online observation, focus group interviewing, semi-structured interviews, informal conversations and online logbook of English usage were employed over a three-months period to collect data. This study draws on Literacy Studies (LS), that understand literacies as social practices involving more than technical skills. Analysing the data thematically revealed that these undergraduates drew on three main approaches: English-spelling checking approaches, English grammar-checking approaches and English-meaning checking approaches. The study recommends that language learners are encouraged to use Google app, Google Translate app, Dictionary apps and the COCA website to correct, craft and improve their English. They are also encouraged to utilise the built-in smartphone technologies that supports English spelling.

Keywords: approaches to English, connective ethnography, English as L2, Saudi female undergraduates, social media

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