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**Investigating Facebook Users ‘Nicknames in
Algeria from a Sociolinguistics perspective, the
Case of Master Students of English at Ibn
Khaldoun University**

**A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Foreign Languages in Partial Fulfilment
of the Requirements for the Master’s Degree in Linguistics**

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Dedication

*All thanks and gratitude to Allah, our Creator, who gave us the strength to complete
this work.*

I dedicate this work to:

My dear parents for their prayers, help and support

My dearest sisters, my little brother

And my best friend

To my beloved uncle *GUENFOUD YAHIA*, for your important role in my
education

Your Death came as a shock to us. We never thought that this day would come; things have not
been the same, our lives fell apart. We will definitely miss you, may Allah rest your soul in peace.

To my both families “*BENKRALIFA*” and “*GUENFOUD*”

To all my friends and colleagues.

And to all the ones who loved me, supported, and believed in me to carry on this research
theme

I'm entirely grateful.

Thank you!

Maissa BENKRALIFA

Dedication

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Thank you God for protection, skills and for giving us healthy life.”

This study is wholeheartedly dedicated to my beloved parents for earning and honest living for us and for supporting and encouraging me to believe in myself and who continually provide their moral, spiritual, emotional and financial support.

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To my relatives, all my lovely and craziest friends and classmates who shared their words of advice and encouragement to finish this study.

To those who love me

To those who encouraged me

To those who inspired me

To those who believed in me.

Ocean ISSAD

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Abstract

The present work attempts to investigate “Facebook user’s nicknames” within the Algerian speech community and taking Tiaret speech community as a case of study. It mainly focuses on the basis of choosing nicknames as “Facebook user names” and the reasons behind their choices, and whether these preferences are affected by gender differences. For the methodology, this research adopts mixed methods of research instruments; both quantitative and qualitative, in which there was an online questionnaire that was given to fifty one (51) Master students at Ibn Khaldoun University; both levels and specialties (linguistics and didactics) and an email interview that was carried out with ten master students. This study reveals that the majority of the respondents prefer to be unknown for social, privacy, and cultural concerns. Also, the findings prove that females use nicknames more than males. Furthermore, the findings indicate other motives that participants rely on to create their nicknames such as childhood nicknames, the abbreviation of their real names, the combination of their first initial names letters, and the last of their beloved ones. Therefore, the main results indicate that the nature of the society, cultural influence, and learning a foreign language, in addition to gender differences are the most important variables that have a greater impact on Facebook users’ choices of nicknames.

Key words: Linguistics, Social Networking, Facebook, User Names, Nicknames, Cultural Influence, Foreign Language, Gender Differences

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List of Abbreviations

CMC: Computer Mediation Communication

CMCD: Computer Mediation Communication Discourse

CMDA: Computer Mediation Discourse Analysis

ICT: Information Communication Technology

IRCs: Internet Communication Chats

SNSs: Social Network Sites

ToS: Terms of Service

General Introduction

Social networking sites, above all Facebook offers a new, effortless and inexpensive way for socialization, entertainment, and education. In Algeria, studies related to social network sites mainly focused on code-switching and language contact because of the diglossic situation of the country. Many researchers have shifted their interest to the linguistic phenomenon known as Nicknaming, which has been proved to be an essential identity marker. The user name revelation is required when opening an account, the choice of a name is determined by its user. Since the use of nicknames on Facebook profiles disclose part of users' identity.

This research is based on sociolinguistic analysis intended to figure out the reasons that lead Facebook users to choose nicknames rather than real names, in Algeria among Tiaret speech community spotting the light on their gender differences, learning a foreign language and cultural influence. Therefore, the present study represents an investigation that tries to cover this gap and add in-depth explanations about the topic.

The Purpose of the Study:

The study aims at identifying the reasons that influence Facebook users' when choosing their nicknames, among Ibn Khaldoun University master students of English in Tiaret. It also explains the choice they make.

The Importance of the Study:

The choice of Names as linguistic elements is an interesting area for many researchers. In this context knowing that the choice of nicknames on Facebook reveals a part of the users 'culture, interest , society, identity and this is what this research intended to analyze.

Research Questions:

In an attempt to find answers, three research questions were prepared:

- ❖ Do most Facebook users at the Department of English in Tiaret prefer using nicknames rather than real names?
- ❖ Are these preferences affected by gender differences?
- ❖ What are the reasons behind their preferences of using nicknames rather than real names?

Hypothesis:

These hypotheses are derived from the previous questions

- ✓ Unexpectedly, it seems that most students use Facebook with a nickname instead of the official name, even in those academic learning and Facebook teaching groups.
- ✓ Females are more likely to use nicknames than males because of the nature of the Algerian society.
- ✓ Many students tend not to show their real names to keep their personal life private, to avoid social problems, and also because of the cultural influence and the preference to use Foreign names as far as they are concerned with learning foreign languages.

Methods of the Study:

The aim of the present study is to investigate the use of nicknames on Facebook among Tiaret master students in Algeria and the reasons behind the choices they make. Therefore, two different tools of data collection; questionnaire and interviews are obtained in this research. Qualitative questionnaire was used to find out reasons behind the use of nicknames and how they are created while the quantitative one was distributed randomly to

51 participants containing 22 items which expose the reasons for participants' choice of nicknames and their attitudes toward it.

Limitation of the Study:

This study is limited in terms of sources, the lack of references, and the difficulty of finding our sample population due to the global pandemic. It was planned to involve more participants in order to obtain an overgeneralization of the results, but the number of participants decreased from 100 participants to 51. Also because of the sensitivity of the topic the students may tend not to show their real attitudes and true opinions through their responses in the questionnaires.

The Structure of the Dissertation:

Our investigation consists of three different chapters; the first one is dedicated to the review of literature by mentioning the most important previous works. Taking into consideration theories and approaches related to the field of sociolinguistics for instance language, culture, the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, society, Tajfel and Turner's social Identity Theory, social media and its impact on language; everything correlated to our subject.

The second chapter devoted to the research methodology of data collection, presenting the population sample, methods selected to answer the research questions.

While data analysis and results of both quantitative and qualitative tools, is provided in the third chapter where the data collected will be converted to numerical statistics.

Chapter One: Literature Review

1.1 Introduction

Language is an essential element in human life, simply because it is an expressive device of communication. It has been studied for many years and from different views and perspectives. Sociolinguistic has become an increasingly important field that is concerned with the study of how language use and interacts with culture and society, Therefore, the term of “sociolinguistic” appeared in the 1960’s and pioneered by Labov.

The focus of this chapter will be on Facebook usernames, more specifically the phenomenon of using nicknames in this social network. Thus, this framework will include different definitions of different concepts that are strongly related to this research, such as language, culture and the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis.

In sum, this research will be analyzed from a sociolinguistic point of view, where language can reflect the identity of individuals, the relationship between language and identity will be included in addition to social identity. This chapter seeks to highlight the main concepts that have a role in this research study including; the impact of technology on language, social media use in Algeria, Social media and culture, and Facebook.

1.2 Language: Definition and Function

Language has been defined differently by several scholars in different disciplines, that is to say some of them covered all aspects of language in their definitions including phonetics, morphology, syntax, phonology and semantics, Sapir (1921,p.8) defines it “*as a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of voluntary produced symbols*”. As mentioned above, language expresses more than just

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information, it is essential in our social lives because people use language to express their emotions, feelings, thoughts and opinions in order to interact easily with each other.

As Chomsky stated that there is no reason to believe that the “ *essential purpose* ” of language is communication, language can be used to transmit information, but it also serves many other purposes: to establish relations among people to express or clarify thoughts, for play, for creative mental activity, to gain understanding, and so on. (Excerpted from *Language and Responsibility*, Pantheon, 1977, para. 6-7)

According to Bill Bryson “*Language, never forget, is more fashion than science, and matters of usage, spelling and pronunciation tend to wander around like hemlines.*” As cited in (Adamson, 2006, p.42) *Thematic Guide to Popular Nonfiction*. Thus, humans obtain language unconsciously for the reason that it is part of them as the quote stated it is a matter of use of spelling and pronunciation.

One cannot talk about language without referring to Wardhaugh definition (1972, n.d.) “*Language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols used for human communication*”. In this definition, Wardhaugh identified the main features of language, as being a system which means, elements of language are structured by a set of rules. In addition, he cited “arbitrary” that is to say there is no reasonable relationship between words, and what they refer to. Furthermore, he mentioned vocal symbols; sounds are combined into words in order to speak the language. He highlighted that language is a systematic means of communication.

1.3. Culture: Definition

Culture refers to intellectual societies; it also includes beliefs, practices, traditions and religion which are transmitted socially to individuals through time. A widely used definition adopted at the World Conference on Cultural Policies (Mexico, 1982) goes as follows:

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Culture ...is...the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group. It includes not only arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs. (Vijayendra & Walton, 2004, p. 147)

As it is clearly stated, culture contains all aspects of society not only music, theatre, clothing, but also beliefs, traditions and norms of life in a given community. For Richerson and Boyd (2005, p.5) culture is *“information capable of affecting individuals behavior that they acquire from other members of their species through teaching, imitation, and other forms of social transmission”*. Thus, culture is a shared knowledge that is acquired through society, and learned at schools, and has an impact on the life of individuals.

According to J.G.Herder, each culture is different and has its own systems of meaning and value, and cannot be ranked on any universal scale. (Concise Routledge Encyclopedia, p.185). Cultures are not similar to each other since they differ in terms of beliefs, traditions, history, etc. In general culture gathers all aspects of human behavior, in addition to shared beliefs, tradition, and norms in society.

1.3.1. Language and Culture Interconnection

Language and culture are two concepts that are strongly connected to each other and the connection between them is deep-seated, many scholars highlight the relationship between language and culture. According to Brown (1994, p.165): *“a language is a part of a culture and a culture is a part of a language; the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture”*.

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Accordingly, Noam Chomsky stated that: *“A language is not just words. It's a culture, a tradition, a unification of a community, a whole history that creates what a community is. It's all embodied in a language”* (The Northumbrians, n.d, p.6).

As the two quotations demonstrate, language and culture walk side by side, they are inseparable. We can no longer talk about language without referring to its culture and vice versa. Language is like the mirror that stares back at culture , they both reflect each other, understanding someone's culture depends on his language, that is to say when a person uses language to interact, they are referring to their culture , traditions and the history of their country since language is the verbal expression of culture .

Another view that stresses the relationship between language and culture: *“When [language] is used in contexts of communication, it is bound up with culture ... [and] Speakers identify themselves and others through their use of language; they view their language as a symbol of their social identity”* (Kramsch, 1998, p.3).

In other words, language is not just a means of communication, it is a way to show the belonging of individuals to a specific speech community, and gives an idea about their origins. Thus, from one's language others can detect where a person comes from, and also it is a way to present their identities and preserve them. As a result, language and culture are two sides of the same coin. This perception is also shared by Rita Mae Brown (2011) *“Language is the road map of a culture. It tells you where its people come from and where they are going”* (p.47).

1.3.2 The Sapir Whorf Hypothesis

Many hypotheses have been implied to prove the relationship between language and culture among them the Saphir-Worf hypothesis which is theory developed by Edward Sapir (1929), an American anthropologist-linguist; a leader in American structural linguistics, and his student Benjamin Lee Whorf (1940), which states that the structure of a language determines or

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greatly influences the modes of thoughts and characteristics behavior of the culture in which it is spoken (Dictionary, n.d).

Two principles are defined by The Sapir–Whorf hypothesis. The first one is linguistic determinism, which states that the way a person thinks is determined by the language in which he speaks. Taking this maximum into consideration, it means that if one doesn't have an utterance for it, one cannot think about it. The second principle is linguistic relativity or linguistic diversity, which refers to the complete difference of language all around the world. These principles raise some important issues for cross cultural communication. In the assumption of how a person thinks is a reflection of the language one speaks, and then the speakers of two different languages must think very differently. This can make effective and successful communication between cultures very difficult, if not impossible. Contemporary linguists qualify the Sapir Whorf hypothesis (Neuliep.2017).In this regard Sapir stated:

Human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society. It is quite an illusion to imagine that one adjusts to reality essentially without the use of language and that language is merely an incidental means of solving specific problems of communication or reflection. The fact of the matter is that the 'real world' is to a large extent unconsciously built upon the language habits of the group...We see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation. (Sapir, 1929, p.207)

As the quotation demonstrates, humans cannot live in total isolation from the society, simply for the reason that they need to express their thoughts and ideas by relying on the use

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of language, that they acquired it in their childhood, and become influenced by it, which appears in their daily activities.

The second principle of Sapir Whorf hypothesis stresses that the structure of a specific language cannot be found in another language. Additionally, language has different variations that influence people's thinking, behavior and the reality and interpretation of events. Gumperz and Levinson (1996, p.1) argue that: *“Every student of language or society should be familiar with the essential idea of linguistic relativity way of perceiving, the idea that culture, through language, affects the way we think, especially perhaps our classification of the experienced world”*.

In other words, language has an effect on thoughts, and is considered as an identification of human's cultural statue and as a glyph of their experiences. As Trudgill has identified the same idea as well in this quotation: *“[...] a speaker's native language sets up a series of categories which act as a kind of a grid through which he perceives the world, and which constrain the way in which he categorizes and conceptualizes different phenomena”* (1984, p.25).

In brief the relationship between language and culture is demonstrated in the way how people speak and interact to express their opinions and beliefs, according to the Spire-Whorf hypothesis.

1.4 Language and Identity Interconnection

The use of a particular language builds a part of who a person is, and makes them establish their identity. As Minae Mizumura indicated *“One's identity derives not from one's nation or blood but from the language one uses”* (The Fall of Language, 2017).

Additionally, Thorn Borrow explains, one's identity is not always fixed. Instead it is 'something which we are constantly building and negotiating all our lives' (supporting inclusive practice, 2004).

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As it is mentioned above, identity can be affected by many factors. For example, learning foreign languages can be the reason for shaping from the origin identity to another, getting influenced by the culture of another country; one discover and express his own identity through the use of language, and through this language others can make their impression about them.

Similarly, according to Paul Kroskrity (2000) who shared the same idea of the above mentioned quotation: *“The emphasis is on identities not essentially given but actively produced whether through deliberate, strategic manipulation, or throughout-of awareness practices. This both captures the agency of speakers and views language as a social action”* (cited in Identity, Journal of Linguistic, n.d.).

Identity is not given; it's produced through conscious and unconscious activities that is to say the use of language by speakers. In this regard when people acquire new languages in their life, it is a dynamic process which the acquired language may become a part of their new identity.

In short, the identity of speakers is read through their use of a specific language, which is decoded by others, through the employment of linguistic manipulation, and adaptation for the purpose of changing the decoding of linguistic signals, as a result, the identity displayed by its speaker. In this way, a speaker can show or hide certain parts of his identity and even invent characteristics to influence the decoding of identity, through the language he uses. (Price, 2010, p.08).

1.5 Social Identity: Definition

Social identity relates to how we identify ourselves in relation to others according to what we have in common. For example, we can identify ourselves according to religion or where we're from. In this regard David Buckingham stated:

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Our identity is something we uniquely possess: it is what distinguishes us from other people. Yet on the other hand, identity also implies a relationship with a broader collective or social group of some kind. When we talk about national identity, cultural identity, or gender Identity, for example, we imply that our identity is partly a matter of what we share with other people. (Buckingham, 2008, p.1)

Depending on Buckingham the concept of Identity refers to what makes human beings different from one another, he also reflected belonging to a wider group or specific one which implies that one's identity is part of interacting with others. In 1979, Henri Tajfel and John Turner suggested a Social Identity Theory states that:

Part of a person's concept of self comes from the groups to which that person belongs. An individual does not just have a personal selfhood, but multiple selves and identities associated with their affiliated groups. A person might act differently in varying social contexts according to the groups they belong to, which might include a sports team they follow, their family, their country of nationality, and the neighborhood they live in, among many other possibilities. (Turner& Tajfel, 1979)

When an individual perceives themselves as a part of a group that is an "in-group" for them. Other similar groups that an individual doesn't identify with are called "out- group", by treating or evaluating in-group members more favorably than out-group members, social identity are often ensured or enhanced. There is an "us" versus "them" mentality when it involves in-groups and their respective out groups (As cited in My WordPress Website, 2016).

In fact, the theory of social identity is a natural process which is performed by individuals, in order to categorize themselves and others, by making comparisons in order to

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join group, that is to say having the same belonging to a specific group is referred as in-group members, and having differences and not sharing the same belonging is referred as an out- group members. Thus, these comparisons impact individuals, either in a positive way by making them feel satisfied with their social identity, or in a negative way by making them feel unsatisfied with their social identity. In addition identity is complex, that is to say it is not fixed, as people interact with each other they can be influenced by others' beliefs, ideas or even cultures, which lead them to change their identity, or in order to be accepted among them .On the other hand, this interaction can reinforce the identity of individuals as Sheldon Stryker stated:

We interact with others to create an identity, this is called identity negotiation. This develops a consistent set of behaviours that reinforce the identity of the person or group. This behaviour then becomes social expectations. This is particularly relevant for collective identities (especially sub-cultures) that develop a specific way of relating to each other (attitude, language, ideas) that goes some way to helping construct our identity a specific way of relating to each other (attitude, language, ideas) that goes some way to helping construct our identity. (n.d.)

1.6 The Impact of Technology on Language

Information communication technology (ICT) has recently been used to describe all kinds of technology from telecommunication to broadcast media. Crystal defines the internet as “*An electronic global and interactive, medium and each of these properties has consequences for the kind of language find there*” Crystal (2001, p.24).

Naughton (1991) on the other hand, in his book declared that:

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The Internet is one of the most remarkable things human beings have ever made. In terms of its impact on society, it ranks with print, the railways, the telegraph, the automobile, electric power and television. Some would equate it with print and television, the two earlier technologies which most transformed the communication environment in which people live. Yet it is potentially more powerful than both because it harnesses the intellectual leverage which print gave to mankind without being hobbled by the one-to-many nature of broadcast television. (Naughton, 1999, pp.2-21)

Lakoff and Ong (1982) have discussed the impact of oral media such as TV and radio on people's use of language. So in order to differentiate between the ICTs of this age from the old one, four characteristics were suggested by Blurton (1999) flexibility, connectivity, interactivity, affordability, and then Bodomo and Lee (2002) added another factor which is popularity.

During the 21st century computer mediated communication, especially the internet has had a great impact on language all over the world. CMC is an umbrella term which refers to human communication via computer. Arcangeli (2000) argues:

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This entire changing universe which surrounds us must be "translated" into words (we are therefore all translators, in a broad sense). Since the objects to be described are continually changing, our language must be equally flexible and creative, so that the linguistic instrument through which we convey our surroundings to others does not become quickly obsolete and inadequate. It is a kind of adaptation to the environment (not only to the natural world, but to the social, economic, psychological, and political environment as well) comparable to genetic mutation, but occurring a thousand times more quickly. (Arcangeli, 2000, p.04)

Various linguists attempted to examine how CMC changes language, especially from a sociolinguistic point of view. Wood & Smith (2005) affirmed that:

We focus on CMC because of its impact on all contexts... we approach these topics with a desire to understand the blurring of technology with our everyday lives. We study the sophisticated ways in which computer technology is integrated into our physical environments, interpersonal relationships, and even senses of personal identity...when we study CMC, we don't just explore the use of technology in communication; we study the blurring of technology with our everyday lives. (Wood & Smith, 2005, p.5)

Additionally, one of the major bottom-up research approaches is the computer mediation discourse analysis (CMDA); it is characterized by being language- focused in describing and interpreting the technological effect of the interdisciplinary CMC on language change. In 2001 Herring defines CMD as follows: "*Computer-mediated discourse is the communication produced when human beings interact with one another by transmitting messages via networked computers*" (Herring, 2001, p.612).

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In addition, Herring stated that computer mediation communication discourse (CMCD) has “*important consequences for understanding the nature of computer mediated language*” (Herring, 2001, p.612). Then Crystal named CMC language “Netspeak”. *He* declared that: “*Netspeak is a development of Millennial. A new medium of linguistic communication does not arrive very often, in the history of the race*” (Crystal, 2001, pp.9- 238).

Thus, new technologies often require new forms of language and literacy to express new concepts that emerge along with these new media and tools. One of the products of CMC and mobile phone is new forms of language mainly referred to as ‘online language’ acronym and abbreviations. Another product of the technology is new literacies. Digital literacy here refers to: “*The ability to understand and use information in multiple formats from a wide range of sources when it is presented via computers*” (Gilster, 1997, p.1).

In sum, the impact of CMC, technology in general on life, society and most importantly language change cannot be denied; such changes can be characterized by implementing different research methodology like the CMDA.

1.6.1 Academics’ Attitudes Towards Integrating Social Networking into Education

With the growth of information technology, social network sites have become a very important and easier tool to obtain information, and the most recent data rapidly and effectively. This has appeared to be the use of technology as the paramount way to discover the broad area of knowledge.

A direct relationship exists between social network sites and academic performance of students, since they are paying more attention towards these social networking activities such

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as twitter and Facebook rather than utilizing this time for their studies and this without doubt affects their academic performance.

In spite of the fact that networking sites have always been seen a necessary support for education, later researcher have insisted on the fact that the majority of students make different uses of them. They use them for fun, to pass time, to interact with other persons and get or make new friends (Ellison et al., 2007).

The negative effects of these social networking sites overweigh the progressive ones. While there may be some advantages to this, such as the teen learning how to type faster and multi-task many things at once, there may also be a breakdown in much of that communication (Williams, 2008). SNSs have caused some latent damage to society.

Although it has been put forward that students spend much time participating in social networking activities, with many students blaming the various social networking sites for their steady decrease in grade point averages (Kimberly et al., 2009), it also shows that only few students are aware of the academic and professional networking opportunities the sites offer, when they are studying or searching online course materials, sidetracking their attention from their work additionally forgetting why they are using the internet.

According to Khan U (2009), social media users generally experience poor performance academically. Englander, Terregrossa & Wang (2010) conceive that social media is negatively allied with academic performance of students and is a lot more momentous than its advantages (Abusbiha & Che Su, 2014).

Larose *et al* (2001) proposed that learner users are affected by the internet and this impact is determined by the type of internet usage. The misapplication of social networking sites on a daily basis has many destructive effects on the physical and mental health of students making them slothful and unenthusiastic to build communication with the people in

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actual world. New literature found that leisurely Internet use is strongly interrelated with weakened academic performance (Kubey et al., 2001). As cited in (Bedassa, 2014).

1.6.2 Social Media: Definition

Technology has become a growing phenomenon. In the 1940s, the first super computers were created and combined those with networks by engineers and scientists.

In the 1960s the initial forms of the Internet were developed, such as CompuServe, by the 80s, home computers were becoming more universal and social media was becoming more complicated. Internet relay chats, or IRCs, were first used in 1988 and sustained to be popular well into the 1990's.

Six Degrees site was launched in 1997, it enabled users to upload a profile and make friends with other users. In 1999, the first blogging sites became popular, creating social media awareness.

Sites like MySpace and LinkedIn gained celebrity in the early 2000s, and other sites rapidly emerged. YouTube came out in 2005, producing a new ways for people to communicate and share with each other across great distances.

Facebook and Twitter both became accessible to users all over the world in 2006. These sites continue to be the most popular social networks on the Internet (Cited in Jeemitha & Com, 2019).

The entire range of social media applications noted above share the innate ability to enable social behavior through dialogue – multiple-way discussions providing the opportunity to discover and share new information (Solis, 2008) (As cited in Davis III et al., 2012).

1.6.2.1 Social Media Use in Algeria

The unprecedented advance of social media and related digital technologies have a major impact on people's lives. They have contributed to various changes in all domains of life. Social *media*, including diverse *social networking* sites (SNS) that emerged to ease interaction, have changed the way people communicate, work and study. The education institutions are embracing social media as a new platform for enhancing students' self, collaborative, and independent learning, offering new ways and tools for the delivery of knowledge across the globe.

According to statistics of the Statcounter site, social media stats in Algeria June 2020 showed that Facebook is the most frequently used SNs with 61.87%, YouTube as the second most popular social network site with 25.04%, and Instagram in the third position in terms of value with 5.32%. Other social network sites scored a lower percentage than the previous ones.

Accordingly, Battouche (2012) conducted a seminal study to investigate the use of social networks by Algerian youth aged 8 to 24. He found that 84% of the surveyed population used Facebook, 8% used Twitter, and only 4% used MySpace. 37 % of respondents indicated that making new friends was the main reason for using social networks, 40% cited their usefulness in acquiring new knowledge, 11% mentioned effective communication, and 18% networking. The results of the study also show that 65% of the surveyed population benefited from social networks in improving their foreign language skills, 25% in strengthening national identity and belongingness, and 11% in acquiring the ability to convince in debates (Battouche, 2012). Social networks and the globalization of culture: a study of Algerian youth institutions.

The preceding research provided experimental data that social media; particularly Facebook is an enormous tool for communication and education.

1.6.2.2 Social Media and Culture

Social media has been a major part of our everyday lives. It is a very powerful tool that can influence and shape human behavior. This has a significant role in transmitting cultures across generations and gives an idea about cultures all around the universe.

This aim of this part is to explore the connection between culture and social media. In fact cultures consist of language languages, religions, dressings, music's, lifestyles, traditions, etc., which is socially acquired, expressed, and transmitted through communication. As Hence affirmed, communication is not only the foundation of culture, but has become a primary podium for the debate about any culture.

Social media allows groups of people to interact, and communicate with one another across the globe; it leads to the formation of a digital community or virtual world whose members engage in non-physical contact. Accordingly, Tobin and Baziel (2008) define social media as digital *technologies “that allow people to share content, opinions, insights, experiences, perspectives and media among themselves”* (p. 13).

Culture is obtained from society, and learned through behaviour. In another term Harris cited in Baran (2012) described culture as the *“learned, socially acquired traditions and lifestyles of the members of a society, including their patterned, repetitive ways of thinking, feeling and acting”* (p. 8). In the words of Dominick (2013), culture is a *“complex concept that refers to the common values, beliefs social practices, rules and assumptions that bind a group of people together”* (p.94).

Social media interactions influence people's use of language, which is a central part of culture. According to Dominick (2013), *“Language developed about 200,000 years ago and led to the development of an oral culture-one that depended on the spoken word”* (p.54). Culture does not depend only on the verbal word or on the written word but also on media

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language (Okorie & Ohiagu, 2014). Social media: shaping and transmitting popular culture. Covenant Journal of Communication (CJOC), (pp. 93-94).

This context refers to Lee Loevinger's reflective projective theory. In which Loevinger stated that mass media "mirror" society but the reflection they present is an ambiguous one. Moreover, the theory assumes that society understand and reproduce the values and virtues presented by the media. Social media that reflect societal expressions and behaviour that are influenced by the society as well as people export their social media experiences into real life situations.

Therefore, while social media contents hypothetically shape and transmit popular culture, on the other hand social media contents are also influenced by cultural expressions. As mentioned in Hanson's (2005) movie example, movie makers claim that they don't shape society, they just reflect it, but this ignores the fact that movies are a central part of society, and even a mirror has an effect...etc. Movies have been an immensely powerful social and cultural force... they have produced social changes –in ways of dress, patterns of speech, methods of courting. And they have mirrored social changes –in fashion, sexual mores, political principle" (p. 224) .Since movie mirrors or shapes social and cultural changes the same can be said about social media (Okorie & Ohiagu, 2014). Social media: shaping and transmitting popular culture. Covenant Journal of Communication (CJOC), (pp. 97).

Ohiagu (2010, p. 638) observes that:

Although the media can actively influence society, they also mirror it, and scholars constantly strive to delineate the differences. If the media reflect the societal values as propounded by Lee Loevinger in the Reflective-Projective Theory, then the influence of media content (ICT) on the society would be that of cultural reinforcement rather than cultural definition.

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Information Communication Technology (ICT), social media interactions contribute to the production and transmission of popular cultural heritage in the online world. Social media users, regardless of other geographic, religious, and ethnic belonging, they share some common expressive ways that most of them can understand, such as slangs and abbreviations like OMG (oh my God), LOL, (variously interpreted as laugh out loud, lots of laughter, lots of love), HBD (happy birthday). Without any formal training on these expressions, many users are familiar with and they adopt them through their interactions with others on social media. Moreover this popularization of slangs and new linguistic styles which are known to most online users across borders, thus leading to a global culture (Okorie & Ohiagu, 2014). Social media: shaping and transmitting popular culture (Covenant Journal, p.106).

1.6.3 Facebook: Origin and Role

Over the last decade Social network sites have been exposed to the world, and been used excessively, specifically Facebook has become the most overused by various ages from children to adults with more active users than any other social networking sites (Esteban Ortiz-Ospina, 2019; the rise of social media, para 3).

Accordingly, Ellison and Boyd (2007) define social network sites as web-based services that allow individuals to construct profiles, display user connections, and search and traverse within that list of connections (as cited in Davis III et al., 2012). Facebook was created by Mark Zuckerberg in 2004 at Harvard University. In September 2005, Facebook started to be available only to particular colleges and universities then it expanded to include regional universities. Furthermore the university student use it to facilitate social interaction, keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues exchange messages, upload photos and videos, and post comments (as cited in Stæhr & Andreas, 2014, p.22).

According to Harvard Institute of Politics (2011) more than 90% of students at 4-year colleges reported that they were Facebook users (as cited in Kamnoetsin, 2014, p.24).

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Eventually, in 2006 Facebook opened to worldwide, rapidly overtaking MySpace as the most popular social network in the world. With almost 2.5 billion monthly active users as of the fourth quarter of 2019, has become the most popular site among college students and worldwide (Clement, 2020).

In 2012 the number of active users has exceeded 1 billion, which makes it the first social network to do so. Facebook is used in many languages; it is available in 70 languages which makes a powerful tool that is used for both an academic and social interface.

Facebook social networking allows their users to maintain connections, communicate online, interact with friends, meet new people, and also share information with many people simultaneously (Ellison et al., 2007). Moreover, it is an indispensable tool for businesses, Companies use the platform to find and interact with customers easily, advertising and promoting products, blogging, social gaming, virtual worlds, reviews, and so on.

1.6.4 Facebook User's Name

In order to be a member of Facebook, users first need to open an account. Then, users are able to create a personal profile that provides a description for the user which contains pictures, contact information and a list of personal information. The list of personal information includes information about work and education, home town and present residence, personal relationships and family. In addition to a list of basic information, this includes date of birth, sexual orientation, marital status, language, etc. When creating a personal profile, users can interact with others, add other users as friends, exchange public or private online messages, express common interests between users, build and maintain connections, and invite others to join a community.

The user name is required when signing up for an account choosing a name on Facebook depends most on how the users prefer to appear to the public. User names are determined by

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the site's Terms of Service (ToS) which stipulates that people must use their real names, and identities and only use the service to connect with "*real world contacts*" (Arrington, 2008).

Hagstrom (2012) points out : "*Questions such as what kind of names are used, why, and how they are perceived, seem all the more relevant as more and more people spend more and more time in virtual worlds, such as Second Life...*" (p. 85). She adds that names in on line world may be real names, but also are particular names coined for a particular setting, and Names in virtual world are important and essential as they are necessary in the real world (p. 86).

Names have been used in micro linguistic studies; names may carry socio-cultural reflection, as they occupy a unique position within human cultural and social systems. It is a "*part of the individual identity*" (Beans, 1980, p.308), and is believed to have an influence on the character of the bearer (Guma, 2000). Haferkamp & others (2012) assert that naming is a specific linguistic act intimately linked with values, traditions, hopes, fears and events in people's lives.

1.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter aims at giving a theoretical background of this present study, by providing a clear picture about nicknaming in the field of Sociolinguistics. Where, Some basic concepts are reviewed like theories and approaches that are relevant to our investigation such as the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, by mentioning different scholars and linguists views. This study tries to cover the phenomenon of using nicknames on Facebook and its relation to society, taking into consideration a sociolinguistic analysis, and how the use of language affects one's identity within one specific linguistic and cultural group. Tajfel and Turner's social Identity Theory is included with the intention to demonstrate how this type of language works in a society. Thus, this chapter sheds some light on how technology impacts the language use, social media, and Facebook in particular.

Chapter Two: Research Methods and Data Collection

2.1. Introduction

The present study is performed with the intention of investigating the basis on which individuals use nicknames on the Facebook network instead of their real names, the appropriate methodology and analysis tool for a specific research must be used for the development of a true investigation. Therefore, this chapter is dedicated to initiating the work tool selected for this study. It attempts to detail the analysis methods implemented to generate the findings that address the investigative questions of this study.

2.2 Research Methodology of Data Collection

Research methods are the different approaches used in a specific research; all methods that are employed by researchers during the conduction of a research study are called research methods. They include theoretical procedures, experimental studies, statistical methods ...etc. Research methods aim at collecting and analyzing information about a phenomenon that is currently under investigation (Rajasekar, 2013, p.05).

2.3 Quantitative and Qualitative Data

Throughout the data collection process, two principal approaches are recognized: Quantitative and qualitative data. The approaches that are chosen should be taken in relation to the setting or the subject to be reviewed. Quantitative research addresses data in the form of

Chapter Two: Research Methods and Data Collection

numbers and uses mathematical operations to examine its properties, and this type of analysis is named statistics (Waliman, 2011, p.128).

The interpretation of the principles and the investigation method would be more preliminary and explorative in qualitative research than in quantitative research. It is where the principal difference lies in the collection and analysis of data. It can be seen that the reiterative procedure of data collection, hypothesis creation and refinement of research questions showing that there is more data collection required. This procedure continues until sufficient evidence is collected to support the hypothesis established which can then lead to conclusions being drawn and the work being finalized (Waliman, 2011, p.148).

Brannen (1992) states that:

In theory, if not in practice, the quantitative researcher isolates and defines variables and variable categories. These variables are linked together to frame hypotheses often before the data are collected, and are then tested upon the data. In contrast, the qualitative researcher begins with defining very general concepts which, as the research progresses, change their definition. (p.4)

The combination of quantitative and qualitative notions is used by mixed researchers in order to acknowledge the world more entirely. They see positive value in both quantitative and qualitative perspectives of human behavior; they also see that using only quantitative or only qualitative research as narrow and deficient (Johnson & Christensen, 2014, p.33).

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Criteria	Qualitative Research	Quantitative Research
Purpose	To understand and interpret social interactions.	To test the hypothesis, look at cause & effect, & make predictions.
Group Studied	Smaller & not randomly selected	Larger & randomly selected.
variables	Study of the whole, not variables.	Specific variables studied.
Types of Data Collected	Words, images or objects.	Numbers and statistics.
Form of Data Collected	Qualitative data such as open- ended responses, interview, participant observations, field note & reflections.	Quantitative data based on precise measurements using structured & validated data-collection instruments.
Types of Data Analysis	Identify the patterns ,features, themes ...	Identify statistical relationships.
Objectivity and Subjectivity	Subjectivity is expected	Objectivity is critical
Role of Researcher	Researcher & their biases may be known to participants in the study & participant characteristics may be known to the researcher.	Researchers & their biases are not known to participants in the study participants characteristics are deliberately hidden from the researcher (double blind studies).
Results	Particular or specialized findings that less generates a new hypothesis and theory from the data collected.	Generalizable findings that can be applied to other populations
Scientific Method	Exploratory or bottom-up: the researcher generates a new hypothesis and theory from the data collected.	Confirmatory or top-down: the researcher tests the hypothesis and theory with the data.
View of Human Behavior	Dynamic, situational, social, & personal.	Regular & predictable.
Most Common Research Objective	Explore, discover & construct.	Describe, explain & predict.
Focus	Wide -angle lens: examines the breadth & depth of phenomena.	Narrow-angle lens: tests a specific hypothesis.
Nature of Observation	Study behavior in a natural environment.	Study behavior under controlled conditions: isolate casual effects.
Nature of Reality	Multiple realities: subjective.	Single reality : objective
Final Report	Narrative reports with contextual description & direct quotations from research participants.	Statistical reports with correlations, comparison of means & statistical significance of findings.

Table 2.1 Qualitative and Quantitative Research (Lichtman, 2006)

In our analysis, we have followed quantitative approach that includes a questionnaire and quantitative approach as well, that is an interview to interpret and compliment the questionnaire performance, and get clear interpretations and answers to our research questions.

2.4 Sample Population

The validity of the findings of any research primarily depends on how the sample is selected, the objective of sampling design is to minimize within the limitation of coast, and the basic principle of sampling is to get a representative sample (Kumar, 2001, p.42). Studying a large population is not practical for researchers to collect information, alternatively, they choose to work with samples instead of a larger group and make generalizations about the population. In this regard Scott W. Vanderstoep , Deirdre and D.Johnston (2009) state:

Researchers make the distinction between a population, the universe of people to which the study could be generalized, and a sample, the subset of people from the population who will participate in the current study.

The sampling frame refers to the eligible members of the population. (p.26)

The samples selected in this study are students from the department of English language, at the level of the Faculty of Letters and Languages at Ibn Khaldoun University of Tiaret. Two different levels were chosen, first and second year master students of English both specialities, to represent the target population in order to ensure objectivity and, reliability, fifty-one (51) were selected randomly for the present case study including (16) in didactics and (35) in linguistics both levels.

Participants	Number	Description
Master one students	<i>26 students</i>	<i>35 females and 16 males</i> <i>16 students from</i>
Master two students	<i>25 students</i>	
Total	<i>51 students</i>	<i>didactics specialty</i> <i>35 students from</i> <i>linguistics specialty</i>

Table 2.2 Description of the Sample Population

2.5. Research Instruments

Different data collection instruments are employed in a sociolinguistic research and are considered important in the research process. In this research we have relied on a quantitative analysis of data collected through a questionnaire as a mean to reach a wide variety of students more effectively. Furthermore, it contained a structured interview in order to compliment and support the interpretation of the data collected from the questionnaire.

2.5.1 Questionnaire

Questionnaire is mostly used in researches for data collection purposes; it comprises a set of questions to extract answers or information from a large number of respondents and it generates numerical data for the researcher. William D. Crano, Marilyn B. Brewer, and Marilyn B. Brewer (2015) stated that:

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A questionnaire involves a single item to assess each construct, and typically is brief in length because participants are unwilling, unable, or unlikely to take part in a longer assessment. Nationally representative polls of voter sentiment or quality- of- life ratings often use measures (i.e., questionnaires) of this sort. (p.223)

As any method of research instruments, questionnaire has also some disadvantages .As shown in the table below (Dr. Prabhat et al., 2015) identify some merits and demerits of a questionnaire:

Merits of Questionnaire Method	Demerits of Questionnaire Method
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It's very economical. 2. It's a time saving process. 3. It covers the research in wide area. 4. It's very suitable for special type of responses. 5. It is most reliable in special cases. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Through this we get only limited responses. 2. Lack of personal contact. 3. Greater possibility of wrong answers. 4. Chances of receiving incomplete response are more. 5. Sometimes answers may be illegible. 6. It may be useless in many problems.

Table 2.3 Merits and Demerits of Questionnaire adopted from (Ibid, p.59)

The questionnaire is designed for 51 master students both levels and specialties , it consists of 23 questions , including open-ended questions ,where respondents give free answers and more information ,and closed-ended questions that contain a limited set of possible answers, in addition multiple choice questions in order to gather more data information .These questions are divided into three sections :

Section One:

It is devoted for personal information .It involves five (5) questions including: sex, age, level, specialty, and if participants do have a Facebook account.

Section Two:

It attempts to gather information about Facebook accounts of participants and their Facebook username, whether they use nicknames or real names, this section is composed of eight (8) items with yes/ no questions and multiple choice questions.

Section Three:

It endeavors to identify the respondents' attitudes towards the use of nicknames on Facebook , and their opinions about the reasons that lead people to use nicknames and real names ,and who tends to use more nicknames on this social network. This section is composed of eight (8) items with one yes/no questions and multiple choice questions.

2.5.2 Interview:

Interviews are the most appropriate methods used by researchers in order to collect qualitative data about an individual's opinions, stories, feelings and thoughts.

In this regard johnny saldaña (2011) states:

Many, if not most, qualitative research studies rely on interviews with participants. The data collection method is an effective way of soliciting and documenting, in their own words, an individual's or group's perspectives, feelings, opinions, values, attitudes, and beliefs about their personal experiences and social world, in addition to factual information about their lives. (p.32)

Moreover Irving Seidman (2006) points out: “ *Interviewing, then, is a basic mode of inquiry. Recounting narratives of experience has been the major way throughout recorded*

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history that humans have made sense of their experience” (p.8). Different styles of interviews are conducting, when doing a research: structured, semi structured and unstructured as it is clearly displayed in the table:

Styles of interview	Characteristics
<p style="text-align: center;">Structured</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Follows a set of specific questions, which are worked through systematically. -It is used when the researcher wishes to acquire information where the responses are directly comparable.
<p style="text-align: center;">Semi-structured</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -This is a more commonly used interview technique that follows a framework in order to address key themes rather than specific questions. - It allows a certain degree of flexibility for the researcher to respond to the answers of the interviewee.
<p style="text-align: center;">Unstructured</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This method of interview does not follow any predetermined pattern of questions or themes. - The interviewer will address the issues as they emerge in the interview. The method is useful when the researcher wishes to explore the full breadth of a topic.

Table 2.4 Styles of Interview adopted from (MacDonal & Headlam, p.40)

In this research we have chosen a semi-structured interview, which is used frequently by researchers in a qualitative method. Steiner Kvale (1996) points out: *“Technically, the qualitative research interview is semi-structured: it is neither an open conversation nor a highly structured questionnaire”* (p.27).

The insertion of the interview has permitted us to focus our questions about the use of nicknames on the social network of Facebook. We have therefore tried to gather in-depth

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answers about the reasons behind using nicknames on Facebook to compliment and support the data gathered by the questionnaire.

The number of students interviewed was ten (10) students from master two, including 8 females and two males. The interview included five questions, in the first question the informants were asked if they ever use their real name before starting using a nickname, with giving us reasons behind their choices, the second question aimed to know if they have been in a bad situation when using nicknames; in the third question we wanted to know if the participants think that opening a Facebook account with a nickname make them feel more comfortable in expressing themselves and, expressing their opinions freely ; in the fourth question participants were asked to give their opinion about the use of real names on Facebook by individuals and whether it causes them any kind of problems, by providing us with examples; the last question inquired if they ever considered using their real names instead of nicknames.

3.6. Conclusion

In this chapter, a detailed methodology, consisting of both qualitative and quantitative methods is provided to collect information through the use of two instruments including a questionnaire, and an interview to gather more data information about the reasons behind using nicknames on the social network of Facebook by selecting master English students as a sample population at Ibn Khaldoun University of Tiaret, the Faculty of Letters and Languages, Section of English. The next chapter is delivered for data analysis and interpretation of the findings.

**Chapter Three:
Research Results and Data Analysis**

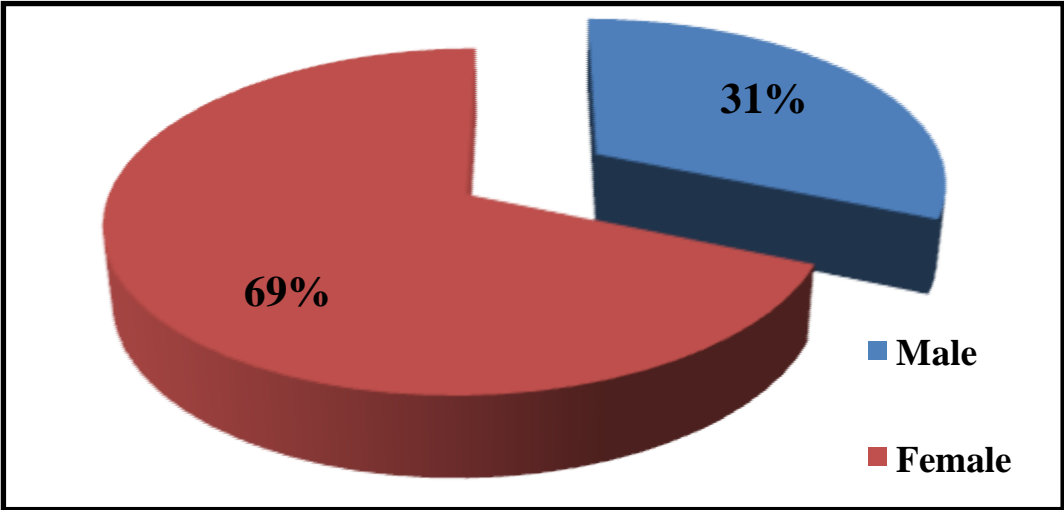
3.1 Introduction:

This chapter exemplifies the findings and analysis of the quantitative data, and the results of the qualitative findings of the study. The responses collected from the online survey have been analyzed using SPSS software. In which the gathered data is presented in a significant way to facilitate the discussion, by analyzing answers into demographic details. A full explanation of the research methodology was given in Chapter two.

3.2 The Graphical Presentation of the Data

3.2.1 Section One: Personal Information.

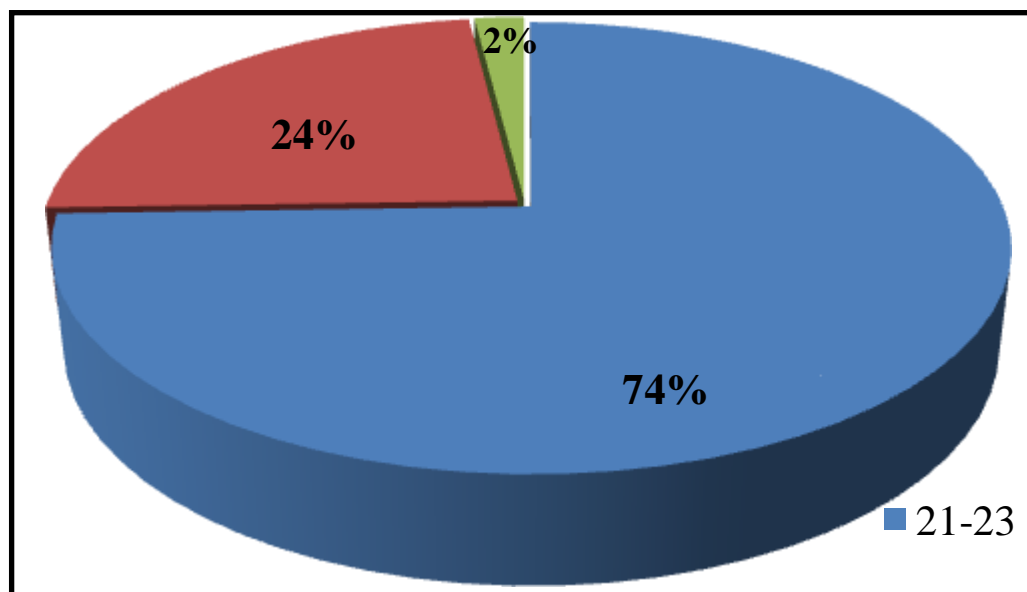
- **Item 01: Gender**



Graph 3.1 Informants’ Distribution According to Gender

The questionnaire was distributed to fifty one (51) students, sixteen (n=16, 31%) males and thirty-five (n=35, 69%) females. So, as it can be seen from the above graph that females represent the highest percentage.

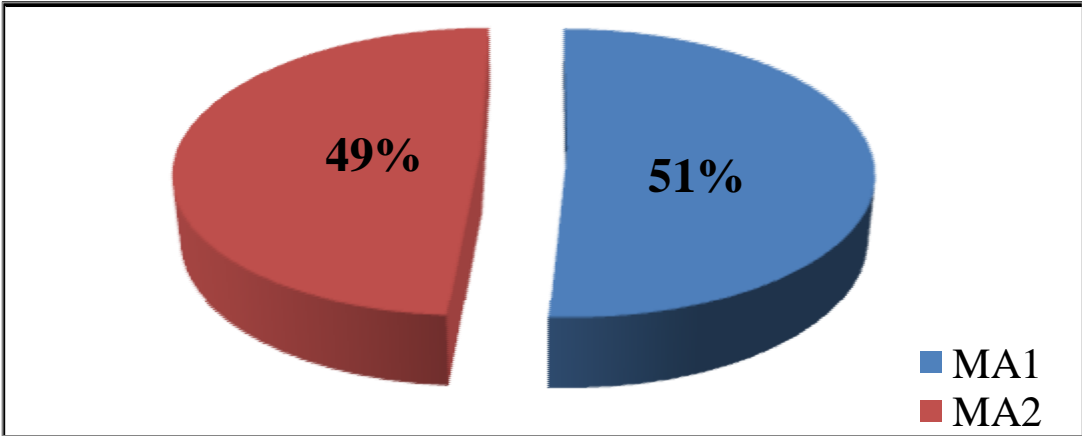
- **Item 02: Age**



Graph 3.2 Informants' Distribution According to Age

The participants were all aged between 21 and 27 years as it is clearly illustrated in the graph above. They were divided into three age ranges, the first category represents 74% (n=31 of informants), where the majority of our respondents were aged between 21- 23, other respondents were between 24 to 26 year old, in which they represent 24% (n= 22) of them . Finally, the last age group represents 2 % (n= 1) of them aged more than 27 year old. As a result, we can notice that most of our informants in the department of English at Ibn Khaldoun University represent the young generation.

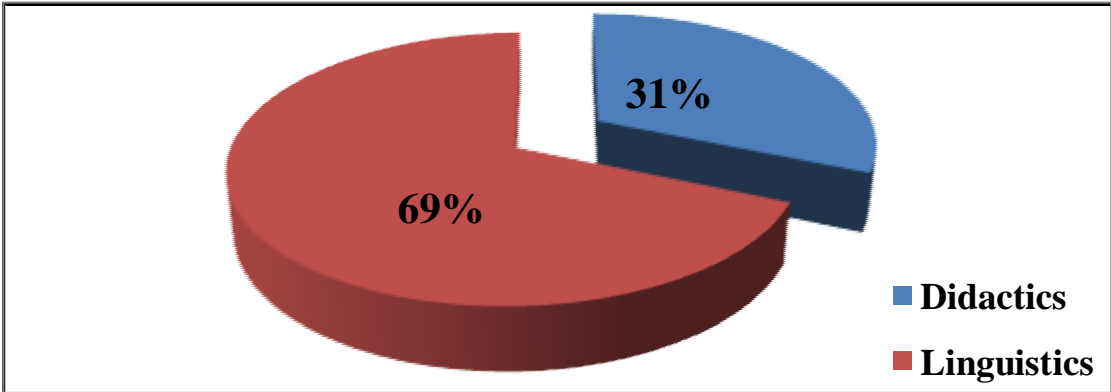
▪ **Item 03: Level**



Graph 3.3 Informants’ Distribution According to Level

The graph above demonstrates the level of the students alienated into two groups; Master one (MA1) are about 25 (49%), the other level which is Master two (MA2) are 26 participants (51%). Therefore, it can be seen that the two levels contain nearly the same number of informants.

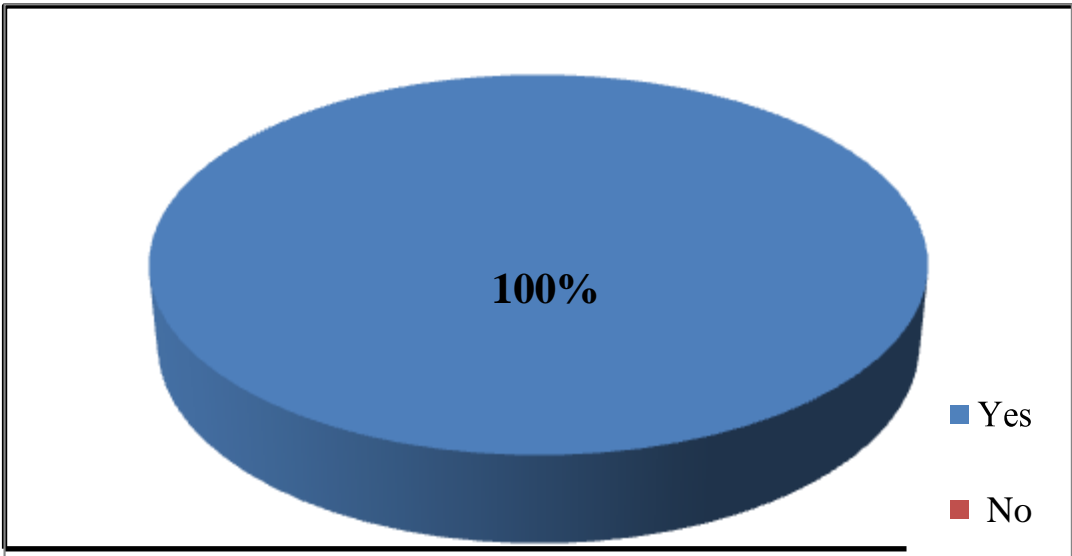
▪ **Item 04: Specialty**



Graph3.4 Informants’ Distribution according to Specialty

Graph 3.4 represents participant’s specialty, the students belong to two specialties linguistics 69% and didactics represents 31%. Referring to the following numerical data linguistics master student surpass didactics master students.

- **Item 05:** Do you have Facebook account?

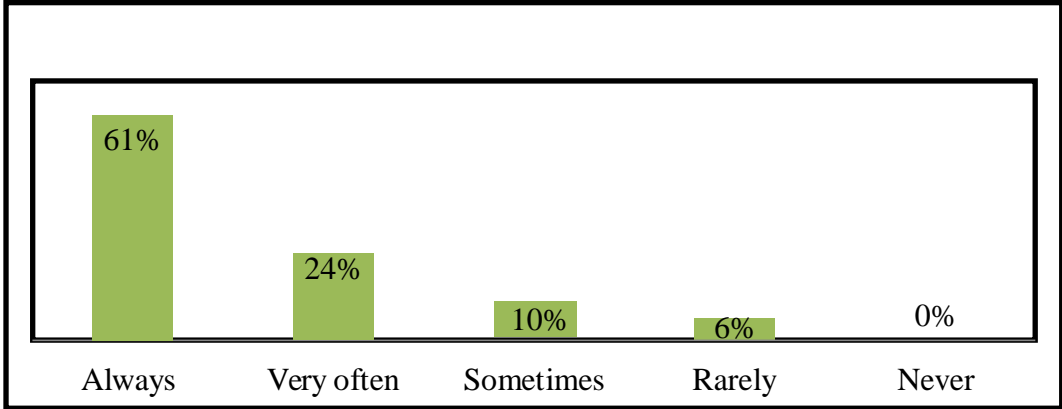


Graph 3.5 Informants’ Facebook Accounts Use

It is clearly confirmed as shown in the graph above that all participants (100%) involved in this research work have Facebook accounts i.e. the internet generation. Thus, our participants are much more influenced by social media especially by Facebook.

3.2.2 Section Two: Participant’s Facebook Accounts and User Name

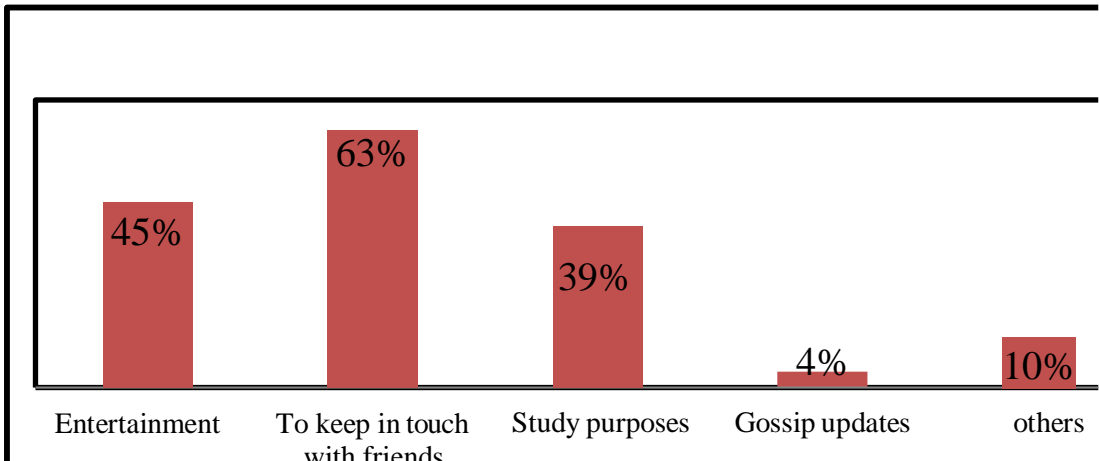
- **Item 06:** How often do you log into Facebook?



Graph 3.6 Informants’ Facebook Logging in Frequency

Graph 3.6 declares that the majority of the informants always log into Facebook ,24%of them log into Facebook very often,10 %respondents log into it only “sometimes”, while 6 % rarely use Facebook , and those who “never” log into it score 0

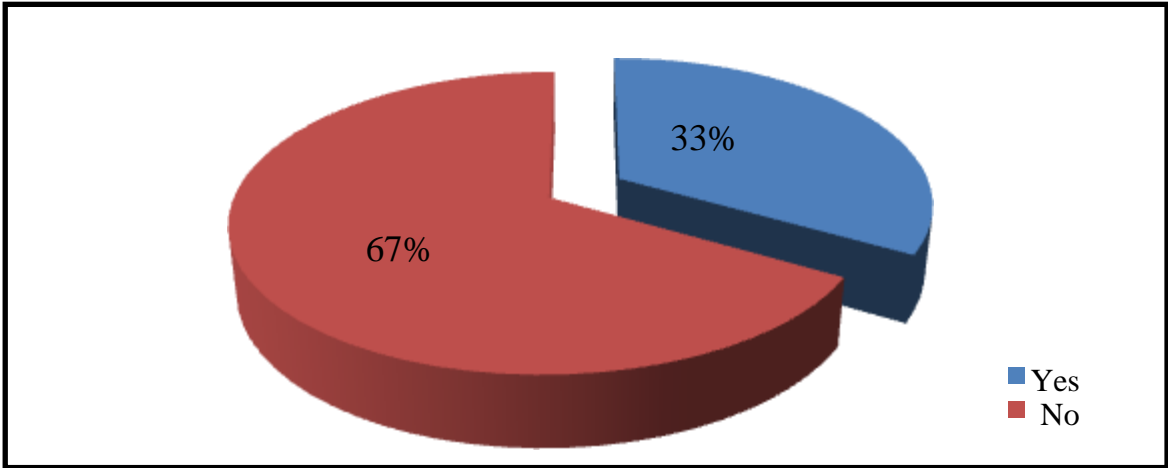
- **Item 07:** Purpose of using Facebook?



Graph 3.7 Informants’ Facebook Use Purposes.

The results in graph 3.7 show that 63% of the respondents use Facebook to keep in touch with friends,45% stated that they use it for entertainment purposes, while 39% use Facebook for study purposes , only 4 % use it for gossip updates,10% use Facebook for other purposes.

- **Item08:** Do you have more than one account?



Graph 3.8 Informants' Accounts Number

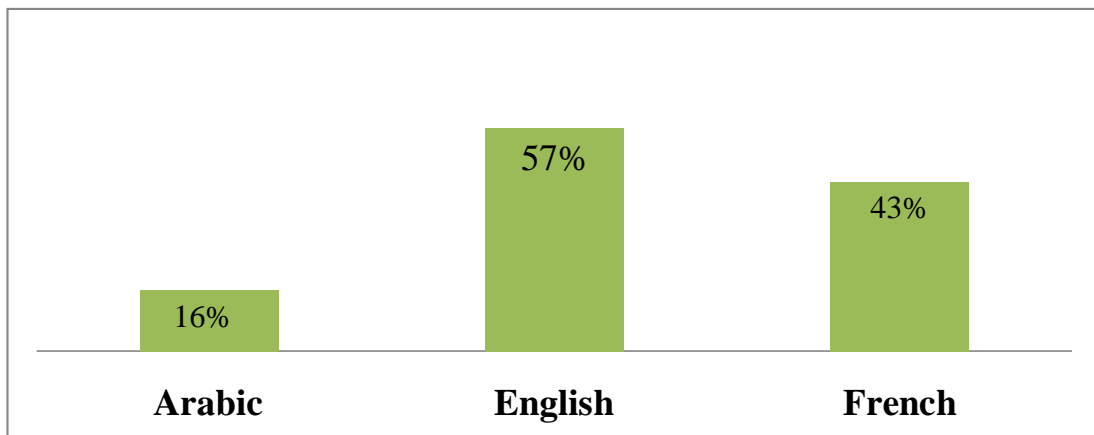
It appears in graph 3.8 that 67% of all participants disagree on having more than one account, on the other hand the rest of them about 33 % admit that they have more than one account.

- **Why?**

The question above was asked to 51 participants only 23 of them responded, participants are a mix between those who have more than one account and those who use just one. According to our interviewees (n=13) of them need just one account as one of the interviewee responded: *“ I do not have any reason to have another account .one account to keep me updated, and in touch with friends and relatives is enough.”* While the other ten (10) participants confirmed they have more than one account in order to avoid social problems, be

unknown for some people as one of them stated: *“one for family and others for friends in order to be identified only for the people that I know.”*

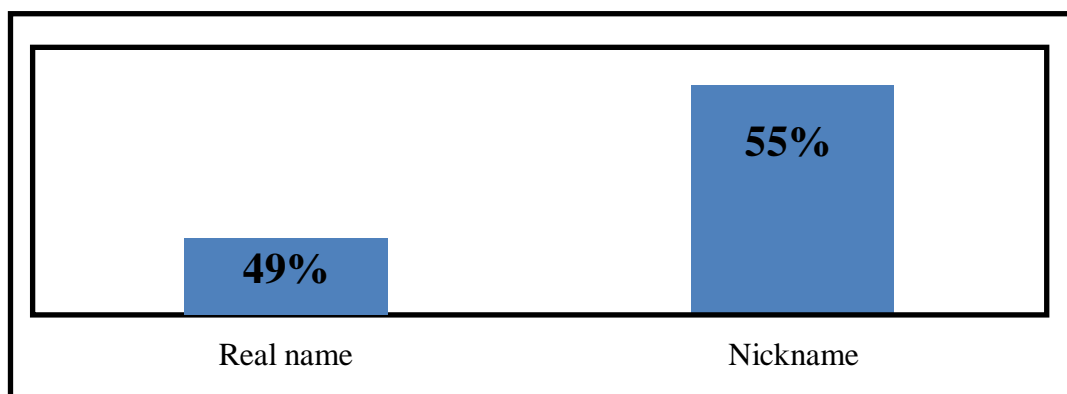
- **Item 09:** Which language do you use in your Facebook username?



Graph 3.9 Informants' Language Use

According to graph 3.9, the statistics demonstrate that 57% of our participants use English language in their Facebook user name especially since all participants are English students, 43% of them use French, and only 16% use Arabic in their Facebook usernames.

- **Item10:** Is your Facebook username a real name or a nickname?



Graph 3.10 Informants' Facebook Username Types

The choices of our participants were between real names and nicknames for their Facebook profiles, where their responses are clearly represented in graph 3.10. So, the majority of them about 51% responded that they use nicknames in their Facebook accounts, whereas 49% of them kept their real names as profile names.

- **Why do you use a nickname? Please! Comment**

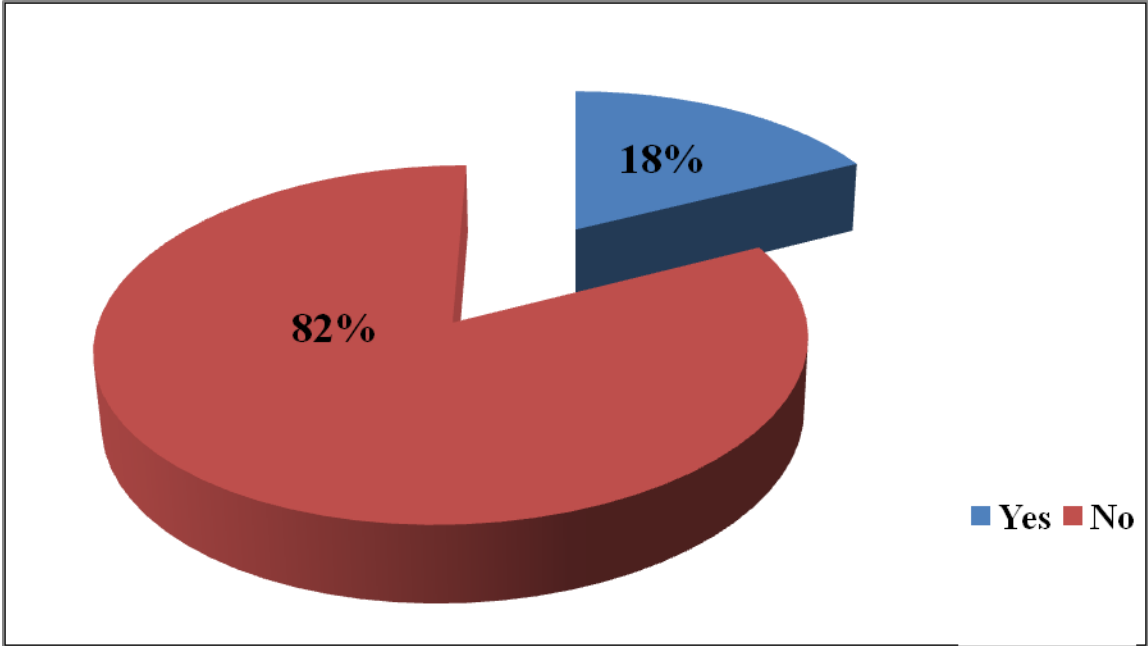
From all participants (n=26) who use nicknames on Facebook, we found that only 22 answered this question. Therefore, every one of them has his own motive, where it can be seen that the most common reasons behind it is that the majority concur about is to hide their identity, to avoid familial and social problems. However, some of them point out cultural reasons as one of them stated: *“because of our society, my parents do not accept the idea of creating a Facebook account with my real name.”* Another claimed that one uses a nickname in order to be known easily.

- **Question 11: What is the relation between you and your nickname?**

This question aimed to identify what people rely on when choosing their nicknames. So, the question was answered by our sample population. Using a nickname rather than the real name for the Facebook profile, besides being anonymous on Facebook almost all of the interviewees point out to other reasons that make them create a nickname for their Facebook profiles. As some of the interviewees stated that they pick their nickname relying on someone famous, favorite band's name, a person that they love, a movie character or a cultural influence. However, other participants revealed that they use their real name abbreviations as a nickname, as well as childhood nicknames. One of the informants declared *“there is strong relation between my real name and my nickname, that people and my family tend to call me with the same nickname, because of that i always use my nickname»*. As it can be seen that

Facebook offers its users many ways to show a part of their identity, and to interact and express themselves more freely.

- **Item 12:** For men, do you ever create a Facebook account with a female name? For women, do you ever create a Facebook account with male name?



Graph 3.11 Informants’ Fake Facebook Accounts Creation

Referring to the graph 3.11, 82%of the participants do not create Facebook accounts with female or male names .On the other hand, 18 % of our participants create fake Facebook accounts using female and male names.

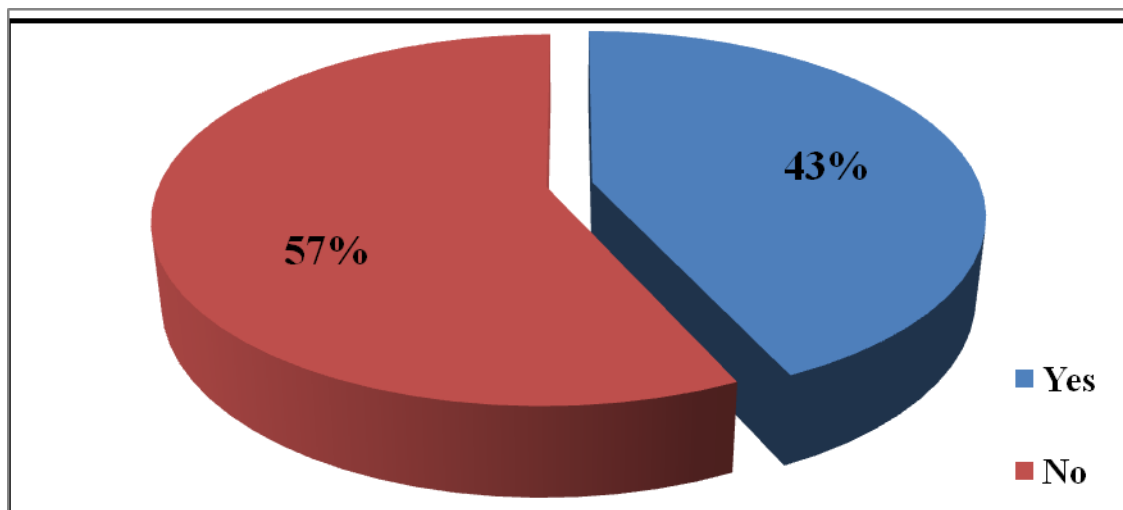
- **Justify**

The sub question demonstrates that most of our participants indicate that they do not create a fake account they think that doing such things is a shameful act, a psychological problem, an unethical behaviour. As one of the informants answered *“I don’t find it justifiable for men or women to pretend that they are opposite of that, it is not ethical, and can be out of*

bad and harmful intentions". However, seven (07) of our participants revealed that they did create an account with female name. All of them point out that fun is one of the reasons that lead them to do so, also curiosity. Referring to respondent's justification "*I did it to contact people that i can not reach them with my profile like when someone blocks me*". People who do not create a fake profile have negative opinions about those who do such things, it can be seen that everyone has his own reasons.

3.2.3Section Three: The respondents' Attitudes Towards the Use of Nicknames on Facebook.

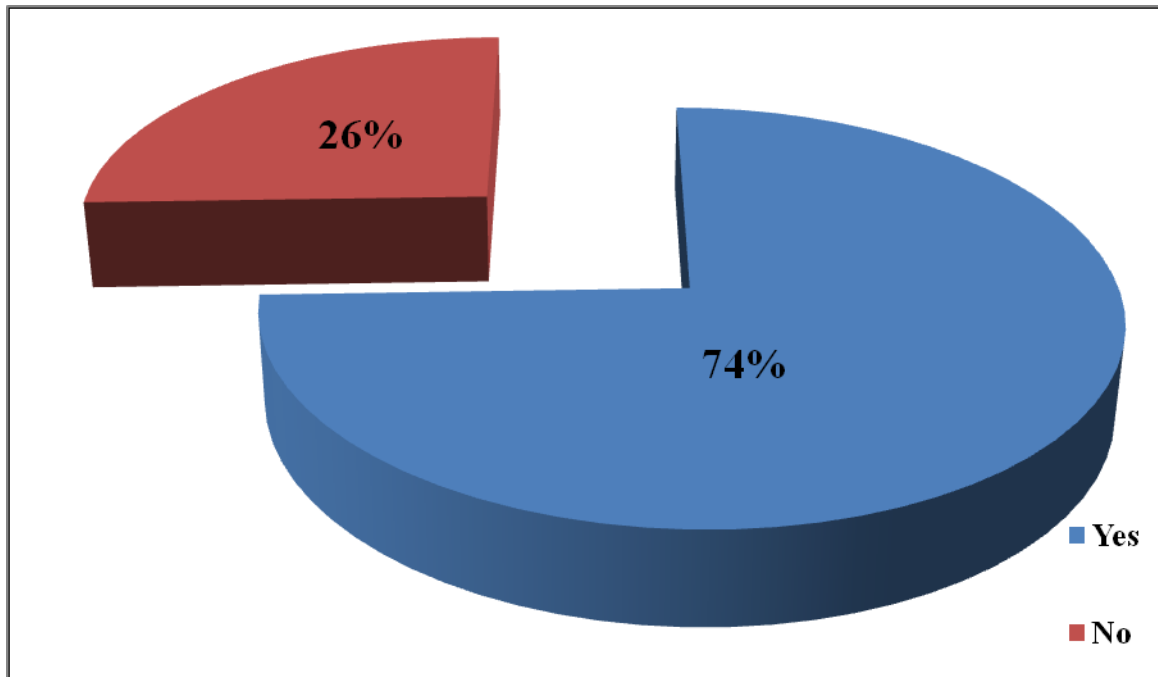
- **Item 13:** Do you accept friend requests with unreal names?



Graph 3.12 Informants' Acceptance of Unreal Names

The graph 3.12 represents the respondent's opinion about accepting friends requests with unreal names, 57% of them answered "No", while 43% accept friend requests with unreal names.

- **Item 14:** Do you agree on using nicknames instead of real names?



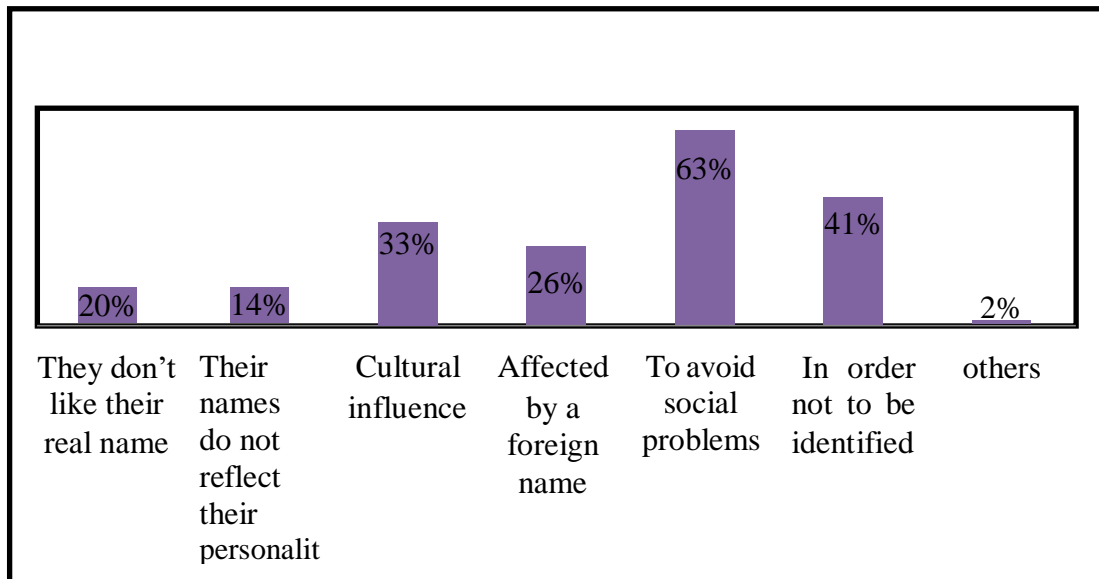
Graph 3.13 Informants' Viewpoints about Nicknames and Real Names Use

The graph above shows that 74% of the informants agree on using nicknames instead of real names, though 26% disagree about using nicknames.

- **Why do you agree or disagree on using nicknames?**

This question is answered by 42 out of 51 of our participants. 28 of them accept using nicknames on Facebook as one of them declared that: *"I Find nicknames more attractive than real names. They could give you an idea about how the person using them is like, and what are his tendencies, or they are influenced by famous personalities .It also allows people to express themselves differently or the opposite meaning hides who they really are for some purposes they only know."*, while just 14 respondent do not agree about nicknaming, it seems that they have problems when they do not know the real identity of the person, as one of them reacted that nicknames are fake names, and fake identities are somehow used to fake something mysterious.

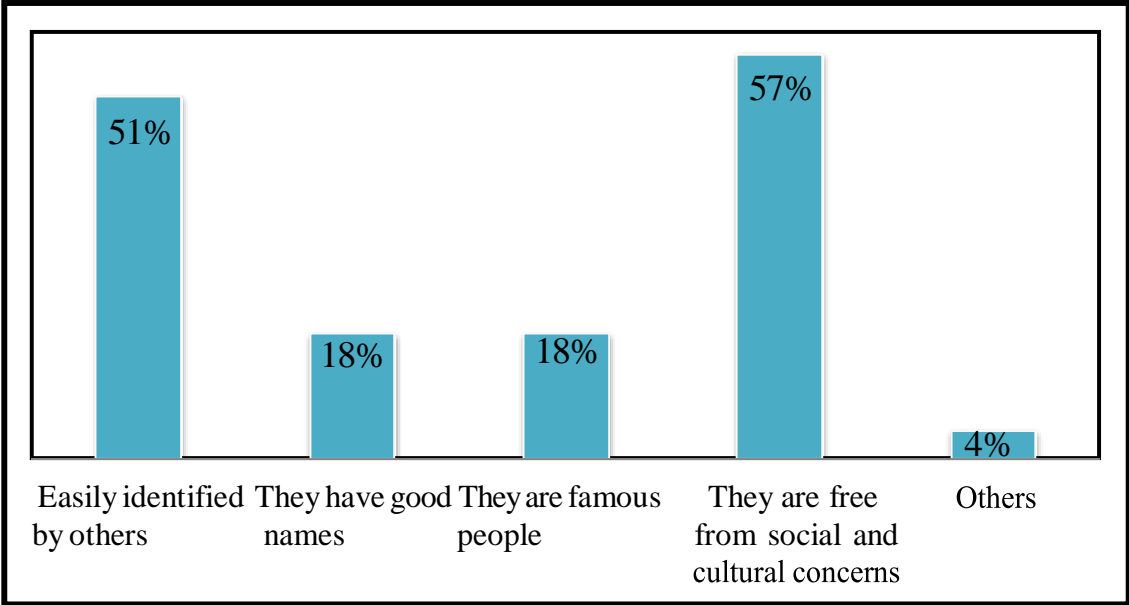
- **Item 15:** In your opinion what are the reasons that lead people to use nicknames on Facebook?



Graph 3.14 Facebook Users' Reasons behind Nicknames Use

According to the results which are clearly shown in the graph above, 63% of the responses approved that the reasons that lead people to use nicknames on Facebook is to avoid social problems. 41% of them answered that people use nicknames in order to not be identified, while 33% of them agreed that the influence of culture on people makes them use more nicknames. Also, 26% said that they are affected by foreign names, 20% of the informants believe that people use nicknames because they do not like their real names. Finally, 14% assume that their names do not reflect their personalities. However, 2% of them think that there are other reasons which lead people to use nicknames

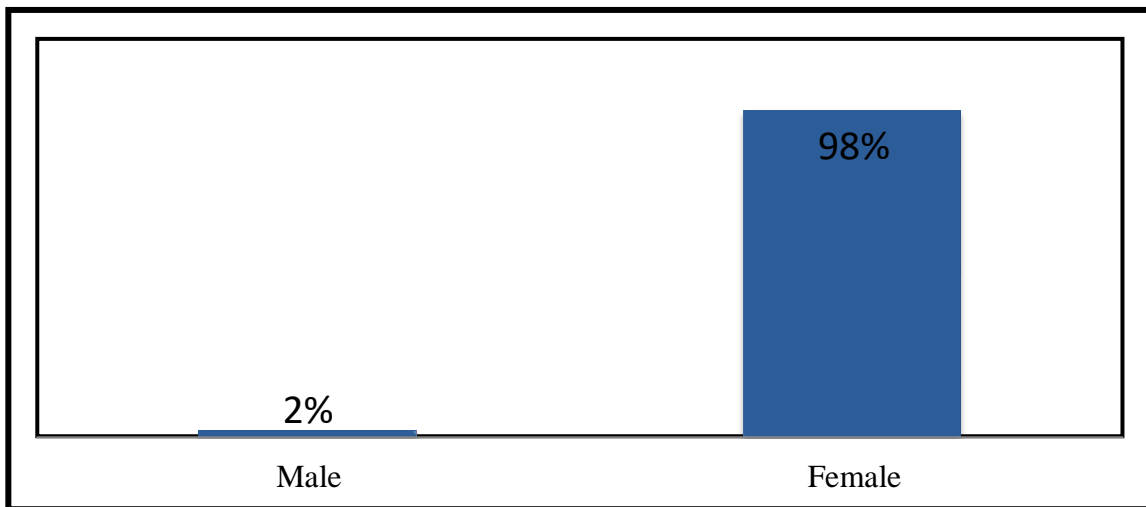
- **Item 16:** In your opinion what are the reasons that lead people to use their real names on Facebook?



Graph 3.15 Facebook Users’ Reasons behind Real Names Use

The data collected reveals that 57% of the respondents agree that the people who use real names on Facebook are free from social and cultural concerns, 51 %of them see that they use real names in order to be easily identified by others, but 18 % of them believe that they have good names, 18% they are famous people, and 4 % stated other reasons that lead people to use real names on Facebook as shown in graph 3.15

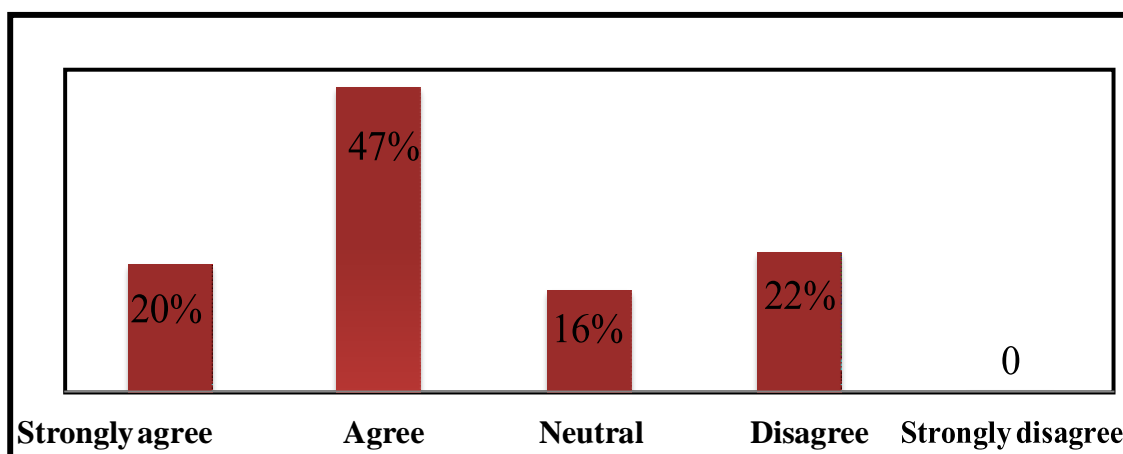
- **Item 17:** Who do you think tend to use more nicknames?



Graph 3.16 Gendered Nicknames Use

Graph 3.16 shows that the majority of our participants 98 % have the same opinion that females tend to use more nicknames than males and only 2% think that male use more nicknames.

- **item18:** Married people use more nicknames



Graph 3.17 Informants' Agreement Extent about Nicknames Use by Married People

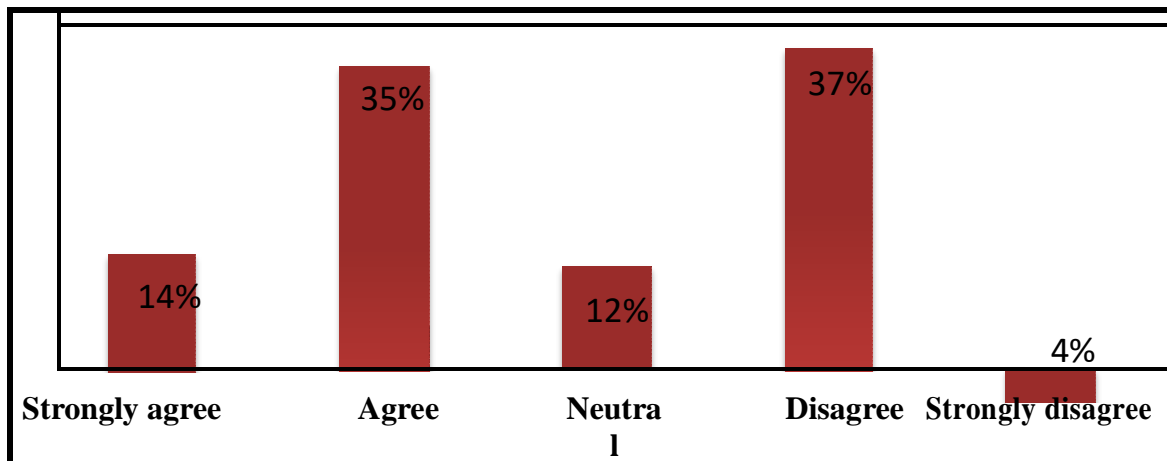
Graph 3.17 illustrates that 47% of our participants “agree” that married people use more nicknames, 20 % of the informants strongly agree with that statement, 22% of them

disagree with it, and about 16 % of the respondents pick “neutral” , yet none of them choose the last option which is ‘strongly disagree’.

- **How is that?**

According to our participants only 29 of them responded to our question because it was up to the respondent either he/she responded or not. The majority of them (22) agreed that married people use nicknames because of cultural identity, Algerian society, and to avoid social problems. Reasons are different, some of our informants have different opinions for instance one declared that: *“Since they are married they do not like to be identified by either people they know or by people who were their relatives in the past, and they usually name their Facebook accounts by their kid’s names”* all of them saw that married people use their children’s names. However, the other 7 participants refused to agree about that without giving any reasons.

- **Item19:**Non-educated people use more nicknames



Graph 3.18 Informants’ Agreement Extent about Nicknames Use by non-educated People

Graph 3.18 represents participant’s opinion about the statement that non-educated people use more nicknames, 37 % of them “disagree” but,35 % “agree” about that, whereas 4% of them

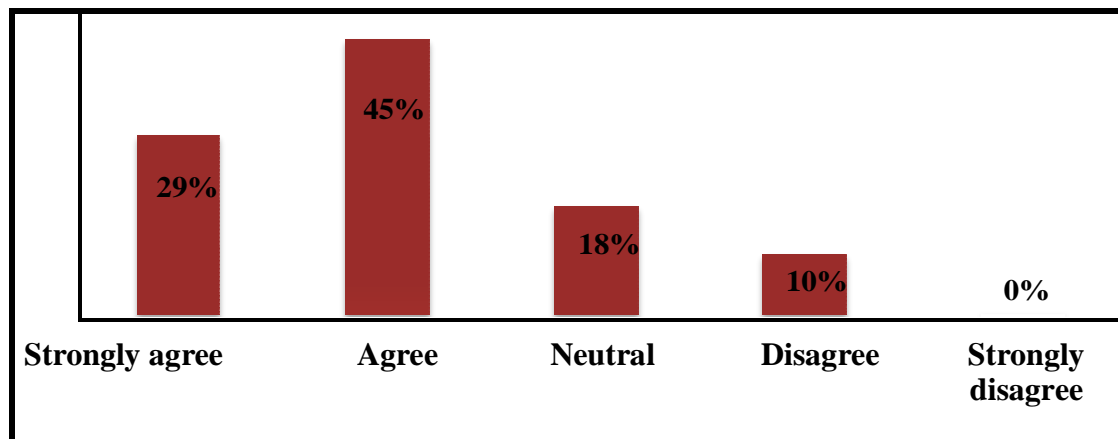
Chapter Three: Research Results And Data Analysis

strongly disagree upon it and 14% of them strongly agree and those who are neutral score 12 %.

- **How is that?**

Over 51 participants ,only 17 answered this optional question, 11 of them do not think that non-educated people use nicknames, using nicknames from their point of view is a personal choice, a way of thinking, and a part of one’s identity as one of them believed that it is the opposite of that, stating “*educated people are more exposed to other cultures and environments that make them use names other than theirs, for all kinds of reasons*” , but the rest of the informants agreed that non-educated people use more nicknames due to the social standards, urbanization, and boundaries of privacy. One of the participants stated: “*non- educated people use nicknames because of the idea that the society give about Facebook, they think that they should not give their real names*”

- **Item 20: Youngster use more nicknames**



Graph 3.19 Informants’ Agreement Extent about Nicknames Use by Youngsters

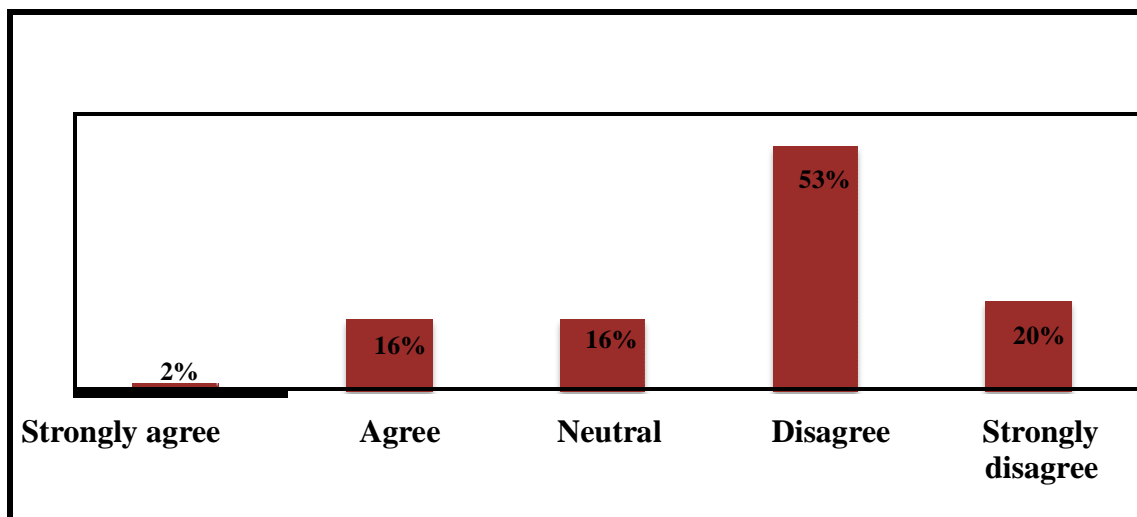
The results which are generated in the graph 3.19 present that 45% of the informants “agree” that youngsters use more nicknames, 29% of them strongly agree about that. 10%

have counter thinking. However, none of our participants strongly disagree with that statement, only 18% were neutral.

- **How is that?**

The elective question was answered by 21 out of 51 participants which all of them agreed that youngsters use more nicknames. Several motives were revealed as blind imitation, celebrities' names, and follow trends. One believed that, some of them are affected by celebrities so they put their names, or those who are affected by other cultures, they use their names as nicknames for them. However only one of them thinks the opposite stating: *"Nowadays youngsters do not give much importance to what people think or say about them so most of them don't use nicknames"*

- **Item 21:** Using nicknames means having two different identities



Graph 3.20 Informants' Agreement Extent about Nicknames Influence on People's Identity

As it can be seen from the above graph 52% of participants think that using nicknames have nothing to do with having two identities, 20% of them strongly disagree, while 16% agree with the statement using nicknames means having two different identities only 2% strongly agree,

and 16 % of informants have neutral opinions about that they neither agree or disagree .

- **How is that?**

From 22 participants, 12 of them think that using a nickname does not mean having two identities, that is to say nicknames are part of one's identity, as one avowed that, nicknames tend to cover the identity not replace it. Nevertheless, the other five (5) informants approved on it, like one of the participants stated: *"Facebook is just a virtual world so I find that we don't have to use our real identity, besides the person having a nickname may pretend to be someone else"*.

3.3 Presentation of the Interview Results

❖ **Question 01:** Did you ever use your real name before starting to use a nickname?

a- If yes, why did you start using a nickname?

b- If no, can you tell us the reasons behind choosing a nickname from the beginning?

The interviewed participants were ten, and all of them answered the first question. Only three students did use their real name before on Facebook then started using a nickname because they had family problems or started to get a lot of invitations from people who know them and had personal problems that they did not want to reveal.

The rest of participants used nicknames when they first created a Facebook account, to avoid social problems, to avoid having relations with their families or to express their ideas freely and avoid the people who know them in real life as one of them declared that she does not want to show her identity because she does not trust people.

Just four participants shared nearly the same reasons ,only three of them have given us different reasons , a participant said that he did not use his real name , because he uses an American name which is “ Jay Walker “’ stating that he loves that person and wishes to become like him one day .The other interviewee said that she never used her real name, because she has always had an obsession for other languages and for discovering the symbolic features they carry in the name, adding that she likes the name she uses to be more artistic and symbolic.

As for the last student, she said that she uses a Spanish name because she has been attracted to the Spanish culture since she studied it in high school.

❖ **Question 02: Have you ever been in a bad situation because of using a nickname?**

Interviewees had the same response to this question; none of them have ever been in a bad situation because of using a nickname. One participant added that she believes that it is a normal thing to do. Some may interpret it in the wrong way but still, it is a personal choice and no one gets to judge anyone for that. She added that it is just a nickname that a person likes or symbolizes something to them.

❖ **Question 03: Do you think that creating a Facebook account with a nickname makes you feel more comfortable to express yourself and give your opinion freely? How?**

Most of the interviewees said “No” to this question, one of the students said that she can express her opinion freely even while using her real name, another participant said that social media is for everyone to express herself or himself and some may think that using a nickname makes it easier or they get to hide behind those names, but she does not like using nicknames for this purpose.

For the interviewees who said “yes” They said that they do feel comfortable expressing their opinion freely because in such a way, they can avoid problems. One of them said that using a nickname makes her feel more comfortable to express herself, so that she can overcome her fear and anxiety. While only one student said that both nicknames and real names make him feel comfortable to express himself.

- ❖ **Question 04:** In your opinion, does the use of real names on Facebook cause problems to individuals? If yes, can you provide us with examples?

All the interviewees agreed that the use of real names on Facebook causes problems to individuals and gave us some examples such as: family problems, embezzlement, threatening individuals, stealing other identities and online bullying, as one of the students said that people keep attacking each other on social media publicly, believing that the use of real names is a major factor. Another student said that by using a real name, we can easily get tracked.

Furthermore, they added that the use of real names on Facebook gives people the opportunity to invade our privacy. Moreover, they declared that when using a nickname, others can not make problems and send meaningless messages and this is the aim behind using a nickname.

- ❖ **Question05:** Did you ever consider using your real name instead of a nickname?

From ten interviewees, only four of them said that they did, or they are actually thinking about using their real name. One of them even started to use a real name, she said that she shifted to using her name recently, thinking that it is more mature to do that although she still loves using nicknames .For the rest of the participants they prefer to keep using their

nicknames to avoid any kind of problems, while a student said that she does not like socializing and will never use her real name.

3.4 Interpretation of the Results Obtained from the Participants:

The results of the given surveys indicate that most participants use nicknames on Facebook, their choice is affected by different factors, we noticed that the majority use nicknames, both males and females, for the sake of avoiding their families, or to be unknown, to avoid social problems. Therefore, it is seen that cultural influence is another reason for using nicknames; some of our participants choose nicknames on the basis of celebrities' names i.e. the name of their favorite band of music or movie characters. Besides, their interests in learning foreign languages and their cultures influence them while choosing their nicknames. For that reason, their nicknames belong to other communities.

Moreover, the findings also have shown that females are more likely to use nicknames than males for cultural reasons; being in a conservative family made some females choose nicknames rather than their real names in order to not disclose themselves to other users or their families on Facebook, especially if they do not allow them to create a Facebook account. On the contrary, some females are not allowed by their parents to use their real names, for the reason that they may have problems.

Additionally, the use of the English language in nicknames is adopted by the majority since they are English students. When analyzing the participants' responses, the majority agreed that females tend to use nicknames more than males, and they tend to use nicknames because they are restricted by social and cultural concerns. The majority also agreed that married people and youngsters are more likely to use nicknames for different motives, and

that using a nickname does not mean having two identities but to show a part of an identity or to show an interest in something.

In brief, from the data gathered we concluded that our participants prefer to use nicknames on Facebook because of the nature of the Algerian society, social and cultural concerns, and to hide their identities from others. In addition, their affection by foreign languages and their cultures, along with the choice of these nicknames is affected by their gender differences. From this regard the insertion of the interview has confirmed and complimented the results of the questionnaire.

3.5 Conclusion:

In brief, this chapter has reported several numerical statistics and the analysis of data that are collected from our participants, gained from both questionnaire and interview. In turn to find answers to our questions, two methods were adopted in our investigation which allows us to refute or approve our hypotheses set in this study. More clarifications are provided in the general conclusion.

General Conclusion

Social networking sites, especially Facebook, have been used extensively by the Algerian young people over the past few years. It has a significant part in their daily lives. Facebook has been spread excessively as a mean of communication between people, friends and relatives. They use it for different purposes including; study purposes, entertainment, business matters, etc. As, the created profiles become a major representative part of one's identity, where most of the chosen usernames on Facebook seem to be real, nicknames, written in Latin letters or in Arabic ones, or even in other languages like Korean , French , Tamazight, etc. Generally speaking, this study aims to identify the reasons that influence users of Facebook to choose their nicknames.

Nicknames on Facebook play an important part in self-presentation, they reflect parts of individual identities or tendencies .In this view, this study attempts to answer the research questions in order to approve or disprove the hypotheses set in this study. Thus, the results of the questionnaire illustrate that most of the students, make use of nicknames to hide their identities, to stay away from social problems, in particular the females; nearly everyone use nicknames noticeably more than the males for more social consideration and privacy, they are constantly stalked, whereas some males disclose their real names, since they are free from any social or cultural concerns. Moreover, the influence of celebrities, movie or anime characters, and favorite music bands on students made them choose their names as nicknames, since they had an impact on their life, or reflected a part of their personality.

On the other hand, the outcome of the interview indicates that students who used their real names when they first created their accounts, changed their usernames to nicknames due

General Conclusion

to familial and personal problems, while others chose nicknames from the beginning because of their love and attraction to foreign languages and cultures, it represents something special to them. Also the use of nicknames is a way to express their feelings and opinions more freely. Furthermore, the gathered data show that some of the nicknames of students are related to their childhood i.e. names given to them when they were kids, or they just use the abbreviation of their real names as nicknames.

To sum up, this study has approved the hypotheses and added more information about the reasons behind the choices of nicknames on Facebook. Thus the results of the quantitative research (the questionnaire) approved three hypotheses which are; the choice of nicknames on Facebook due to social problems, cultural influence and students affected by gender differences, while the results of the qualitative research (the interview) confirmed the findings of the questionnaire and approved the last hypothesis which is; learning a foreign language has an impact on individuals, This affection leads them to choose a name that belongs to that language as their nickname.

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Appendix One

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear students,

You are kindly invited to participate in our survey. The purpose of this questionnaire is to analyze the reasons that push Facebook users to pick their nicknames among Master English Students at Ibn khaldoun university, Tiaret. We are interested in your personal opinion. Please choose the answer that you agree with the most. Thank you very much for your help.

We would like you to choose the right answer by putting an “X” in the box.

➤ Section One: Personal Information.

1- Sex:

a- Male.

b- Female.

2- Age:

a. 21-23.

b- 24-26.

c- 27 and more.

3- Level:

a- MA1.

b- MA2

4- Specialty:

a- Linguistics.

b- Didactics.

5-Do you have Facebook account?

a- Yes

b-No

Appendices and Illustrations

➤ Section Two: Participant's Facebook Accounts and Username.

1- How often do you log into Facebook?

- a- Always b- Very often c- Sometimes d- Rarely e- Never

2- Purpose of using facebook?

- a- Entertainment. b- To keep in touch with friends.
c- Study purposes. d- Gossip updates.

Other(s).....
.....

3- Do have more than one account?

- a- Yes. b- No.

Why?.....
.....

4- Which language do you use in your facebook username?

- a- Arabic b- English c- French

5- Is your facebook user name:

- a- Real name b- Nickname (pseudo)

6- Why do you use a nickname ? Please! Comment

.....

Appendices and Illustrations

.....
.....

7- What is the relation between you and your nickname?

.....
.....
.....

8- For men, do you ever create a Facebook account with female name? For women, do you ever create a Facebook account with male name?

A-Yes b- No

Justify.....
.....

➤ Section Three: The Respondents' Attitudes Towards the Use of Nicknames on Facebook.

1- Do you accept friend requests with unreal names?

a- Yes b- No

Why?.....
.....
.....

2- Do you agree on using nicknames instead of real names?

a- Yes b- No

Appendices and Illustrations

Why do you agree or disagree on using nicknames?

.....
.....
.....

3- In your opinion what are the reasons that lead people to use nicknames on Facebook?

- a-** They don't like their real name **b-** Their names do not reflect their personalities
c- Cultural influence **d-** Affected by a foreign name
e- To avoid social problems **f-** In order not to be identified.

Other(s):.....

4- In your opinion what are the reasons that lead people to use their real names on Facebook?

- a-** Easily identified by others **b-** They have good names
c- They are famous people **d-** They are free from social and cultural concerns

Others.....

5- Who do you think tend to use more nicknames?

- a-** Male **b-** Female

6- Married people use more nicknames

- a-** Strongly agree **b-** Agree **c-** Disagree **d-** Strongly disagree

How?(optional).....
.....

7- Noneducated people use more nicknames

Appendices and Illustrations

a-Strongly agree **b-Agree** **c-Disagree** **d-Strongly disagree**

How?(optional).....
.....

8-Youngster use more nicknames

a-Strongly agree **b-Agree** **c-Disagree** **d-Strongly disagree**

How?(optional).....
.....

9- Using nicknames means having two different identities.

a-Strongly agree **b-Agree** **c-Disagree** **d-Strongly disagree**

How?(optional).....
.....

Appendix Two

The Interview Questions

The following is a list of questions used in the interview.

Step1: Introduction

Dear students you taking part in this study, which is about using nicknames on Facebook among Master English Students at Ibn khaldoun university, Tiaret. Rest assured that the data will be used for my research only, your views will remain anonymous .Thank you for your participation in this research.

Step2: Core Questions

Q1. Did you ever use your real name before starting to use a nickname?

- a. If yes, why you started using nickname?
- b. If no, can you tell us what are the reasons behind choosing a nickname from the beginning?

Q2. Have you ever been in a bad situation because of using a nickname? If yes, how?

Q3. Do you think that opening a Facebook account with a nickname makes you feel more comfortable to express yourself and give your opinion freely? How

Q4. In your opinion, does the use of real names on Facebook cause any kind of problems to individuals? If yes, provides us with examples

Q5. Did you ever consider using your real name instead of a nickname?

Step3: Conclusion

The researcher: “Thanks so much for taking the time to talk to us.”

ملخص

يهدف عملنا هذا إلى دراسة الأسماء المستعارة التي يلجأ إليها المستخدمون الجزائريون لموقع التواصل الاجتماعي فيسبوك

واستعمالها، بأخذ المجتمع الكلامي لولاية تيارت كعينة للدراسة. حيث ركّزنا على المبدأ الذي على أساسه يتم اختيار أسماء المستخدمين، أهم الأسباب وراء ذلك، وإذا ما يوجد تأثير لجنس المستخدم على اختياره. بالنسبة للمنهجية تتبنى هذه الدراسة مزيجاً من أدوات البحث الكمية منها والنوعية، حيث تمّ اعتماد استبيان ورّع عبر الأنترنت على عينة تتكون من واحد وخمسون 51 طالب وطالبة ماستر من كل المستويين والتخصصين (تعليمية المادة واللسانيات) بالإضافة إلى مقابلة تم إجراءها عبر البريد الإلكتروني مع عشرة طلاب. توصلنا إلى أن أغلبية المشاركين في الدراسة يلجئون إلى إخفاء هوياتهم لأغراض اجتماعية، خصوصية، وثقافية. كما تمكنا من إثبات أن الفروق بين الجنسين تلعب دوراً كبيراً على اختيار اسم المستخدم حيث أن عدد الاناث اللواتي يستخدمون أسماء مستعارة أكبر من عدد الذكور، إضافة إلى ذلك، تشير النتائج إلى أن هناك أنماطاً أخرى يعتمد عليها المشاركون في كتابة وتكوين الأسماء المستعارة، مثل ألقاب طفولتهم، واختصار أسمائهم الحقيقية، والجمع بين الحروف الأولى والأخيرة لأسمائهم أو لأسماء الأولى لأقاربهم هذا بالإضافة إلى عوامل أخرى كنوعية المجتمع، التأثير الثقافي، وتعلم لغة أجنبية لها تأثير أكبر على اختيارات مستخدمي فيسبوك لأسمائهم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: لسانيات، التواصل الاجتماعي، فيسبوك، أسماء المستخدمين، الأسماء المستعارة، التأثير الثقافي، لغة أجنبية، الفروق بين الجنسين.

Résumé

Le présent travail tente d'étudier les "surnoms ou pseudo-noms des utilisateurs de Facebook" au sein de la communauté linguistique algérienne et en prenant comme cas d'étude la communauté linguistique de Tiaret. Il porte principalement sur le choix des surnoms comme noms d'utilisateur sur Facebook et les raisons qui motivent les participants, et sur la question de savoir si ces choix sont influencés par les différences entre les sexes. Pour la méthodologie, cette étude adopte des méthodes mixtes d'instruments de recherche ; à la fois quantitatives et qualitatives, dans lesquelles un questionnaire en ligne, via internet, a été distribué à cinquante et un (51) étudiants de Master à l'Université Ibn Khaldoun de Tiaret ; tout niveaux et toute spécialités confondus (linguistique et didactique) et une interview via e-mail qui a été effectué avec Dix (10) étudiants de Master. Cette étude révèle que la majorité des étudiants préfèrent être anonymes pour des raisons sociales, personnelles (vie privée) et culturelles. De plus, les résultats prouvent que la gent féminine utilise plus de pseudo noms –surnoms- que la gent masculine. En outre, les résultats indiquent qu'il ya d'autres motifs sur lesquels les participants se basent pour écrire et composer leurs surnoms, tels que leurs surnoms d'enfance, l'abréviation de leurs vrais noms, la combinaison des premières et dernières lettres des prénoms de leurs proches. Ainsi, les principaux résultats indiquent que les variables suivantes : la nature de la société, l'influence culturelle, l'acquisition d'une langue étrangère et les différences de genre, sont les plus importantes et qui ont le plus d'impact sur les choix de pseudo noms – surnoms- des utilisateurs de Facebook.

Mots-clés : Linguistique, Réseau social, Facebook, Noms d'utilisateurs, Surnoms, Influence culturelle Langue étrangère, Différences de genre.