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INSTITUTO DE POSTGRADO

**MAESTRÍA EN PEDAGOGÍA DE LOS IDIOMAS NACIONALES Y
EXTRANJEROS MENCIÓN ENSEÑANZA DE INGLÉS**

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**USING WHATSAPP TO IMPROVE SPEAKING INTERACTION IN EFL
STUDENTS**

**PREVIO A LA OBTENCIÓN DEL TÍTULO DE MAGÍSTER EN
PEDAGOGÍA DE LOS IDIOMAS NACIONALES Y EXTRANJEROS
MENCIÓN ENSEÑANZA DE INGLÉS.**

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Dedication

I dedicate this work, first to God for being the light that guides my life, to my mother for always being the example to follow, to my wife for her unconditional support throughout this process, and especially to my son Sebastian for being my inspiration to be better every day.

Fabricio

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I thank God and my family for accompanying me in this new stage of my life and my most sincere thanks to my tutor and all the colleagues who were part of this process since for their support and perseverance we achieved this goal together.

Fabricio

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MAESTRÍA EN PEDAGOGÍA DE LOS IDIOMAS NACIONALES Y EXTRANJEROS
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Tema: USING WHATSAPP TO IMPROVE SPEAKING INTERACTION IN EFL STUDENTS

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Resumen

El presente trabajo es el reflejo de una exhaustiva investigación sobre la relación de las aplicaciones de mensajería instantánea (WhatsApp) con el desarrollo de las habilidades de interacción oral de los estudiantes de un nuevo idioma. En el mismo analizaremos investigaciones previas pertinentes y relacionadas al tema y ahondaremos en la importancia de la relación intrínseca que existe entre estas dos variables, permitiéndonos con esto reflejar su estrecha relación y demostrar como con el uso de las aplicaciones de mensajería instantánea como WhatsApp se logra motivar a los estudiantes a que desarrollen sus habilidades de comunicación y se expresen con mas confianza y asertividad en el nuevo idioma que están practicando y aprehendiendo.

Palabras clave: WhatsApp, interacción oral, habilidades de comunicación



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Abstract

The present work is the reflection of an exhaustive investigation on the relationship of instant messaging applications (WhatsApp) with the development of the oral interaction skills of students of a new language. In it we will analyze previous relevant research related to the subject and delve into the importance of the intrinsic relationship that exists between these two variables, allowing us to reflect on their close relationship and demonstrate how the use of instant messaging applications such as WhatsApp is achieved. motivate students to develop their communication skills and express themselves with more confidence and assertiveness in the new language they are practicing and learning.

Keywords: WhatsApp, oral interaction, communication skills

Introduction

The present work will analyze the importance of mobile learning and mobile assisted language learning in class and its relationship with the development of the skills using instant messaging applications like WhatsApp while you are learning a new language, in our case English, but it could be used in any language or skill that needs extra practice.

This is something that we must face much faster than we expected since the COVID 19 appeared bringing with him a general lockdown and consequently the temporary closure of all the educational institutions and therefore the beginning of an online education for which we were not prepared.

During this pandemic we all adapted to a new way of living, we suffer from anxiety and stress and the use of technology in our lives is mandatory in all aspects. As a result, technology become part of our way to teach and being taught.

To sum up, most instant messaging apps and not only WhatsApp could be used to teach more dynamically, and we could recommend exploring all the possible ways to include them in our classes.

Chapter I

Topic: Using WhatsApp to Improve Speaking Interaction in EFL Students.

WhatsApp

Today there are a lot of apps that help us to communicate instantly like Facebook Messenger, Instagram, WhatsApp, etc. And WhatsApp is one of the most popular and as a result of this, a lot of teachers and institutions are using it in their planning and curriculums.

There are a lot of studies that demonstrate the positive impact an effect that WhatsApp has on students' motivation and engagement and how its use of it helps students to improve their performance at all levels of education.

Objectives

- Determine if the use of WhatsApp improves Students' English spoken interaction
- Identify the factors that affect students' English spoken interaction

Justification

Nowadays knowing a foreign language is important because it plays a vital role in communications in this modern world and real life, speaking will be the skill in which they will be judged most firmly (Brown & Yule, 1983). And speaking in front of partners and teachers is one of the biggest problems students must overcome in English classes. However, oral communication occupies 80% of the time of human activity and 45% of this is devoted to listening and 30% to talking as it is mentioned by (Ríos, 2013) and that's why we are going to research the

positive effect of the use of the instant messaging apps in education and to be more specific in the improvement of the spoken interaction of students from an English as a Foreign Language class.

We are going to focus on instant messaging apps especially WhatsApp, because, it is one of the most used in the world. According to (Statista, 2021) 2 billion people use WhatsApp monthly, and it is used more outside the United States of America, in the second place we could find Facebook Messenger with 1.3 billion users per month.

Methodology

Qualitative research and descriptive methodology were used to get all the relevant information about the topic studied in the present work.

Content

In chapter II, we could find the background research and some literature reviews about WhatsApp use in education and students' spoken interaction, to support the written work.

Chapter II

Literature review

Speaking is a productive skill, and it is one of the most difficult to develop in any language that you learn, usually, babies learn how to speak a language because they have a comprehensible input of their mother tongue so we could apply that in a second language. Therefore, we could give students this kind of input and they will acquire the language naturally without notice according to the theory of language acquisition (Krashen, 1981).

The students do not have this kind of input even though they have at least five hours of English in class (usually in schools and high school) due to the lack of trained teachers who teach English speaking in Spanish, and they do not encourage students to take risks and speak in English. Nowadays, at the university where I work, they just have three hours per week and that is not enough time; according to the (British Council, 2018), a student needs between 500 to 600 hours of guided learning hours to get a B2 level. This level is a requirement to graduate.

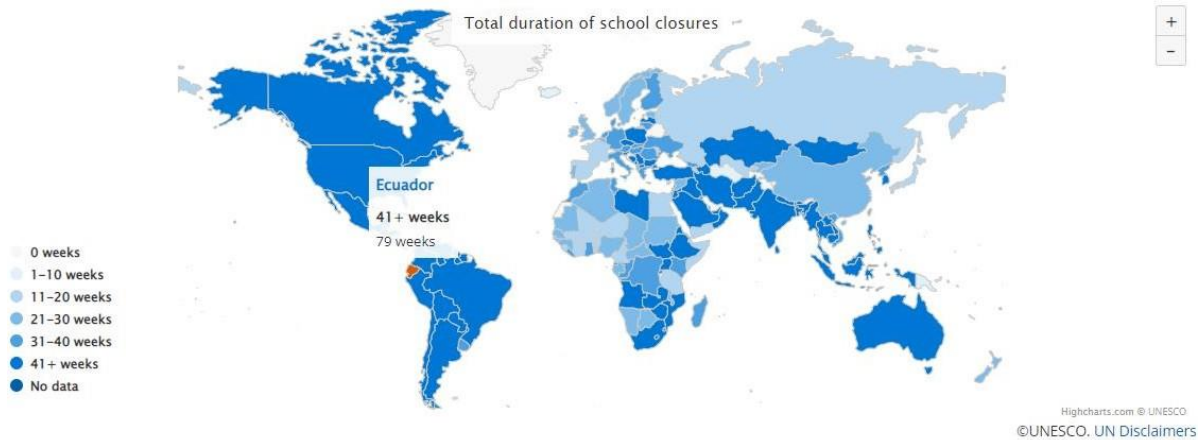
Another problem we face is the number of students per classroom which goes between 45 to 60 students and (Urrutia & Vega, 2010) state that this exceeds by far the accurate number of students to have a good speaking practice. However, we constantly try to get new and engaging ways to teach and encourage students to participate in class, but they just do not want to try due to their shyness, their afraid of making mistakes in front of their classmates, or just because they do not want to do it.

Nowadays, technology becomes an important part of our lives, and with the pandemic and the lockdowns when according to (UNESCO, 2020) more than 1.37 billion students in 138

countries stay at home due to school and universities closures including Ecuador which had its educational institutions closed for 79 weeks as shown in Figure 1.

Figure1

Total Duration of School Closures



Note. Adapted from *Total duration of school closures*, by UNESCO, 2020 <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse#durationschoolclosures>. Copyright.

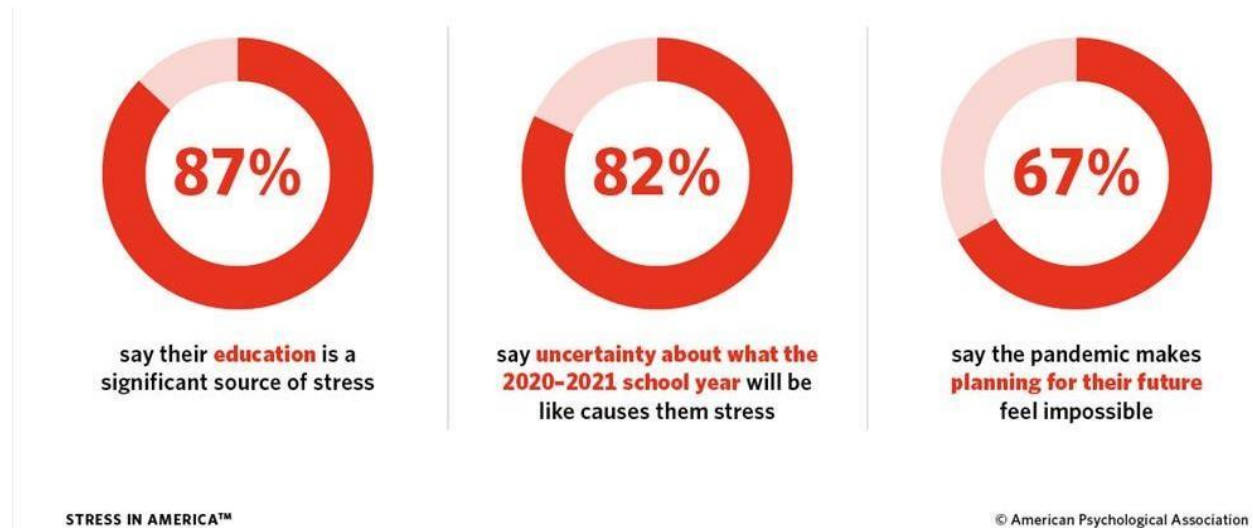
Therefore, we depend more on technology than we used to do it. As a result, technology is an important part of our teaching process, and we could find a huge number of websites or apps that help us to teach. Students connect to their classes online through several devices such as laptops, smartphones, or tablets. However, students prefer to use cell phones instead of other devices for several reasons as stated by (Martin & Ertzberger, 2013). This happens for the practicality and the ease that the cellphone gives the students to study while they commute (McConatha et al., 2008).

In education, we have to make an effort to adapt to these changes and evolve with them, even though it is not an easy process and could be stressful. According to (APA Association, 2020) the disruption to education caused significant stress in 87% of adult college students and 67% of

them felt uncertain about their future, additional to this 82% of adult college students thought that thinking about their school year made them feel stress as shown in figure 2.

Figure 2

Disruption to Education Causing Stress for Adult College Students



Note. Adapted from *Disruption to Education Causing Stress for Adult College Students*, by American Psychological Association, 2020. https://www.apa.org/images/sia-2020-disruption-education_tcm7-279799_w1024_n.jpg. Copyright.

As a result of this, students, teachers, and the educational system need to adapt to these changes or die digitally and one way to make it easy is to use devices with which we are familiar like our smartphones. (Aicha, 2014) states that the use of cellphones in education is an innovative tool, especially in higher education, and using the technology to teach and to be more precise, using the cellphone is the way the teachers and all the educative communitive can reach the students' interest using these devices and technology in classes and outside them (Healey et al., 2008). Therefore, this is a good way to engage students to fulfill their tasks and according to (Gerger, 2014) this is going to generate autonomy in the students and their learning process.

Incorporating technology like cellphones and apps related to it like WhatsApp into our classes and students learning process allows them to set their own goals and be in control of what and when to learn or practice to increase their knowledge (Boticki et al., 2015) and a study performed by (Dresselhaus et al., 2012) showed that more than 50 percent of the students use cellphones for academic purposes. Therefore, students tend to use their cellphone not just for entertainment but to do homework or exchange ideas with their partners

Based on what we have read we are going to analyze the influence of WhatsApp on the students' motivation and education. According to (Almeida d'Eca, 2003), WhatsApp can help students increase language skills like speaking, writing, and listening. Therefore, WhatsApp could be used as a tool in teaching since the user can send messages... in form of..., audio files... to be accessed (Bouhnik & Deshen, 2014). We must point out that according to (Reese, 2011) the learning by doing principle has been advocated widely and in many forms, including..., practical experience versus book learning, and “proof upon practice”. In addition, the role of the teacher is to structure students' learning experiences to support their speaking development, in and outside the classroom, as it is explained by (Goh & Burns, 2012).

In the following paragraphs, you will find the key elements of this research such as the advantages and disadvantages of using WhatsApp for academic purposes and the importance and relevance of developing speaking and spoken interaction

Speaking and Spoken Interaction.

Speaking is a process where you share your ideas, opinions, and thoughts with words, gestures, and using your body language in several situations (Chaney & Burk, 1998). Even though

speaking is natural in our mother tongue, it could be a little bit difficult when we are learning a second language and it could be probably the most important skill because it includes all other skills of the language that we want to learn as stated by (Ur, 1996). Speaking is an important part of our daily life, and we as teachers must prepare students to speak as fluent as possible using the language naturally and confidently with almost no unnatural pauses (Nunan, 2003)

To develop speaking skills students also must take part in the process and assume their role and according to (Brown H. , 1994), some categories can be used as the role of learners in developing speaking skills in class such as intensive, responsive, transactional, interpersonal, and extensive. Moreover, according to (Bueno et al., 2006) speaking is difficult in any language, and this could be one of the problems students have to overcome. As a result, teachers have to find a way to engage students in the practice and development of their speaking skills.

Mobile Assisted Language Learning

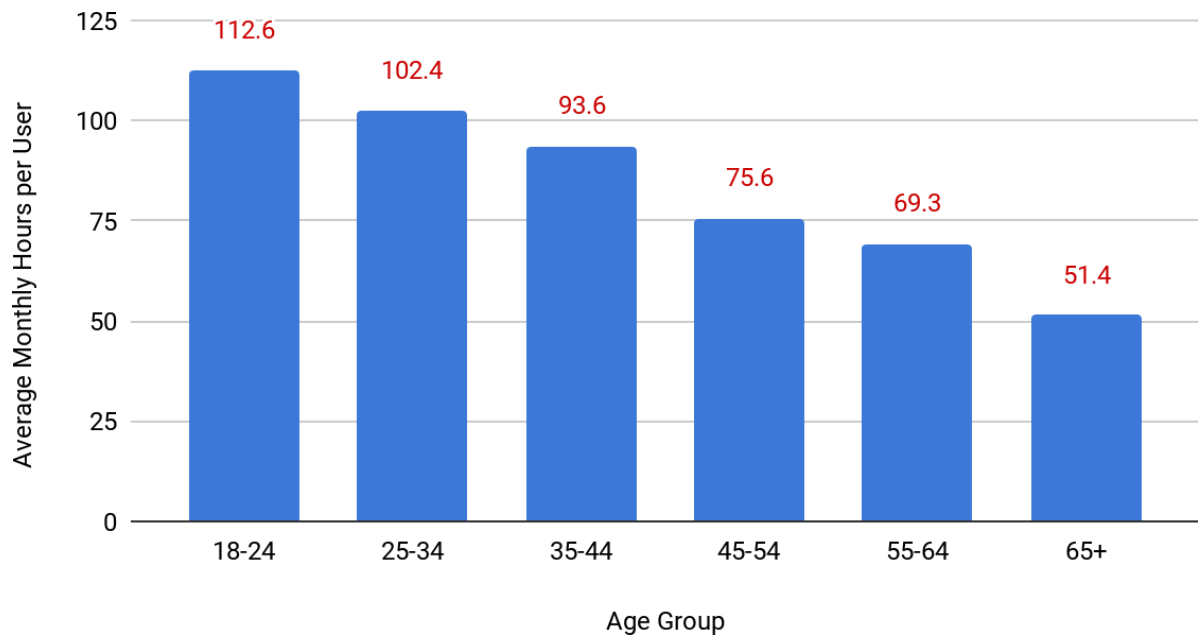
Mobile Assisted Language Learning is also known as MALL is a mix between CALL (computer-assisted language learning) and mobile learning (M-learning) that allows students to access more up-to-date material and to get instant information and communication with their partners and teachers whenever they need it. Therefore, this could lead students to get engaged in the learning process and to do activities that they enjoy while they are learning probably without noticing.

As it is stated by (Nuremi, 2021) online teaching and MALL is not optional anymore, now it is something we need to use if we want to keep on track with the oncoming generations of students who spend more time on their smartphones than a few years ago as shown in figure 3,

giving us as teachers some advantages like getting more students “connect” with us and as a result of this, have more “followers” for our classes.

Figure 3

Average Monthly Hours per Mobile App User by Age



Note. Adapt from *Average Monthly Hours per Mobile App User by Age* by Simform, 2021.

<https://www.simform.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Monthly-hours-per-user-by-age.png>

WhatsApp for Academic Purposes.

(Cortes et al., 2015) states that there is a constant increase in the number of people who use the internet worldwide and with this, the number of users of electronic devices has also increased, with these devices we can get access to a lot of webpages and applications including WhatsApp where you can send instant messages, audios, videos, and images and according to (Sharples M et al., 2009) this application engages students in learning and encourage them to participate including the shyest ones, this is also supported by (Ibrahim et al., 2015)

Another important factor to using WhatsApp in class is that it helps students and teachers during the teaching-learning processes and the students can learn and develop the ability to work collaboratively with their classmates as stated (Vilches Vilela MJ et al., 2015). However, we could have some disadvantages of using this app because students need to be connected to the Internet for a long period and it could lead to some disorders or even internet addiction according to (Rosenbaum & Wong, 2012).

Even though there are some drawbacks to using WhatsApp for academic purposes a lot of studies support the idea that this kind of application has the potential to increase learning and they could shoot down some social barriers (Doering et al., 2008) and change the way the student study and their perspective about English. As (Akkara et al., 2020) states the use of WhatsApp has a great impact on the student's participation and perception of their performance when they have been assessed in speaking as shown in table 1.

Table 1

Changes in Perceptions Before and After the Study

	Descriptors of Speaking	Before	After	Difference
1	Reduction in silence and hesitation	48.00%	70.00%	22.00%
2	Reduction in grammatical errors	40.90%	73.63%	32.73%
3	Variety of sentence structures	26.36%	49.09%	22.73%
4	Use of idioms and collocations	44.54%	66.36%	21.82%
5	Use of a wide range of vocabulary	50.90%	60.00%	9.10%
6	Use of connective words	39.09%	56.36%	17.27%
7	Speaking at length on a topic	32.09%	53.63%	21.54%
8	Improvement in pronunciation	30.00%	50.90%	20.90%

Note. Adapted from *Changes in Perceptions Before and After the Study* by Akkara et al., 2020.

<https://www.learntechlib.org/p/217018/>.

To support the information mentioned before we found another study that demonstrated that students' performance could increase thanks to the use of apps for instant messaging because they send or receive audio, videos, or messages in English from their classmates motivating them to respond in the same way and develop the interaction between them. (Mustafa, 2018) In addition to this, he recommends that teachers keep in touch with students through these apps to force them to improve their spoken interactions.

Chapter III

Conclusions

The use of any device like computers, laptops, smartphone, etc. help students to develop their skill, not only the speaking ones but also all the language skills involved in this learning process.

WhatsApp is one of the most common apps of instant messaging used by students and this allows us as teachers to use it as a tool to engage our students in our classes and the topic taught there.

Mobile Assisted Language Learning is the new trend in education, and we need to be part of this revolutionary stage if we do not want to lose our students' attention.

Recommendations

Encourage our authorities to incorporate any kind of mobile learning (M-learning) or mobile assisted language learning (MALL) into our planning and curriculums

Prepare and/or attend some training about the new technologies related to education including programs, websites, mobile phone applications.

Carry out an internal survey in the educational institution to determine which apps of instant messaging students would like to use to practice English.

Read up-to-date studies related to the use of mobile learning in English classes to define which resources would be the ideal ones when we plan a lesson

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Annex 1

En mi calidad de Tutor de la monografía, “**USING WHATSAPP TO IMPROVE SPEAKING INTERACTION IN EFL STUDENTS**” elaborado por Jorge Fabricio Chávez Villavicencio egresado de la **MAESTRIA EN PEDAGOGIA DE LOS IDIOMAS NACIONALES Y EXTRANJEROS MENCION ENSEÑANZA DE INGLES PRIMERA COHORTE**, de la Universidad Estatal Península de Santa Elena, previo a la obtención del Título de Magister en Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros Mención Enseñanza de Inglés, me permito declarar que una vez analizado anti-plagio URKUND, luego de haber cumplido los requerimientos exigidos de valoración, el presente trabajo ejecutado, se encuentra con el **0%** de la valoración permitida, por consiguiente se procede a emitir el presente informe. Adjunto reporte de similitud.



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