



Linguistics Initiative

ISSN 2775-3719

Volume 1, Number 1, (2021)

<https://doi.org/10.53696/27753719.18>

Published by Pusat Studi Bahasa dan Publikasi Ilmiah
(Center for Language and Scholarly Publishing Studies)

Copyright © 2021 The author(s)

Article License: CC BY-NC 4.0

Impact of WhatsApp on the Vocabulary Acquisition of Secondary School Students in Ogbomoso, Oyo State, Nigeria

Abdulmalik A. Salman ⁽¹⁾, Muhyideen O. Imam ⁽²⁾

⁽¹⁾ University of Ibadan, Nigeria | abiola.info2015@gmail.com

⁽²⁾ University of Ibadan, Nigeria

Abstract

The advent of technology has brought a change in the dynamics of second language teaching and learning. WhatsApp has been a common tool used among students for communicating and chatting with friends, peers, and relatives. Its commonality may be because of its easy installation as mobile application on mobile devices. Educators are beginning to explore its potentials toward seeing how it can help students in their learning. Since it is apparently a novel tool in the education sector, its usefulness in acquiring vocabulary by secondary school students is yet to be ascertained. Therefore, this study examined the impact of WhatsApp on vocabulary acquisition of secondary school students in Ogbomoso, Oyo State, Nigeria. This study was premised on the constructivist learning theory since WhatsApp provides students the opportunity to construct their vocabulary knowledge. The sample for the study comprised 250 students from five secondary schools randomly selected in Ogbomoso, Oyo State. Data for the study were generated from the participants using self-made questionnaire. The questionnaire is structured into 5 points from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. Mean and standard deviation were employed to analyse the data. Findings showed that more than half of the students believe WhatsApp is expedient in learning and acquiring vocabulary. It further revealed that the majority of the students perceive WhatsApp as an effective social network that enhances their vocabulary acquisition as it is easy to acquire new words and understand their meanings through WhatsApp. The study concluded that language teachers should devise means of adopting social media such as WhatsApp to teach their students since students are favourably disposed to learning through WhatsApp.

Keywords

social media, mobile learning, language learning, vocabulary acquisition, WhatsApp

Introduction

The advent of the Internet has revolutionized the education sector with changes in the process of language learning. The depth of facts and materials accessible to the teachers and the learners is not bound by the confines of the classroom. The Internet has also spawned various technological applications through which this information and knowledge can be collected, disseminated and communicated to people with relevant interests and goals. As the time goes, the extent and frequency of use of Internet technologies increased; so also methods of creating and sharing contents.

Online platforms have been greatly adopted by young persons and are becoming more common to engaged in activities that promote socialization among them. The nature of online platforms began to affect the way students interact with them. As part of these needs, the development of mobile formats for the use of these social networks translates the social structure from real life into a social media mediated environment which remove time and space constraints. This process is carried out with the widely adopted social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, etc). Although these online technologies have their differences (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Taylor, Lewin, & Strutton, 2011), it wasn't long before they became part of users' lives especially for the purpose of education.

Few decades ago, we witnessed the emergence of numerous types of social networking applications among which are Facebook, 2go, Google plus+, Instagram, WhatsApp, etc. Each of these applications has their unique characteristics, however, they share some common features of allowing users to invite, connect and share contents. These applications are accessible through the web or mobile phones as mobile applications.

WhatsApp, unlike the SMS, is a mobile app used for sending and receiving instant messages. It can send messages with large volume of information and multimedia files. It was introduced in 2009 and has gained prominence among young persons, especially students (Fawzi, 2015). WhatsApp is usually installed on Smart, Android or Windows phone from Google Play Store or Apple Store. After the installation is successful, a student can create his or her own account and begin to connect with other people who have also installed WhatsApp on their phone and have their contacts saved too.

Today, English words are easy to acquire and prepare because students can get help through the social network platforms. Dyrud, Worley, & Flatley (2005) and Kajder & Bull (2004) maintained that there are online sources that are available on the Internet which students can benefit from. Also, Mutum & Wang (2010) pointed out that because of available online sources allows users to send messages and also provides feedback on various concepts, which improve students' language skills. Social networks allow users to interact and build relationships (Gaudeul & Peroni, 2010). Kern (2006) maintained that online blogs, such as social networks, also strong support constructive ideas and emphasize students' interactions.

A study by Mingle & Adams (2015) found that Ghanaian high school students' use of social platforms and negatively affected their learning progress. Jairus et al. (2017) discussed cell phone and its impact on school performance and found a positive

correlation between these students' cell's phone use and their school performance. [Izyani & Mohamed](#) (2016) also investigated the perception of using WhatsApp for learning among Malaysian students in English classes and suggested that the adoption of WhatsApp is important because it improves students' vocabulary knowledge. [Kumar et al.](#) (2016) examined WhatsApp use as a teaching tool and noted that the use of WhatsApp inside and outside the school can improve students' language ability and overall learning progress.

[Mistar & Embi](#) (2016) explored how ESL students perceived learning with WhatsApp. The students perceived that WhatsApp enhanced the students' English language learning. [Yin](#) (2016) investigated the level at which Ipoh higher institutions education students have adopted WhatsApp and their attitude towards using it for learning; their study revealed that majority of the learners were favourably disposed to using WhatsApp for learning. [Raiman, Antbring, & Mahmood](#) (2017) reported their findings on the use of WhatsApp by medical students' in their clinical engagement; it showed that WhatsApp Messenger is widely accepted as a complement to the students' education.

A similar study was carried out by [Gasaymeh](#) (2017) where he looked at the use of WhatsApp by university students for personal and educational reasons. He observed that college students' used Whatsapp mostly for usage for social and personal interactions while its use for learning educational reasons was low, but found it useful and enjoyable for learning. [Nitza & Roman](#) (2016) investigated the performance and satisfaction of students in seminar courses with WhatsApp as the medium of instruction and interaction; he found a strong relationship between the two variables.

It is obvious that most of the reviewed studies above were conducted in different countries and locations with distinct social and environmental realities from the current research area. Also, while the studies examined the impacts of social networks on different aspect of education and language learning, none of the studies has really focused on the impact of WhatsApp on vocabulary acquisition among secondary schools. Therefore, this study is necessary in order to put a search light on this research gap.

WhatsApp has been a common tool used among students for communicating and chatting with friends, peers and relatives. Its commonality may be because of its easy installation as mobile application on mobile devices. Educators are beginning to explore its potentials toward seeing how it can help students in their learning. Since it is apparently a novel tool in the education sector, its usefulness in acquiring vocabulary by secondary school students is yet to be ascertained. This study explored the workability of WhatsApp as a veritable tool in language learning in general and in students' vocabulary acquisition in particular. The study would provide answers to these research questions:

1. Does WhatsApp have any impact on vocabulary acquisition among secondary school students?
2. How do the students perceive WhatsApp as a useful tool for vocabulary acquisition?

Though language learning with the aid social sites is an innovative topic in research which has received the attention of researchers lately, there is practically no previous research work that has focused on the use of social platforms for vocabulary acquisition especially in Nigeria. The aim of this study would be to look into the effect of WhatsApp usage on vocabulary acquisition among secondary school students. Social media are valuable communication tools for the students -to connect with colleagues, explore news articles and other materials posted on the varying media platforms and groups.

The outcome of this research would guide the language learners to know the importance of WhatsApp in building their vocabulary base and thus, make effective use of their time while using the mobile application. In addition, the study seeks to educate learners about the implications of learning new words through WhatsApp and the critical role of social media platforms in language acquisition. It would provide necessary facts to guide and inform English curriculum planners and designers teaching methodologies and materials which suit various ways of teaching and match students' level of achievement in language vocabulary.

Method

This is a descriptive survey study. It was conducted in the first term of 2019/2020 academic session in Nigeria. The research participants comprised 250 students from five secondary schools randomly selected in Ogbomoso, Oyo State, Nigeria. The research data was gathered through self-made instrument by the researcher. The instrument was validated for face and content validity by three experts in the field of second language teaching, while the instrument was trial-tested and its reliability was determined using split-half method. The coefficient value of .872 was obtained. The questionnaire is structured into 5 points from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. Copies of research instrument covering the sample size of two hundred and fifty (250) students were administered in the five selected secondary schools in Ogbomoso, Oyo State, Nigeria. Mean, standard deviation, frequency count and percentages were employed to analyse the data. A mean score of 3.51 to 5 implies a positive impact/attitude, 2.51 and 3.5 signifies a neutral impact/attitude, and a mean score of 0 to 2.5 suggests a negative impact/attitude.

Results

Research Question 1: Does WhatsApp have any impact on vocabulary acquisition among secondary school students?

Table 1 presents mean values for students' responses to questionnaire items relating to the impact of WhatsApp on vocabulary acquisition. Results revealed that the overwhelming majority of students, 220 (88%) who participated in the survey agreed (Strongly Agree and Agree) that WhatsApp plays an important role in vocabulary acquisition while 28 participants (11.2%) disagreed (Strongly Disagree and Disagree), and 2 participants (0.8) were undecided. Also, 230 (92%) of the respondents claimed that they always come across new vocabulary on WhatsApp while 20 students (8%) disagreed.

While 178 (72%) of the students stated that WhatsApp enables them to read news and posts on different fields thereby exposing them to new stock of words, 85 students (18%) disagreed and 25 (10%) were undecided. Also, that On whether there are videos and pictures on WhatsApp which help to comprehend the meaning of new vocabulary, 200 (80%) of the participants agreed, 44 (17.6) disagreed while 6 (2.4%) were undecided. Lastly, majority of the respondents, 165 (66%), stated that they use Google or phone dictionary soft wares to check meanings, spellings and other morphological details of new words, while 54 (21.6%) disagreed and 31 (12.4%) undecided.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Impact of WhatsApp on Vocabulary Acquisition

S/N	Item Statement	Freq.	Freq.	Freq.	Mean	SD
		(%)	(%)	(%)		
		D	U	A		
1.	WhatsApp is important in vocabulary acquisition.	28 (11.2%)	2 (0.8%)	220 (88%)	4.17	.909
2.	I always come across new vocabulary on WhatsApp.	20 (8%)	-	230 (92%)	4.53	.934
3.	I read news and posts on different fields on WhatsApp.	45 (18%)	25 (10%)	178 (72%)	3.86	1.214
4.	WhatsApp posts are sometimes accompanied with videos and pictures to aid understanding.	44 (17.6%)	6 (2.4%)	200 (80%)	3.91	1.117
5.	I check Google or phone dictionary for meaning and spellings of new vocabulary I see on WhatsApp.	54 (21.6%)	31 (12.4%)	165 (66%)	3.68	1.265

Research Question 2: How do the students perceive WhatsApp as a useful tool for vocabulary acquisition?

Table 2 presents the mean values and standard deviations for students’ responses to each item on the questionnaire regarding their perceptions towards using WhatsApp to acquire vocabulary. The results clearly revealed that average of 75% of students have favourable attitudes towards the use of WhatsApp in acquiring vocabulary. 235 (94%) of the participants agreed that it is easy to acquire vocabulary when using WhatsApp, while 13 (5.2%) disagreed and 2 (0.8%) undecided. Also, 220 (88%) of the students thought acquiring new words using WhatsApp is an interesting method of learning, 27 (10.8%) disagreed and 3 (1.2%) undecided. When asked if it is easy to remember new vocabularies acquired on WhatsApp, 180 (72%) of the students responded in the affirmative, while 70 students (28%) disagreed. Furthermore, 170 (68%) claimed WhatsApp is very useful to understand the meaning of complex and unfamiliar words while 70 (28%) disagreed, and 10 (4%) were undecided. Lastly, 240 (96%) of the students

agreed that they would like their teachers to create a WhatsApp group where language vocabulary will be taught during holidays, while 9 (3.6%) disagreed and only 1 (0.4%) student was undecided.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Students' Perception of using WhatsApp for Vocabulary Acquisition

S/N	Item Statement	Freq. (%)			Mean	SD
		D	U	A		
1.	It is very easy to acquire new words on WhatsApp.	13 (5.2%)	2 (0.8%)	235 (94%)	4.22	.757
2.	Acquiring new words using WhatsApp is an interesting method of learning.	27 (10.8%)	3 (1.2%)	220 (88%)	4.09	.975
3.	It is easy to remember new words acquire on WhatsApp.	70 (28%)	-	180 (72%)	3.77	1.337
4.	I think WhatsApp is very useful to understand the meaning of complex words and unfamiliar words.	70 (28%)	10 (4%)	170 (68%)	3.68	1.353
5.	I would like our English teacher to create a WhatsApp group where he can teach us new vocabulary during the holiday.	9 (3.6%)	1 (0.4%)	240 (96%)	4.32	.667

Discussion

Considering the first research question, the study revealed that majority of the students believed WhatsApp is advantageous in learning and acquiring new vocabulary. This study lends credence to the constructivist learning theory since WhatsApp provides the students the opportunity to construct their own learning. This finding in line with that of Nakata (2008) and Fehr et al. (2012) who found social media helped to learn and retain new words. This can be explained due to the fact that students are eager to interact with their peers online, and so they must learn the right words to communicate their ideas. It also agrees perfectly with that of Kumar et al. (2016). It is also in line with the findings of Nitza & Roman (2016) on the performance of students in social media mediated course. Hayashi (2011) and Majid et al. (2012) also reported a strong correlation of social networks to language learning. Their study showed that students feel relaxed while using social media platforms for learning. However, the findings of this study is at variance with the work of Gasaymeh (2017) on students' WhatsApp usage for educational and personal reasons, and reported that learners employed the use of social media for non-educational issues more than they do for educational issues. It also disagrees with the study of Mingle & Adams (2015) which found that students with social media exposure had poor academic result.

The second research question sought to gauge students' views on the impact of social media (WhatsApp) in their learning. The finding indicated that majority of the students had favourable attitudes towards the use of WhatsApp. They perceived WhatsApp as a social network app that makes it easy to acquire new vocabularies with opportunities for online sources where meanings and other detail about a word can be checked. This finding agrees with the work of [Izyani & Mohamed \(2016\)](#) on perception of Malaysian students on WhatsApp utilization as learning material in English language classroom and revealed that the use of WhatsApp in education helps for effective learning of English language. In the same vein, it corroborates the findings of [Mistar & Embi \(2016\)](#) where students perceived that WhatsApp enhanced their English language learning and [Yin \(2016\)](#) who found that students had tremendous experience and positive attitude towards using WhatsApp for learning. [Bensalem \(2018\)](#) in an experimental study also reported that the overwhelming majority of students were favourably disposed to the adoption of WhatsApp for leaning vocabulary. The reason for this alignment in the findings of previous research in different contexts is not far-to-see. The emergence of smart phones and different online platforms is novel to young people and students in Nigeria. These platforms provide access to students to chat and share content with their peers. Therefore, learning through these media will be interesting and fun to the students.

Conclusion

This study examined the impact of WhatsApp on the vocabulary acquisition of secondary school students in Ogbomoso, Oyo State, Nigeria. The results indicated that majority of the students agreed that WhatsApp is beneficial in learning and acquiring vocabulary. The results further revealed that the students perceived WhatsApp as an effective social network that enhances their vocabulary acquisition as it is easy to acquire new words and understand their meanings through WhatsApp. The implication of this study for language teaching and learning is that learning language through social network mediated approach enhances students' learning and helps students to construct knowledge on their own.

It is recommended that language teachers should look for ways to incorporate the teaching of vocabulary through WhatsApp since students are favourably disposed to learning through it. Education planners and policy makers should engage the services of competent language educators to design language programs which is flexible enough to accommodate the use of online platforms both by the teachers and the students for learning purpose.

Acknowledgments

We acknowledge the heads of schools used in conducting this study, the teachers and the students who provided the primary data used in the study. We thank them all most sincerely.

References

- Boyd, D. M., & Ellison, N. B. (2007). Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship. *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication*, 13(1), 210-230
- Dyrud, M. A., Worley, R. B., and Flatley, M. E. (2005). Blogging for enhanced teaching and learning, *Business Communication Quarterly*, 68(1), 77-80.
- Fawzi, H. A. (2015). Usage of WhatsApp application for e-learning and its impact on academic performance in Irbid National University in Jordan, *International Journal of Applied Engineering*, 10(19), 39875-39879.
- Fehr, C. N., Davison, M. L., Graves, M. F., Sales, G. C., Seipel, B., & Sekhran-Sharma, S. (2012). The effects of individualized, online vocabulary instruction on picture vocabulary scores: An efficacy study. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 25(1), 87-102.
- Gasaymeh, A. M. (2017). University students' use of whatsapp and their perceptions regarding its possible integration into their education. *Global Journal of Computer Science and Technology: G Interdiscipline*, 17(1).
- Gaudeul, A., & Peroni, C. (2010). Reciprocal attention and norm of reciprocity in blogging networks. *Economics Bulletin*, 30(3), 2230-2248
- Hayashi, P. (2011). A learning success story using Facebook. *Studies in Self-Access Learning Journal*, 2(4), 309-316.
- Izyani, B. M., & Mohamed, A. E. (2016). Students' perception on the use of WhatsApp as a learning tool in ESL classroom. *Journal of Education and Social Sciences*, 4, 96
- Jairus, E. U., Christian, U. U., Ogwuche, A. J., Thomas, O. I., Taiyol, T. T., Ode, E. J., Ekpo, S. O., & Adoga, I. A. (2017). Impact of mobile phone usage on students' academic performance among public secondary schools in Oju local government area of Benue State. *International Journal of Science and Research Methodology (IJSRM); Human*, 6(3), 104 - 118.
- Kajder, S., & Bull, G. (2004). A space for "writing without writing." *Learning & Leading with Technology*, 31(6), 32-35.
- Kern, R. (2006). Perspectives on technology in learning and teaching languages. *TESOL Quarterly*, 40(1), 183-210
- Kumar, V. S., Lian, T. Y., & Vasudevan, H. (2016). UNiKL RCMP undergraduates' perception on using WhatsApp as a tool for Mandarin Language teaching and learning. Retrieved on the 18th December, 2017 from https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Vishalini_Selva_Kumar/publication
- Majid, A. H. A., Stapa, H. S., & Keong, C. Y. (2012). Scaffolding through the blended approach: Improving the writing process and performance using Facebook. *American Journal of Social Issues & Humanities*, 2(5), 336-342.
- Mingle, J., & Adams, M. (2015). Social media network participation and academic performance in senior high schools in Ghana. *Library Philosophy and Practice (ejournal)*, Paper 1286

- Mistar, I. B., & Embi, M. A. (2016). Students' perception on the use of whatsapp as a learning tool in ESL classroom. *Journal of Education and Social Sciences, 4*, 96- 104
- Mutum, D., & Wang, Q. (2010). Consumer Generated Advertising in Blogs. In Neal M. Burns, Terry Daugherty, Matthew S. Eastin. *Handbook of Research on Digital Media and Advertising: User Generated Content Consumption, 1*. IGI Global. pp. 248–261
- Nakata, T. (2008). English vocabulary learning with word lists, word cards and computers: Implications from cognitive psychology research for optimal spaced learning. *ReCALL, 20*(1), 3-5.
- Nitza, D., & Roman, Y. (2016). WhatsApp messaging: Achievements and success in academia. *International Journal of Higher Education, 5*(4).
- Raiman, L., Antbring, R., & Mahmood, A. (2017). WhatsApp messenger as a tool to supplement medical education for medical students on clinical attachment. *BMC Medical Education, 17*(7).
- Taylor, D. G., Lewin, E. J., and Strutton, D. (2011). Friends, fans, and followers: Do ads work on social networks? How gender and age shape receptivity, *Journal of Advertising Research, 51*(1), 258-275. <https://doi.org/10.2501/JAR-51-1-258-275>
- Yin, L. C. (2016). Adoption of WhatsApp instant messaging among students in ipoh higher education institutions. Retrieved 5th April, 2017 from http://woulibrary.wou.edu.my/theses-project/MED2016_CYLEE.pdf

Author's Biography

Abdulmalik Abiola SALMAN, B.Ed. M.Ed. (Language Education) is a postgraduate student at the Department of Arts and Social Sciences Education, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria. His research interest is in the area of teaching and learning of English as a Second Language.

Muhyideen IMAM, BA, MA, teaches English Studies courses at the Centre for General Studies, University of Ibadan, Nigeria. He's an author and a content and engagement specialist.