

## **An Experimental Approach by Using WhatsApp for Teaching and Learning of Bahasa Malaysia to International Students at Engineering Campus, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) Due to Pandemic of COVID-19**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The paper is about the effectiveness of using WhatsApp in teaching and learning Bahasa Malaysia as a foreign language to international students at the Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) Engineering Campus especially during pandemic Covid-19 issues. An experimental teaching approach is adopted in teaching language at USM Engineering Campus, involving Bahasa Malaysia language course. The research is on how students are able to learn more effectively by using WhatsApp in online learning, in order to develop their language proficiency in Bahasa Malaysia as a foreign language will be described. Experience from the experimental teaching and learning approach through “FUN WITH LANGUAGE IN ONLINE CLASS- through WhatsApp” provides valuable information on how students react towards WhatsApp application and how do they acquire their language skills through language learning activities.

**Keywords:** Online learning using WhatsApp; Malay Language proficiency; Bahasa Malaysia as a foreign language; Language learning due to Covid-19 pandemic.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Language is a tool for communication. In order to be able to communicate effectively, students must master the basic skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening. Teaching language with the use of WhatsApp is an effective tool because it can enhance different aspects of language learning such as vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation clear to students through the presence of visual effects in the WhatsApp application. Blake Aronson (2020) said in his study: How to Succeed in Online Classes During the COVID-19 Pandemic, like many university students, they are probably in the position of being unable to return to campus because of the Covid-19 pandemic and have to live within the new normal. Schools, colleges and universities everywhere are shutting down their campuses and moving classes online. According Rebecca Kalman, Monica Macias Esparza, and Christina Weston, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, chemistry faculty across the globe quickly converted courses to an online format. Che Azizan, S. N., & Mohamad Nasri, N. (2020) was said, “*Online learning is not something new to teachers before the Covid-19 pandemic, but this learning method is only as a support to*

*conventional learning conducted in the classroom*". Going on with the 21<sup>st</sup> century trend, we can notice that not only is the education system developing rapidly, but also technological gadgets has invaded our living, such as everyone practices smart phone these days for using trendy applications such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Telegram, etc. According Mohamad, A. M. (2020), an alternative e-assessment medium during the new norms education through comparison of quiz completion time and quiz scores between control groups and treatment groups for Malay as a Foreign Language course can be used to identify effectiveness of using online learning Malay course to international students. There is no denial that the current generation we are handling today is the generation of technology, whereby whatever we do, we can't prevent them from using technology gadgets. According to Karolina Kraj (2019), twenty years ago, education was based on books and lectures, now, iPads and websites. During the current health crisis, many instructors have had to improvise quick online learning solutions (Hodges et al. 2020). However, student's attention and motivation in language learning is always unpredictable.

Various research studies have discussed the potential impact of using WhatsApp in foreign language study. As Renata Phelps, Anne Graham said in their book *"conventional wisdom suggests that being in an environment where others are using technology is generally positive for foster learning"*. All agreed that the generation of these days, has become addicted to these applications, for social relationship and fun. We believe that one important aspect of any language learning is "FUN".

Egbert J. (2020) said in his study, *"understanding the facilitators that support student task engagement, in general, can assist teachers in engaging students, specifically. For example, authenticity, which can be defined as learners' perceptions that the task is meaningful, valuable, and/or enjoyable, is a facilitator that is often mentioned in the literature"*. So, according to Egbert J. has said, researcher agreed that the authentic activity in online class for learning of Bahasa Malaysia by using WhatsApp can help international students used for enjoyment and for fun. Thanajaro (2000) conducted a study concerning the use of authentic materials to develop listening comprehension in the English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom through analysis of the class observation and interviews with students. The results revealed that the use of authentic materials in ESL classrooms provided a positive effect on ESL student's motivation to learn the language.

As a fresh approach in teaching and learning languages effectively, we have organized "FUN WITH LANGUAGE IN CLASS-through WhatsApp" as an activity in the educating process of Bahasa Malaysia as a foreign language. During the experimental approach, we have planned carefully the assessment methods that can strengthen the development of students' proficiency in Bahasa Malaysia. Bahasa Malaysia is considered in this study as it is taken by foreign students as part of their graduation requirement, where Bahasa Malaysia is a foreign language to them. At the same time, we give opportunity for the students to explore cultural aspects throughout the activity. Through this experimental learning approach, we believe that students will gain self-confidence and personal satisfaction when they develop the language proficiency and cultural understanding.

In the following subtopic, the methodology employed is mainly described. This is then followed by a section on data analysis of the outcomes and effects of the teaching approach adopted. Lastly, some concluding remarks are presented.

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

Aicha Blehch Amry (2014) in her study: *The Impact of WhatsApp Mobile Social Learning of The achievement and Attitudes of Females Students and Compared with Face to Face Learning in the Classroom*, the experimentation showed that there are real differences, at 0.05 alpha level, in the achievements and attitudes of the experimental group that is based on WhatsApp mobile learning activities compared with the control group that without WhatsApp mobile learning activities and receives only face-to-face learning in the classroom.

Hani (2014) in his study: *The Impact of WhatsApp Group's Utilization of EFL Students' Vocabulary Writing Amelioration* showed that the findings imply a significant difference between the overall writing scores of the pretest and posttest of the participants who used journaling. Additionally, test of individual item scores shows that there are statistically significant developments in vocabulary choice and voice as two pivotal writing characteristics. The study can promote a favorable educational change by assisting teachers grasp the possible merits of WhatsApp electronic dialogue journaling to develop the vocabulary word choice and voice writing skills of their students.

Andújar-Vaca, Alberto and Cruz-Martínez, Maria-Soledad (2017) in their study: *Mobile Instant Messaging: Whatsapp and its Potential to Develop Oral Skills*, found that: there are significant improvements in term of oral proficiency were observed in the experimental group and negotiations were the LRE most common throughout the activity. It worth to be mentioned, that Mobile learning offers an environment where learners can ubiquitously negotiate meaning, reflect and evaluate on their own performance through authentic interaction and feedback, constituting a powerful tool for developing second language proficiency.

Oxford (1991) revealed that communicative competence can be developed through realistic interaction using meaningful and contextualized language, however, time inside the lesson is not enough to practice the four skills, so using WhatsApp can be a solution to this problem.

Maria (2016) in her study: *Use of Whatsapp to Enhance Reading and Writing Skills at Undergraduate College Level* showed that using WhatsApp helps to motivate the learners to improve their writing skills though it is considered the most difficult of the four language skills, and learners respond better when technology, especially the internet, is involved in their language learning. The internet which is available on the mobile phones of almost all the students is a highly motivating tool for L2 learning.

BasmaIssa Ahmad Alsaleem (2013) in her study: *The Effect of "WhatsApp" Electronic Dialogue Journaling on Improving Writing Vocabulary Word Choice and Voice of EFL Undergraduate Saudi Students*, results indicated a significant difference between the overall writing scores of the pretest and posttest of the students that journaled. In addition, examination of individual item scores reveals that there are statistically significant improvements in vocabulary word choice and voice as two critically important writing factors. The study can raise a positive social change by helping teachers understand the prospective benefits of WhatsApp electronic dialogue journaling to improve the vocabulary word choice and voice writing skills of their students.

Abraham Gert van der Vyver, and his colleagues (2015) in their study: *Using Social Media as a Managerial Platform for an Educational Development Project* found that: using Whatsapp; which considered unconventional platform; proved to be an excellent anchor for managerial communication on the project.

Ghada Awada (2016) in her study: *"Effect of WhatsApp on Critique Writing Proficiency and Perceptions Toward Learning"* results indicated that: the use of WhatsApp mediation was more effective

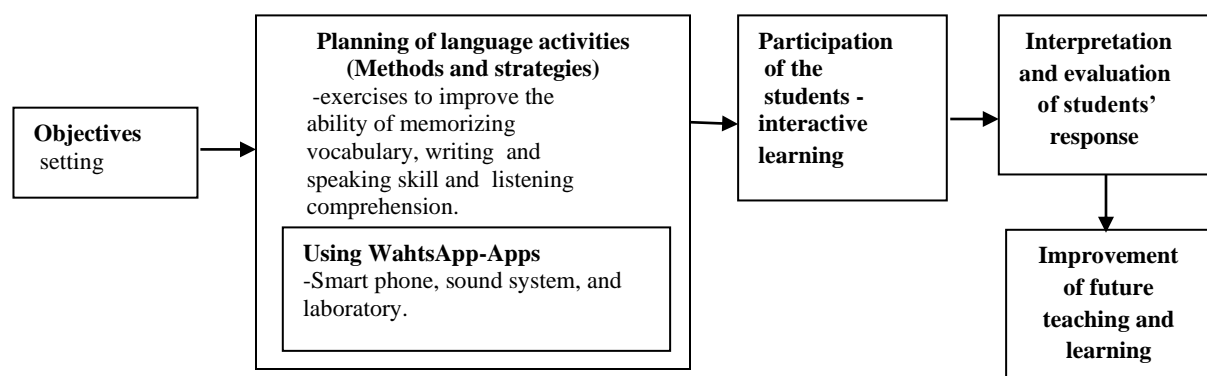
than the regular instruction in improving the critique writing proficiency of the participants and in increasing their motivation for learning.

Nedal (2014) in his study: “The Impact of WhatsApp Group’s Utilization on EFL Students’ Vocabulary Writing Amelioration”, the findings imply a significant difference between the overall writing scores of the pretest and posttest of the participants who used journaling. Additionally, test of individual item scores shows that there are statistically significant developments in vocabulary choice and voice as two pivotal writing characteristics. The study can promote a favorable educational change by assisting teachers grasp the possible merits of WhatsApp electronic dialogue journaling to develop vocabulary, word choice and voice writing skills of their students.

Man (2014) in his paper: Word’s Up with WhatsApp: The Use of Instant Messaging in Consciousness-Raising of Academic Vocabulary, the findings revealed a large increase in the participants’ scores. The interview data also revealed participants’ appreciation on the use of IM in helping them to be more aware of academic words. Despite its small sample size, this study has outlined several affordances and constraints of using WhatsApp for consciousness-raising of vocabulary for future replication of similar study in different contexts. Ibtehal Mahmoud Aburezeqand Fawzi Fayez Ishtaiwa (2013) in their study: “The Impact of WhatsApp in Interaction an Arabic Language Teaching Course”, revealed WhatsApp platform offers them a space for communicating, expressing ideas and exchanging information anytime and anywhere. However, (a) expenses involved in WhatsApp use, (b) extra work load, (c) distraction to learning, and (d) lack of students’ commitment for effective participation were identified as the greatest challenges of effective WhatsApp use for learning purposes.

## METHODOLOGY

This study examines the use of a different strategy for learning Bahasa Malaysia using WhatsApp-Apps in “FUN WITH LANGUAGE IN ONLINE CLASS” for the development of students’ language proficiency. The experimental teaching and learning approach have been planned based on the ideas shown in *Figure 1*.



*Figure 1:* Idea of the experimental approach for teaching

## Data Collection

The researcher used the analytical descriptive method to conduct this study. The descriptive analytics method is being used in this study is collating course survey results. A survey will be carried out to gather enough data about the language activities by using WhatsApp among the international students in the second semester, 2019/2020 academic session. Then, their participation and response will be evaluated.

This will help to determine whether the international students are interested or not with the Malay Language activities by using WhatsApp in the online classes.

### Population

The population of this study is 31 students studying LKM 100-Bahasa Malaysia I at School of Languages, Literacies and Translation in Engineering Campus, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) in the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester, Academic Session 2019/ 2020.

### Instruments of the Study

A research instrument is a tool of language activities by using WhatsApp in online classes that can be used to obtain, measure, and analyze data from subjects around the research topic. Researcher decided the instrument to use based on mixed-method. The instruments used to collect data of this study is students' questionnaire, interview besides the observation to the students' performance and interaction.

**Table 1** Details of the planning of experimental teaching and learning approach of "FUN WITH LANGUAGE -through WhatsApp"

"FUN WITH LANGUAGE IN CLASS"				
Language	Approach	Objectives	Language tools	Learning activities
Bahasa Malaysia	WhatsApp	1. Learning <b>Malay culture using image/ photo</b> 2. <b>Reading comprehension and grammar by sending file.</b> 3. Remembering, listening and practice <b>the words or conversation through voice-note and massage text</b> 4. Watching and listening audio-visual/ video file/ video chat 5. Writing and spelling <b>the words in Malay language</b>	1. <b>Vocabulary:</b> <i>nouns, verbs and adjectives</i>	1. <b>Identify</b> words about people, fruits and animals 2. <b>Identify</b> phrases/sentences such as greetings 3. <b>Choose and memorize</b> the correct words 4. <b>Select</b> the correct relationship between members in the family

### ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The results of using movies in "FUN WITH LANGUAGE IN ONLINE CLASS-through WhatsApp" is judged based on:

- i. Direct students' feedback and
- ii. Students' exercises/ projects.

Discussion on the results is presented as shown below:

**(a) Survey Results from Students of LKM 100**

A survey to students of LKM 100 who attended “FUN WITH LANGUAGE IN ONLINE CLASS – through WhatsApp” has also been conducted at the end of Semester II 2019/ 2020. Table 2 summarizes the results of the survey.

**Table 2** Survey of “FUN WITH LANGUAGE IN CLASS-through WhatsApp”

No.	Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total No. of Respondent
1.	WhatsApp is one of the most commonly used mode of communication and social interaction today.			7.9%	34.2%	57.9%	31
2.	Convenient to use WhatsApp because of affordable mobile data plans/ Wi-Fi availability throughout campus			7.9%	36.8%	52.6%	31
3.	Prefer Classroom learning	2.6%	5.3%	18.4%	28.9%	44.7%	31
4.	Prefer e-learning		5.3%	31.6%	15.8%	47.4%	31
5.	Would you like to be able access course contents anywhere, anytime through mobile phone		2.6%	2.6%	28.9%	68.8%	31
6.	Convenient to learn Bahasa Malaysia language and culture through audio/ video material made available via WhatsApp			7.9%	36.8%	52.6%	31
7.	Repeated listening to words form a new language gives confidence to acquire a better vocabulary and you to communicate with local people in Bahasa Malaysia			13.2%	34.2%	52.6%	31
8.	You can improve your language phonetics using WhatsApp to listen to the recordings regularly	2.6%		18.4%	31.6%	47.4%	31
9.	You feel comfortable using WhatsApp to learn Bahasa Malaysia	2.6%	5.3%	15.8%	28.9%	47.4%	31
10.	You prefer to text using mobile phone rather than using a computer/ laptop			18.4%	23.7%	57.9%	31
11.	After learning Bahasa Malaysia language for a few months, you are able to recognize basic words, make sentences and also chat with friends in Bahasa Malaysia language on WhatsApp	2.6%	7.9%	26.3%	34.2%	28.9%	31
12.	WhatsApp feature to record voice/ audio is helpful to practice speaking / listening Bahasa Malaysia		7.9%	15.8%	31.6%	44.7%	31

13.	Video calling facility available on WhatsApp helps in listening to communicate in Bahasa Malaysia with others better		5.3%	26.3%	28.9%	39.5%	31
14.	Learning Bahasa Malaysia through WhatsApp complements classrooms teaching for better understanding and practical application of language on a day-to-day basis		2.6%	18.4%	26.3%	52.6%	31

The results in Table 2 contains the percentage satisfaction of students from the “FUN WITH LANGUAGE IN ONLINE CLASS-through WhatsApp”. 14 questions were asked in the survey. From the result, it is shown that overall feedback from the respondents is strongly agree.

**(b) Exercise and Assessment from Students of LKM 100**

After “FUN WITH LANGUAGE IN ONLINE CLASS-through WhatsApp”, foreign students were found to be able to communicate by using simple greeting words and they are able to speak in basic Bahasa Malaysia because they have adopted to the conversation between teacher and friends.

**CONCLUSION**

From the analysis carried out based on the response from the international students, the following conclusions about the effectiveness of using WhatsApp in teaching and learning Bahasa Malaysia at the Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) Engineering Campus especially during pandemic Covid-19 issues can be made as below:

- i. Students’ interest in learning the Bahasa Malaysia has been found to be very positive even they are facing some problems due to pandemic Covid-19.
- ii. With cultural activities by using WhatsApp, the participation of students in online classes has increased highly.
- iii. Student centered learning is important for teaching and learning of Bahasa Malaysia.
- iv. Student’s desire to learn Bahasa Malaysia as a foreign languages has increased as result of the impact of cultural activities.
- v. Using WhatsApp for online classes are found to be effective as part of instructional process in order to develop the language proficiency of students.
- vi. Awareness and knowledge of international students about Malay cultures have increased.

Although this is a first attempt by Malay Language teachers in trying out different strategies in teaching and learning of Bahasa Malaysia, the positive feedback received from students has given the teachers confidence and motivation to continue using the experimental approach in order to achieve excellence in teaching. The success of the activities has made us realize the importance of:

- i. adopting a flexible teaching style,

- ii. creating a good climate during the learning process and
- iii. using a variety of approaches according to the needs of the students, in order to improve student's language proficiency.

Hopefully, this study can be used among educators especially Malay Language teacher and also international students in order to learn Bahasa Malaysia in digital way by using WhatsApp. The experiences of doing the experiment also indicates that student's participation in the language learning process is a crucial factor in this 21st century of sustainable teaching and learning environment. During Covid-19 pandemic issue, everybody have to change their live style to the new normal. In this contexts, the students and educators essential to know how to improve their teaching and learning style in order to archive the objectives of any courses.

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