

## A Review of the Literature on Integration of WhatsApp into English Language Classroom

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### ABSTRACT

Education system has tremendously developed from the traditional way of teaching and learning to a modern and efficient way of transmitting knowledge to the students. Today, educators and students depend on the technological tools in teaching and learning process. Social media applications such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, Telegram and many more have been introduced as platforms to keep ourselves updated with the latest information and also to make new friends from all over the world. However, in education line, the implementation of WhatsApp in English language classroom can be beneficial not only for learners, but also teachers or instructors. For instance, the use of WhatsApp in education enhances social interaction, students' motivation, sense of belonging, and it supports learning anytime and anywhere. Even though there are lots of benefits of utilizing WhatsApp in English language classroom, there are certain aspects that have to be taken into consideration in terms of the difficulties and challenges of using this application. There are some concerns with regard to privacy and security, losing attention, and use of slang language. Considering both positive and negative sides of using WhatsApp does not change the fact that this application has been rapidly becoming popular not only for communication purposes but also, as a teaching-learning tool in education. This study reviews the literature regarding the use of WhatsApp in English language classroom.

**Keywords:** online communication, WhatsApp, vocabulary, oral skills, learning experience.

### Introduction

Online communication is an available path of correspondence and an unending type of electronic instrument that assists the distributing of information. It also provides study guides, social interaction, and a sense of community. A study by Zarei & Hussin (2014) emphasized that one of the significant roles of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is the accessibility to knowledge and a wide selection of learning materials. Ward (2001) & Caplan (2003) mentioned that online communication plays a central role in the development of compulsive Internet use. In the era of technology,

students use technological devices to facilitate the learning process. Using technology as a study guide motivates them to enhance their academic performance. By integrating technology into a classroom setting, students will be able to improve their computer skills which play a momentous aspect in the learning process. Furthermore, Lim et al. (2003) and Hew & Brush (2007) stated that teachers can integrate technology into education to develop learners' thinking and problem-solving skills. In a study Zarei & Al-Shboul (2013) stated that the students had positive perceptions towards employing the Internet as a learning device, obtaining sufficient general knowledge of the Internet, and the learning was encouraged

via integrating Internet in teaching. A study by Zarei, Hussin, & Rashid (2015) focused on learners' experiments of employing blogs to embolden themselves to carry out pre-class reading assignment and observation after class. The research aimed at learners' perceptions towards the utilization of blogs. The findings disclosed that there were positive perceptions towards the usage of blogs for before class preparation and after class observation.

Szabó (2019) stated that "there is now a consensus on the requirement for large corporate training providers to embrace the new forms of technology and to integrate them into their pedagogical offering. Mobile learning and micro-learning respectively have developed as a result of these needs". In addition, Cetinkaya (2017) believed that social networks are becoming prevalent due to their nature to meet the needs of young people towards socialization and education. In line with this, the use of social media applications such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are prevalent among individuals. As such, people attempt to familiarize themselves with technology and incorporating it into day-to-day basis. WhatsApp is a well-known application which is available nowadays and its users are not charged for sending messages or making phone calls as they are allowed to do so via Wi-Fi or mobile data. Moreover, WhatsApp provides a variety of messages such as simple texts, photos, audios, videos, GIFs, and stickers. Students can learn easily and effectively via WhatsApp if they are guided and monitored by their teacher. They will have the chance to explore the functions of the application to gain more solutions to the problems via discussion with their peers. Additionally, students can practice and improve their English language learning through communication with other people all around the world through WhatsApp. Therefore, this study attempts to review the literature on the use of WhatsApp as messaging application in English language classroom.

### **WhatsApp Integration in Education**

According to Chun (2006), the accessibility of online exercises and electronic word references assist undergraduates with being shown to trustworthy creations and to wear down investigating thoroughly. In a study by Zarei & Hussin (2014), it was articulated that ICT offers students the chance to communicate with their peers and teacher in the target language outside the classroom and this aids in helping the students to broaden their social skills and regulate issues faced in learning. An analysis of the usage of WhatsApp by students from a specific class in a South African college depicted positive feedback from the

undergraduates who asserted that the employment of the application was hassle-free and a fun way of learning. With the integration of the application, learners came to the conclusion that it aided in reducing learning gaps.

Correspondingly, undergraduates' point of views towards the use of General English and the impact of WebQuest were analysed. In a study by Khrisat and Mahmoud (2013), the researchers inspected undergraduates' viewpoints towards ten helpful highlights and applications in General English classroom. It was revealed that the undergraduates indicated positive feedback towards the benefits of organization in learning. Alshumaimeri & Almasri (2012) also analyzed the execution and effects of WebQuest on higher education institutions in Saudi Arabia. Based on the findings gathered, WebQuests have the potential for use in pushing investigating appreciation. These analyses demonstrate that there is a need to produce a gander at the results of smaller highlights and applications, to be specific, versatile WhatsApp, on the web and separated word references, advantageous camera, online assets, and warning on English investigating practices of tertiary estimation male understudies in a Saudi EFL classroom.

By and large, WhatsApp has been transformed into a common stage that overhauls receptiveness, enables interest, and fortifies motivation to play a crucial role in academic assignments. To compare with the past technological tools that had been integrated, WhatsApp has great characteristics that embolden instructors and learners to employ it in order to enhance understanding, improve the effectiveness of the lessons, and simplify the teaching and learning process. According to Zarei, Hussin, & Rashid (2015), technological devices play a part in improving ESL learners' motivation, and this makes them take charge of their own learning.

In the modern era, a social media such as WhatsApp can be employed to enable students to develop their abilities since these applications allow them to strengthen their English language proficiency. Educators can get solid examinations with respect to how to utilize WhatsApp in language learning. An understudy focused system is appeared in this point of reference. This system permits more examination of WhatsApp in English language learning, offers the understudies more chances to detail their very own stand-out contemplations or feeling about the issues and furthermore to update their significant limits in the vernacular learning process. To give sustenance differing learning styles, it is basic to devise particular sorts of undertakings and exercises. Every one of them is done in English to submerge understudies in an English-talking situation.

## **Reinforcing Vocabulary Learning via Using WhatsApp**

In this technological era, technological gadgets are used everywhere including classrooms. Learning via mobile phone grants teachers and learners to use it as a platform both inside and outside the classroom. In a study by Chakir (2018), it was stated that learners can download a free dictionary application on mobile phones which can help them to search for words effectively and efficiently rather than using a traditional dictionary. In addition, learners can use mobile phones to communicate with teachers by using the messenger or other applications. This makes it convenient for teachers and learners instead of communicating through face-to-face. Furthermore, (Thornton & Houser, 2005; Stockwell, 2007; Lu, 2008; Cavus & Ibrahim, 2009; Abbasi & Hashemi, 2013; Şahan, et al., 2016), stated that mobile phones can be integrated in education to teach language components such as vocabulary.

Similarly Jafari and Chalak (2016) investigated the role of WhatsApp in teaching vocabulary to Iranian EFL learners. They found that using WhatsApp had significant role in vocabulary learning of the students. They also mentioned that there was not a substantial difference between male and female students with regard to their vocabulary knowledge after using WhatsApp application. Furthermore, Alsaleem (2013) attempted to determine whether WhatsApp application has a significant effect on writing vocabulary word choice and voice of undergraduate Saudi students. The findings of his study revealed a significant difference between the overall writing scores of the pretest and posttest of the students that journalled. Moreover, the examination of individual item scores demonstrated that there were statistically significant improvements in vocabulary word choice and voice as two critically important writing factors. The findings of a study by Hamad (2017) showed that using WhatsApp enhanced students' learning and enthusiasm and it helped them to enrich their vocabulary and learn more from their mates' mistakes.

Chakir (2018) explored the effectiveness of English vocabulary learning through WhatsApp application in comparison to a paper-based method of delivery. A total of 60 high school students took part in the study. Based on the findings, the researcher came to a conclusion that mobile-based study for English vocabulary had a positive impact on Moroccan EFL learners' vocabulary learning. However, the dominance of a mobile phone over the paper-based in terms of test scores was not mentioned. Besides, in the delayed test and the results showed no

significant difference between the scores of the two groups. Bensalem (2018) carried out a study on the impact of WhatsApp on EFL students' vocabulary learning. The findings of his study indicated that WhatsApp group significantly outperformed the traditional group on a vocabulary test. Furthermore, generally the participants had positive attitudes towards learning new vocabulary items via WhatsApp.

## **The Impact of WhatsApp on Students' Oral Skills**

Nowadays, the young generation spends most of their time using social applications to communicate with each other and share important information. Not forgetting, teachers and learners smartly utilize this platform to enhance their teaching and learning process. The voice notes function of this application benefits the learners to improve their oral communication. In a research conducted by (Baradaran & Khalili, 2009), it was put forward that with the employment of WhatsApp, students can communicate with other learners from around the world by using the language they understand.

Ali and Kootbodien (2017) identified the perceptions and trends of Abu Dhabi university students when considering WhatsApp as an effective interpersonal communication medium. They found that WhatsApp can be considered as an effective interpersonal communication medium and it can improve students' oral skills.

Mustafa (2018) stated that WhatsApp has a great impact on speaking skills. He also suggested that the teacher who wishes to improve the students' speaking skills should consider the application of WhatsApp in the learning process. Mustafa (2018) believed that WhatsApp has a great role in improving EFL learners' oral communication skills.

Furthermore, Andújar-Vaca, Cruz-Martínez, and Soledad (2017) conducted a study on WhatsApp and its potential to develop oral skills. The results of their study illustrated that there were significant improvements regarding oral proficiency in experimental group and negotiations were the LRE most common throughout the activity. In fact the integration of social network in learning had positive results and learners had the chance to get rid of problems via traditional learning. The findings also showed that the learners may have struggled in English language learning due to lack of confidence through face-to-face communication. Therefore, the application provides the chance for the learners to practice their oral skills by shaping their confidence level through communication.

## The Use of WhatsApp as a Communication Tool in Education

According to the previous studies, WhatsApp has been introduced for communication purpose especially for teachers and learners. For instance, the findings of a study by Naidoo and Kopung (2016) illustrated how high school students who received academic support in mathematics through IM service were able to put forward questions throughout the learning process after school hours. This study proved that WhatsApp has become one of the popular communication tools for students and teachers. It is also one of the easiest ways to communicate with their teachers even after their class hours. In other words, the findings of their research suggested that the use of the WhatsApp instant messaging assists students in learning mathematics. It fostered a social constructivist environment for mathematical learning as well. This environment supported students in improving their academic performance in mathematics.

Moreover, another study was conducted with the university students on employing WhatsApp as a communication tool with their lecturers. This study was conducted by Scornavacca, Huff, & Marshall (2009) among university students who communicated during and after class through an internal SMS scheme that the university had introduced. The findings revealed that the students were likely to ask more questions and engaged through the application. According to (Doering, Lewis, Veletsianos, & Nichols-Besel, 2008; Sweeny, 2010), the speciality of WhatsApp application is that if there is an important message or information that the students would like to ask their teachers, they may do so without any hesitation. While Doering et al (2008), voiced out that this application aids in breaking down the teacher-student social barriers. Sweeney (2010) articulated that through this application, students will be more serious about their tasks to impress their peers.

Majority of the teachers are utilizing WhatsApp as a communication tool rather than using normal text message (SMS) as it is convenient for teachers to send important documents or assignment questions through WhatsApp. Another easier and hassle-free way is teachers can also create a WhatsApp group for the students' discussion as it can be used anywhere without time limitation. Based on the study conducted by Bansal & Joshi (2014), the usage of WhatsApp application can assist in enhancing students' experiences of mobile learning. The researchers found that learners' social interactivity with their teachers and peers had escalated and students had positive perceptions towards learning through this

application. In this study, the researchers employed the mixed-method where a mixture of quantitative and qualitative approaches was used to collect the data for the study. The researchers found that students benefited from WhatsApp application as teachers provided administrative messages, classroom management tips and extra exercises on previous lessons taught. For instance, the students had the chance to ask any questions if they were having difficulties in their tasks. Bansal & Joshi (2014) also stressed that the integration of WhatsApp in teaching and learning helped teachers stay updated what students were doing and types of problems that they faced. Besides, from the interviews conducted, participants were asked whether mobile learning through WhatsApp has educational benefits and considered as collaborative learning. Based on a study by Bansal & Joshi (2014, p.30), some of the academic advantages stated by the students throughout the interview were quick feedback to the issue, a better insight into the issues faced, recapitulation of earlier learned topics, learning from the others, discussions and accessibility of learning materials. Hence, students felt comfortable to learn through WhatsApp and suggested that the application should be used in future learning. All in all, the students stated that learning via WhatsApp is fun because it may lead to useful discussion and posts.

According to the results of a study by Bouhnik, Dshen, & Gan (2014), the students mentioned some technical advantages of using WhatsApp, such as simple operation, low cost, availability, as well as immediacy. The students also referred to educational advantages, such as the creation of a pleasant environment and an in-depth acquaintance with fellow students, which had a positive influence upon the manner of conversation. The findings of this study revealed academic advantages such as the accessibility of learning materials, teacher availability, and the continuation of learning beyond class hours.

Over the earlier year, the high intrusion of smartphones into the market has begun creating utilization of WhatsApp as a correspondence stage for various understudy gatherings. Teachers can make a gathering for their understudies that sets up a sort of "fundamental relational association" for the class. Different reasons why people hold onto WhatsApp as their principle correspondence channel rather than choices (for instance, SMS or other informal communities) are the minimal effort of the application joined with the ability to send countless, the capacity to coordinate an on-running discourse with various colleagues at the same time, the weaving together of a system of mates or family, and a sentiment of security as for other interpersonal organizations.

## Conclusion

The employment of ICT in education has long ago been implemented by the government as in aids in information sharing, improves educators' teaching strategies, and strengthens students' writing skills and learners' motivation towards learning. With the employment of WhatsApp as a learning tool in English classroom, educators and students can communicate through this application anywhere and anytime in order to facilitate the process of learning. Besides, with proper training and exposure on techniques and strategies in the employment of WhatsApp in English language learning to a certain extent, it can assist educators in being at par with the 21<sup>st</sup>-century teaching.

## Competing Interest Statement

All authors have read and approved the manuscript and take full responsibility for its contents. No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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