EFL Learner's Perception about Utilising Technology-Driven Learning in the Midst of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Langgeng Budianto[a], [a]Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University, Malang Indonesia, Email: [a]langgeng@bsi.uin-malang.ac.id

The COVID-19 Pandemic is having a massive impact in the world of education. This current research investigates the learners' perceptions of utilising technology of WhatsApp application in the midst of a COVID-19 pandemic. The usefulness aspects are ease of use, an ease of learning and satisfaction were investigated on this basis. A descriptive method and questionnaire developed by Lund, A. M (2001) were used in this study. The subjects of this study were 33 participants from three different levels of academic years. They perceived the use of online learning via WhatsApp was not intensely useful in the middle of the Covid 19 pandemic. The main response of participants' perception is that WhatsApp application is not useful, is hard to use, not user-friendly and is an unsatisfactory tool used by teachers and students. Thus, WhatsApp shall not be implemented in EFL learning system.

Key words: *WhatsApp, perception, learning, COVID.*

Introduction

The development of technology plays a crucial role in the implementation of Education 4.0. The existence of technology endorses the teaching and learning process in the digital era as it helps the students to be self-determined learners. They can learn everything and everywhere by clicking many features or using platforms on the internet that relates to their study. It is crucial to apply technology expansion in the 21st century for language pedagogy.. Technology can assist college students' to work rapidly and easily. Mobile phone technology is the most prospective tool to be utilised in teaching English language. Second language teachers can apply message applications through mobile phones and smart phones. The most famous messenger application is WhatsApp. Bensalem (2018) claimed that many foreign language

teachers have been interested in using WhatsApp to teach certain aspects of foreign language learning. In addition to Bensalem, Kim, Lee, & Kim, M. (2014) claim that mobile learning provides students with unlimited opportunities to achieve their learning goals through learning situations in real time and authentic interaction that makes learning meaningful, effective and different from decontextualised traditional classrooms.

Maintaining learning amidst the COVID 19 pandemic has brought major challenges for teachers, who need to apply initiative and provide flexible learning for students' at home. Flexible learning during educational disruption is crucial for the sustained existence of an educational environment. In Indonesia, the use of online learning amidst COVID-19 is impacting the educational sector. The impact is also occurring in the economic sector as reported by the Indonesian Ministry of Finance via CNN-Indonesia (2020). The unaddressed spread of COVID 19 is having an impact on the economy and causing many problems. In responce to this, the educational policy makers are active in taking steps to eliminate campus activities transmitted through E-campus facilities or other forms that maintain sustainable education via online learning. The students' online language learning needs should be designed in more flexible ways to make the most of the current learning environment. The new learning modes, utilising technology appear to open more opportunities for self-determined and independent learners. In line with this, Wiki (2019) argued that the self-determined and independent learners aim is to engage with teachers who become learning facilitatosr.

Susanti and Tarmuji (2016) argue that smartphone technology seems to have a promising and flexible use features such as text, calling, and video sending, audio, links, location, document, and pictures. This means that the technology of WhatsApp has the biggest potential to support English language teaching and learning. Hamad (2017:74-75) stated that "using WhatsApp to facilitate and create an avenue for learning and communication as well, as it is the most common App for students, and they always have their mobile phones and smart phones in their hands, and it is cheap to activate the App. The emergence usage of technologies is growing rapidly among the present generation of students. Because the next generation has grown up with web 2.0 social media technologies, these tools have tremendous popularity in students' social lives. Thus, the social network systems are currently very popular when used among university students. Many activities can be designed in WhatsApp application to strengthen the students' English skills during classroom activities.

With regard to classroom learning activities that have switched to the online system, creative and innovative teachers are required. Through the use of E-Campus application and other forms, the university lecturers switched to perform teaching tasks with the use of online aids. This system has driven teachers and students to adapt to this way of interacting, communicating, learning and working collectively (Lai, 2015; Resta & Laferrière, 2007; Wood & Homan, 2003). In line with this context, sending instant messages, photos, video, podcasts

and location permit is effective communication through the app message (Aal, Parmar, Patel, & Sen,2014; Barhoumi, 2015). Other studies revealed that the application of mobile phone contributes positive attitudes to foster learner's autonomy, encouraging cooperation, and intensifies motivation to active participation in academic goals (Vavoula & Sharples, 2008; Bere, 2013; Chipunza, 2013; Fattah, 2015).

In this study, the application of WhatsApp as a learning tool was significantly essential to provide immediate learning tasks and information exchange with the group of students. Through this tool, more flexible learning activities outside the classroom with an electronic sources encourages learners to learn English outside the classroom in a more flexible way. However, most teachers have not optimally utilised the technology in teaching English language. This is supported by Lailiyah and Cahyono (2016:345) who claim that "some EFL teachers are reluctant to take the opportunity to integrate technology into their classrooms".

Therefore, this study is undeertaken to find out students' perceptions of using an on line system in the English language classroom. This online system is applied to optimise the learning processes that occur in the second language classroom setting. There is a need to know the students' responses which can input into lecturers and universities knowledge regarding some of the aspects, such as the usefulness aspect, ease of use and ease of learning. Thus, the research question for this study is as follows: What is the EFL student's perception towards the use of a mobile phone application amidst the COVID-19 pandemic?

Methodology

This study is descriptive research to understand users' perception of WhatsApp application. This study used quantitative research design. The subject of this study were 33 participants of an English study program of the State Islamic University, Malang Indonesia. The reason for this choice is that the researcher worked with the cohorts and could get a high rate of responses easily. Responding to the five-point Linkert-scale, the respondents were requested to tick the answer with the level of 1-5 (5=strongly agree, 4= agree, 3=neutral, 2=disagree and 1=strongly disagree). The data was collected by using a questionnaire developed by Lund (2001). The online survey consisted of 5 aspects; the useful aspect, ease of use aspect, ease of learning aspect, and satisfaction aspect. Each aspect has a different questions. The students' responses to the questionnaires were classified and analysed to understand perceptions. The data was analysed descriptively based on the percentage of the students' responses toward the researcher's questionnaire.

Finding

The learners' perception of the online learning system amidst the COVID-19 pandemic is the main objective of the study. The investigation is done because of the need toimprove classroom teaching.

RQ1. Students' perceptions toward the use of mobile phone application

Based on the responses on the questionnaire, all students had mobile devices. Smartphones were the most popular tool used as social media interaction. Students reported that mostly mobile phones are used for calls and text messages.

Table 1: The Learners' Perception of Using WhatsApp on Ease of Learning

Aspects	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
The learners use WhatsApp for learning quickly	45,5%	33,3%	15,2%	6,1%	0,0%
The learners use WhatsApp for general information	39,4%	33,3%	24,2%	3,0%	0,0%
The learners use WhatsApp for chatting	24,2%	36,4%	24,2%	12,1%	3,0%

As indicated in table 1 regarding the use of WhatsApp in ease of learning, 15 respondents (45,5%) strongly disagree that learners use WhatsApp for quicker learning and only (6,1%) claime to agree with the use of WhatsApp in quick learning. In terms of those who used WhatsApp for general information, the respondents made different statements. 13 respondents (39,4%) stated they strongly disagree that WhatsApp was easily used for general information. With reference to learners who use WhatsApp for learning easily, 12 respondents (36,4%) chose to disagree that WhatsApp was easily used for chatting in academic tasks, and the agreement is represented by 4 respondents (12,1%) of the total number of respondents. This result, however, is not in line with Sanjaya's (2012) investigation that the WhatsApp application which provides facilities of sharing information in the form of audio, video, and images became the concern of the dominant students. The finding in point 1 implied that participants do not give positive responses toward the use of WhatsApp because it is not a fast way to learn language, an easy tool to chat in academic tasks and an adequate time to access general information.

Table 2 contains data about users' perceptions towards WhatsApp on the useful aspect. The students' responses indicated that most of them, 39.4% chose neutral for effective help. As shown in the percentage computation, 36.4% respondents said that WhatsApp helped language

productivity improve and only 6.1% said strongly agree. In the aspect of useful and innovative tool, 27.3% respondents disagreed that WhatsApp is used innovatively and improves thinking skills. The disagreement that WhatsApp can monitor and accomplish learning was claimed by 33.3% respondents. Regarding WhatsApp working smarter as expected by learners was neutral as claimed by (30.3) respondents. This result is consistent with Alhadhrami's (2016) investigation about the application of social media and SMS as a part of instruction in learning English. His findings revealed that most students in Oman who used mobile devices in language learning became frustrated due to the lack of support from their English teachers'. In line with this, the use of WhatsApp application should be appropriate for students' educational background and environment. In addition, the teachers also need to give correct and suitable instruction to enhance the effectiveness of WhatsApp implementation in the language learning process. The findings implied that respondents do not give positive responses to WhatsApp on the useful aspect, because it is not easy and applicable to use in the language learning process.

Table 2: The Learners' Perception towards the Useful Aspect of WhatsApp

Aspects	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
Can help me effectively	18,2%	21,2%	39,4%	12,1%	9,1%
Can help language productivity improved	27,3%	18,2%	36,4%	12,1%	6,1%
Cen be useful and innovative instrument	15,2%	27,3%	27,3%	21,2%	9,1%
Can monitor my learning activities	21,2%	33,3%	24,2%	12,1%	9,1%
Can accomplish things done easily	27,3%	33,3%	27,3%	6,1%	6,1%
Can improve thinking skills	24,2%	27,3%	33,3%	9,1%	6,1%
Can meet my needs	24,2%	30,3%	24,2%	21,2%	0,0%
Can work smartly as expected	27,3%	21,2%	30,3%	18,2%	3,0%

Table 2 contains data about users' perceptions towards Whatsapp on the useful aspect. The students' responses indicate that most of them, 39.4% chose neutral for effective help. As shown in the percentage computation, 36.4% of respondents said that WhatsApp helped language productivity improve and only 6.1% said strongly agree. In the aspect of a useful and innovative tool, 27.3% of respondents disagreed that WhatsApp is innovatively used to improve thinking skills. The disagreement that WhatsApp can monitor and accomplish learning was claimed by 33.3% of respondents. WhatsApp can work smart as expected by learners fell in neutral as claimed by (30,3) respondents. This result is consistent with Alhadhrami's (2016) investigation about the application of social media and SMS as a part of instruction in learning English. His findings reveal that most students in Oman who used mobile devices in language learning became frustrated due to the lack of support from their English teachers. In line with this, the use of the WhatsApp application should be appropriate with students' educational background and environment. Besides, the teachers also need to give correct and suitable instruction to enhance the effectiveness of WhatsApp implementation in the language learning

process. The findings implied that respondents do not give positive responses to WhatsApp on the useful aspect, because it is not easy and applicable to use in the language learning process.

Table 3: The Learners' Perception towards WhatsApp on Satisfaction

Aspects	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
WhatsApp makes me satisfied	12,1%	42,4%	24,2%	12,1%	9,1%
WhatsApp is fun to use	30,3%	36,4%	18,2%	12,1%	3,0%
WhatsApp communicated valuable information	21,2%	27,3%	42,4%	6,1%	3,0%
WhatsApp is wonderful	18,2%	24,2%	36,4%	18,2%	3,0%
WhatsApp is pleasant to use	33,3%	36,4%	24,2%	6,1%	0,0%

Every app has features that makes the user more comfortable when using the app. Respondents gave their own criteria on which features are useful, cool, helpful, and others. Table 3 shows users' perceptions towards WhatsApp on satisfaction in six aspects. Every aspect was claimed differently by the 33 respondents. The first aspect claimed by 14 (42.2%) respondents to disagree regarding their satisfaction in using WhatsApp. Twelve (36.4%) respondents disagreed that WhatsApp is fun to use. Meanwhile, in the aspect WhatsApp communicated valuable information, 14 (42.2%) respondents chose neutral. Regarding WhatsApp is wonderful, 12 (36.4%) respondents claimed neutral. In addition, the statement WhatsApp is pleasant to use, 12 (36.4%) respondents chose to disagree. The finding is supported by Chavan's (2018) investigation on the impact of WhatsApp usage on students' performance. The study shows 70% respondents claimed that most of the students feel using WhatsApp is unpleasant because they must type ots of sentences, it takes up much of students study time and destroys students' spellingand grammatical construction of sentences during the online meeting. This result implied that respondents do not give a positive response in the user's satisfaction of WhatsApp because it is not fun and pleasant to use.

Table 4: The Learners' Perception towards WhatsApp on Ease of Use

Aspects	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
WhatsApp helped pass information discussed	30,3%	39,4%	27,3%	3,0%	0,0%
WhatsApp is flexible	39,4%	42,4%	15,2%	3,0%	0,0%
WhatsApp is effortless	33,3%	33,3%	18,2%	9,1%	6,1%
WhatsApp can be used without written instructions	27,3%	33,3%	21,2%	15,2%	3,0%

WhatsApp increased self confidence	30,3%	39,4%	21,2%	6,1%	3,0%
WhatsApp encouraged peer learning	42,4%	30,3%	24,2%	3,0%	0,0%

As indicated in Table 4, 13 (39.4%) respondents disagree that WhatsApp helped pass information discussed. When asked was WhatsApp flexible, most of the respondents 42.4% (14 respondents) choose disagree while 11 (33,3%) of respondents chose to disagree on the aspect of the user can use WhatsApp without written instructions. Subsequently, the aspect of using WhatsApp is effortless has been claimed equally by the respondents who choose strongly agree and disagree. 12 (39.4%) respondents disagreed that WhatsApp increased confidence, and the last aspect did WhatsApp encourage peer learning respondents strongly disagree by 14 (42.4%).

The result is not in line with Gon and Rawekar's (2017) study about the effectivity of E-Learning through WhatsApp as a teaching / learning tool. They reported that WhatsApp can consistently provide easy access to learning materials since it provided a positive side to learning, quick feedback, and availability of learning materials. The finding in point 3 can be concluded that participants do not give positive responses toward the easy use of WhatsApp because it is not flexible and it is hard to use it in online learning meetings.

Discussion

Mobile technology has grown in value since the beginning of the 21st century. The new focus of learning processes in this century is turning to online platforms for students ease of use in the learning process itself. WhatsApp is a program that can be used in mobile learning. WhatsApp is a mobile app for text message sharing (Mayangsari & Aprianti, 2017). The result of the finding revealed that some students are in the strongly disagree category, mostly 15 (45.5%) respondents stated that the use of WhatsApp did not provide quick learning, was not easy to understand or to use for students. These results contrast with the existing statement about the use of WhatsApp to ease both students and teachers in sharing materials through this app (Hamidin, 2015).

Table 2 presents that most of the participants are not effective when using WhatsApp, and most of them agree that WhatsApp is not an innovative tool that improved thinking skills and accomplished language learning. Results drawn from the questionnaire are in line with the findings of Irfan and Dhimmar (2019). WhatsApp has a profoundly negative impact on students and adversely affects their education, behaviour, and routine lives. WhatsApp messed up the students' study time and distracted students' focus to complete their assignments because the app appeared to be seriously addictive. Others claimed that WhatsApp did not work smartly as the students' expectation for a language learning tool. In addition, the need of an effective

collaborative tool for meetings by the learners was not met. Regarding students' perception of mobile phone use for English learning purposes, the majority indicated that the frequency of mobile phone use in EFL classroom initiated by the students was minimal.

Most students also revealed that they do not think they can integrate their own mobile phone for teacher-guided activities in the classroom. In line with this, Irfan and Dhimmar (2019) stated that WhatsApp decreased student attention and impacted negatively on academic achievement and responsibilities with a number of grammatical mistakes, and loss of concentration when being taught. WhatsApp even decreases academic scores of the learners. The results revealed that the attitudes towards the use of WhatsApp among students was negative.. It was supported by the result that showed more than 50% of respondents claimed disagree to strongly disagree in the three items presented in the table 1. It can be concluded that the students' attitude towards WhatsApp and how they perceive its usage and convenience of usage were rated at a very low level.

In table 3, the results indicate that 14 (42.4%) respondents said WhatsApp doesn't make users satisfied and it doesn't work the way users want it to work. Most of the students stated that WhatsApp is not suitable for information communicated since the access of Wi-Fi connection as it takes time. These findings were also strengthened by the results of table 4, which shows that WhatsApp is not flexible to use as claimed by 14 (42.4%) of respondents. This similar to Shivam's (2014) finding that WhatsApp has some positive features, such as downloading and uploading a variety of media; photos, audio, video, documents, and PowerPoint presentation slides. Besides, uploading to WhatsApp has a limited size. This is the reason that the majority of the students do not find it pleasant to use WhatsApp. The results showed that the usefulness of WhatsApp among students are at a low level. It was confirmed by the result of this study presented in Table 2 that every item in relation to the usefulness of WhatsApp were all at the very low level. No more than one-third of respondents chose agree and strongly agree, while the most of respondents chose strongly disagree to neutral in the items in relation to the usefulness of WhatsApp.

Conclusion

WhatsApp is an application that almost everyone who has a smartphone uses. WhatsApp is known as an application that is easy to use by all aspects of society, from children to adults. WhatsApp is used as a platform for communication, business, and learning. In the aspect of education, WhatsApp helps to make communication between teacher and student easier. Using WhatsApp as a learning media can have both positive and negative effects on the teacher, students, and the learning process.

However, the results have shown that the online language learning process is considered ineffective by the students. WhatsApp is not an application that is easy to use for this purpose. Users need more time to learn about WhatsApp before they can use the application. The study proves that WhatsApp cannot be learned quickly. WhatsApp is also not a really effective application to suit users' standards and wants. The respondents agreed that WhatsApp did not work as they wanted it to and it was not a flexible application. WhatsApp has a limit for the media size that can be sent through the application. More work needs to be done to incorporate mobile phones as an alternative teaching tool in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers and students can effectively and efficiently use mobile technologies in the EFL classroom activities. However, the use of WhatsApp in the students' experiences did not reflect positively to strengthen language pedagogical teaching.

Focusing on the learning side, WhatsApp doesn't support a lot in the online learning environment since it is not easy to use under a range of circumstances. This makes it impossible for learners and teachers to use WhatsApp as a learning tool. It can be concluded that the WhatsApp application is not suited for an asynchronous and online learning tool. Findings from this study illuminate the way the teachers and students can apply the mobile phone in the EFL classroom with the limited access to technology resources.

Based on the data in the tables WhatsApp among the respondents is not useful enough, it has the average between useful and less usefulness. This means that the use of WhatsApp itself is average depending on the needs of students.
WhatsApp allows students to send and receive, especially at university. This application provides many tempting features including content sharing in the form of audio, videos, photographs, or even use location sharing.

REFERENCES

Aal, L. B., Parmar, J. N., Patel, V. R., & Sen, D. J. (2014). WhatsApp, Skype, Wickr, Viber, Twitter, and Blog are ready to asymptote globally from all corners during communications in latest fast life. Research Journal of Science and Technology, 6(2), 101-116..

Alhadhrami, M. N. (2016). Using mobile phone apps inside and outside the English language classroom by undergraduate students at Sultana Qaboos University: Attitudes, practices, and challenges. Journal of Teaching English for Specific and Academic Purposes, 4(1), 61-74

Barhoumi, C. (2015). The effectiveness of WhatsAppmobile learning activities guided by activity theory on students' knowledge management. Contemporary Educational Technology, 6(3), 221-238.Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1105764.pdf

Bensalem, E. (2018). The Impact of WhatsApp on EFL students' vocabulary learning. Arab World English Journal, 9(1), 23-28. https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol9no1.2.

Bere, A. 2013. Using mobile instant messaging to leverage learner participation and transform pedagogy at a South African university of technology. British Journal of Educational Technology, 44(4), 554-561.

Chavan, S.B. (2018). The impact of whatsApp massenger usage on students performance. International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research an Development. October 2018, 191-196

Chipunza, P. R. C. (2013). Using mobile devices to leverage student access to collaboratively-generated resources: A case of whatsapp instant messaging at a South African University. International Conference on Advanced Information and Communication Technology for Education (ICAICTE 2013). e-mail: teknosastik@teknokrat.ac.id   TEKNOSASTIK ISSN 2656-6842 Volume 17 (2). 100-108.

CNN-Indonesia. (2020). Sri mulyani: Dampak virus corona berat ke perekonomian CNN Indonesia. Jakarta, Indonesia: CNN Indonesia

Fattah, S. F. E. S. A. (2015). The Effectiveness of Using WhatsApp Messager as one of mobile learning techniques to develop students' writing skills. Journal of Education and Practice, 6(32), 115-127.

Gon, S and Rawekar, A. (2017). Effectivity of E-Learning through Whatsapp as a teaching learning tool. MVP Journal of Medical Science, Vol 4 (1), 19-25, January- June 2017 DOI:10.18311/mvpjms/2017/v4i1/8454.

Hamad, M. M. (2017). Using WhatsApp to enhance students' learning of English language "Experience to Share". Higher Education Studies, 7 (4), 74-87. http://doi.org/10.5539/hes.v7n4p74

Hamidin, N. M. (2015). Penggunaan Aplikasi 'whatsapp'dalam pembelajaran & pengajaran (P&P) di KUIS. In 1st Global Conference on Technology in Language Learning (Vol. 20015).

Irfan, M., & Dhimmar, S. (2019). Impact of WhatsApp Messenger on the university level students: A Psychological Study. 6(1), 572-586.

Kim, H., Lee, M., & Kim, M. (2014). Effects of mobile instant messaging on collaborative learning processes and outcomes: The case of South Korea. Journal of Educational Technology & Society, 17(2), 31- 42.Retrieved from https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/jeductechsoci.17.2.31.

Lai, C. (2015). Modeling teachers' influence on learners'self-directed use of technology for language learning outside the classroom. Computers & Education, 82, 74-83.https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2014.11.005

Lailiyah, M. & Cahyono, B. Y. (2016). Indonesian EFL teachers' Self-Efficacy towards technology Integration (SETI) and their use of technology in EFL. Studies in English Language Teaching, 5(2), 345-357. http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/selt.v5n2p344

Lund, A.M. (2001) Measuring usability with the USE Questionnaire. STC Usability SIG Newsletter, 8: 2.

Mayangsari, I. D., & Aprianti, A. (2017). Understanding communication among parents and teachers in WhatsApp. Case study in Bandung, Indonesia. Malaysian Journal of Social Science and Humanities, 2(2) 19-24.

Resta , P., & Laferrière, T. (2007). Technology in supportof collaborative learning.Educational Psychology Re-view, 19(1), 65-83.https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-007-9042-7

Sanjaya, I. (2012). Pemanfaatan "WhatsApp Messenger" Sebagai Media Komunikasi Pada Remaja Akhir.

Susanti, A & Tarmuji, A. (2016). Techniques of optimizing Whatsapp as an sg EFL Writing in Indonesian Senior High Schools. International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature, 4,(10), 26-31. http://dx.doi.org/10.20431/2347-3134.0410005.

Wiki. (2019). Open learning. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_learning

Wood, K., & Homan, S. R. (2003). Taming the mega-lecture: Wireless quizzing. Campus Technology. Retrieved Online from

https://campustechnology.com/Articles/2003/09/Taming-the-MegaLecture-Wireless-Quizzing.aspx

Vavoula, G. & Sharples, M. (2008). Challenges in evaluating mobile informal learning. In Proceedings of the mLearn 2008 conference (pp. 296-303). UK: Wolverhampton. TEKNOSASTIK ISSN 2656-6842 Volume 17 (2), 2019 Sari & Putri

s