

# THE IMPACT OF WHATSAPP ON INTERACTION IN LANGUAGE TEACHING COURSE

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## Abstract

This paper aimed to interrogate the impact of WhatsApp mobile instant messaging service on the enhancement of the instructional interaction. The near ubiquitous access of mobile technology has attracted the attention of educators to seek ways to become more efficient and effective in their efforts to prepare their students for the demands and challenges of a globally competitive society through utilizing mobile technology as educational tools. Also, identify the challenges of using this application as a mobile learning tool. The data was collected using semi-structured interviews and an analysis of the postings on WhatsApp platform. In conclusion, WhatsApp platform offers a space for communicating, expressing ideas and exchanging information anytime and anywhere. However, expenses involved in WhatsApp use, extra workload, distraction to learning and lack of students' commitment for effective participation were identified as the greatest challenges of effective WhatsApp use for learning purposes.

**Keywords:** Mobile technology, Interaction, WhatsApp

## Introduction

Education systems are also challenged by the demands of the twenty-first century. It is obvious that there is a tremendous gap between how students live and how we expect them to learn. These demands are imposing further changes to teachers' responsibilities, required skills and professional roles. There is no doubt that teaching the same way that we had taught for decades does not radically improve the educational system. Teachers' roles should be changed from the 'sage on the stage' model, which focuses on the transfer of the knowledge to learners, to the 'guide on the side' model, with a focus on the teacher as a learning facilitator and coach (King, 1993). This idea is aligned with the constructivist approach that emphasizes learner-centered tactics to meet students' needs and pedagogy.

It is widely believed that addressing these challenges requires a range of interventions, including the integration and the use of information and communications technology (ICT) (Perraton, 2007). ICTs have opened up new possibilities for combining learning with other life activities in ways that are optimally adapted to suit the needs and preferences of the students. It has the potential to create environments where students actively engage with materials as well as refine their understanding as they build new knowledge (Johnston, Killion & Omomen, 2005).

Additionally, the emergence of near-universal access to mobile technologies opens up new avenues for improving the quality of teaching, learning and education management (UNESCO, 2012). Mobile technology have now made it possible for teachers and students to have access to up to date information anytime, anywhere without being tied up to a desktop or laptop that restricts their ability to learn and share knowledge while traveling or in areas with bad Internet connectivity ( Mockus, et al., 2011). This in turn is spurring today’s educators who are educating millennial students to innovate teaching and learning practices. Teachers with this technology are expected to improve students engagement, peer interaction and collaboration; provide and receive feedback; improve communication; reduce computer costs; enhance situated learning; and extend the place and time of learning (Allen, 2011; Kolb, 2011; Shuler, 2009).

However, current research is still limited in terms of examining the impact of specific mobile application on interaction in particular content area and context. Thus, this study was set up to investigate the perceptions of the impact of integrating WhatsApp mobile instant messaging on enhancing their instructional interaction. It also sought to identify the challenges of WhatsApp integration in the learning process.

### **WhatsApp as a Mobile Application**

WhatsApp is doubtlessly the leading instant multimedia messaging service in cellular networks. WhatsApp is a cross-platform mobile application, which allows users worldwide to instantly exchange text messages and multimedia contents such as photos, audio and videos. It currently handles more than 64 billion messages per day, including 700 million photos and 100 million videos. With half a billion of active users, it has become the fastest-growing company in history in terms of users. Such an astonishing popularity does not only have a major impact on the traditional SMS/MMS business, but might also have a remarked impact on the track, especially due to the sharing of multimedia messages.

One popular application of mobile technology is WhatsApp “instant messaging”. WhatsApp is a cross-platform mobile messaging app allowing users to exchange messages in real time without having to pay for SMS (WhatsApp, 2013). It is available at different devices including personal digital assistants, smart phones, and tablets. All users of those devices can interact and message each other through various media such as; text, images, audio and video messages. Because WhatsApp messenger uses the same internet data plan as emailing and web browsing, there is no extra charge for messaging and staying in touch with others. In addition to basic messaging, WhatsApp users can create groups, which consist of up to 30 group members, which allow them to engage in discussion forums. Another important feature of the WhatsApp is the Offline messaging. It means that all messages transmitted when the device is off or when it is located outside the coverage area are automatically saved and retrievable when network coverage is restored or when the device is turned on (Bere, 2012). Finally,

WhatsApp works via phone numbers and integrates with users' address books, thus there is no need to memorize usernames or passwords.

### **Problem Statement**

In the light of the information revolution and the scientific challenges of the 21st century, there is a sweeping trend to use technology in all aspects of life and education is no exception. On the other hand, the world is heading towards knowledge economy and a lot of money will be invested in computer assisted learning instructional mobile apps using multimedia techniques. Therefore, it is worth to investigating the effectiveness of WhatsApp mobile app on the performance of learners and the challenges when using WhatsApp mobile app and the level of the interaction of WhatsApp mobile app towards the learning process availability in the market.

### **Objectives**

The primary objectives behind this study are;

- How do WhatsApp as a tool to stimulate interaction with their instructor, peers and instructional content
- Reasons for using WhatsApp as a learning tool than other social media.
- Challenges face during their integration of WhatsApp as an interactive and collaborative learning tool.

### **Literature Review**

Kata Csizer, Zoltan Dornyei (2005), did a research under the heading on “the internal structure of language learning motivation and its relationship with language choice and learning efforts”. The purpose of their study is to use structural equation modeling to evaluate a proposed theoretical model concerning the internal structure of the second language (L2) motivation complex and its impact on motivated behavior. The basis of the analysis is survey data collected in Hungary from 8,593 pupils, 13 to 14 years old, on two occasions, in 1993 and in 1999. Their main finding is that integrativeness appears to be the single most important factor, subsuming or mediating the effects of all the other responses to questions asked. In light of their finding, they analyze what motivational content this core component might represent in various settings.

Md. Rashedul Islam, Md. Rofiqul Islam, Tahidul Arafhin Mazumder.(2010) in their research titled, Mobile Application and Its Global Impact, they stated that the uses and effect of mobile application in individuals, business and social area. Their paper they demonstrates that how individual mobile user facilitate using mobile application and the popularity of the mobile application. Finally, they declared that After all the limitation of mobile environment and mobile application, the uses and popularity of mobile application are increasing day by day. Most of the people are trying to use mobile device and

mobile application instead of desktop for easy task. Gradually the uses of mobile applications are increasing corresponding to the use of desktop applications. All of the mobile manufactured companies and mobile application Developer companies are increasing the capacity, quality and functionality. Therefore, the modern mobile applications are more capable and more usable for the user. Moreover, the global impacts of mobile applications are going high. In their paper, they have tried to explain the so many things about mobile application and business with some data from modern market. In addition, they think this paper will help to other for further study in the mobile application area.

Manal Elobaid, Moawia Elfaki Yahia Eldow, (2016) in their research they are describes a project focusing on developing application software for android device. The aim of the research is proliferate the learning of holy Quran using latest technology for non-Arabic speakers. And also they explain that, smart phones are becoming our center of our lives, these devices are brining immediacy and availability of the internet. That has changed and transformed the way of people access information. Therefore there is utmost need to utilize this fast growing technology in propagating the teaching of the Quran. And finally they state that they are going to develop a Quranic app called AN-Noor app. This application will fulfill the need of non- Arabic speakers and it also will replace the mistakes of other Quranic apps. And also they hope that it will be useful for everyone

### **Methodology**

Research Methodology is the most important part of a research. to do this research, Two different sources of data were used to collect the information needed for answering the research questions. They were semi-structured interviews and analysis of participants' posts on the WhatsApp platform. Interviews were conducted to obtain in-depth perspectives, along with personal stories and contexts of the participants. The interview questions dealt with the following areas of inquiry: And also we used observation, and discussion were held regarding the WhatsApp application. Moreover we used internet, research articles, and statistic reports as secondary data collection method.

### **Results and Discussion**

Since technology can play, a role in enhancing instructional interaction, which is in turn, may contribute to improve learning, this study investigated the impact of WhatsApp mobile instant messaging on interaction between students and the instructor, students and content, and student with other students. It also sought to identify the challenges of using this application as a mobile learning tool. Based on the interviews with 17 female pre-service teachers registered in methods of teaching Arabic course, and analysis of their postings on the WhatsApp platform as well, some notable themes could be seen across the responses. These themes will be further discussed. Majority of the pre-service teachers participated in the study viewed the WhatsApp platform as an effective tool to promote interaction. More specifically, 77% of the participants reported that WhatsApp enhanced their interaction with peers, 49% of them stated that it enhanced interaction with the instructional content and 54% of the participants

reported that it enhanced interaction with the instructor. Pre-service teachers indicated that WhatsApp helped to create convenient, easy, free, quick and open channel for communicating, expressing ideas and thoughts, as well as getting help and assistance anytime and anywhere. The major benefit of WhatsApp is allowing students to utilize the small free time slices for learning. Many participants noted that they conducted different types of learning activities on the school bus or in a shopping mall.

It is one advantage of WhatsApp application to allow students to benefit from convenience, expediency, and immediacy of mobile devices to learn the right thing at the right time in the right place (Seppälä & Alamäki, 2003; Peng et al., 2009). Additionally, Text-based communications may enhance interactions through removing and diminishing obstacles of participation such as lack of time during class time, lack of communication skills, cultural differences, and shyness, or any other learning difficulties experienced by students in the classroom. With such application, there is an opportunity for all voices to be heard. Even those students who may be intimidated by speaking in class, or those who need more time to think, reflect and respond. The anonymity involved in WhatsApp learning activities could also contribute to improve participants' interaction. Allowing students to use nicknames during their discussions may enhance students' willing to participate and take risks in exploring answers.

The positive views toward WhatsApp may also attribute to allowing participants to experience something that is motivating, enjoyable and different from what they used to do in traditional face to face interaction. The results revealed from interviews were supported by the results revealed from the analysis of students' postings. The noteworthy number of posted contributions on the WhatsApp platform (1639 posts) suggests that participants welcome the idea of using WhatsApp as a tool for interaction. The type of postings indicates that WhatsApp was used to interact with peers, instructor, and content. However, it was used more heavily for interacting with Peers. These results were in line with previous research studies that reported positive feedback regarding the impact of mobile learning activities on instructional interaction (Bere, 2012; Davis, 2003; Gong & Wallace, 2012; Seppälä & Alamäki, 2003; Peng et al., 2009). On the other hand, 24% of the participants reported that WhatsApp had no impact on improving interaction and learning. Small screen size of mobile technologies, the symbolic view, or these applications as a tool for edutainment rather than for education may constrain interaction among learners. This view is consistent with the findings of some of previous studies that reported negative feedback regarding the impact of mobile applications on instructional interaction (Chen-Chung et.al., 2009; Luminita, 2010)

Teachers' willing to integrate WhatsApp in their future Arabic language classes is a further fundamental finding of the study. 76% of participants indicated that they will use WhatsApp to enhance interaction in their future teaching. It is apparent that participants who valued the use of WhatsApp as a learning tool reported that they will integrate it in their teaching since it is appropriate for Arabic language teaching and learning classes. Visibly the perceptions of pre-service teachers on WhatsApp influence

their decisions to integrate it. According to Barnes, (2000), if teachers believe that technology fulfill their own and their students' needs, most likely they attempt to implement it into their classes.

Despite the fact that students' experience of WhatsApp integration was positive, they reported initial hesitation or frustration at using the new application due to several challenges. The utmost challenge of WhatsApp integration emerged from our data was due to the expenses involved in WhatsApp use. Most of the students are coming from low incomes families. They live in the dorms. Both the University and the dorms are not provided with Internet access "wireless". Therefore, to participate in WhatsApp activities, they need to buy Wi-Fi connection, a SIM card or a subscription to a local Internet service provider. In addition, they need to have an advanced mobile device. The high price of new mobile technologies and the fees for internet connections may not be affordable by all the students.

Another key challenge of WhatsApp integration was the extra workload. Similar to other Asynchronous applications, students especially married ones complained of not having enough time and effort to read, summarize and type postings. Integrating WhatsApp as described by participants involves reading and responding for unlimited amount of questions and opinions, which is bothersome and strenuous. Distraction was also one of the greatest challenges of WhatsApp integration. Students indicated that balancing the attractiveness of their mobile device with learning activities is challenging and difficult. Because of the wide functions and features of mobile devices, students' attention may split between learning and buzzing of these technologies.

Lack of students' commitment for effective participation presented another main challenge. The problem of huge amount of short, redundant, useless and irrelevant comments was a common concern of the participants. Apparently, some students tended to just copy and paste others ideas and opinions. This was also evident during the analysis of students' postings on the WhatsApp platform where the same idea was being written repeatedly. This finding suggests the necessity to provide students with more comprehensible, restricted and detailed criteria for contribution and evaluation of these contributions. In addition, the significant number of repeated, unrelated and nonsense comments may be justified by students' lack of WhatsApp integration skills. Participants indicated that using mobile technologies in daily life is different from using them for learning. Thus, special preparation in new technological applications should be offered for pre-service teachers to support their efforts of technology integration. Finally, small screen of mobile technology is an additional challenge. Participants indicated that using devices with small screens for learning purposes is difficult and thorny. They believe that devices with bigger screens are more effective. Therefore, new tablets such as iPad tablets can play significant role in overcoming this key limitation. Other researchers reported similar concerns and challenges of mobile learning activities (Chen-Chung et al., 2009; Gong & Wallace, 2012; Mahmoud, 2008; Tai & Ting, 2011).

## **Recommendations**

This study revealed that WhatsApp platform had the power to enhance students' instructional interaction, mainly student-student interaction in the first place, followed by student-content interaction and student-instructor interaction in the second and third place. The main function of WhatsApp platform was providing participants with an open and flexible space for communicating, expressing ideas and exchanging information. However, expenses involved in WhatsApp use, extra work load, distraction to learning, lack of students' commitment for effective participation, lack of WhatsApp integration skills and small screens of mobile technology were identified as the greatest challenges of effective WhatsApp integration as a learning tool.

Based on the findings of this study, a number of recommendations were offered that may lead to effective integration of WhatsApp in the learning process:

- Utilizing WhatsApp mobile application as a learning tool to enhance interaction and improve students' learning.
- Providing students with adequate and reliable wireless internet access to enable more equal access on their mobile technologies.
- Providing educators with training programs that focus on the effective integration of new technology application.
- Creating pedagogical strategies that support students' efforts of WhatsApp and other technological applications integration.
- Creating a strategy for WhatsApp integration that explicate regulations of technology use, criteria for the participation and guidelines for evaluating students' contributions.
- Conducting further research that includes larger sample, mix methods, different group of students and different types of WhatsApp activities to validate the findings of the present study. As well, investigating other aspects of WhatsApp integration, such as the impact of WhatsApp on students' achievement in specific content areas, the ways of evaluating WhatsApp learning activities and educators' perspectives toward WhatsApp are also recommended.

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