

## THE ROLE OF WHATSAPP IN TEACHING VOCABULARY TO THE STAFFS OF UMBUL PONGGOK KLATEN

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**Abstract:** *This study was conducted with the aim of knowing the significant role of WhatsApp in teaching vocabulary, especially staff learning achievement which was limited to vocabulary achievement as measured by a vocabulary test at Umbul Ponggok Klaten. Participants in this study amounted to 30 people consisting of 15 men and 15 women. All participants will learn English as a foreign language using WhatsApp to learn new vocabulary items via their mobile, tablet or laptop. Participants' English level will be measured. Random sampling procedure was carried out. To carry out the research, a true experimental design was used. The participants were assigned to two experimental and control groups. The assessment instrument in this study used a pre-test and post-test. The results showed that the use of the WhatsApp application in teaching vocabulary to the Umbul Ponggok Klaten staff was able to improve the achievement of new English vocabulary mastery of the Umbul Ponggok Klaten staff which was getting better.*

**Keywords:** *vocabulary, learning achievement, WhatsApp application*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Klaten is the capital regency, which occupies an area of 656 km<sup>2</sup>. It consists of 26 districts and more than 401 villages. Ponggok village is the most popular among the others recently. It has a beautiful natural tourism place, named Umbul Ponggok. Umbul Ponggok is a spring used as a bath and snorkeling. This natural pool has been around for a long time, with a size of 50 x 25 meters and an average depth of 1.5 – 2.6 meters. The tourists do not have to be afraid of waves, because this snorkeling place is not a sea but a natural spring water that is fresh and very clear. Basic Umbul Ponggok still very natural form of expanse of sand nan area, rocks, and thousands of colorful fish so that atmosphere really like under sea. Apart from being a snorkeling place, Umbul Ponggok also often used as a diving training location for beginner divers before they actually dive in the sea.

There are many staffs who will facilitate the visitors to enjoy the natural spring in Umbul Ponggok. The visitors, who come from various cities in Indonesia and also from other countries, experience good time during the visit. However, the ability of the staffs in speaking English with foreign people is low. They have limited vocabulary to deliver some messages to international tourists. They often use gestures to express their meaning. Therefore, the researcher needed to take an action to find out ways to improve their vocabulary in English.

Nowadays, in order to be in line with the current trends and changes, the L2 practitioners have to welcome and incorporate the new technology and its vast possibilities (Zhihong, Leijuan, & Xiaohui, 2010). Gooniband Shooshtari, Jalilifar, and Khazaie (2013) investigated the effect of

the application of mobile devices on teaching English vocabulary items and found that the use of application was successful in the performance of the semi-illiterates. Taki and Khazaei (2011) investigated the use of mobile phone to present vocabulary in written and pictorial forms. The findings showed that the participants who used mobile phone applications performed better when they studied word with pictorial or written annotations. Başoğlu (2010) indicated that the participants who used the mobile application could remember the words better than the ones who used traditional methods. Stickler and Hampel (2010) found that online language course can combine different approaches to learning and teaching, such as using language communicatively and focusing on form and language practice.

New communicative applications such as WhatsApp should not be used just for the sake of wasting time and chatting. There has to be a goal that the teacher is trying to reach. It may help students in improving their writing products in a delightful way. Problem Statement Educators have started to notice the new technologies and explore their effects on student behavior and performance. While there is supporting evidence to suggest that these technologies have a large influence on the social development of adolescents, an even more pertinent issue for classroom teachers is what effects these technologies have on the academic development of young people (Fogg, 2010).

The researcher felt that there was a need for a study on the role of WhatsApp in teaching vocabulary to the staffs of Umbul Ponggok Klaten. In this research, the researcher examined how the staffs of Umbul Ponggok use of WhatsApp technical applications improves their vocabulary.

## **2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

Nowadays, in order to be in line with the current trends and changes, the L2 practitioners have to welcome and incorporate the new technology and its vast possibilities (Zhihong, Leijuan, & Xiaohui, 2010). Gooniband Shooshtari, Jalilifar, and Khazaie (2013) investigated the effect of the application of mobile devices on teaching English vocabulary items and found that the use of application was successful in the performance of the semi-illiterates. Taki and Khazaei (2011) investigated the use of mobile phone to present vocabulary in written and pictorial forms. The findings showed that the participants who used mobile phone applications performed better when they studied word with pictorial or written annotations.

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Chen & Hsieh (2008) investigated the use of mobile phones for the delivery of vocabulary materials to English learners in Taiwan. The results showed that the EFL learners preferred using their phones because of easy access to materials and the ability to practice anytime and anywhere. Stockwell (2007) concluded that the potential use of mobile applications was great and the learners' vocabulary knowledge was increased due to using the mobile-based intelligent vocabulary application.

Thornton and Houser (2005) examined the use of mobile devices in a language learning context. The results showed that the students evaluated educational materials designed for mobile phones very positively, and that they were able to learn via this medium. The researchers also found mobile phones are very effective platforms for vocabulary learning as they are able to draw the students' interests and create new study opportunities.

A lot of researchers (Grant & Rong, 1999; Wong, Lam, & Ho, 2002) attempted to explain that gender differences play an essential role in L2 academic achievement. Not only the social context but also gender, as an individual factor, determines significant difference in failure or success in learning of an L2 (Catalán, 2003). Gender may influence the success of L2 learner, but it cannot be constantly predictable (Bidlake, 2005).

Regarding vocabulary learning, several ideas revolve around the performance of the two genders. Some studies (Geiger & Litwiller, 2005) attempted to explain that males have better memory of words and their meanings. Gurian and Ballew (2003) believe that, the majority of females' brains develop earlier and faster than males, so it makes females attain complex verbal skills earlier than males. Accordingly, some researchers (Anderson, 2001; Lowe, Mayfield, & Reynolds, 2003) emphasize on the fact that females' verbal and language tasks are better than those of males.

The purpose of Salamat and Pourgharib's (2013) study was to improve the speaking knowledge of EFL students through using mobile phones. The participants were 40 male and female EFL learners aged 18-25. The results showed that the participants who had benefited from mobile-assisted learning had a significantly better performance on a speaking post-test than the participants in the control group. On the other hand, some other researchers claim that the performance of the memory of males and females has no difference (Grabe, Ward & Hyde, 2008). In addition, several studies have attempted to explore the difference between male and female L2 learners' strategies in reading comprehension (e.g., Chavez, et. al, 2001; Young & Oxford, 1997), listening comprehension (e.g., Bacon, 1992), and other L2 skills.

### **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The participants in this study will be 30 people including 15 males and 15 females. The participants' native language is Indonesian. All of the participants will learn English as their foreign language. The participants' English level will be measured. Random sampling procedure is carried out. In order to conduct the study, the true experimental design is used. The participants are assigned to two experimental and control groups.

The instruments employee in this study are pre-test and post-test. Bachman and Palmer's (1996) framework was followed in order to develop a good and reliable pre-test. The present test is designed to test the participants' knowledge of vocabulary. The function of the test is

prognostic and it is a language proficiency type. The test consists of just one section namely vocabulary. It consists of 35 multiple-choice items. The test content is checked against the table of specifications, adequate timing, clarity of instructions, arrangement of items, and feasibility of test administration. To ensure maximum test reliability it will be tried to provide a good testing condition by giving adequate time, answering all the questions before administering the main test, and preventing them from cheating.

The experimental group (EG) install WhatsApp on their cell phones, tablets or laptops and they electronically will receive vocabulary instructions four days a week for four weeks (12 sessions). In each session, five vocabulary items will be taught to students. All students in the EG will be the member of the same WhatsApp chat group. The instructional materials initially available in the print form will be developed and converted into a mobile-based format. Different related pictures and videos will also be sent to the students which conveyed the meaning of the new words and help the students with the pronunciations. Definitions, synonyms and antonyms of the new words are also practiced in different sentences by using WhatsApp. They will also receive different drills to practice the new vocabulary items. Teacher ask the participants to answer the questions individually and send their answers to the teacher. In other words, the instructional module consisted of three different phases including the pre-teaching phase, the teaching phase, and the post-teaching phase; in pre-teaching phase, based on students' text book, information will be provided for the learners. In teaching phase, during each school day, the students will be asked to use WhatsApp to learn new vocabulary items, and in post-teaching phase, the learners' vocabulary achievement will be measured by post-test.

The data collection procedure will be carried out in quantitative phase. The selected participants are divided into two groups: control group (CG) and experimental group (EG). The selected participants in two groups take the pre-test in order to evaluate their vocabulary knowledge which take 30 minutes. The EG install WhatsApp on their cell phones, tablets or laptops and they electronically will receive vocabulary instructions. The participants in the CG will be taught vocabularies of their textbook inside the classroom and repeat, practice, and do the exercises in the book by traditional method used in all Iranian schools for teaching English to students. And the participants in the EG will be taught the same vocabularies via the use of WhatsApp and practice them by their cell phones, tablets or laptops. The participants in the EG will be asked to write a report of their progress after each three sessions. Item facility index is run to analyze the easiness and difficulty level of items. Independent-sample t-test will be carried out twice: once at the very outset of the study (to make sure the control and experimental group participants were at the same level of vocabulary knowledge), and once after the completion of the experiment (to see whether the treatment, using WhatsApp for vocabulary learning will be effective or not).

#### **4. RESEARCH RESULTS**

In the initial conditions, the method used by the staff at Umbul Ponggok Klaten to learn new English vocabulary items using the traditional method, where the learning achievement ability of the staff when the test was carried out was still far from expectations. This resulted in low understanding of new English vocabulary, and finally the learning achievement of staff at Umbul

Ponggok Klaten in understanding English vocabulary was also low. The following is the learning achievement data of the staff at Umbul Ponggok Klaten which consists of 15 male staff and 15 female staff in the initial conditions during the vocabulary test before using the WhatsApp application.

Table 1  
Learning Achievement of Male Initial Condition

No	Description	Results
1.	Lowest value	60
2.	Highest value	80
3.	Average value	70
4.	Minimum completeness criteria	75
5.	Completeness	9 staff (60%)

Table 2  
Learning Achievement of Female Staff Initial Condition

No	Description	Results
1.	Lowest value	60
2.	Highest value	80
3.	Average value	70
4.	Minimum completeness criteria	75
5.	Completeness	11 staff (73,33%)

From the data on the value of learning achievement in learning English vocabulary items in the initial conditions with the traditional method above, the average value is 70, still below the specified minimum completeness criteria value of 75. The highest score of staff is 80, the lowest score is 60 and the number of staff in Umbul Ponggok Klaten who achieved the minimum completeness criteria score was only 9 male staff (60%) from a total of 15 male staff and only 11 female staff (73.33%) from a total of 15 female staff at Umbul Ponggok Klaten. Seeing the low condition of learning achievement in learning new English vocabulary items, the researchers carried out a study through the application of the method of learning English as a foreign language using WhatsApp to learn new vocabulary items through cellphones, tablets, or laptops owned by each staff.

In implementing the application of using the WhatsApp application to learn new English vocabulary items via mobile phones, tablets, or laptops, the learning achievement of the staff at Umbul Ponggok Klaten has increased, both male and female groups. The following is the learning achievement data of the staff at Umbul Ponggok Klaten after the application of the WhatsApp application in learning new English vocabulary items during the vocabulary test.

Table 3  
Male Staff Learning Achievement with WhatsApp Application

No	Description	Results
1.	Lowest value	70
2.	Highest value	90
3.	Average value	85
4.	Minimum completeness criteria	75
5.	Completeness	12 staff (80%)

Table 4  
Learning Achievements of Female Staff with the WhatsApp Application

No	Description	Results
1.	Lowest value	70
2.	Highest value	90
3.	Average value	85
4.	Minimum completeness criteria	75
5.	Completeness	13 staff (86,67%)

From the data on the value of learning achievement in learning English vocabulary items in this condition with the use of the WhatsApp application via cellphone, tablet, or laptop, the average value is 85, it is already above the minimum completeness criteria value set, which is 75. The highest score for staff is 90, the score is 90. the lowest is 70 and the number of staff in Umbul Ponggok Klaten who achieves the minimum completeness criteria score is 12 male staff (80%) from a total of 15 male staff and 13 female staff (86.67%) from a total of 15 female staff in Umbul Ponggok Klaten. Seeing the condition of the development of learning achievement in learning the new English vocabulary items, the researchers saw an increase in the understanding of the staff at Umbul Ponggok Klaten through the application of the WhatsApp application to learn new vocabulary items via mobile phones, tablets, or laptops.

The results of empirical research, namely through the application of the WhatsApp application via mobile phones, tablets, or laptops, learning achievement in learning new English vocabulary items by staff at Umbul Ponggok Klaten has increased both male and female staff. For male staff, from the initial condition the average value is 70 with 60% completeness to the new condition with an average value of 85 with 80% completeness in other words the increase reaches 20% after using the WhatsApp application. For female staff, from the initial condition the average score was 70 with 73.33% completeness to the new condition with an average score of 85 with 86.67% completeness in other words the increase reached 13.34% after using the WhatsApp application.

## 5. CONCLUSION

From the results of the assessment and evaluation of the performance abilities of the Umbul Ponggok Klaten staff through the use of the WhatsApp application with mobile phones, tablets, or laptops on new English vocabulary skills carried out at the end of the research activity as

measured by vocabulary tests, it shows that the staff have begun to understand and can improve the mastery of new English vocabulary by using the WhatsApp application that has been implemented. Thus, it shows that the use of the WhatsApp application in teaching new vocabulary to Umbul Ponggok Klaten staff is able to improve the achievement of better English vocabulary mastery of Umbul Ponggok Klaten staff.

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