

Using WhatsApp to promote ESL students' writing

Malek Alouch

School of Languages, Literacies and Translation,
Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia
English Language Institute
King Abdul Aziz University, Saudi Arabia

Malini Ganapathy (*Corresponding author*)

School of Languages, Literacies and Translation,
Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia

Debbita Tan Ai Lin

School of Languages, Literacies and Translation,
Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia

email: alouch.malek@student.usm.my, malinik@usm.my, debbita_tan@usm.my

Received: 23 February 2021; **Accepted:** 02 December 2021; **Published:** 06 December 2021

To cite this article (APA): Alouch, M., Ganapathy, M., & Ai Lin, D. T. (2021). Using WhatsApp to promote ESL students' writing. *AJELP: Asian Journal of English Language and Pedagogy*, 9(2), 54-65. <https://doi.org/10.37134/ajelp.vol9.2.5.2021>

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.37134/ajelp.vol9.2.5.2021>

Abstract: This research article illustrates the use of WhatsApp to help tertiary students to improve their English writing skills. The writing activities includes writing emails, paragraphs and essays. This electronic application can help instructors to have an engaging classroom environment by giving the students the opportunity to take their role in the classroom as producers. The main objective of this study is to investigate the extent to which the use of WhatsApp improves students' writing skills. The second objective of this present study is to identify students' perceptions about the use of WhatsApp to learn writing inside the classroom. A mixed-methods research was used in this study whereby six writing tests, a questionnaire and focus group discussions were administered. The results of the writing tests and the questionnaire used in this study highlighted that WhatsApp motivated students to use it to promote their writing in English. The research findings will benefit ESL instructors to overcome the difficulties that they may face when teaching ESL writing skills. The findings of this current research will enable the ESL instructors to teach writing effectively using WhatsApp as a supplementary pedagogical tool. The most significant benefit is that educators, teacher trainers and the curriculum planners can take into consideration implementing more technological and educational tools in the teaching of writing. They will also open the door for students to participate in evaluating the learning process and methodology.

Keywords: vocabulary, ESL, technology integration, WhatsApp, writing

INTRODUCTION

WhatsApp has been used in schools, institutes and universities for administrative purposes such as sending schedules, delaying or cancelling exams and forwarding urgent circulars. This electronic tool has become a friend to people especially students. It has facilitated and built a great educational contact between students and their instructors, which enables both students and instructors to create a good social and educational rapport inside and outside the classroom.

As the most accessible tool of technology, WhatsApp can be used to help students promote their writing in English. Hamad (2017) states that WhatsApp can help students develop their writing. WhatsApp has the potential to motivate students to practice writing as a process when students go through different stages while they are writing on WhatsApp. It is an educational tool that enables instructors to get their students involved in the learning process when instructors intentionally bring social life into the classroom. This paves the way for students to enjoy and promote learning writing in the classroom by using WhatsApp as the most used application.

WhatsApp has replaced many of people's belongings such as laptops, computers, pens and papers. WhatsApp and other applications facilitate many aspects of people's life including learning at schools, institutes and universities. Some studies have identified WhatsApp as a motivational tool for writing. Dwee and Sharif (2016) stressed that WhatsApp has influenced students' role in being able to engage in learning and have fun. Ramakrishnan (2017) stresses the fact that people use WhatsApp to do daily activities such as sharing videos, texting, which enables them to learn English automatically.

With regards to the use of WhatsApp in the Saudi universities, this paper focuses on promoting writing in a Saudi university, and it is significant to mention that Saudi Arabia has planned to integrate educational technology in schools, institutes and universities. The aim of integrating technology including mobile applications namely WhatsApp has been to improve the quality of learning and teaching of English writing, speaking and other language skills. Alshammari, Parkes and Adlington (2017) state that students and instructors in Saudi Arabia have utilized WhatsApp for many different educational purposes. This encourages researchers to investigate the potential of using WhatsApp as a novel tool to improve ESL/EFL learning of writing.

Researchers in Saudi Arabia have discussed and researched the importance of using mobile phone applications in universities and schools. The focus of these studies was on the need for using mobile phone applications in learning English. Alsaleem (2013), Hamad (2017) and Bensalem (2018) stated that WhatsApp can be used in the context of EFL learning. This present paper aims at identifying the impact of using WhatsApp to help students improve their English writing skills.

Saudi's public and private universities and language centres have used technologies for academic, teaching and learning goals. This opens the door for researchers to identify and evaluate the possibility and the benefits of using mobile applications like WhatsApp to achieve learning objectives. With regards to other universities globally, students use WhatsApp application for many educational reasons such as sending summaries, sharing schedules and teachers' notes that help them prepare for their exams. This paves the way in teachers' pedagogical methods and encourages them at the same time to include writing activities and tasks where students can use WhatsApp to do the writing tasks. Teachers can do that with the aim of enhancing the process of learning and practicing writing on WhatsApp.

The pacing guide, a syllabus prepared by the ELI Curriculum and Testing Unit in the academic year 2018/2019, highlights the inclination at the ELI, King Abdul Aziz University, to integrate mobile phone applications to teach and learn the four ESL language skills. The

pacing guide planners have identified how teachers can use mobile phone applications to teach both grammar and vocabulary. Using technologies becomes an essential part in education and in ESL learning, the thing that scaffolds student interests and motivation so that they play their role in the learning process.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Research has been done in Saudi universities about using WhatsApp as an electronic tool to improve EFL learning. Amry (2014), Hamad (2017) and Bensalem (2018) have studied the impact of using WhatsApp to enhance EFL learning. Hamad (2017) has focused on using WhatsApp to help female students improve their EFL learning skills. Bensalem (2018) in turn did his study on using WhatsApp to improve vocabulary learning. Amry (2014) did her study on using WhatsApp to teach one unit of the textbook. However, no study has investigated the use of WhatsApp as a tool to improve the style of writings in emails, paragraphs or essay writing. Akakandelwa, Changala and Moonga (2018) state that the use of WhatsApp has an impact on the performance of students. In addition, the finding of the study by Mashru and Upadhyay (2015) reveals that the use of technology seems to be a motivating factor in encouraging students to be more engaged in doing activities in the language classroom.

In the study by Dwee and Sharif (2016), students stated that the use of technology especially WhatsApp made it easier for them to write. Students elaborated significantly on how the use of WhatsApp increased their confidence in writing in English. Therefore, this study will be an investigation of the use of WhatsApp to improve the writing skills of students at tertiary level, which is the gap in the literature that this study aims to address.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This paper examined and analyzed the extent to which students' writing skills improved with the use of WhatsApp. This investigation was based on the results of six writing tests, a questionnaire and focus group discussions. The objective of this paper was to gauge and evaluate whether or not WhatsApp had the potential to improve students' writing skills.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There have been many studies and research about using WhatsApp application as a motivating and entertaining tool inside and outside the classroom. The study by Hamad (2017) has focused on using WhatsApp to enhance learning the four skills of English language. Improving students' learning of the English language skills was the main aim of her study. Hamad's study (2017) identified the need for using mobile applications in education to help students to enjoy learning English language skills. However, the study was superficial as it did not delve into the writing skill or any other skill comprehensively.

Bensalem (2018) has identified the impact of using WhatsApp to improve learning vocabulary. For Bensalem (2018), WhatsApp was an interesting tool that students used to learn new words. He stressed in his research paper that students became more motivated to work hard in order to submit their assignments by using WhatsApp. Bensalem (2018) highlighted the potential of students' preference of using WhatsApp as a new tool but the intervention could have been longer in duration to examine the sustainability of the study.

In addition, Alsaleem (2013) has found that WhatsApp can be used as an electronic tool to improve writing vocabulary and word choice. Alsaleem (2013) discussed the importance of using new technology in education. Among the new mobile applications, she chose WhatsApp

as a learning tool that students can use in learning English. As Alsaleem (2013) suggested, the use of WhatsApp would motivate students and keep them engaged in the learning process. It would also encourage teachers of English to focus on teaching writing using WhatsApp electronic journaling will allow university ESL instructors to add writing to their subject matter across the curriculum while helping students to improve their writing skills at the same time. Hence, this study will fill the gap in the literature, as it investigates the extent to which students' writing skills improved with the use of WhatsApp.

Justina (2016) discussed the potential of using WhatsApp to improve and develop both reading and writing skills. She reiterated that social networking sites are helpful tools and learners are encouraged to use them because they have the advantage of increasing students' motivation. The study of Justina (2016) showed using mobile phones inside the classroom made students motivated and eager to learn but students get distracted too in the process of learning. One of the advantages that Justina highlighted in her study (2016) was that students' skills developed with the use of WhatsApp. Justina (2016) highlighted the effect of using WhatsApp to build good rapport among instructors and students.

Amry (2014) points out that using WhatsApp as a means of learning has many advantages that make learning better and entertaining. In her study, Amry (2014) found that students were able to overcome their lack of interest in learning when WhatsApp was integrated as a social learning tool. Students tended to be more sociable when they practiced sharing their writings and ideas on the WhatsApp group. Amry's (2014) findings corroborate with other Saudi researchers who focused on using novel tools in learning English as a foreign language. Amry's (2014) findings have much in common with the study by Alsaleem (2013), Hamad (2017) and Bensalem (2018). Those researchers highlighted the benefits of using WhatsApp to help students to improve English learning skills.

WhatsApp and ESL Writing

Writing is an important skill that students are required to practice and improve in their academic and university studies. Writing as a skill includes many different stages that writers go through while writing using their mother tongue or any other second language. Students have some difficulties when they learn writing using a foreign language especially in their writing component during the exams. In order to motivate students to learn writing, which is an important skill; instructors can facilitate learning by using new mobile applications in their teaching. Using such tools leads to building a new environment of learning inside the classroom.

Regarding the use of WhatsApp to improve the process of writing, WhatsApp application helps students to go through and practice the necessary writing stages. On WhatsApp, students can plan their ideas, draft, edit, revise and publish their final draft. After publishing their texts, students can have the chance to see what their colleagues wrote. The flexibility of using WhatsApp to write the assigned task and sharing the writings on WhatsApp increase collaboration and group work. The use of this novel writing tool offers students the chance to read many different drafts about the same topic. This feature encourages ESL instructors to use WhatsApp application while doing the writing activities required in the curriculum they teach.

Writing on WhatsApp leads to achieving the goal of having a teamwork. Writing is perceived as a social activity that binds people to each other. Writing on WhatsApp strengthens the social learning aspect. Establishing a motivating classroom of learning should be one of the instructor's teaching priorities as Brophy (2004) pointed out in his book entitled "Motivating Students to Learn". Practicing and sharing writing tasks on WhatsApp can reinforce the social relations among students, which leads to a better learning classroom environment.

Kheryadi (2017) suggested that instructors need to advocate new mobile applications such as WhatsApp to improve students' speaking and writing skills. He highlighted the

advantages of using WhatsApp to get students involved in completing their writing activities. The use of WhatsApp helps students practice the different stages of writing as a process. Kheryadi (2017) posits that WhatsApp can be used as a means of teaching English where instructors differentiate their methods of teaching with the aim of increasing collaboration among students. Kheryadi (2017) focuses on the importance of the theme of participation and collaboration when using WhatsApp to teach writing. Students learn from their peers how to organize their writing topics and what ideas should they include when writing a certain topic.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study was conducted using a mixed-methods research that used both quantitative and qualitative approaches to collect data for the study. This methodology was used to get a good understanding of the problem and to gather the students' responses on using WhatsApp in learning writing skills in the classroom. The two sets of the data are triangulated with each other to provide more accurate results and findings.

In relation to the population for the study, one of the four levels, level 104, of the English Foundation Year Program at King Abdul Aziz University was selected for this research study. This was done according to the classes available at the beginning of module four of the academic year 2018/2019. The General Track levels are: Beginner, Elementary, Pre-Intermediate and Intermediate.

These four levels are correlated with CEFR and students should finish them all in one year. The CEFR level for the Beginner and Elementary groups are A1 and A2. As for the Pre-Intermediate level it is B1, while the Intermediate level is B1+. On the other hand, the Academic English Track levels are: Beginner, Elementary, Upper Elementary to Pre-Intermediate and Intermediate. The Academic Track levels are correlated to the CEFR and are designed to take student from A1 to B1 on the CEFR levels with a greater focus on academic vocabulary and academic skills.

Participants

A level 4 class comprising of 19 male students participated in the study. Students in this class had already passed three levels of EFL at the ELI. This ensured that students in the study had sufficient writing skills to take part in doing the assigned activities. One class comprising male students were selected to participate in this study. The number of the students was limited to 19. This gave the instructor doing the study the opportunity to administer his class while teaching the writing activities using WhatsApp. The teacher of this class volunteered to participate in this study that focused on using WhatsApp to improve students' writing skills. Ten students in this class participated in providing the qualitative data through the focus group discussions that took place at the end of the intervention of this study.

Research Procedure

The researchers of the study did a pre-intervention survey about students' perceptions of their preferred mobile application and about the skill that they faced difficulty in mastering while learning a language. The students' responses contributed to choosing the writing skill to be the focus of this current study. The fact the students preferred to use WhatsApp as their most used application enabled the researchers in this study to choose WhatsApp as a method for learning writing.

The intervention in this study lasted for nine weeks. During the intervention, students were taught the writing skills through the use of WhatsApp. The instructor explained to the students how to use WhatsApp to brainstorm their ideas, write, send, revise and edit their writings on WhatsApp. After teaching and discussing the topics on WhatsApp, students had to take a writing test 108 in a separate class period. Each writing test focused on a particular theme that was covered during the course. The topics of writing tests were selected in accordance with the topics that the textbook covered. This enabled the participants to practice the necessary writing activities the foster their style and ideas. The topics included writing about famous people, writing different kinds of emails and writing an essay. Students sent their drafts on WhatsApp and their instructor sent them the helpful feedback through the WhatsApp group. After practicing this on the group, students had to take a writing test on a different day. WhatsApp was used as a platform to write the essays for the test.

The participants in this study had to go through three stages of the intervention process. The participants had to take six writing tests on a weekly basis. They also had to give answers for the questionnaire of this current study at the end of the intervention. The last stage was to participate in the focus group discussions to reflect on what they did during the intervention namely on the effect of using WhatsApp as a tool in learning writing. All instruments had undergone a pilot study to establish the reliability and validity of the study.

The Instruments of the Study

Weekly Writing Tests

In every week during the intervention of this study, students had a writing test. Students had 18 hours a week where they studied English using Cambridge English Unlimited books. Two instructors who are members of the Curriculum and Testing Unit of the ELI who volunteered to participate in this study marked all these writing tests. The writing scores data was used to gauge and evaluate students' achievements and improvement throughout the whole of this intervention. All the writing topics that students wrote in this real study were marked according to the modified writing rating rubrics set by the Curriculum and Testing Unit of the ELI.

Questionnaire

The researchers of this study modified the questionnaire by Hamad (2017) to suit this present study. The researchers did so by rephrasing some of the questions and replacing some of them with their own questions to suit this present study. The modified questionnaire was piloted prior to this study. A formal email was sent to the researcher, Mona Hamad, to inform her about the possibility of using her questionnaire. The researchers used a five-point Likert scale questionnaire that focused on the use of WhatsApp to improve learning writing skills and on students' opinions of using WhatsApp to learn writing. The questionnaire was adapted and the Cronbach Alpha's reading, .963 showed the reliability of the items.

DATA ANALYSIS

The researchers of this current study collected both the quantitative and qualitative data and analyzed the data at the end of the intervention. They analyzed the six writing tests scores, the students' answers of the questionnaire used in this study and the data that the students provided in the focus group discussions. The scores of the six writing tests were analyzed following the Criterion Referenced Scoring method. After the two graders submitted the scores of the six writing tests, the researcher established criteria where he calculated the class average for each

writing test using Excel. In each writing test, the class average was taken as the base score to reflect on students' achievements and performance. This kind of analysis allowed the researcher to make comparison among students. This also helped him to observe and identify whether or not there was any achievement growth or declining pattern in the six writing tests that the students took during the intervention of this current study. Tracking students' achievement and defining the findings of the results was explained and reported using tables and figures.

The results of the questionnaire of this current study were presented using the percentage of frequencies. These results were presented in two separate tables. The researchers used a thematic analysis to identify the main ideas that students had and shared about using WhatsApp to learn writing. The researchers examined and analyzed the interviews that took place in the last week of the study. This was done by identifying the most important repeated words in the interviews and the themes that the participants concentrated on while giving their opinions.

Results

The Writing Tests

The scores of the writing tests addressed the first research objective of this study. Based on the scores presented in Table 1, the writing performance of the students improved slightly. These writing tests were helpful instruments that provided a great source of data to determine how the use of WhatsApp contributed to students' improvement in the field of writing based on their essay writing skills. In general, the writing scores did not show a big improvement, but it revealed that the use of WhatsApp had the potential to improve ESL writing skills based on students' ability to write essays.

Table 1 shows the average scores for each test graded by the two graders. The final average taken from the two graders is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Final Average of Grader 1 and Grader 2

Graders	Test 1	Test 2	Test 3	Test 4	Test 5	Test 6
Grader 1	17.81818	16.5	16.27273	17.71429	16.58333	12.81818
Grader 2	17.45455	15.83333	16.09091	17.57143	17.16667	13
Average	17.6364	16.1667	16.1818	17.6429	16.875	12.9091

Second, the descriptive analysis obtained from the questionnaire showed that using WhatsApp had a good impact in helping students to improve their ESL writing. Nine questions in the questionnaire focused on the first objective of this study, which was to examine the extent to which students' writing skills improved by using WhatsApp. All the items of the questionnaire were evaluated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). Table 2 illustrates the percentage of frequencies for the nine questions that focused on the usefulness of using WhatsApp for improving writing skills.

Table 2: Frequency of Usefulness of Using WhatsApp for Improving Writing Skills

Question #	Question/Statement	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)	Mean
2	Using WhatsApp helped me to revise my work well.	10.5	--	5.3	15.8	68.4	4.32
7	Using WhatsApp made the writing of my initial draft easier.	10.5	--	10.5	26.3	52.6	4.11

8	The use of WhatsApp enabled me to learn from my peers' mistakes.	10.5	--	5.3	36.8	47.4	4.11
9	I received my teacher's feedback faster through the use of WhatsApp.	--	--	15.8	10.5	73.7	4.58
11	When doing the writing activities, I collaborated better in class through the use of WhatsApp.	5.3	--	5.3	36.8	52.6	4.32
13	Using WhatsApp helped me improve my spelling and learn new words.	10.5	--	5.3	15.8	68.4	4.32
14	Using WhatsApp helped me to do better on the final writing exam.	10.5	--	15.8	10.5	63.2	4.16
17	The use of WhatsApp helped me learn how to organize sentences when writing a paragraph.	10.5	--	10.5	26.3	52.6	4.11
18	Using WhatsApp helped me use punctuation marks correctly.	10.5	5.3	15.8	21.1	47.4	3.89

As shown in table 2, item 9 scored the highest average mean score of 4.58 and Std. Deviation .769. Item 11 scored the next highest mean, 4.32, with a Std. Deviation 1.003. The mean scores for item 2 and 13 is 4.32 with Std. Deviation 1.293. This indicated that the trend for item 13 is (Strongly agree) according to a 5-point Likert scale. A percentage of 78.9% of the total participants agreed that writing their initial draft became easier through the use of WhatsApp. 84.2% of the total students agree that they were able to learn from their peers' mistakes. Noticeably, more than 70% of the participants selected "Agree" and "Strongly agree" in item 14 to reflect on the advantage of using WhatsApp on their progress in the final writing exam. A high percentage (78.9) of the whole participants agree that the use of WhatsApp helped them organize sentences while writing a paragraph. A percentage of 68.5% of the students stated that using WhatsApp enabled them to punctuate their sentences correctly.

Table 3: Frequency of Students' Perceptions of Using WhatsApp to Learn Writing

Question #	Question/Statement	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)	Mean
1	Using WhatsApp to write is fun.	10.5	--	--	26.3	63.2	4.32
3	Using WhatsApp to write is difficult.	47.4	26.3	21.1	5.3	--	1.84
4	I find it challenging to use WhatsApp to write.	21.1	31.6	26.3	15.8	5.3	2.53
5	WhatsApp is an entertaining tool for learning writing.	10.5	--	5.3	21.1	63.2	4.26
6	Using WhatsApp helped me to develop my writing skill.	10.5	--	10.5	26.3	52.6	4.11
10	Using WhatsApp to contact my instructor is easier than using any other application.	--	--	--	26.3	73.7	4.74

12	Using WhatsApp made me enjoy doing the writing activities.	10.5	--	5.3	26.3	57.9	4.21
15	Using WhatsApp made me more motivated in learning English.	10.5	--	15.8	31.6	42.1	3.95
16	I prefer using WhatsApp to practice writing over using paper and pencil.	10.5	5.3	5.3	15.8	52.6	3.74

Table 4.8 shows the students' perceptions of using WhatsApp to learn writing in the

classroom. As it is shown in table 4.8, item 10 scored the highest average, 4.74 mean score showing that the students find using WhatsApp to contact instructors is easier compared to other applications. Next, item 1 scored 4.32, indicating that using Mean WhatsApp to write is fun. Students also indicated that WhatsApp is an entertaining tool for learning writing with the mean score 4.26, WhatsApp made them enjoy doing writing activities (4.21) and WhatsApp made them motivated to learn English Language (3.95).

Item 16 scored 3.74 mean score showing that the respondents prefer WhatsApp to using paper and pencil when they practiced writing in the classroom. Item 3 received the lowest mean score with 1.84 and a Std. Deviation of .958 indicating that 73.7% of the total students disagreed that using WhatsApp to write was difficult. The next lowest mean (2.53) with a Std. Deviation of 1.172 was given to item four. It indicated that 52.7 % of the total students disagreed that it was challenging to use WhatsApp to write.

Discussion

Among the most valuable findings that the researchers of this study highlighted is that the use of WhatsApp provides an interesting learning environment. This study also has pointed out that WhatsApp application as a learning platform increases students' motivation to learn and collaborate inside the classroom. This finding corroborates with Bensalem's research (2018) in which he highlighted that using WhatsApp is an interesting supplementary platform of learning. The same finding could be traced out in the study of Dwee and Nurhidayah (2016). These two researchers stated that their learners found the use of WhatsApp to be fun for giving the writing prompts.

Another important finding of this current study is that the use of WhatsApp to learn enhances and strengthens the rapport among the whole team of the class including the instructor of the class. As a learning social tool, WhatsApp increases the social friendly relationships among students when they share their information and achievements on the group. This finding asserts Amry's research (2014) and the study of Justina (2016) about the importance of the theme of collaboration and building good in-class relations that the use of WhatsApp application can offer. Amry (2014) highlights that using WhatsApp provides students with great opportunities to interact and work together. Justina (2016) stressed the positive effect of using this electronic application in building the good rapport in the classroom. This great factor brings real social relations into the classroom where students learn and become more social. The use of WhatsApp helps students to work as a team focusing on learning and sharing writing on the group.

WhatsApp as a learning tool helps students to have instant contact with the instructor inside the classroom, which enabled them to improve their writing by correcting their own mistakes and by learning from their peers' mistakes. The finding highlights that the extent of immediate improvement was remarkable. This advantage of contacting with the instructor by using WhatsApp as an electronic tool is given much interest in Hamad's research (2017) and in Kheryadi's study (2017). The use of WhatsApp replaces the use of pen and paper to improve writing.

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The three researchers conducted this study to identify the benefits of using WhatsApp for improving students' writing skills, and to evaluate students' opinions of using this online mobile application to learn and practice writing in the classroom. Due to the fact that students often use their mobile applications to contact people and their classmates, it is significant to use mobile applications for improving English Language writing skills.

Among the most important findings of this study is that using WhatsApp in the classroom to improve writing skills may contribute to creating a better learning environment. In this study, the students were able to help each other and to share their writings with their peers. Hence, the use of WhatsApp enabled them to learn from their classmates and correct each other. This strengthens the social interaction among students and stresses the significance of students' collaboration in the classroom. This corroborates with the findings and suggestions of research of Mhandeni and Mwakapina (2016) who state that the use of WhatsApp creates an interactive class collaboration between learners.

Based on the findings, English language instructors are encouraged to give more time for the use of mobile applications in the classroom. Taking this step and challenge can enhance student motivation as students learn in an environment that is based on their interests and ambitions. Justina (2016) stresses the importance of using teaching methods that focus on what students' interests to motivate them to take part in the process of improving their writing performance.

Lastly, considering the importance of student voice in the learning process, ESL instructors can allow learners to use WhatsApp as a learning tool for educational goals. This can also enable the instructors to make use of the available facilities in creating an educational model of learning environment. Learners become the core of teaching plan that instructors prepare for their classroom.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This current study highlighted the need for using WhatsApp and other mobile phone applications in the classroom with the aim of bringing the social environment into classroom learning. This current study revealed that creating an environment of learning that is similar to the social environment outside the classroom helps students to learn writing naturally and professionally. This current study showed that the use of WhatsApp had the potential of helping university students to improve their ESL writing. This study identified the positive effects that the use of WhatsApp would provide for the students who seek to improve their writing skills. According to the results of this current study, if students were given the opportunity to bring their social aspect of learning into the classroom, they would probably enjoy learning writing in a different way inside the classroom. In turn, instructors would differentiate their methods of teaching ESL writing at the tertiary stage. Students would be more active and enthusiastic in practicing a new method of writing in the classroom especially when their aims and interests are highly valued by instructors and curriculum planners. Students become the centre of the learning process when they have the chance to reflect on learning strategies.

This study was conducted with the aim of investigating the benefits of using WhatsApp by ELI students and to measure and evaluate the students' outcomes and improvement upon using WhatsApp. These researchers also investigated students' perceptions about using WhatsApp to practice and learn writing skills' in the classroom.

The first benefit from this study was the improvement of the performance of ELI students who were the target of this research. Secondly, the ELI instructors, teacher trainers

and the curriculum and pacing guide planners could benefit from this research. They could plan for implementing more technologies in the classroom to strengthen students' motivation towards learning English writing skills.

The researchers of this study investigated the effects of using WhatsApp application for improving writing and they investigated students' perceptions about using WhatsApp to learn writing. Future studies can investigate the effects and outcomes of using WhatsApp or other mobile applications in learning other English skills. Since this age is known to be the age of using new technology in education and learning English language, there is a need to identify how to use WhatsApp and other mobile learning applications in universities and institutes to improve the quality of learning foreign languages.

Acknowledgements

The support of the School of Languages, Literacies and Translation was vital for the success of this paper. The staff of this school provided the researchers of this paper with all help needed so that the researchers were able to conduct this study academically and professionally

REFERENCES

- Alsalem, B. I. (2013). The Effect of "WhatsApp" Electronic Dialogue Journaling on Improving Writing Vocabulary Word Choice and Voice of EFL Undergraduate Saudi Students. *Arab World English Journal*, 4(3), 213-225.
- Alshammari, R., Parkes, M., & Adlington, R. (2017). Using WhatsApp in EFL Instruction with Saudi Arabian University Students. *Arab World English Journal*, 8(4), 68-84.
- AlSudais, A. (2017). Teaching English as a Foreign Language: The Case of Saudi Arabia. *European Journal of English Language and Literature Studies*, 5(9), 18-27.
- Akakandelwa, A., Moonga, A., & Changala, M. (2018). Usage of WhatsApp Messenger Among Final Year Undergraduate Adult Education Students at the University of Zambia. *Journal of African Interdisciplinary Studies*. 2(8), 4-13.
- Amry, A. (2014). The Impact of WhatsApp Mobile Social Learning on the Achievement and Attitudes of Female Students Compared with Face to Face Learning in the Classroom. *European Scientific Journal*, 10(22), 116-136.
- Bensalem, E. (2018). The Impact of WhatsApp on EFL students' Vocabulary Learning. *Arab World English Journal*, 9(1), 23-38.
- Brophy, J. (2004). *Motivating Students to Learn*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Dornyei, Z. (2001). *Motivational Strategies in the Language Classroom*. Cambridge University Press.
- Dwee, C. & Sharif, N. (2016). What's up with WhatsApp: Writing on the Go. [Conference Session] Malaysian English Language Teaching Association (MELTA) 25th International Conference. Perak, Malaysia.
- Fathullah, M. (2006). *The Basics of the Production and the Use of Educational Means and Technology*. Dar Alsumaei.
- Justina, M. (2016). *Use of WhatsApp to Enhance Reading and Writing Skills at Undergraduate College Level*, 16(11), 47-60.
- Kheryadi, K. (2017). The Implementation of "WhatsApp" as a Media of English Language Teaching. *Loquen English Studies Journal*, 10(2), 1-14
- M. Hamad, M. (2017). Using WhatsApp to Enhance Students' Learning of English Language "Experience to Share". *Higher Education Studies*, 7(4), 74-87

- Mashru, D. & Upadhyay, A. (2015). Enriching vocabulary through WhatsApp: an innovative approach of ELT using ICT. *Recent Trends: A Referred International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 2(3), 59-63.
- Mwakapina, J., Mhandeni, A., & Nyinondi, O. (2016). WhatsApp Mobile Tool in Second Language Learning: Opportunities, Potentials and Challenges in Higher Education Settings in Tanzania. *International Journal of English Language Education*. 4(2), 70-90.
- Maxwell, J. (2017). *The Power of Significance: How Purpose Changes Your Life*. Hachette Book Group, Inc.
- Ramakrishnan (2017). Use of WhatsApp for English Language Proficiency. Among B.ED. Trainees. *International Journal of Research-Granthaalayah*, 5(9). 1-6.