



Exploring Language Preferences of EFL Bilinguals on Social Media: Influencing Factors and Their Impact on User Engagement Across Platforms

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Abstract:

This study investigated the language preferences of bilingual users of English-as-a- Foreign Language (EFL) in Saudi Arabia across social media platforms (Snapchat, Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp, and X), the factors influencing these preferences, and their relationship with engagement dimensions. While previous research has focused on multilingual communities or single platforms, this study addressed a gap in understanding bilingual language choices across multiple platforms in non-Western contexts. A quantitative approach was employed using a survey administered to 287 bilingual high school students aged 14–17 years. The results revealed platform-specific language preferences: English dominated platforms such as Instagram for their global reach and professional appeal, whereas Arabic was preferred on WhatsApp for personal communication. Mixed-language use was prevalent, adapted to diverse audiences. The key reasons for language choice included cultural identity, global connectivity, and language proficiency, which influenced different dimensions of engagement. Behaviorally, users preferred English to share posts, whereas mixed-language usage facilitated engagement with diverse audiences. Cognitively, English was favored for understanding complex ideas, whereas Arabic facilitated content creation. Emotionally, Arabic conveyed a sense of authenticity, whereas English fostered feelings of global belonging and facilitated humor. Overall, the English language demonstrated higher engagement across all dimensions. These results offer insights for policymakers and social media developers and suggest strategies for enhancing bilingual communication and engagement across platforms. Further research should expand on these findings to include diverse demographics and longitudinal studies.

1. Introduction

In today's interconnected world, the ability to communicate across cultures has become a common reality, leading to a significant increase in bilinguals.

Bilingualism refers to the ability to use two languages in everyday life [1]. For bilinguals, the choice of language often depends on the context, including location, who they are speaking to, and the message they wish to convey [2]. This flexibility enables them to connect with diverse people and

easily navigate various social and cultural settings. Social media introduces a new dimension to the dynamics of language use. Platforms such as Snapchat, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter) facilitate interaction, self-expression, and creativity, effectively breaking geographical barriers [3]. For bilingual users, these platforms provide opportunities to adapt to language use based on the audience or the specific norms of each platform [4]. For example, users may switch between languages or blend them depending on their communication partner or the content they share. Understanding these language choices is essential because it offers insights into how people connect and engage in the digital world, which can be valuable for businesses, policymakers, and educators. Language preferences on social media do not only reflect personal choices; they also influence how individuals engage with others. For instance, a study by Mekacher et al. (2024) [5] found that posts written in a user's local language foster a stronger sense of connection within their community. By contrast, using a global language such as English can help users reach a broader audience and connect with people from diverse backgrounds. Additionally, platform algorithms can play a significant role, sometimes encouraging users to adjust their language choices to gain greater visibility [4,6]. These interactions underscore the impact of language choice on communication and engagement, particularly for bilingual individuals navigating multilingual digital spaces.

There is a significant amount of research on language use in social media, primarily focusing on multilingual users (e.g., [4,7-10]). However, bilingual individuals often have unique experiences that differ from those of multilingual individuals. For example, they may have a more focused cognitive advantage compared to multilingual individuals [11], and proficient bilingual individuals tend to have more verbal ability in their native language [12]. These differences have not always been adequately explored. Many studies also tend to focus on a single platform, such as Facebook [13,14], Twitter [15,16], and YouTube [17]. Although some studies, such as that of Tu (2018) [18], examined multiple platforms, such studies remain relatively rare.

There is a noticeable lack of research in Saudi Arabia on how bilingual individuals who learn English as a foreign language (EFL) navigate social media. This study aims to address this gap by exploring the language preferences of EFL bilinguals on popular platforms, such as Snapchat, Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp, and X. Additionally, it examines the

reasons behind their language choices and how these choices influence bilinguals' engagement cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally.

1.1. Novelty of the Study

Social media has become a powerful force shaping how people communicate, offering bilingual users unique opportunities to switch between languages based on context and audience. While many studies have explored the influence of social media on language preferences, much of this research focuses on Western bilingual communities. Examples include those of Kamran and Mansoor (2017) [14], Hafeez et al. (2018) [13], Rudra et al. (2016) [16], Feldman et al. (2021) [15], Pahari and Shimada (2023) [17], and Tu (2018) [18]. These studies identify the gaps between languages and underscore how these dynamics operate in diverse and culturally rich settings such as international schools in Saudi Arabia, where students often navigate between Arabic and English, alongside other languages. International school students represent a unique demographic in the context of globalization and the growing prominence of English as a global lingua franca. They operate in multilingual environments where various cultural, social, and educational factors influence their linguistic choices on platforms such as Snapchat, Instagram, and Twitter. This study aims to investigate the impact of social media on the language preferences of bilingual users in Saudi Arabia, specifically focusing on whether they prefer Arabic, English, or a combination of both. By exploring how students manage their linguistic identities online, the study provides valuable insight for educators and linguists interested in the complexities of bilingual communication in the digital age.

Moreover, this study has practical implications for parents, teachers, and policymakers, allowing them to develop more effective language instruction and communication strategies tailored to bilingual learners. By examining a relatively underexplored demographic, it contributes to the expanding body of knowledge on bilingualism and digital communication by offering a unique perspective from a multicultural educational context. Additionally, the findings may inform social media developers by guiding them on how to design platforms that better meet the needs and behaviors of bilingual users.

1.2. Research Questions

The following questions were examined:

1. What languages do EFL bilinguals prefer to use on social media, and how do these preferences vary across various platforms?
2. What factors influence EFL bilinguals' language preferences on social media?
3. How do participants' engagement dimensions (behavioral, cognitive, and emotional) vary based on their language preferences on social media?
4. Is there a significant correlation between EFL bilinguals' language preferences on social media and their engagement dimensions (behavioral, cognitive, and emotional)?

2. Literature Review

2.1. EFL Bilinguals' Language Preferences on Social Media

Given the numerous languages spoken worldwide, individuals from different linguistic backgrounds frequently engage with each other, often resulting in the emergence of bilingualism. Bilingualism has gained considerable importance in today's interconnected world, leading bilingual individuals to switch between languages depending on their needs. From this perspective, researchers have convincingly demonstrated the value of focusing on the language preferences of EFL bilinguals. For example, Salimova and Koudrjavitseva (2017) [19] explored the language preferences of 200 bilingual children (ages 3–14 years) in Germany, Russia, and Kazakhstan, focusing on German-Russian and Russian-German bilinguals. Their findings revealed that Russian was primarily used in emotional and personal interactions, whereas German was dominant in formal and educational settings. Younger children preferred their home language (Russian), but older children shifted toward using German more frequently, which was influenced by school and social environments. Similarly, Ledesma and Morris (2005) [20] studied language preferences among bilingual Filipino-English boys in kindergarten and their first year. They examined preferences in social, formal, and media-related contexts. They found that Filipino was favored in social interactions, whereas English was predominantly used in media and formal settings. Over time, they observed a shift toward increased English usage across all contexts, indicating a change in linguistic preferences during early education. Maqfirah and Mokodenseho (2023) [21] studied the interplay between bilingualism, language attitudes, and language choices among 250 university participants in West Java. Their findings

indicated that participants commonly paired languages such as Sundanese and Bahasa Indonesia or Javanese and English. Notably, 40% of the participants identified Bahasa Indonesia as their primary language. Bahasa Indonesia and English were dominant in formal settings, whereas regional languages were preferred in informal contexts. Although these studies have provided a comprehensive view of bilingual preferences, they have largely overlooked the influence of social media as a dynamic platform affecting language choices.

The rise of social media platforms, such as Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, and Snapchat, has created new opportunities for bilingual individuals to express their language preferences. This rise of social media platforms has led to flexible language choices reflecting personal identities and contextual factors [4]. Consequently, the language preferences of EFL bilinguals on social media have attracted significant attention in various contexts within the literature. Kamran and Mansoor (2017) [14] analyzed Facebook comments from Pakistani university students. Their findings showed that English was the dominant language, especially among private university students, with 66% of their comments in English compared to 44% from public university students. Rudra et al. (2016) [16] analyzed language preferences among Hindi-English bilinguals on Twitter, focusing on monolingual and code-switched tweets. Their study revealed that Hindi (L1) was predominantly used for expressing negative sentiments and swearing, whereas English (L2) was more commonly used for expressing positive sentiments, indicating its role as a language of aspiration. Code-switched tweets were frequently observed, reflecting shifts between positive and negative sentiments depending on the language used. Similarly, Pahari and Shimada (2023) [17] studied the language preferences of Nepali-English bilingual speakers on social media, specifically by examining code-switched comments on YouTube. Their research revealed that Nepali was primarily used to express negative sentiments, whereas English was preferred for expressing positive sentiments. This finding indicates that distinct language preferences depend on the emotional tone of the message. Both studies found that native languages are used to express negative sentiments, reflecting emotional depth and familiarity, whereas English is favored for expressing positive sentiments, highlighting its association with aspirations and modernity.

McMonagle (2022) [22] explored the online language practices of bilingual adolescents who spoke German and Upper Sorbian. The study found

that German was predominantly used in most online activities, reflecting its status as the majority language. Upper Sorbian was primarily used for school-related tasks and private communication. By contrast, English, which was learned as a foreign language, was occasionally used for entertainment or engaging with a broader audience. Hafeez et al. (2018) [13] examined the language preferences of bilingual Pakistani undergraduate students on Facebook, focusing on Urdu and English. Their findings revealed the dynamic use of both languages; English was often used as a status marker, whereas Urdu was preferred for posts related to family and religion. Similarly, Tu (2018) [18] explored the language preferences on social media among international students in the U.S., specifically focusing on their use of English and their native languages across various platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, WhatsApp, Skype, Viber, and LinkedIn. This study found that students used their native language when connecting with family and friends, providing them emotional comfort and familiarity. Conversely, they used English for academic, professional, and social interactions. Language preferences varied according to the platform and specific usage, reflecting the contexts and audiences involved. Both studies found that people generally prefer to use their native language when interacting with their families, as it enhances emotional bonds and preserves cultural connections.

Two significant studies have explored bilingual language preferences, specifically examining how English and Spanish are strategically selected in various contexts and across different platforms. For example, Feldman et al. (2021) [15] analyzed language preferences and code-switching among English-Spanish bilinguals on Twitter during Hurricane Irma. They found that bilinguals who primarily tweeted in English often switched to Spanish for crisis-related tweets, whereas those who preferred Spanish did the opposite. These language choices highlight how language preferences on social media are dynamic, context-sensitive, and influenced by the communicative needs of the moment. Likewise, Montes-Alcalá (2024) [23] studied Spanish-English code-switching in text messaging (SMS) among bilingual youth in New York City. The research revealed that both Spanish and English were used interchangeably, with English textisms, such as “LOL” and “OMG” frequently appearing even in messages that were primarily in Spanish. This dichotomy highlights the dynamic use of both languages in digital communication.

In Saudi Arabia, bilingualism is increasing because of the country’s efforts to engage with the global community and the reforms associated with Vision 2030. English has become essential in various fields, such as tourism, technology, and education. It coexists with Arabic and leads Saudi bilinguals to switch languages based on their social and communication needs [24]. However, few Saudi or Arabian EFL studies have explored bilingual EFL language preferences on social media. A study by Koka et al. (2023) [25] revealed that Arabic is the dominant language on social media in Saudi Arabia, and it is used by 80% of respondents.

By contrast, 15% of the respondents used English, while 5% used a combination of both languages. Arabic is favored for expressing cultural identity and maintaining a connection with Saudi roots, whereas English is preferred for cross-cultural communication and global engagement. Alhejely (2020) [26] investigated the online linguistic practices of Arab students studying abroad in the UK. The study found that these students utilized a combination of linguistic resources on Twitter, including Standard Arabic (Fus’ha), Colloquial Arabic (Ammyah), and English, as well as semiotic elements such as emojis. While Standard Arabic holds ideological prestige, Colloquial Arabic emerged as the dominant form, reflecting its natural use in informal communication. English played a less significant role in this context than in previous studies.

2.2. Factors Behind Language Choices on Social Media

Understanding the reasons behind people’s choice of one language over another provides valuable insights into the social, cultural, and practical factors influencing bilingual language use. Research indicates that these preferences are not arbitrary; they are significantly affected by social norms, cultural identity, and the need for effective communication. Hafeez et al. (2018) [13] identified several factors influencing language preferences, including ideological, communicative, and sociocultural elements. Participants chose Urdu for nationalistic or religious reasons while associating English with international use, prestige, and opportunities for upward mobility. The prevalence of code-switching and language mixing demonstrated the participants’ bilingual identities and ability to adapt to different social contexts. Similarly, Kamran and Mansoor (2017) [14] examined Pakistani university students’ language preferences on Facebook. They found that English had emerged as a prominent marker of prestige and

socioeconomic advancement, especially among students from private universities.

By contrast, regional languages such as Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, and Balochi were marginalized mainly within higher education. These findings are consistent with those of Ledesma and Morris (2005) [20], who found that English was associated with high social status in the Philippines, evidenced by its frequent use among individuals of higher socioeconomic status. Additionally, students from English-medium schools were more likely to prefer English, which reflects their elite societal position. The studies highlight a similar trend: English as a second language is preferred among bilinguals because it symbolizes prestige and high social status. This perception reinforces the dominance of English in various social and professional contexts.

Tu (2018) [18] identified several reasons for language choices on social media. Using native languages provides emotional support, allows clear communication, and helps maintain connections with one's home country. By contrast, English enabled participation in academic discussions, facilitated professional networking, and aided integration into the host culture. Using both languages across different platforms demonstrates students' adaptability in navigating various cultural and linguistic environments, with their preferences changing depending on the platform's purpose and the audience. Similarly, Salimova and Koudrjvtseva (2017) [19] found that the language preferences of German-Russian and Russian-German bilingual children were influenced by family language use, cultural background, and context of communication. These children preferred Russian, their native language, for emotional and personal interactions and mainly used German in formal and educational settings.

Additionally, age and education significantly affected language preferences; younger children showed a stronger tendency to use Russian, whereas older children increasingly employed German for academic and social purposes. Tu (2018) [18] and Salimova and Koudrjvtseva (2017) [19] showed that bilingual individuals prefer using their native language for emotional and personal interactions. They tend to favor English as a second language because of its connection with professionalism and importance in academic participation.

Koka et al. (2023) [25] examined the linguistic landscape of social media in the Arab and Saudi contexts. They found that cultural and communicative needs significantly influenced

language preferences. Arabic was primarily used to express cultural identity and strengthen connections to Saudi heritage, whereas English was used to engage with diverse audiences and participate in global discussions. Furthermore, demographic factors, such as age and education, played a role in these preferences, with younger and highly educated users showing a greater tendency to use English more frequently. Similarly, Alhejely's (2020) [26] study of Arab students studying in the UK found that their language preferences were influenced by the need to express different identities and connect with diverse audiences. Colloquial Arabic was primarily used for personal and informal communication, whereas Standard Arabic reflected national and religious identities. Although their mobility and social networks affected their English, they played a smaller role in their language choices, demonstrating that cultural ties and norms significantly influenced their online communications. In addition, Cunliffe et al. (2013) [27] investigated how young bilingual Welsh speakers select between Welsh and English on Facebook. Offline social networks, cultural identity, and practical considerations influenced language choices. Students from Welsh-speaking communities were more inclined to use Welsh online, reflecting the impact of their offline interactions. Welsh was associated with cultural pride and identity, whereas English was the default language for online communication to engage mixed-language audiences. These three studies showed that bilingual individuals prefer using their native languages to express cultural and national identities. They favor English for online communication because of its global reach and adaptability in digital spaces.

Furthermore, Mahiroh (2024) [28] explored why bilingual individuals aged 17–25 years on the X social media platform prefer using English over their native language, Indonesian. The study revealed that the participants felt more proficient in English, which allowed them to communicate casually and comfortably. By contrast, the participants perceived Indonesians as overly formal. Emotional factors also play a significant role in language choice, as English offers comfort, safety, and belonging, particularly for those looking to connect with like-minded communities.

2.3. Dimensions of Engagement: Cognitive, Behavioral, and Emotional

Language use on social media reflects various factors and plays a crucial role in shaping how users interact with the content. Bilingual individuals engage with content in diverse ways, including

cognitive engagement (processing information), emotional connections, and behavioral actions (liking, sharing, or commenting). Many studies have explored these patterns, highlighting the complex relationship between language choice and user interactions in digital environments. Mahiroh (2024) [28] explored the factors influencing language dominance among self-learning bilinguals aged 17–25 years on the X platform. The study showed that the platform’s informal and interactive nature encouraged participants to engage more actively in English, helping them align their communication with global norms. Frequent interactions with English language media enhanced behavioral engagement. By contrast, emotional engagement was fostered by the platform’s ability to create a sense of safety and belonging among users, especially those looking to connect with like-minded communities.

In their analysis of Nepali-English bilinguals on YouTube, Pahari and Shimada (2023) [17] found that emotional attachment and fluency in one’s first language (L1) affected language preferences. They found that Nepali was often used to express negative sentiments because of its emotional resonance. By contrast, English was preferred to express positive sentiments, reflecting its association with modernity and prestige. These findings align with Tu’s (2018) [18] exploration of how international students in the U.S. use social media and how their language choices influence their cultural adaptation. Tu (2018) [18] demonstrated that students use English to enhance their academic growth, build professional networks, and connect with the local culture. This engagement allowed them to expand their social circles and interact with diverse communities. Conversely, their native language provided emotional comfort and a sense of cultural familiarity but often limited their ability to engage with the host culture fully. This situation reflected the students’ attempts to balance their connections to their roots while adapting to a new environment.

Cunliffe et al. (2013) [27] found that emotional and practical factors affect language engagement on Facebook. Welsh was primarily used in private conversations or among close friends who spoke Welsh, highlighting its strong connection to cultural identity. By contrast, English was more prevalent in public interactions because of its ease of use in digital communication and lack of confidence in writing in Welsh. This decision limited the overall online engagement in Welsh.

Furthermore, Mishnick and Wise (2024) [29] analyzed user engagement on Facebook, Instagram,

and LinkedIn and highlighted the influence of different types of content on these interactions. Facebook experienced the highest levels of engagement, particularly for posts that included visuals, emotional appeals, and calls for action. Users were attracted to platforms they found easy to use and where the content felt valuable. Facebook’s familiarity contributed to its status as the most engaging platform—emotional posts celebrating achievements or sharing impactful stories performed exceptionally well on Facebook. By contrast, LinkedIn’s professional tone resonated with its audience, fostering more formal engagement.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study used a quantitative research design that combined descriptive and correlational analyses. It aimed to identify trends in language preferences, explore the reasons behind these preferences, and examine the associated engagement behaviors. In addition, it investigated the relationships between these variables. Data were primarily collected through a structured questionnaire that gathered detailed insights into students’ language choices, the platforms they use, the types of content they engage with, and the motivations driving their preferences. Using measurable variables allowed us to clearly and systematically understand bilingual language behavior in digital environments.

3.2. Respondents

This study employed convenience sampling to recruit participants. The sample consisted of 287 bilingual female high school students attending an international school in Riyadh. Convenience sampling was appropriate because of the target population’s accessibility to school settings. Although most participants were Saudi nationals, the school offered a diverse environment for students of various Arab nationalities. These choices created a multicultural perspective of bilingual language use. Saudi and non-Saudi participants were included because they shared similar experiences within the social and cultural contexts of Saudi Arabia. This shared context influences their bilingual interactions, and studying them as a unified group would allow us to understand bilingual behavior better. Their ages ranged between 14 and 17 years, and they were in the first semester of the academic year 2024–2025. The respondents had been learning English in addition to their native language, Arabic, since the first grade. All subjects were taught in English except for Arabic and Islamic studies. Prior

to participation, the respondents were briefed on the study's focus on language preferences on social media and the factors influencing their choices and engagement. They were assured that participation was voluntary, with the option to withdraw at any time without reason. Their responses would remain confidential and solely used for academic purposes, ensuring transparency and ethical compliance. All the respondents completed the questionnaire.

Table 1 presents the participants' demographic characteristics (age, nationality, dominant language, and social media usage).

Table 1. Participants' characteristics: International high school, female students

| Category | Subcategory | Total Participants (n) |
|--------------------|---|------------------------|
| Age | 14 or less (15, 5.2%), | 287 |
| | 15 (95, 33.1%), 16 | |
| | (100, 34.8%), 17 or more (77, 26.8%) | |
| Nationality | Saudi (205, 71.4%), non-Saudi (82, 28.6%) | 287 |
| Dominant Language | Arabic (152, 53.0%), English (135, 47.0%) | 287 |
| Social Media Usage | Less than 1 hour (12, 4.2%), 1–3 hours (85, 29.6%), 4–6 hours (133, 46.3%), More than 6 hours (57, 19.9%) | 287 |

The participants showed a balanced distribution of preferred languages, with 53.0% choosing Arabic and 47.0% preferring English. Their social media usage varied widely; nearly half of the participants (46.3%) reported spending four to six hours daily on social media platforms, whereas 29.6% spent one to three hours daily. A smaller proportion of participants (19.9%) used social media for more than six hours each day, and only 4.2% stated that they spent less than one hour daily on these platforms. This overview highlights the diverse backgrounds and habits of the participants and provides a valuable context for understanding the study's findings.

3.3. Instrument

Previous studies on bilingual language preferences have often relied on interviews or analyses of social media posts. For example, Kamran and Mansoor (2017) [14], Rudra et al. (2016) [16], Pahari and Shimada (2023) [17], and Feldman et al. (2021) [15] focused on posts and comments, whereas Hafeez et al. (2018) [13] and Tu (2018) [18] used interviews and such studies as Alhejely (2020) [26] and Koka et al. (2023) [25] combined both methods. Cunliffe et al. (2013) used a questionnaire. However, these

studies have not addressed the specific questions that this study sought to investigate, including a broader range of variables beyond language preferences, reasons, and their correlation with engagement.

Therefore, a self-designed questionnaire was developed as the primary data collection tool to address the research questions, focusing on Arab bilingual teenage students' language preferences on social media (See Appendix A). The questionnaire consisted of two main parts. The first part gathered demographic information, including age, nationality, dominant language, and daily hours spent on social media. The second part included statements rated on a five-point Likert scale (ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree) to assess participants' language preferences. The questionnaire was further divided into three sections. The first section, Language Preferences on Social Media, explored participants' general language use and was categorized into the following subheadings: General Language Use, Platform-Specific Preferences, and Audience and Interaction. The second section, Reasons for Language Choice, investigated factors influencing language preferences, such as cultural identity, emotional connections, and ease of communication. The final section, Engagement, was categorized into three subheadings: behavioral, cognitive, and emotional. It examined whether there is a significant correlation between EFL bilinguals' engagement dimensions (behavioral, cognitive, and emotional) and their choice of language on social media. This structured design ensured that the questionnaire effectively captured participants' language preferences and the factors influencing their choices, providing a comprehensive understanding aligned with the research objectives.

3.4. Data Collection Procedure

This study used a quantitative method to gather data on bilinguals' language preferences across various social media platforms. The data collection process comprised three stages. First, to develop appropriate questionnaire instruments for this study, a pilot test was conducted with 30 bilingual students who matched the study respondent criteria but were excluded from the final sample. This pilot phase aimed to test the research process, identify any potential problems, and make necessary adjustments before using the final version of the questionnaire. The expected time to respond to the questionnaires and their validity were assessed using SPSS.

Second, a letter of approval was sent to the school company's head office to obtain permission and

request participation from all branches of these schools in Riyadh. After one week, we obtained the necessary permission. The questionnaire was distributed via Google Forms to each international high school principal, who was asked to share it with their students. It took two weeks to gather responses from all students. After two weeks, the students completed the questionnaire, resulting in 287 responses.

3.5. Validity and Reliability

We validated the questionnaire using both face and content validity tests. Three expert referees specializing in Applied Linguistics were invited to review the manuscript. Based on their feedback, we revised the unclear items and removed those deemed unnecessary, resulting in the final version of the questionnaire. We conducted a pilot study with 30 bilingual students to ensure content reliability. Their responses were analyzed using Cronbach’s alpha, which yielded a value of 0.845, indicating that the instrument’s reliability was suitable for the study.

3.6. Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were calculated to analyze the characteristics of the participants and the variables

under study. Frequencies and percentages were determined to summarize the categorical data, whereas the arithmetic mean, and standard deviation were used to identify trends in the questionnaire items based on the Likert scale. Pearson’s correlation analysis examined the correlation between the engagement dimensions (behavioral, cognitive, and emotional) and language choice on social media among EFL bilinguals. A significance level of 1% ($p < 0.01$) was established to determine statistical significance. When statistical significance was achieved, the effect size was calculated to assess the strength of the relationship. All analyses were performed using IBM SPSS, version 28.0 (Armonk, NY, IBM Corp).

4. Results

4.1. Language Preferences on Social Media

This subsection reveals participants’ language preferences in social media use, highlighting general language trends, language preferences across different social media platforms, and the influence of audiences and interaction contexts on language preferences (Table 2).

Table 2. Participants’ language preferences on social media

| Item | S.Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | S.Disagree | Mean | SD | Direction | Rank |
|--|-----------------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|------|
| 1. I prefer to use Arabic when posting on social media. | N % 21 7.3% | 43 15.0% | 130 45.3% | 56 19.5% | 37 12.9% | 2.84 | 1.06 | neutral | 3 |
| 2. I prefer to use English when posting on social media. | N % 94 32.8% | 92 32.1% | 90 31.4% | 10 3.5% | 1 0.3% | 3.93 | 0.90 | agree | 1 |
| 3. I use a mix of Arabic and English in my posts on social media. | N % 97 33.8% | 75 26.1% | 74 25.8% | 24 8.4% | 17 5.9% | 3.74 | 1.18 | agree | 2 |
| General Language Use | | | | | | 3.50 | 1.05 | Agree | |
| 1. I prefer to communicate in Arabic rather than English on Snapchat. | N % 41 14.3% | 47 16.4% | 106 36.9% | 57 19.9% | 36 12.5% | 3.00 | 1.20 | neutral | 4 |
| 2. I prefer to communicate in English rather than Arabic on Instagram. | N % 91 31.7% | 76 26.5% | 83 28.9% | 27 9.4% | 10 3.5% | 3.74 | 1.11 | agree | 1 |
| 3. I prefer to communicate in Arabic rather than | N % 55 19.2% | 76 26.5% | 96 33.4% | 35 12.2% | 25 8.7% | 3.35 | 1.18 | neutral | 2 |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------------|-------------|----------------|---|
| | English on WhatsApp. | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4. | I prefer to communicate in English rather than Arabic on X platform. | N | 58 | 51 | 120 | 39 | 19 | 3.31 | 1.14 | neutral | 3 |
| | | % | 20.2% | 17.8% | 41.8% | 13.6% | 6.6% | | | | |
| 5. | I prefer to communicate in Arabic rather than English on TikTok. | N | 22 | 42 | 73 | 85 | 65 | 2.55 | 1.21 | disagree | 5 |
| | | % | 7.7% | 14.6% | 25.4% | 29.6% | 22.6% | | | | |
| Platform-Specific Preferences | | | | | | | | 3.19 | 1.17 | neutral | |
| 1. | I use Arabic when posting for family and close friends on social media. | N | 49 | 89 | 96 | 33 | 20 | 3.40 | 1.11 | neutral | 3 |
| | | % | 17.1% | 31.0% | 33.4% | 11.5% | 7.0% | | | | |
| 2. | I use English when posting to reach a wider or global audience on social media. | N | 97 | 85 | 75 | 26 | 4 | 3.85 | 1.03 | agree | 2 |
| | | % | 33.8% | 29.6% | 26.1% | 9.1% | 1.4% | | | | |
| 3. | I switch between Arabic and English based on the language preferences of my audience. | N | 126 | 80 | 58 | 11 | 12 | 4.03 | 1.08 | agree | 1 |
| | | % | 43.9% | 27.9% | 20.2% | 3.8% | 4.2% | | | | |
| Audience and Interaction | | | | | | | | 3.76 | 1.08 | agree | |

4.1.1. Language Preferences Related to General Use

The participants expressed varied language preferences on social media. The most preferred language was English, with 64.9% of the participants agreeing or strongly agreeing to use it for posting (mean = 3.93, SD = 0.90). In addition, many participants reported using a mixture of Arabic and English (mean, 3.74; SD = 1.18). Arabic was the least preferred, receiving a neutral overall response (mean = 2.84, SD = 1.06). These findings indicate a clear preference for English in social media interactions, with many users favoring bilingual communication, whereas Arabic alone was the least commonly used language.

4.1.2. Language Preferences Related to Specific Platforms

The table above shows that language preferences varied across social media platforms. Instagram emerged as the platform on which English was most commonly used, with a mean preference score of 3.74 (SD = 1.11). WhatsApp showed a neutral-to-slight preference for Arabic, with a mean score of 3.35 (SD = 1.18), reflecting its role in personal communication. On X, participants maintained a neutral stance, showing no strong preference for

Arabic or English, with a mean score of 3.31 (SD = 1.14). Similarly, Snapchat and TikTok recorded neutral responses, although TikTok displayed the lowest preference for Arabic (mean = 2.55; SD = 1.21).

4.1.3. Language Preferences Related to Audience and Interaction

The participants adjusted their language use based on their audience and the context of the interaction. The highest level of agreement was observed when switching between Arabic and English, depending on the audience (mean = 4.03; SD = 1.08). English was preferred for addressing a global audience (mean = 3.85; SD = 1.03), while Arabic was used moderately for interactions with family and close friends (mean = 3.40; SD = 1.11). These findings highlight that, while English was preferred for broader international communication, Arabic retained importance in more intimate and personal interactions. Frequent switching between languages highlights the dynamic nature of language use on social media, reflecting the diverse linguistic landscapes of participants.

4.2. Factors Influencing Language Preferences

Table 3 highlights factors influencing participants' choice of Arabic or English on social media.

Table 3. Factors affecting participants' choice of Arabic or English on social media

| Item | | S.Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | S.Disagree | Mean | SD | Direction | Rank |
|--------------------------------------|---|-------------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|------|
| 4. | I prefer to use Arabic when posting on social media. | N 21 7.3% | 43 15.0% | 130 45.3% | 56 19.5% | 37 12.9% | 2.84 | 1.06 | neutral | 3 |
| 5. | I prefer to use English when posting on social media. | N 94 32.8% | 92 32.1% | 90 31.4% | 10 3.5% | 1 0.3% | 3.93 | 0.90 | agree | 1 |
| 6. | I use a mix of Arabic and English in my posts on social media. | N 97 33.8% | 75 26.1% | 74 25.8% | 24 8.4% | 17 5.9% | 3.74 | 1.18 | agree | 2 |
| General Language Use | | | | | | | 3.50 | 1.05 | Agree | |
| 6. | I prefer to communicate in Arabic rather than English on Snapchat. | N 41 14.3% | 47 16.4% | 106 36.9% | 57 19.9% | 36 12.5% | 3.00 | 1.20 | neutral | 4 |
| 7. | I prefer to communicate in English rather than Arabic on Instagram. | N 91 31.7% | 76 26.5% | 83 28.9% | 27 9.4% | 10 3.5% | 3.74 | 1.11 | agree | 1 |
| 8. | I prefer to communicate in Arabic rather than English on WhatsApp. | N 55 19.2% | 76 26.5% | 96 33.4% | 35 12.2% | 25 8.7% | 3.35 | 1.18 | neutral | 2 |
| 9. | I prefer to communicate in English rather than Arabic on X platform. | N 58 20.2% | 51 17.8% | 120 41.8% | 39 13.6% | 19 6.6% | 3.31 | 1.14 | neutral | 3 |
| 10. | I prefer to communicate in Arabic rather than English on TikTok. | N 22 7.7% | 42 14.6% | 73 25.4% | 85 29.6% | 65 22.6% | 2.55 | 1.21 | disagree | 5 |
| Platform-Specific Preferences | | | | | | | 3.19 | 1.17 | neutral | |
| 4. | I use Arabic when posting for family and close friends on social media. | N 49 17.1% | 89 31.0% | 96 33.4% | 33 11.5% | 20 7.0% | 3.40 | 1.11 | neutral | 3 |
| 5. | I use English when posting to reach a wider or global audience on social media. | N 97 33.8% | 85 29.6% | 75 26.1% | 26 9.1% | 4 1.4% | 3.85 | 1.03 | agree | 2 |
| 6. | I switch between Arabic and English based on the language preferences of my audience. | N 126 43.9% | 80 27.9% | 58 20.2% | 11 3.8% | 12 4.2% | 4.03 | 1.08 | agree | 1 |
| Audience and Interaction | | | | | | | 3.76 | 1.08 | agree | |

4.2.1. Factors Affecting English Preference

English received a higher agreement score for several reasons. The most supported reason was its

role in helping individuals practice and improve their language skills (mean = 3.77; SD = 1.15). Additionally, the participants valued English for its ability to connect with a larger audience (mean = 3.73; SD = 1.11), ranking second, followed by the perception of English as a more popular language on social media platforms (mean = 3.62; SD = 1.08), highlighting its utility in reaching diverse and global audiences. These findings underscore that English is primarily preferred for its role in language skill development, followed by its potential to reach a broader audience and widespread popularity on social media, making it a valuable tool for global communication.

4.2.2. Factors Affecting Arabic Preference

While English was favored, Arabic remained important, particularly for cultural identity. Arabic received a neutral overall response (mean = 3.40; SD = 1.13), ranking fourth among the listed factors. Approximately 47.4% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that Arabic reflected their cultural identity, demonstrating its significance in personal and social identity. Similarly, Arabic preference among friends and family elicited neutral responses (mean = 3.33; SD = 1.18), ranking sixth. These findings indicate that Arabic holds cultural importance and is commonly used in personal interactions, but it is not a dominant factor influencing language preference on social media. Its role is more pronounced in maintaining cultural and

familial connections than in shaping digital communication trends.

4.2.3. Factors Affecting Neutral Preference

Several factors influenced the use of both English and Arabic, although they were less significant in determining the overall language preferences. For instance, while 34.9% of the participants agreed that using English made posts more appealing, this reason ranked lowest among all factors (mean = 3.19; SD = 1.11). The influence of mixed-language use, driven by trending hashtags and popular phrases, also received moderate relevance (mean = 3.26; SD = 1.25), ranking seventh. Similarly, English proficiency influenced some participants' language preferences (mean = 3.39; SD = 1.26), ranking fifth. These findings suggest that while post-appeal, trending content, and language proficiency contribute to language choices on social media, they do not serve as primary drivers that affect the choice of language. Instead, language use is strongly shaped by broader communicative needs, cultural identity, and global accessibility.

4.3. Variation in Engagement Dimensions Based on Language Preferences

Table 4 presents the results of the variation in EFL bilinguals' engagement dimensions (behavioral, cognitive, and emotional) on social media based on their language preferences.

Table 4. Variation in EFL bilinguals' engagement dimensions (behavioral, cognitive, and emotional) based on their language preferences on social media

| Item | | S.Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | S.Disagree | Mean | SD | Direction | Rank |
|--|---|---------|-------|---------|----------|------------|------|------|-----------|------|
| 1. I share more posts when I use English than Arabic. | N | 64 | 70 | 91 | 51 | 11 | 3.44 | 1.13 | agree | 3 |
| | % | 22.3% | 24.4% | 31.7% | 17.8% | 3.8% | | | | |
| 2. I actively engage (e.g., like, comment, or share) with posts written in Arabic more than in English on social media | N | 17 | 40 | 105 | 89 | 36 | 2.70 | 1.05 | neutral | 7 |
| | % | 5.9% | 13.9% | 36.6% | 31.0% | 12.5% | | | | |
| 3. I usually reply to comments using the same language written in. | N | 143 | 90 | 34 | 11 | 9 | 4.21 | 1.01 | agree | 1 |
| | % | 49.8% | 31.4% | 11.8% | 3.8% | 3.1% | | | | |
| 4. I consciously choose English on social media to sound more professional or trendy. | N | 25 | 42 | 89 | 94 | 37 | 2.74 | 1.13 | neutral | 6 |
| | % | 8.7% | 14.6% | 31.0% | 32.8% | 12.9% | | | | |
| 5. I often check the language preferences | N | 57 | 77 | 90 | 44 | 19 | 3.38 | 1.16 | neutral | 4 |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|--|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|------|----------|---|
| | of my audience before replying to their messages or comments. | % | 19.9% | 26.8% | 31.4% | 15.3% | 6.6% | | | | |
| 6. | When addressing mixed-language audiences, I combine English and Arabic in my posts. | N | 69 | 76 | 87 | 39 | 16 | 3.50 | 1.16 | agree | 2 |
| | | % | 24.0% | 26.5% | 30.3% | 13.6% | 5.6% | | | | |
| 7. | I'm more likely to engage with posts written in Arabic when interacting with people I know. | N | 35 | 64 | 113 | 51 | 24 | 3.12 | 1.10 | neutral | 5 |
| | | % | 12.2% | 22.3% | 39.4% | 17.8% | 8.4% | | | | |
| Behavioral Engagement | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1. | I find it easier to comprehend content in Arabic than in English on social media. | N | 11 | 39 | 110 | 88 | 39 | 2.63 | 1.00 | neutral | 4 |
| | | % | 3.8% | 13.6% | 38.3% | 30.7% | 13.6% | | | | |
| 2. | I believe that using English on social media improves my understanding of complex ideas more than using Arabic. | N | 69 | 82 | 78 | 51 | 7 | 3.54 | 1.11 | agree | 1 |
| | | % | 24.0% | 28.6% | 27.2% | 17.8% | 2.4% | | | | |
| 3. | I find it more mentally engaging to read or write posts in Arabic on social media than in English. | N | 20 | 49 | 114 | 69 | 35 | 2.83 | 1.07 | neutral | 3 |
| | | % | 7.0% | 17.1% | 39.7% | 24.0% | 12.2% | | | | |
| 4. | Switching between English and Arabic on social media makes me think critically. | N | 43 | 91 | 96 | 40 | 17 | 3.36 | 1.08 | neutral | 2 |
| | | % | 15.0% | 31.7% | 33.4% | 13.9% | 5.9% | | | | |
| 5. | I find it mentally easier to compose posts in Arabic than in English. | N | 13 | 28 | 92 | 112 | 42 | 2.51 | 1.01 | disagree | 5 |
| | | % | 4.5% | 9.8% | 32.1% | 39.0% | 14.6% | | | | |
| 6. | I sometimes feel more mentally drained after creating or interacting with English content on social media than with content in Arabic. | N | 10 | 19 | 77 | 99 | 82 | 2.22 | 1.04 | disagree | 6 |
| | | % | 3.5% | 6.6% | 26.8% | 34.5% | 28.6% | | | | |
| Cognitive Engagement | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1. | I feel more confident expressing my thoughts and opinions in Arabic on social media than in English, such as when sharing personal stories, opinions, or cultural experiences. | N | 29 | 49 | 77 | 80 | 52 | 2.73 | 1.23 | neutral | 7 |
| | | % | 10.1% | 17.1% | 26.8% | 27.9% | 18.1% | | | | |
| 2. | I find it easier to express my emotions in English on social media than in Arabic, such as when sharing feelings, offering emotional support, or writing heartfelt messages. | N | 103 | 64 | 78 | 37 | 5 | 3.78 | 1.12 | agree | 1 |
| | | % | 35.9% | 22.3% | 27.2% | 12.9% | 1.7% | | | | |
| 3. | Using English on social media gives me a sense of belonging | N | 60 | 66 | 99 | 51 | 11 | 3.39 | 1.12 | neutral | 3 |
| | | % | 20.9% | 23.0% | 34.5% | 17.8% | 3.8% | | | | |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----|--|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|------|---------|---|
| | to a global community. | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4. | Writing posts in Arabic makes me feel more authentic than using English. | N | 26 | 65 | 114 | 62 | 20 | 3.05 | 1.04 | neutral | 4 |
| | | % | 9.1% | 22.6% | 39.7% | 21.6% | 7.0% | | | | |
| 5. | Writing in Arabic on social media boosts my self-esteem more than writing in English. | N | 18 | 31 | 145 | 62 | 31 | 2.80 | 0.99 | neutral | 6 |
| | | % | 6.3% | 10.8% | 50.5% | 21.6% | 10.8% | | | | |
| 6. | I prefer using English on social media because it is easier to express humor or share familiar sayings than in Arabic. | N | 100 | 77 | 64 | 36 | 10 | 3.77 | 1.16 | agree | 2 |
| | | % | 34.8% | 26.8% | 22.3% | 12.5% | 3.5% | | | | |
| 7. | I prefer using Arabic on social media because it feels more natural to me than using English. | N | 30 | 46 | 99 | 77 | 35 | 2.86 | 1.15 | neutral | 5 |
| | | % | 10.5% | 16.0% | 34.5% | 26.8% | 12.2% | | | | |

Emotional Engagement

4.3.1. Behavioral Engagement

Descriptive analysis revealed how EFL bilinguals engaged in social media based on language preferences. Participants' behavioral engagement remained consistent across both language groups, as they did not strongly prefer Arabic or English in most interactions. The most common behavior was replying to comments in the same language they were written ($M = 4.21$), indicating a strong tendency to maintain language consistency in interactions. The second most frequent behavior involved using a mix of Arabic and English when addressing a mixed-language audience ($M = 3.50$), suggesting that bilingual users adjusted their language choices based on their audience. This behavior was followed by a slight preference for sharing more English posts ($M = 3.44$). The remaining four items reflected a neutral stance, indicating that users did not strongly prefer these behaviors. These findings indicate that bilingual users naturally switch between Arabic and English depending on the context, with a notable preference for mixing both languages when engaging with diverse audiences on social media.

4.3.2. Cognitive Engagement

Cognitive engagement among participants varied according to their language preferences, reflecting differences in how bilingual users processed and interacted with social media content. As shown in Table 4, the highest level of cognitive engagement was associated with the belief that using English enhanced the understanding of complex ideas (mean = 3.54). The second highest engagement was linked

to the idea that switching between English and Arabic fostered critical thinking (mean = 3.36). The participants strongly agreed with these two items. Furthermore, the following two items received disagreement, suggesting that participants leaned toward opposing views: "I sometimes feel more mentally drained after creating or interacting with English content than with content in Arabic" and "I find it mentally easier to compose posts in Arabic than in English." Because the participants disagreed with these statements, it can be inferred that they felt more cognitively engaged when using English. The remaining two items received neutral responses, indicating that the participants did not express strong preferences for them. Overall, these findings show that EFL bilinguals experienced greater cognitive engagement when using English compared to when they used Arabic or a mix of languages.

4.3.3. Emotional Engagement

The findings indicate that participants experienced higher emotional engagement when using English on social media. The strongest agreement was that using English made it easier to express emotions, whether by sharing feelings, offering emotional support, or writing heartfelt messages (mean = 3.78). The second-highest emotional engagement was related to the preference for English when it came to humor and sharing familiar sayings, as participants found it easier to do so in English than in Arabic (mean = 3.77). Three items received neutral responses; however, when examining the combined percentages of "disagree" and "strongly disagree" responses for these items (132%, 112%, and 62%), it became clear that several participants opposed these statements. These items pertained to feeling

more emotionally engaged when they used English to understand content, experiencing a sense of belonging to a global community, and perceiving English as more natural than Arabic. Additionally, two other items received neutral responses, indicating that the participants did not lean strongly toward agreement or disagreement. Generally, these findings indicate that EFL bilingual learners tend to engage more emotionally when using English than Arabic on social media, particularly in areas such as emotional expression, humor, personal messages, global belonging, and content comprehension.

4.4 Correlation between Language Preferences and Engagement Dimensions on Social Media

Table 5 presents the Pearson test results revealing the correlation between bilinguals' language choices on social media and their engagement dimensions (behavioral, cognitive, and emotional).

Table 5. Pearson correlation results between engagement dimensions and language preferences on social media

| Engagement | Preference for Using Arabic | Preference for Using English | Use of Mixed Arabic and English |
|---|-----------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. I share more posts when I use English than Arabic. | -.454 | .526 | -.156 |
| 2. I actively engage (e.g., like, comment, or share) with posts written in Arabic more than in English on social media | .543 | -.429 | .273 |
| 3. I usually reply to comments using the same language they are written in. | 0.073 | -0.035 | .311 |
| 4. I consciously choose English on social media to sound more professional or trendy. | -0.023 | 0.076 | 0.112 |
| 5. I often check the language preferences of my audience before replying to their messages or comments. | .165 | -0.040 | .209 |
| 6. When addressing mixed-language audiences, I tend to combine both English and Arabic in my posts. | 0.010 | 0.089 | .367 |
| 7. I'm more likely to engage with posts written in Arabic when interacting with people I know. | .360 | -.253 | .334 |
| Behavioral Engagement | .180 | -0.007 | .406 |
| 1. I find it easier to comprehend content in Arabic than in English on social media. | .538 | -.460 | .251 |
| 2. I believe that using English on social media improves my understanding of complex ideas more than using Arabic. | -.233 | .354 | 0.053 |
| 3. I find it more mentally engaging to read or write posts in Arabic on social media than in English. | .426 | -.360 | .250 |
| 4. Switching between English and Arabic on social media makes me think critically. | 0.076 | -0.058 | .261 |
| 5. I find it mentally easier to compose posts in Arabic than in English. | .557 | -.418 | .286 |
| 6. I sometimes feel more mentally drained after creating or interacting with English content on social media than with content in Arabic. | .226 | -.126 | .127 |
| Cognitive Engagement | .467 | -.309 | .370 |
| 1. I feel more confident expressing my thoughts and opinions in Arabic on social media than in English, such as when sharing personal stories, opinions, or cultural experiences. | .617 | -.452 | .230 |
| 2. I find it easier to express my emotions in English on social media than in Arabic, such as when sharing feelings, offering emotional support, or writing heartfelt messages. | -.384 | .477 | -0.034 |
| 3. Using English on social media gives me a sense of belonging to a global community. | -.233 | .325 | 0.000 |
| 4. Writing posts in Arabic makes me feel more authentic than using English. | .323 | -.272 | .264 |
| 5. Writing in Arabic on social media boosts my self-esteem more than writing in English. | .344 | -.228 | .204 |
| 6. I prefer using English on social media because it is easier to express humor or share familiar sayings than in Arabic. | -.359 | .385 | -0.055 |
| 7. I prefer using Arabic on social media because it feels more natural to me than using English. | .539 | -.446 | .266 |
| Emotional Engagement | .276 | -0.068 | .280 |

4.4.1. Correlation between Language Preferences and Behavioral Engagement

Language choice significantly affects behavioral engagement. The strongest correlation was observed

between a preference for Arabic and active engagement (liking, commenting, or sharing), evidenced by more posts written in Arabic than in English ($r = .543$). This finding suggests that participants who preferred Arabic were significantly more likely to interact with Arabic content on social media. Additionally, there was a notable positive correlation between Arabic preference and the tendency to engage more with Arabic posts when interacting with familiar people ($r = .360$). This finding reinforces the idea that social relationships influence language choice regarding engagement.

Conversely, the preference for English was negatively correlated with more engagement with Arabic posts ($r = -0.429$), indicating that participants who favored English were less likely to interact with Arabic content. Similarly, those who preferred English showed a positive correlation with sharing more posts in English than in Arabic ($r = .526$), highlighting a preference for English in content creation. Simultaneously, mixing Arabic and English correlated with replying to comments in the same language they were written ($r = .311$). This finding suggests that bilinguals mirror the language of their interactions.

The findings indicate that behavioral engagement positively correlates with using mixed Arabic and English ($r = .406$, $p < 0.01$). This finding suggests that the participants who frequently engaged on social media were likely to mix both languages during their interactions. A weaker positive correlation existed between behavioral engagement and Arabic preference ($r = .180$, $p < 0.01$), whereas no significant correlation was observed with English preference ($r = -0.007$, $p < 0.01$).

4.4.2. Correlation between Language Preferences and Cognitive Engagement

Correlation analysis revealed significant differences in cognitive engagement based on language preferences among Arabic, English, and mixed-language usage. The strongest correlation existed between the preference for Arabic and the belief that composing Arabic posts was mentally easier than composing English posts ($r = .557$). Additionally, a significant correlation was observed between the preference for Arabic and ease of comprehending Arabic content compared to English ($r = .538$). This correlation indicates that Arabic users experienced greater cognitive ease when processing information in their native language. However, preference for English was negatively correlated with the perception that composing posts in Arabic was easier ($r = -0.418$) and with the idea that reading or writing

in Arabic was more engaging than in English ($r = -0.360$). This difference suggests that individuals who prefer English find Arabic less cognitively stimulating in digital interactions. Mixing languages showed a moderately positive correlation, indicating that switching between Arabic and English fostered critical thinking ($r = .261$). This finding implies that code-switching on social media encourages cognitive engagement.

Overall, cognitive engagement is moderately correlated with a preference for Arabic ($r = .467$, $p < 0.01$) and mixed-language use ($r = .370$, $p < 0.01$). These results indicate that participants who engaged in more critical thinking on social media tended to prefer Arabic or a combination of both languages. By contrast, preference for English negatively correlates with cognitive engagement ($r = -0.309$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that individuals who favored English participated less in mentally stimulating interactions than those who preferred Arabic.

4.4.3. Correlation between Language Preferences and Emotional Engagement

Correlation analysis revealed important differences in how bilingual users' language preferences influenced their emotional engagement. The strongest correlation existed between the preference for Arabic and confidence in expressing personal thoughts and opinions in Arabic ($r = .617$). This finding indicates that the participants felt a deeper emotional connection to their native language when sharing personal experiences. Similarly, the preference for Arabic positively correlates with the belief that Arabic felt more natural than English on social media ($r = .539$). By contrast, the preference for English showed a moderate correlation with the belief that expressing emotions in English was more straightforward than in Arabic ($r = .477$). This preference reinforces the belief that bilingual individuals associate different languages with distinct emotional functions. However, there was no strong correlation between English preference and overall emotional engagement ($r = -0.068$), indicating that English did not significantly influence emotional interactions on social media. Furthermore, using a mix of languages had a weak positive correlation with emotional engagement ($r = .280$), suggesting that bilinguals who frequently switched between Arabic and English experienced slightly higher emotional engagement.

This emotional engagement had a weak positive correlation with the preference for Arabic ($r = .276$) and the use of mixed languages ($r = .280$). This difference indicates that participants who expressed

emotions on social media tended to do so in Arabic or by mixing languages. By contrast, a preference for English did not strongly correlate with emotional engagement ($r = -0.068$), implying that English was not a primary factor in shaping emotional interactions.

5. Discussion

This study explored the language preferences of EFL bilinguals for social media, the factors influencing these preferences, the influence of language preference on engagement, and the correlation between engagement dimensions (behavioral, cognitive, and emotional) and language preference. These findings provide insight into the dynamic interplay between language preferences and social media usage among bilingual teenagers in Saudi Arabia. This discussion highlights the key findings and places them within the broader literature.

Results for the first research question (What languages do EFL bilinguals prefer to use on social media, and how do these preferences vary across various platforms?) indicated that participants demonstrated a general preference for English (64.9%) over Arabic (22.3%) when posting on social media. This finding is consistent with previous studies, such as Kamran and Mansoor (2017) [14] and Koka et al. (2023) [25]: English was favored because of its perceived prestige and ability to reach a broader audience.

Platform-specific trends further reinforced this pattern. On Instagram, 58.2% of the participants preferred English. The dominance of English on Instagram can be attributed to its international user base, where bilingual users seek broader audience engagement, which aligns with the findings of Androutsopoulos (2013) [4]. Conversely, Arabic was favored on WhatsApp, with approximately 46% of the participants preferring it, reflecting its role in personal and intimate communication, as suggested by Tu (2018) [18] and Salimova and Koudrjajtseva (2017) [19]. This result indicates that Arabic remains crucial for maintaining cultural and familial ties even though English dominates broader social media interactions.

Language preferences varied across platforms. The participants displayed neutral preferences for X, Snapchat, and TikTok, suggesting that their language choice was context-dependent. Notably, TikTok recorded the lowest preference for Arabic, with nearly 52% of the participants disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that they preferred Arabic. This preference suggests that TikTok's globalized nature

influences bilingual users to gravitate toward English, a finding consistent with research on language use in digital spaces [28].

Moreover, mixed-language use emerged as an adaptive strategy, with 71.8% of the participants indicating that switching between Arabic and English depending on their audience. This practice aligns with Androutsopoulos' (2013) [4] networked multilingualism theory, in which bilingual users switch between languages to maximize communication effectiveness.

Results for the second research question (What are the factors that influence EFL bilinguals' language preferences on social media?) indicated several factors influencing participants' language preferences. The most significant reason for choosing English was its role in improving language skills, with nearly 64% agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement. This finding supports those of Hafeez et al. (2018) [13] and Mahiroh (2024) [28], who highlighted English as a key tool in academic and professional advancement.

Additionally, approximately 61% of participants selected English to connect with a larger audience, reinforcing its global appeal and practicality in cross-cultural interactions. English was also perceived as the dominant language on social media, aligning with previous research that associated English with digital communication trends [14]. The dominance of English symbolizes upward mobility and global reach, particularly in digital spaces. This user choice was particularly evident among younger and highly educated users, consistent with the findings of Koka et al. (2023) [25].

Arabic, however, was primarily associated with cultural identity and familial connections, but these factors did not strongly influence overall language preference. While 47.4% of the participants agreed that Arabic reflected their cultural identity, the neutral response suggested that the influence of cultural identity on language choice was gradually shifting. This trend mirrored the findings of Ledesma and Morris (2005) [20], who observed that bilinguals prioritized global languages for broader engagement while maintaining cultural ties.

Additionally, the role of Arabic in interactions with family and friends received moderate agreement (45%), supporting the findings of Koka et al. (2023) [25] and Cunliffe et al. (2013) [27], who emphasized the importance of native languages in close personal interactions. However, the neutral responses indicated that bilingual users increasingly integrated

English into their digital communication, even in personal contexts, reflecting the broader impact of globalization and digitalization.

Participants reported that their language choices were sometimes influenced by trending hashtags and social media norms, although this factor ranked lower in importance. This finding suggested that, while bilinguals were aware of social media trends, their language choices were primarily driven by broader communicative and audience considerations rather than temporary digital trends.

Results for the third research question (How do participants' engagement dimensions (behavioral, cognitive, and emotional) vary based on their language preferences on social media?) revealed a complex relationship between engagement behavior and language preference: behavioral engagement was balanced between Arabic and English, cognitive engagement was stronger in English, and emotional engagement peaked in English, especially for personal expressions and humor. These results align with some studies while contrasting with others and offer deeper insight into how bilingual users navigate digital spaces based on their language preferences.

The results of behavioral engagement indicated that participants naturally switched between Arabic and English based on the context of their interactions. The most common behavior observed was responding in the same language as the original comment, reflecting a preference for maintaining linguistic consistency (mean = 4.21). Participants frequently mixed both languages when addressing diverse audiences (mean = 3.50). However, the findings suggested no strong preference for either language regarding active engagement, such as liking, commenting, or sharing, indicating a flexible approach to language use. These findings support Mahiroh's (2024) [28] study, which found that bilingual individuals actively engaged in English on social media because of its global accessibility and familiarity.

By contrast, Pahari and Shimada's (2023) [17] study on Nepali-English bilinguals found a strong emotional attachment to their first language (L1) when expressing personal sentiments. However, the present study did not indicate a clear behavioral preference for Arabic. Instead, bilinguals appeared comfortable using both languages depending on the audience's expectations and context, which aligns with Cunliffe et al. (2013) [27], who observed that bilingual users often switched between languages based on the social context, using one language for

public interactions and another for personal conversations.

Cognitive engagement was highest among participants who believed that using English improved their understanding of complex ideas (mean = 3.54). Additionally, the participants agreed that switching between Arabic and English stimulated critical thinking (mean = 3.36) and suggested that bilingual individuals find language alternation cognitively enriching. Interestingly, they disagreed with statements indicating that the English content was mentally draining, which implied a level of cognitive ease when using English. These findings align with Tu's (2018) [18] research, which indicated that international students in the U.S. used English to enhance academic engagement and professional networking, deeming it essential for cognitive growth. Similarly, Mishnick and Wise (2024) [29] highlighted that social media platforms encouraging professional and intellectual exchanges, such as LinkedIn, fostered deeper English engagement. Users associated English with complex discussion and learning.

By contrast, Pahari and Shimada (2023) [17] found that bilinguals often reserved their native language for emotionally charged or personal conversations rather than for intellectual discourse. However, the present study indicates that Arabic does not demonstrate a significant cognitive advantage. Instead, English was consistently associated with a more engaging cognitive experience, reinforcing that English serves as the primary language for knowledge acquisition and complex discussions in bilingual social media interactions.

The most notable finding is the strong emotional engagement associated with English. Participants reported that English facilitated the expression of emotions, offered support, and allowed them to write heartfelt messages (mean = 3.78). They also indicated that humor and familiar phrases were more straightforward to express in English (mean = 3.77), reinforcing that English is a comfortable emotional outlet for students. These results align with Mahiroh's (2024) [28] conclusion that social media enhances emotional engagement in English because users associate it with global connectivity and informal interactions. Mishnick and Wise (2024) [29] emphasized that emotional content, such as personal stories and celebrations, garnered the highest engagement on platforms like Facebook. The current study partially supports the findings of Cunliffe et al. (2013) [27] who observed that bilinguals typically use their native language for personal conversations. However, in the current

study, Arabic was not the preferred language for emotional expression. Interestingly, while Pahari and Shimada (2023) [17] found that bilinguals tend to use their native language to express negative emotions and English to express positive ones, this pattern was not observed in the present study. Instead, English consistently emerged as the preferred language for emotional and cognitive engagement. This preference may be attributed to the participants' bilingual proficiency, digital literacy, and the prevalence of English in online spaces.

These findings underscore how EFL bilinguals engage differently depending on their language choice. While behavioral engagement remained adaptable, cognitive and emotional engagement were strongly associated with English. This finding suggests that English is crucial for deeper thoughts and personal expression in digital interactions. These patterns align with previous studies highlighting the dominance of English in bilingual social media engagement while also providing new insights into the role of Arabic in online communication.

Results for the fourth question (Is there a significant correlation between EFL bilinguals' language preferences on social media and their engagement dimensions (behavioral, cognitive, and emotional)?) revealed a complex relationship between bilinguals' language preferences and their engagement on social media. Although the descriptive analysis indicated that cognitive and emotional engagement were higher when using English, the correlation results showed stronger associations between the preference for Arabic and various dimensions of engagement. By contrast, the correlations with English were generally weak or negative.

This contradiction arises from the difference between the absolute engagement dimensions and relational trends. English engagement is primarily driven by necessity, such as academic or professional purposes, rather than personal preference. By contrast, Arabic engagement is closely linked to emotional and cognitive comfort. Individuals who preferred Arabic demonstrated stronger engagement, which aligns with Tu (2018) [18] and Pahari and Shimada (2023) [17]: native languages facilitate emotional expression. Furthermore, the correlation between behavioral engagement and mixed-language use ($r = .406$) supported the research by Cunliffe et al. (2013) [27], indicating that bilingual individuals exhibited adaptability.

The negative correlation between English preference and cognitive engagement ($r = -0.309$) indicates that individuals who prefer English may have found engaging with the language in social situations easier, leading to lower cognitive demand. This finding aligns with that of Mahiroh (2024) [28], who found that structured language-learning environments require more significant cognitive effort when using English, and how individuals interact with language varies depending on the context.

Ultimately, bilingual engagement is primarily driven by function rather than language preference. English is often used for professional and cognitive tasks, whereas Arabic promotes deeper emotional and interactive connections. This discrepancy highlighted how engagement reflected language preference and an adaptive response to contextual demands. In other words, English was used strategically for intellectual and global communication, while Arabic remained deeply tied to personal expression and social connection.

6. Conclusion

This study explored the language preferences of bilingual EFL users in Saudi Arabia, specifically teenage female students attending an international school. It focused on their language choices across different social media platforms, the factors influencing these preferences, and the impact of these choices on various dimensions of engagement: behavioral, cognitive, and emotional.

The findings revealed a clear preference for English over Arabic, particularly on such platforms as Instagram, where English's global reach and professional appeal have made it the dominant language. By contrast, Arabic played a significant role in personal interactions on WhatsApp, highlighting its importance in maintaining cultural and familial connections. Many participants also reported switching between Arabic and English based on the audience and context, demonstrating a flexible and adaptive approach to communication.

Several factors influenced language preferences among participants. English was chosen primarily because of its role in language development, ability to reach a wider audience, and alignment with social media trends. Although Arabic held cultural significance, it had a lesser impact on overall preferences. Engagement patterns highlighted these distinctions. Behavioral engagement indicated that participants naturally adjusted their language choices based on their audience, often responding in

the same language as in the original comment. Cognitive engagement was stronger for English, as the participants found it more effective in understanding complex ideas and stimulating critical thinking. Emotional engagement peaked for English, especially in humor, personal expressions, and a sense of global belonging. However, Arabic remained important in terms of personal and cultural identity.

The correlation analysis revealed a complex relationship between language preferences and engagement. A preference for Arabic positively correlated with cognitive and emotional engagement, indicating that individuals who identified strongly with Arabic formed deeper mental and personal connections when using the language. By contrast, although participants reported higher cognitive and emotional engagement with English, their preference for English showed weaker or even negative correlations with these dimensions of engagement. This observation suggested that while the participants frequently used English in professional and digital contexts, their deeper connections and engagement remained rooted in Arabic. Furthermore, the use of mixed languages was positively correlated with behavioral engagement, highlighting that bilingual individuals adapted their language choices flexibly depending on social interactions.

Overall, this study highlighted the dual roles of English and Arabic in the digital interactions of bilingual users. English was prevalent in global, professional, and cognitive contexts, whereas Arabic remained important in intimate, personal, and culturally significant conversations. The findings indicated that Arabic retained significant emotional and cognitive value, although English was commonly used for practical communication. This study enhances our understanding of bilingualism in digital environments by emphasizing how context, audiences, and communicative objectives influence language choices.

6.1. Implications

These findings have practical implications for policymakers and social media developers. First, education and communication policymakers should develop frameworks to support bilingual users in maintaining their cultural identities while engaging with global audiences. This framework could include integrating bilingual communication skills into the curricula and promoting initiatives that value linguistic diversity in online interactions. Moreover, social media developers should consider the unique

needs of bilingual users when designing social media platforms. Features such as customizable language settings, multilingual hashtags, and tools for seamless switching between languages can enhance user experience and engagement. By addressing these implications, stakeholders can foster more inclusive and effective communication strategies for bilingual users in an increasingly globalized digital environment. By addressing these implications, stakeholders can foster more inclusive and effective communication strategies for bilingual users in an increasingly globalized digital environment.

6.2. Limitations and Recommendations

Despite the comprehensive goals of this study, several limitations must be acknowledged.

First, it exclusively focused on teenage bilingual female students from a single international school in Saudi Arabia. By limiting the demographics to this narrow group, the findings cannot be generalized to broader populations, including male students, individuals from public schools, and adults from different educational and social contexts.

Second, the study focused exclusively on language preferences between English and Arabic across specific social media platforms, such as X, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, and WhatsApp. Although this approach aligns with the participants' bilingual abilities, it excluded potential insights into how these users navigate other linguistic contexts or communicate outside social media platforms. Exploring additional communicative settings can provide a broader understanding of bilingual language dynamics.

Third, this study used a cross-sectional design, capturing participants' preferences and engagement at a single point in time. While this approach provided valuable data, it did not account for the changes or trends in language preferences that may occur over time, limiting its ability to draw conclusions about the evolution of bilingual behaviors in the digital age.

Future research should broaden the scope and methodology of this study. Including a more diverse demographic, such as individuals of different ages, genders, and educational backgrounds, would enhance the generalizability of the findings. Moreover, expanding the scope to explore communication contexts beyond social media would offer a more comprehensive understanding of bilingual language practices in various settings. Additionally, incorporating longitudinal designs

could help track the evolution of bilinguals' language preferences over time, shedding light on the trends and changes across different life stages. Qualitative methods, such as interviews and discourse analysis, should also be employed to explore the deeper motivations, emotions, and contextual factors influencing language choices on social media. Future studies should build on this study to provide a broader and more in-depth understanding of bilingual language preferences in diverse and dynamic settings.

Author Statements:

- **Ethical approval:** This study followed ethical guidelines. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection.
- **Conflict of interest:** The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest associated with this study. The research was conducted independently, and the authors have no financial, personal, or professional relationships that could affect the findings or conclusions presented in this paper.
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- **Data availability statement:** The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

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APPENDICES

Appendix (A)

Questionnaire Title: Language Preferences and Engagement on Social Media

Instructions:

Dear participants, this questionnaire explores your language preferences on social media, the factors influencing your choices, and how these preferences affect your engagement. We greatly appreciate your participation; your answers are critical to the study. Please remember that your participation is entirely voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time without providing a reason. Kindly indicate your level of agreement with each statement by selecting one of the following options: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree. Your responses will remain confidential and can only be used for academic purposes. **Make sure not to leave any answers blank.**

Section 1: Demographics

| Question | Response |
|---|---|
| 1. What is your age? | _____ years old |
| 2. Nationality | Saudi ____ /Other (Please specify): |
| 3. School Name | |
| 4. Which language do you consider your dominant language? | Arabic ____ / English ____ |
| 5. How many hours per day do you spend on social media? | Less than 1 hour ____ / 1–3 hours ____ 4–6 hours ____ / More than 6 hours ____ |

Section 2: Language Preferences

| A. General Language Use | | | | | |
|---|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| Statement | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
| I prefer to use Arabic when posting on social media. | | | | | |
| I prefer to use English when posting on social media. | | | | | |
| I use a mix of Arabic and English in my posts on social media. | | | | | |
| B. Platform-Specific Preferences | | | | | |
| I prefer to communicate in Arabic rather than English on Snapchat. | | | | | |
| I prefer to communicate in English rather than Arabic on Instagram. | | | | | |
| I prefer to communicate in Arabic rather than English on WhatsApp. | | | | | |
| I prefer to communicate in English rather than Arabic on X platform. | | | | | |
| I prefer to communicate in Arabic rather than English on TikTok. | | | | | |
| C. Audience and Interaction | | | | | |
| I use Arabic when posting for family and close friends on social media. | | | | | |
| I use English when posting to reach a wider or global audience on social media. | | | | | |
| I switch between Arabic and English based on the language preferences of my audience. | | | | | |

Section 3: Reasons for Language Choice

| Statement | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|--|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| I prefer using Arabic on social media because it reflects my cultural identity. | | | | | |
| I use Arabic on social media because it is the language most of my friends and family use. | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|
| I use English on social media because it is more popular on the platforms I use. | | | | | |
| I use English because it helps me connect with a larger audience. | | | | | |
| I prefer using English on social media because it allows me to practice and improve my language skills. | | | | | |
| I feel that using English makes my posts more appealing. | | | | | |
| I usually choose between Arabic or English depending on popular hashtags or trending phrases on social media. | | | | | |
| I prefer using English on social media because I feel more proficient in English than in Arabic. | | | | | |

Section 4: Engagement

Behavioral

| Statement | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|--|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| I share more posts when I use English than Arabic. | | | | | |
| I actively engage (e.g., like, comment, or share) with posts written in Arabic more than in English on social media. | | | | | |
| I usually reply to comments using the same language they're written in. | | | | | |
| I consciously choose English on social media to sound more professional or trendy. | | | | | |
| I often check the language preferences of my audience before replying to their messages or comments. | | | | | |
| When addressing mixed-language audiences, I tend to combine both English and Arabic in my posts. | | | | | |
| I'm more likely to engage with posts written in Arabic when interacting with people I know. | | | | | |

Cognitive

| Statement | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|--|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| I find it easier to comprehend content in Arabic than in English on social media. | | | | | |
| I believe that using English on social media improves my understanding of complex ideas more than using Arabic. | | | | | |
| I find it more mentally engaging to read or write posts in Arabic on social media than in English. | | | | | |
| Switching between English and Arabic on social media makes me think critically. | | | | | |
| I find it mentally easier to compose posts in Arabic than in English. | | | | | |
| I sometimes feel more mentally drained after creating or interacting with English content on social media than with content in Arabic. | | | | | |

Emotional

| Statement | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|--|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| I feel more confident expressing my thoughts and opinions in Arabic on social media than in English, such as when sharing personal stories, opinions, or cultural experiences. | | | | | |
| I find it easier to express my emotions in English on social media than in Arabic, such as when sharing feelings, offering emotional support, or writing heartfelt messages. | | | | | |
| Using English on social media gives me a sense of belonging to a global community. | | | | | |
| Writing posts in Arabic makes me feel more authentic than using English. | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Writing in Arabic on social media boosts my self-esteem more than writing in English. | | | | | |
| I prefer using English on social media because it is easier to express humor or share familiar sayings than in Arabic. | | | | | |
| I prefer using Arabic on social media because it feels more natural to me than using English. | | | | | |

Thank you for completing the questionnaire.