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Revolutionizing English Learning: Unleashing the Power of WhatsApp - A Dynamic Literature Exploration

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Abstract: In the teaching and learning process, WhatsApp is an application frequently utilized for online learning due to its easy operability across all levels of education. Researchers have concentrated on assessing the effectiveness of WhatsApp in English lessons by scrutinizing studies on communication technology utilizing WhatsApp. The data utilized in this literature review comprises articles published in open-access journals, allowing the authors to analyze them. Five relevant studies are under review, as discussed by Ahmed (2019), Hashemifardnia, Namuziandot, and Eshafani (2018), Minalla (2018), Novianto (2017), and Ta 'Amneh (2017). The results indicate that incorporating WhatsApp into English learning can aid learning. However, there are both advantages and disadvantages associated with its usage. The primary disadvantage is the limited internet fees students must bear to access WhatsApp. Conversely, the advantages include students' increased motivation to learn English and enhanced vocabulary and writing skills through discussions in WhatsApp groups.

Keywords: Effectiveness, Technology, WhatsApp

INTRODUCTION

Over the years, technological advances have rapidly accelerated, becoming an integral part of modern life. Today, individuals cannot escape technology's pervasive role in our daily existence. The significant progress in information technology and communication has brought about substantial changes across various aspects of life. In the contemporary era, technology usage is considered a lifestyle, with social media emerging as a crucial tool, particularly in language learning.

Educational institutions are increasingly adopting social media platforms as a medium for learning, aligning with the characteristics of the "internet generation," as highlighted by Prensky (2007). This entails

incorporating internet and digital technology devices such as computers and smartphones into various facets of individuals' lives, including education and language learning. Social media applications are particularly beneficial in language education, offering students opportunities to enhance their foreign language skills and practice language proficiency.

Despite integrating technology into the learning process, the allocated class time may not be sufficient for students to practice and develop their English skills adequately. Therefore, exploring alternative approaches becomes imperative to assist students facing challenges in their learning journey and ensure strong communicative competence in English. Several studies have examined the efficacy of WhatsApp in enhancing vocabulary, writing, and speaking skills among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. WhatsApp proves to be a valuable tool for EFL students, facilitating the learning of unfamiliar vocabulary and enabling corrections in writing.

One notable technological evolution is WhatsApp, a mobile application that utilizes users' internet data packets to facilitate communication and networking. WhatsApp lets users exchange messages, share pictures, files, audio, and create discussion groups easily. This study aims to assess the effectiveness of WhatsApp in language learning, exploring its potential impact on students' language abilities in general. Researchers evaluate the effectiveness of WhatsApp by reviewing studies in information technology and its application in English learning. The aspiration is that using WhatsApp will significantly enhance students' English skills, encompassing writing, reading, listening, and speaking improvements.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The data employed in this literature review comprises published articles from open-access journals. The review seeks to assess the effectiveness of using WhatsApp in English language learning among students, covering articles published between 2017 and 2019. While searching for relevant articles, Google Scholar served as the primary search engine, with the researcher utilizing keywords such as WhatsApp, learning, and effectiveness. The primary keywords yielded 5 hits on Google Scholar while including the keyword "effectiveness" resulted in an additional 5 hits. Consequently, the researchers obtained 10 hits in their search using Google Scholar.

Criteria for Choosing Review Studies

The selection of studies for review was guided by specific criteria, as indicated in the Google Scholar search results. The chosen criteria include studies conducted within the timeframe of 2017 to 2019. Additionally, the selected studies specifically concentrate on e-learning, emphasizing the

utilization of technology, particularly WhatsApp, in the effectiveness of teaching and learning the English language. Furthermore, the criteria encompass studies that directly address the effectiveness of using WhatsApp in the context of English language learning among students. These criteria collectively guided the identification and inclusion of relevant studies for a comprehensive review.

Reasons for Choosing the Criteria

The selection of the timeframe, spanning from 2017 to 2019, was based on the researcher's reliance on journals obtained as references. The chosen period aligns with the availability of relevant literature and studies that contribute to the understanding of online learning. In both online and offline learning settings, various platforms and applications are employed to facilitate the learning process, with WhatsApp being one such example. The primary objective of this review is to investigate and comprehend the effectiveness of utilizing WhatsApp specifically for learning English among students. Therefore, the chosen criteria were instrumental in ensuring that the selected studies align with the researcher's focus on the impact of WhatsApp in the specified context during the stated timeframe.

Excluded Studies and Reasons

Several studies were excluded from consideration for this review, each with specific reasons. The first study conducted by Dyavarishetty and Patil in 2017 was omitted due to its focus on assessing the effectiveness of WhatsApp as a complementary teaching medium in traditional education. This study aimed to enhance the knowledge and skills of medical students through case-based learning. The second study, conducted by Gon and Alka in 2017, was excluded because its primary objective was to evaluate the effectiveness of social media, including WhatsApp, in delivering knowledge to medical college students. This study compared knowledge acquisition through e-learning and traditional didactic lectures. The third study conducted by Isrofiyah, Budiasih, and Wonorahardjo in 2017 was excluded because it aimed to identify differences in motivation and cognitive learning outcomes among groups of students taught using the Problem Posing-WhatsApp method. The fourth study by Pratama and Kartikawati in 2017 was excluded as it focused on determining the impact of the Group Investigation (GI) method with WhatsApp as a mobile learning tool on student learning outcomes during the study. The fifth study by Oyewole, Animasahun, and Chapman in 2020 was omitted because it sought to survey the effectiveness of WhatsApp in preparing doctors for medical licensing exams. Consequently, these exclusions were made based on the studies not meeting the specified criteria for this review.

Relevant Studies

Thus, a total of five studies were deemed relevant for review after the exclusion of certain studies. The first study (Ahmed, 2019) aims to test the pedagogical role of using WhatsApp as a mobile application for language learning, intending to enhance the motivation of EFL Yemeni students and develop their skills in reading and writing. The second study (Hashemifardnia, Namaziandost, & Esfahani, 2018) focuses on understanding the effects of using WhatsApp among EFL learners, specifically Iranian students, with an emphasis on vocabulary learning. The third study (Minalla, 2018) aims to identify a verbal communicative platform within the classroom context that increases the verbal interaction of EFL students. It seeks ways to integrate with traditional learning, supporting verbal interactions of EFL students outside the classroom context, irrespective of time and place. The fourth study (Novianto, 2017) aims to assess the effectiveness of the WhatsApp Group Application as authentic material in comprehending students' writing and their responses. The fifth study (Ta'amneh, 2017) investigates the effectiveness of using WhatsApp Messenger in learning the English language among 40 university students.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Ahmed (2019) aimed to answer the question: "Can WhatsApp be used as a pedagogical tool to enhance the motivation of EFL students in developing reading and writing skills?" Twenty students participated in the English learning program at Radfan College of Education - Aden University. Data collection involved pre-tests, post-tests, and daily observations. Task-based reading and writing assessments were given to students at the beginning and end of the learning period. The research aimed to develop an effective pedagogical use of WhatsApp to increase students' motivation for learning foreign languages and improving their written communication skills. The results indicated that WhatsApp provides students with a valuable and enjoyable platform for learning a foreign language, contributing to increased motivation and proficiency in reading and writing.

Hashemifardnia, Namaziandost, and Esfahani (2018) sought to answer the research question: "Does using WhatsApp have any significant effect on Iranian EFL learners' vocabulary learning?" The study included 50 Iranian female participants from the Adiban English Language Institute in Baghmalek, Khuzestan, Iran. Data collection involved Paired Sample t-tests and Independent Sample t-tests to analyze the effectiveness of WhatsApp on students' vocabulary learning. The participants were divided into experimental and control groups, comprising 25 participants. The results showed that students receiving instructions via WhatsApp performed better than those with traditional instruction. The statistical

analysis revealed a significant difference, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. WhatsApp positively affected the experimental group's vocabulary learning, providing more complete and authentic input for enhanced learning.

Minalla (2018) asked: "To what extent could utilizing message chat on WhatsApp Group enhance EFL learners' verbal interaction outside classroom contexts?" The study involved creating experimental and control groups, with qualitative and quantitative data analysis. Initially, the results showed no significant difference between the groups. However, a significant difference emerged after the post-test, with the experimental group exhibiting higher results. This suggested that using the WhatsApp application as a new method led to progress in verbal interactions among students in the experimental group.

Novianto (2017) conducted a study with 35 students from the seventh grade at SMP NEGERI 2 Kediri. The research employed pre-tests, post-tests, and quantitative research methods. The results indicated that students perceived the WhatsApp Group Application as effective in assisting them with writing paragraphs, organizing ideas, and developing coherent drafts. Most students agreed that WhatsApp was beneficial for learning writing, providing evidence of its positive impact on students' writing skills.

Ta 'Amneh (2017) suspected that WhatsApp affects the learning process based on statistical results. The study used an experimental class with a mixed method (WhatsApp and traditional) and a control class using a traditional method (face-to-face). Initial statistical data showed no significant difference between the two groups. However, after a post-test, the experimental class outperformed the control class, confirming that the use of WhatsApp positively affected the learning process. The findings indicated that students using WhatsApp felt more engaged, actively participating in learning, and freely exchanging information, contributing to increased motivation and knowledge acquisition.

Summary of Major Results

The five reviewed studies (Ahmed, 2019; Hashemifardnia, Namunziadot & Eshafan, 2018; Minalla, 2018; Novianto, 2017) collectively provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of using WhatsApp in language learning. The first study (Ahmed, 2019) demonstrated that learning through WhatsApp groups and traditional classroom methods yields varying effectiveness. Students in the WhatsApp group, engaging in discussions and receiving assignments, showed enhanced development in reading and writing skills compared to those in traditional classroom settings. The research emphasized that using WhatsApp groups allowed more extensive practice in reading, writing, and English communication, fostering increased student motivation. In contrast, classroom learning often limited active participation, with most students being passive listeners.

The second study (Hashemifardnia, Namaziandost, & Esfahani, 2018) highlighted that WhatsApp significantly improved vocabulary for Iranian ESL students through chatting and studying. Using WhatsApp exposed students to more comprehensible and authentic input, resulting in a more effective learning process. Students reported increased motivation and confidence in WhatsApp, facilitating enhanced interactive competence and easier vocabulary acquisition.

The third study (Minalla, 2018) aimed to understand the effects of learning through the new WhatsApp application method in verbal communication. The results indicated progress in verbal interaction learning processes among EFL students in the experimental group, which utilized a mix of WhatsApp voice messages and traditional methods. The authors recommended incorporating the WhatsApp application, particularly through voice conversations, in middle school EFL teaching to broaden language skills beyond the classroom.

In the fourth study (Novianto, 2017), WhatsApp, especially in group learning, emerged as a valuable tool in fostering student confidence and facilitating learning beyond the classroom. The WhatsApp Group Application was found to aid students in understanding word meanings, providing a platform for discussions and clarifications outside regular class hours. The application effectively increased student motivation, allowing them to use mobile phones as supportive tools for learning anytime and anywhere.

The fifth study (Ta 'Amneh, 2017) investigated the effects of using WhatsApp messenger in English language learning, comparing an experimental group utilizing a mix of WhatsApp and traditional methods with a control group using face-to-face traditional methods. The findings suggested that English learning through WhatsApp technology was more effective than traditional methods. WhatsApp messenger positively impacted the learning process, enabling students to freely share, capture information, and enhance their motivation and English language abilities.

Drawbacks and Solutions

From this study, the identified drawbacks are as follows: limited internet connection, expensive internet fees, the reluctance of some female students to be in a group with male students or to share their phone numbers with teachers and classmates due to social and cultural concerns, some students abusing their study groups, and being less active in WhatsApp study, as highlighted by Sabri Thabit Saleh Ahmed (2019). Students face numerous challenges in learning English, with many finding classroom study boring and stressful, as indicated by Ta'amneh (2017). The quality of Saudi EFL students is unsatisfactory, attributed to time constraints in language classes and students experiencing uncontrolled anxiety when speaking in front of their classmates, as revealed in the study by Amir Abdalla Minalla (2018).

These deficiencies can be addressed by educational institutions through improved internet connectivity, teachers fostering a positive perception of gender equality to facilitate successful mixed-gender WhatsApp groups, and making English learning interesting and enjoyable to enhance student engagement in the learning process.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the approach through a literature review, it can be concluded that the use of WhatsApp application technology is effective in developing skills and improving general language learning abilities, including vocabulary, listening, reading, speaking, and writing. From the perspectives of usability and convenience, WhatsApp provides satisfaction for users, making it implementable both inside and outside the classroom. WhatsApp instant messengers have the potential to bridge and share information between teachers and students. Students feel motivated to enhance their English proficiency, and for those with introverted tendencies, it can assist them in expressing their ideas and building self-confidence when communicating with their friends.

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