

An Integration of WhatsApp, Peer Review and Assessment with Blended Learning to Enhance the English Language Skills of Freshmen Engineering Graduates

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ABSTRACT

This research sheds light on the educational effects of WhatsApp in encouraging first-year engineering students to enhance their English Language proficiency. When it comes to apps that help you learn a new language on the go, WhatsApp is among the best. A WhatsApp English-club chat group was formed by sixty first-year engineering graduate students. For four months, the students spoke, shared, and commented on news stories in English. Furthermore, participants were asked to complete a post-test, a pre-test, and a questionnaire after the study was finished. Results showed that WhatsApp was an effective method of piquing students' interest in improving their literacy skills. Their grammar, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and writing skills all saw significant improvements. Students also had a positive impression of WhatsApp as a teaching tool for English, according to the report. Researchers found that students enrolled in WhatsApp English-club groups were more likely to work together to improve their language skills and had more opportunities to use the language in context, especially when it came to writing. Therefore, the research suggests that English instructors use WhatsApp as a teaching tool and encourage their students to create and join English-club groups on the messaging app. This would allow them to engage in more informal chats and practise contextualised language usage, which may be challenging in a traditional classroom environment.

Keywords: English language learning, WhatsApp, Blended learning, Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL), Peer review, Content assessment.

Introduction:

As the twenty-first century advances, it is evident that the education system is undergoing rapid evolution, and technology has become an integral part of our daily existence. In the present day, nearly everyone utilises a smartphone, and they utilise applications such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Telegram. The age group we are currently educating is unquestionably a technological generation; we are unable to prevent them from utilising technology, including iPads and mobile phones, regardless of our efforts. When we contrast the education systems of the past five decades, during which we were students, with the education systems of today, we will observe a significant disparity between the educational aids, teaching techniques, incentive strategies, and other strategies that instructors employed in the past and the ones we employ today to educate our students. Although all has been developed, students' attention and motivation to learn have declined in comparison to previous years.

Millennial learners nowadays study English with the help of a plethora of apps available on their cell phones. Media files (MP3), movies (MP4), documents (PDFs), social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube), and websites that teach languages are all examples of such applications. This new method of teaching languages with technology is a major step forward for education in the modern day. Back in the day, people had to rely on textbooks and classroom instruction to learn a new language. The proliferation of language-learning applications and programs made possible by ICT has, however, opened up a world of possibilities for students of foreign languages (Eslit, 2014; Zayed, 2016). In and out of class, students may use these resources to self-learn and become more fluent in a foreign language.

This article's main goal is to analyse WhatsApp's impact, with a focus on creating inspiring levels that will improve the reading and writing skills of sixty first-year engineering students. This study is based on the hypothesis that a WhatsApp group may be a simple and effective way to motivate students to improve their language skills, particularly their reading and writing abilities. This WhatsApp group will provide students a lot of chances to exercise English and learn from one other in a fun, motivating, and pleasant setting.

Objectives of the study:

The objective of this study is to examine the pedagogical function of WhatsApp, a mobile-assisted language learning application, in the improvement of the reading and writing abilities of freshmen engineering graduates. The following are the objectives:

1. To examine the educational function of WhatsApp in enhancing the motivation of freshmen engineering graduates to develop their reading and writing abilities in English.
2. To evaluate the effectiveness of the WhatsApp English club group in enhancing the reading and writing skills of freshmen engineering graduates in the areas of vocabulary, grammar, reading comprehension, and writing length..
3. To investigate the perceptions of freshmen engineering graduates regarding WhatsApp as a pedagogical instrument in their English language acquisition.

Literature Review

The use of mobile technologies, particularly instant messaging applications like WhatsApp, has become increasingly prevalent in language teaching and learning. Numerous studies have highlighted the role of WhatsApp in facilitating communication, collaboration, and interaction among learners and teachers. One of the most significant aspects of WhatsApp in language teaching is its ability to provide a platform for authentic communication. Unlike traditional classroom settings, WhatsApp enables real-time interactions beyond the classroom, allowing learners to practice language skills in a more informal, social context. According to Andujar (2016), students tend to engage more actively in WhatsApp a discussion, which foster a sense of community and motivates language practice in a low-pressure environment.

Research also underscores WhatsApp's effectiveness in improving specific language skills. In particular, studies by Susanti and Tarmuji (2016) found that students showed significant improvement in their writing and speaking skills through consistent WhatsApp-based tasks. WhatsApp's multimodal features, including text, voice notes, images, and videos, enable learners to engage in different forms of communication, supporting language skills development holistically. Furthermore, the convenience and accessibility of the platform make it ideal for

continuous practice, as learners can interact at any time, promoting more frequent use of the target language.

Moreover, WhatsApp fosters collaborative learning, which is an essential component of language acquisition. According to research by Barhoumi (2015), learners who participated in WhatsApp study groups developed better problem-solving skills, as they worked together to correct language errors and improve their communication. Collaborative tasks such as group discussions, peer feedback, and brainstorming sessions conducted on WhatsApp promote the development of critical thinking and negotiation of meaning, which are vital for second language learning. The app's group chat feature also creates opportunities for learners to learn from one another, providing exposure to a variety of language uses and vocabulary.

However, some challenges in using WhatsApp for language teaching have been identified. Studies by Gon and Rawekar (2017) point out that despite its advantages, there are limitations regarding its use for formal assessment and structured learning. While WhatsApp is excellent for informal and spontaneous communication, its lack of learning management tools makes it difficult to track progress, organize content, and evaluate student performance systematically. Moreover, excessive use of informal language and abbreviations in WhatsApp communication can sometimes hinder the formal aspects of language learning, making it less suitable for academic writing or standardized language assessments.

WhatsApp offers significant potential as a supplementary tool for language teaching, particularly in enhancing communication, collaboration, and language skills development. However, its informal nature and lack of structured learning management require careful consideration. To maximize the effectiveness of WhatsApp in language teaching, educators need to integrate it into a well-structured curriculum, using it to complement, rather than replace, traditional classroom methods. As mobile technologies continue to evolve, further research is needed to explore best practices for integrating instant messaging platforms like WhatsApp into formal language learning environments.

Advantages of using WhatsApp in English language teaching:

Using WhatsApp in English language teaching offers several advantages that can enhance both learning and engagement.

1. Real-time Communication

WhatsApp allows immediate interaction between teachers and students. This facilitates quick feedback, question-answers, and clarification of doubts, making the learning process more dynamic and interactive. Teachers can send instant grammar corrections or vocabulary explanations when students are practicing English.

2. Flexibility and Accessibility

WhatsApp can be accessed from almost any device with an internet connection, providing flexibility for students to learn from anywhere and at any time. Teachers can share resources like voice notes or exercises, which students can access outside classroom hours.

3. Multimedia Sharing

Teachers can share a variety of media such as text, images, audio, and video, making lessons more engaging. This helps cater to different learning styles (visual, auditory, etc.). Teachers can send a short video to demonstrate the correct pronunciation of words or a graphic to explain complex grammar rules.

4. Collaborative Learning

Group chats allow students to engage in discussions, collaborate on tasks, and learn from each other. This encourages peer-to-peer learning and communication in English. Teachers can create group projects where students discuss topics in English, helping them practice conversation skills.

5. Improves Writing and Speaking Skills

Texting on WhatsApp helps improve informal writing skills, while voice notes encourage students to practice spoken English. Teachers can provide feedback on both. Teachers can assign students to describe their day in English using voice notes, then give feedback on pronunciation and grammar.

6. Fosters a Learner-Centered Environment

WhatsApp creates an informal, friendly learning environment where students feel less intimidated to participate compared to traditional classroom settings. Shy students may feel more comfortable contributing to

discussions in a WhatsApp group chat, where the pressure of face-to-face interaction is reduced.

7. Easy to Share Resources

Teachers can quickly share learning materials, homework, quizzes, and reading assignments directly to students' phones, keeping everyone organized and on track. Teachers can share eBooks, grammar exercises, or links to language-learning websites with the entire class at once.

8. Encourages Consistent Practice

WhatsApp allows teachers to send daily reminders, new vocabulary, or short quizzes, ensuring that students are regularly practicing their English skills. A daily word or phrase challenge can be posted in the group, encouraging students to use the new word in a sentence.

9. Supports Audio-Visual Learning

WhatsApp's voice message feature is excellent for listening and speaking exercises. Students can listen to native speakers' recordings or practice speaking by sending voice messages. Teachers can send voice messages with different accents, helping students improve their listening comprehension.

10. Low-cost and Accessible

WhatsApp is free and available on most smartphones, making it accessible for learners across various socioeconomic backgrounds, especially in regions with limited access to educational resources. Students can participate in English language learning without having to invest in expensive software or devices.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study offers a practical experience in which the researcher has examined the pedagogical function of WhatsApp in the development of the English language skills of Freshmen Engineering graduates. This study offers a practical experience in which the researcher has examined the pedagogical function of WhatsApp in the development of the English language skills of Freshmen Engineering graduates.

Participants:

A total of sixty first-year engineering students participated in this research, which aimed to enhance their English language skills, with a particular focus on improving their reading and writing abilities. The students were enrolled in a WhatsApp English group as part of the study. These participants were specifically selected due to the critical importance of strong English communication skills for engineering graduates, both in securing success during job interviews and in increasing their employability with multinational companies (MNCs).

Data Collection Instruments:

The data was collected through a pre- and post-test, daily assessments of students' development by researchers, and a questionnaire administered to participants at the conclusion of the study. Upon enrolment and again at the conclusion of the research session, students were administered the reading and writing comprehension pre- and post-tests. Monitoring pupils' reading and writing abilities on a daily basis was the goal of the researchers. The researcher used the questionnaire to find out how the students felt about WhatsApp's ability to help them improve their reading and writing abilities in light of their experience in the study.

Data Analysis:

1. How comfortable are you using WhatsApp as a platform for English language learning activities?

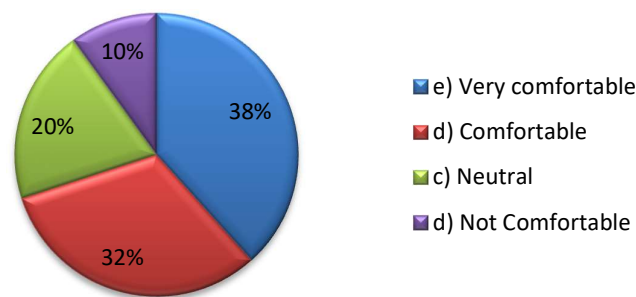


Figure: 01 Questionnaire 01

In the above figure 38% students out of 60 agree that they were very comfortable using WhatsApp while 32% students felt comfortable. 20% of them remained neutral and 10% of the students were not comfortable with it.

2. To what extent do you believe WhatsApp facilitates collaboration and communication among your peers for English language learning?

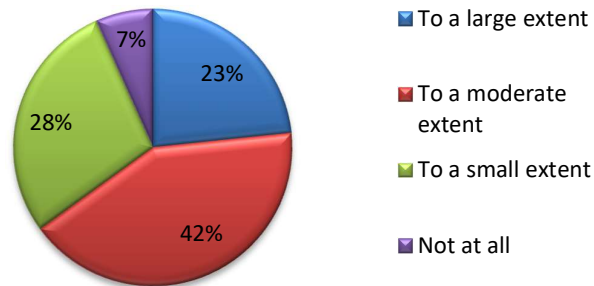


Figure: 02 Questionnaire 02

In the above figure 2 23% students out of 60 agree that WhatsApp helped them with good collaboration and communication among your peer members and 42% of them felt it moderate. 28% students felt small extent and only 7% of them felt I didn't help them.

3. How relevant and constructive do you find the feedback provided by peers and moderators in the WhatsApp English club group?

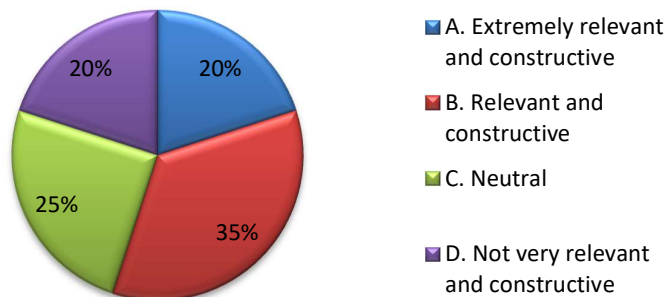


Figure: 03 Questionnaire 03

In the above figure 3, 20% students out of 60 agree that the feedback provided by peers and moderators was extremely relevant and constructive, whereas 35% of them responded in a positive way. 25% of them remained neutral and 20% students felt it was not relevant and constructive them.

4. How actively do you participate in the WhatsApp English club group discussions?

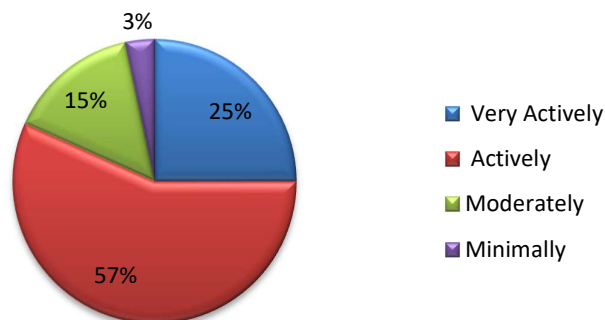


Figure: 04 Questionnaire 04

Nearly 25% students out of 60 agree that they participate in the WhatsApp English club group discussions very actively, whereas 57% of them responded in a positive way. 15% of them moderately participated and only 3% students felt them they couldn't participate actively.

5. To what extent do you find the interactive discussions in the WhatsApp English club group beneficial for your language learning?

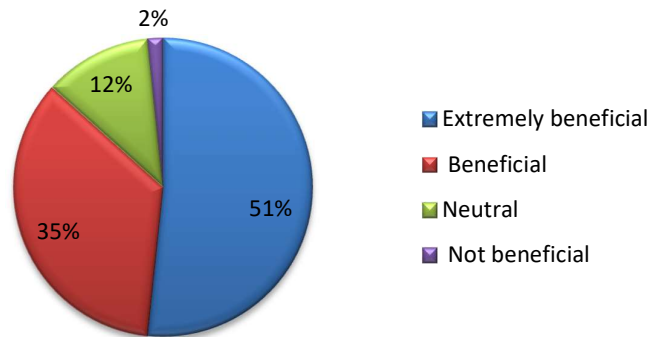


Figure: 05 Questionnaire 05

In above figure 05, major part of the students, i.e. 51% found the interactive discussions in the WhatsApp English club group were extremely beneficial for your language learning, 35% felt it was beneficial, very few felt it non-beneficial.

6. To what extent do you believe the WhatsApp English club group has helped improve your reading comprehension skills?

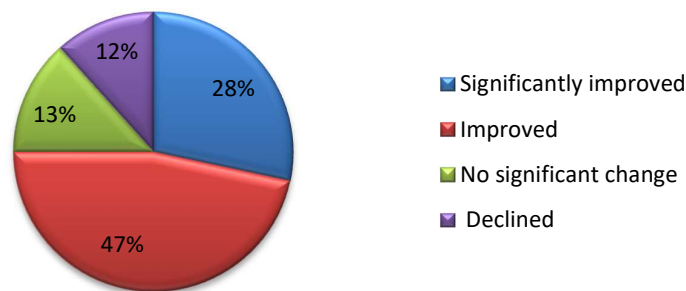


Figure: 06 Questionnaire 06

In above figure 06, 28% of the students felt that WhatsApp helped improve your reading comprehension skills. 47% of them responded positively. 25% of the students responded negatively.

7. To what extent do you believe WhatsApp has positively influenced your overall motivation for academic success in your engineering studies?

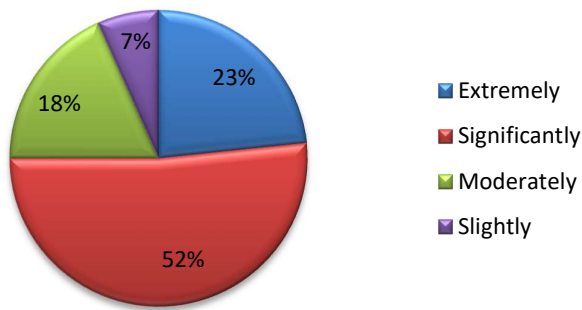


Figure: 07 Questionnaire 07

Nearly 23% of the students responded that WhatsApp influenced their overall motivation for academic success. Major number of students i.e. 52% responded agreed that it significantly motivated them. Around 25% of them of the students responded partially.

8. How comfortable are you in participating in educational discussions related to reading and writing skills on WhatsApp?

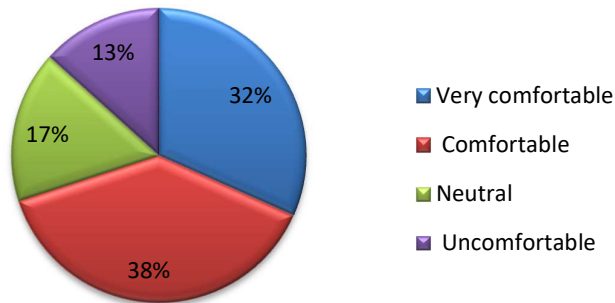


Figure: 08 Questionnaire 08

In above figure 08, 32% of the students felt very comfortable in participating in educational discussions related to reading and writing skills on WhatsApp. 38% of them felt comfortable, and around 30% of the students felt uncomfortable.

9. To what extent do you believe that participating in educational activities on WhatsApp has motivated you to improve your reading skills in English?

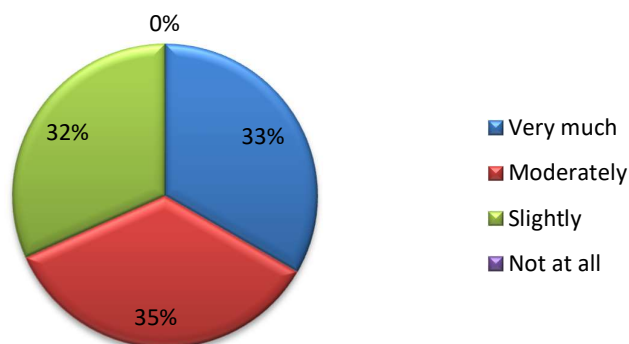


Figure: 09 Questionnaire 09

In above figure 09, 70% of the students felt that participating in educational activities on WhatsApp has motivated you to improve your reading skills in English. Around 30% of the students felt it helped them positively.

10. In your opinion, does the use of WhatsApp contribute positively to your overall English language proficiency?

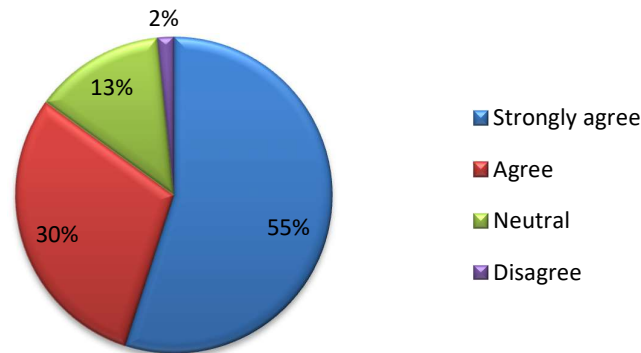


Figure: 10 Questionnaire 10

In above figure 10, 85% of the students agreed that the use of WhatsApp contribute positively to your overall English language proficiency. Only 15% of the student responded neutrally.

Findings:

The integration of WhatsApp, has shown significant positive results in enhancing the English language skills of freshmen engineering graduates, particularly in reading and writing. By utilizing WhatsApp, students were able to engage in continuous, real-time communication, allowing them to discuss and review language content with both peers and instructors outside the classroom. This constant interaction fostered a supportive learning environment where students could share reading materials, clarify doubts, and provide feedback on written assignments, leading to greater engagement and more opportunities to practice English. Moreover, the informal nature of WhatsApp reduced the anxiety often associated with language learning, encouraging students to participate more actively and practice writing with ease.

Peer review played a pivotal role in the development of students' writing skills. Through WhatsApp, students shared their written work for feedback from classmates, allowing them to learn collaboratively and identify common mistakes. This process not only improved their writing skills but also enhanced their critical thinking and self-assessment abilities. Blended learning further supported these activities by combining traditional classroom instruction with online learning, providing flexibility and access to diverse resources. Overall, the integration of these tools helped create a more dynamic, interactive, and supportive environment, which significantly improved students' reading comprehension and writing proficiency.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, integrating WhatsApp, in English language learning significantly enhances the English language skills of freshmen engineering graduates. By utilizing WhatsApp as a communication and collaboration tool, students are provided with real-time feedback, increased opportunities for practice, and continuous engagement beyond the classroom. Peer review encourages critical thinking and active participation, allowing students to improve their writing and speaking skills through constructive feedback from their peers. The combination of assessment ensures that learning is aligned with objectives and progress is measurable.

This blended learning approach fosters a more dynamic and supportive environment, where students feel comfortable practicing English, gaining confidence, and developing comprehensive language skills. Ultimately, this integration promotes effective language acquisition, benefiting students academically and professionally in a global engineering context.

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Mrs. L. Zainab Tehmeen Khanam, Assistant Professor of English at Ashoka Women's Engineering College, has 14 years of undergraduate and postgraduate teaching experience. Her academic path is distinguished by a deep commitment to student education and well-being and continual professional growth. She is known for her creative teaching methods, excellent communication skills, and ability to encourage pupils. She has created a dynamic and inclusive learning environment by combining contemporary and traditional teaching approaches throughout my career. Her upbeat, creative approach encourages critical thinking and intellectual curiosity in kids. She is skilled in using technology to improve learning and devoted to keeping up with educational trends. In addition to teaching, She published and presented many research articles at national and international academic conferences.



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Dr. Hilda Annie Grace Bandaru, is working as an Associate Professor at SVR Engineering College, Nandyal. Her MA, MEd, MPhil, PhD, TESOL, and PGCTE demonstrate my commitment to study and professional growth. For 18 years, she has taught across disciplines at engineering schools and universities, helping students succeed in their studies and careers. She teaches with enthusiasm and dedication to student achievement. She aims to foster students' academic and personal development in an inclusive and engaging learning environment. Her purpose is to teach and motivate children to think critically, solve issues, and apply what they learn. Mentoring, academic advising, and career counselling have helped students develop the skills and confidence to succeed in their industries throughout my career.



Mrs. Kanulla Sridevi is an accomplished educator. Her MA, PGCTE, and PhD demonstrate my commitment to study and professional growth. Her 15 years of teaching experience include educating UG and PG students in many disciplines and guiding them in their academics and careers at several engineering institutions. She teaches with enthusiasm and dedication to student achievement. She aims to foster students' academic and personal development in an inclusive and engaging learning environment. Her purpose is to teach and motivate students to think critically, communicate well, and apply what they learn in practical sessions. Her engineering and humanities background gives me a unique viewpoint that helps my students progress academically and professionally.



Dr. Imran Mahammad is an Associate Professor of English at QIS College of Engineering & Technology, Ongole, with approximately 20 years of teaching experience. He has taught both undergraduate and postgraduate students, demonstrating his versatility in academia. Dr. Imran has published around 18 articles in prestigious national and international journals and has presented numerous research papers at conferences and seminars on both levels. Additionally, he has authored a book and holds multiple patents. His commitment to engineering education is bolstered by his strong linguistic skills and academic expertise.