

WhatsApp as a Useful Tool to Strengthen EFL Learners' Academic Writing Creativity: Exploring Students' and Teachers' Voices

Mohammad Owais Khan¹, Mohd Nazim² and Ali Abbas Falah Alzubi³

Abstract

The research initiatives have often delved into the challenges of academic writing creativity, particularly among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Even though studies have investigated the creativity in writing across different contexts including integrating technology through social media platforms; there remains a dearth of research to explore WhatsApp's usefulness in improving EFL learners' writing creativity particularly Arabic speakers' context. Therefore, the present study attempts to discover WhatsApp as a useful tool to strengthen EFL learners' academic writing creativity from students and teachers' perspectives. This study, through descriptive survey research method and a set of instruments: a questionnaire and semi-structured interview, was applied to a sample of (N=50) undergraduate students and (N=20) teachers. According to finding, students opined a 'high' perception that WhatsApp significantly enhance their writing creativity in terms of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and grammar, whereas teachers do not see much advantage of WhatsApp in improving students' academic writing creativity. Also, the participant role (student, teacher) affected views about the usefulness of WhatsApp in enhancing writing creativity, and thus the responses were different based on the participation role. Additionally, the content analysis revealed the challenges encountered by the learners when using WhatsApp as a tool to strengthen their writing creativity. Based on the study findings, suggestions, recommendations, and implications are presented.

Keywords: Academic Writing Creativity, WhatsApp Use and Challenges, EFL Learners

INTRODUCTION

Academic writing differs from other types of writing, for example, Albert-Morgan et al. (2007) opined that academic writing is an intricate process. There must be specific actions to be taken as well as significant factors that must be given high importance while writing (Irawati, 2015). According to Ningrum et al. (2016), prewriting, or planning, is the first and most crucial step in the procedure of academic writing. The preliminary writing exercises are made to aid students in getting ready for their writing by helping them build background knowledge, choose, and narrow acceptable topics, come up with ideas, and organize their thinking. Thus, for students to develop their academic writing, it is essential that they engage in writing activities with a variety of instruction types including direct and explicit ones. Many scholars view that without employing direct instruction, teaching writing might be challenging (Walker, et al., 2005). Even with explicit instruction, writing requires learners to use a variety of abilities at once. In addition to employing good grammar and spelling, the student must write, think, and compose (Kieft, et al., 2007). Educators, particularly in the last two decades, have been emphasizing the value of integration of technology including WhatsApp, a messaging app, to help EFL students strengthen their academic writing creativity. It is assumed that, with this method, students can use the platform's features to explore different writing styles and strategies, collaborate on projects, share ideas, and get feedback on their writings both inside and outside classroom environments. This approach recognizes the potential of technology in creating an atmosphere where EFL students can strengthen their creative writing abilities in more dynamic and interactive learning style, in the present study context—WhatsApp. The term "WhatsApp" derives its meaning from the English expression "What's up?", which translates to "What's new?" The app is an instant messaging service that allows users to send and receive text, voice, video, and image communications while connected to the Internet. Due to its low cost, WhatsApp is an excellent replacement for SMS, which can be extremely expensive when used outside of one's home country due to roaming fees. Additionally, WhatsApp instant messaging encourages online collaboration, which supports integrated learning

¹ Languages and Translation, Najran University, Najran, Saudi Arabia. E-mail: khanmokhan1@gmail.com

² Languages and Translation, Najran University, Najran, Saudi Arabia. E-mail: nazimspeaking@gmail.com

³ Languages and Translation, Najran University, Najran, Saudi Arabia. E-mail: aliyarmouk2004@gmail.com

via mobile devices. Facebook-owned WhatsApp, which has more than a billion customers globally, is the most popular online communication service available. Furthermore, WhatsApp's end-to-end encryption provides security and confidentiality, making it a reliable platform for scholarly conversations and interactions. Moreover, numerous other benefits for learning may be found in WhatsApp's capabilities, such as instant messaging, audiovisual communication, ease of access and availability etc. (Ahmad et al. 2020; Candra & Qodriani 2019 ; Kardiansyah 2019 ; Kuswanto et al., 2020). Scholars, for example, Rosenberg and Asterhan (2018) list a number of benefits of using WhatsApp group discussions in the learning process, including the availability of teachers after school or as a conduit for public or private contact, different types of textual communication, and fewer privacy protection concerns. According to Konetes and McKeague (2011), WhatsApp enables students to develop their knowledge and learning opportunities as well as their self-identities and freedom of thought. WhatsApp might be a useful tool for improving language proficiency and giving students a chance to communicate freely (Rambe & Chipunza, 2013; Riyanto, 2013). The use of WhatsApp technology can increase students' participation in EFL lessons (Baffour-Awuah, 2015). WhatsApp messages can considerably improve learning since they make it simple for students to exchange data, get answers to their questions swiftly, build understanding, and participate in the classroom (Bouhnik & Deshen, 2014). The usefulness of WhatsApp for teacher-student communication was also supported by Calvo et al. (2014), who emphasized the significance of earlier research on instant messaging systems. The purpose of this study is to examine the WhatsApp messages sent and received by undergraduate EFL students at Najran University who strive to improve their academic writing. This study intends to answer the following research questions:

1. To find out the perceptions of EFL teachers and students about the usefulness of WhatsApp in strengthening English-language writing creativity.
2. To discover correlation between EFL students' and teachers' voices about the usefulness of WhatsApp in strengthening English-language writing creativity.
3. To find out the difficulties encountered by EFL students while using WhatsApp to strengthen their writing creativity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Various studies have been conducted to investigate the use of WhatsApp in developing EFL students writing using different contexts and variables. For example, Alamer (2021) used structural equation modeling to conduct a controlled examination into a study about the impact of using WhatsApp on language learners' motivation. The goal of the study was to determine how effective WhatsApp and maybe other alike Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) applications might be in analyzing students' desire for language learning. The outcome demonstrated that using the WhatsApp app could be helpful in determining students' motivation for language study. Haron and Rahmat (2020) assessed the usage of mobile instant messaging applications (WhatsApp) to support teaching and learning. 66 Penang students who use WhatsApp on their smartphones were divided into experimental and control groups. In order to gather the data for this study, a pre-and post-test as well as a questionnaire were used. The WhatsApp app helps students get better at writing by allowing them to use it. Entertaining students in the classroom, fostering academic success, and improving learners' writing all contribute to long-term students. Other investigations also conducted and revealed findings from a different methodological angle. For instance, a mixed-method study by Akyildiz and Elik (2021), which involved 54 secondary students, came to the conclusion that using WhatsApp as a supplemental tool for reading tasks can be thought of as an efficient way to improve students' reading comprehension abilities and that it was well-received by the students. Additionally, a different study by Farahian and Parhamnia (2022) found that using WhatsApp as an opportunity for instructors to share knowledge has resulted in reflective behavior, which has helped their professional growth. Furthermore, with a small sample of undergraduate students in the Malaysian context, Annamalai (2019) investigated the usage of WhatsApp chat groups as a platform for extending learning in an online lecture. The purpose of this study was to give students the chance to consider the benefits and drawbacks of utilizing WhatsApp as another tool for learning. Despite the difficulties they encountered, almost all of the students preferred WhatsApp in their thoughts, according to the findings. As a result, WhatsApp was selected for this study to make it easier to teach narrative writing about bullies in terms of vocabulary and

grammar due to its acceptable features and widespread use in Malaysia. According to Alshammari, et al. (2017), using WhatsApp enables teachers to play a more facilitative role in the learning process. All aspects that aid learners in learning English language skills can be facilitated by instructors. Based on the study's findings, Sabri (2019) argued that WhatsApp is particularly excellent in fostering the acquisition of language and reading and writing skills. It gives students the opportunity to communicate in real-world situations and to use their language significantly. Learning a language is more relaxing and encouraging when learners communicate while doing so. Besides, a study by Saleh, (2019) investigated WhatsApp's potential to improve Saudi tertiary students' English writing skills. Students' answers to questionnaires and instructors' observations served as the source of the data. According to research, using WhatsApp improves students' academic motivation and English language proficiency while also expanding their vocabulary and allowing them to learn from their friends' mistakes. WhatsApp has become a potent educational tool, especially when it comes to improving college students' writing abilities. This well-liked messaging service provides an abundance of features that contribute to making it the perfect setting for developing written communication skills. Most importantly, WhatsApp offers a practical and simple user experience that motivates students to have regular written conversations. Noor et al. (2019) carried out research, and their results of the post-test indicated that the lexical aspect was substantially better, as 75% of the participants demonstrated an enhancement of one to two marks. However, the grammatical element did not appear to have any impact at all, as only one individual, representing 12% of the participants, displayed an increase in score from 12 to 13 marks. The study also aims to shed some light on how teachers could exploit the features of WhatsApp for smartphones to teach English, especially writing skills. Alsaleem (2013) also carried out a controlled experiment to ascertain whether WhatsApp digital journaling, a new program for smartphones, has any substantial impact on learners' writing, vocabulary, and tonalities. The findings showed a substantial difference between the students who kept writing and their overall writing scores on the pretest and posttest. Another research was conducted by Cheng, et al. 2023, and the results shed light on WhatsApp's acceptance among undergraduates as well as the fact that they use it for both social and educational purposes because they believe it to be simple to use and beneficial for improving coordination and academic performance. WhatsApp has little influence on the cohesiveness and frankness of the learner's efficiency, despite being acknowledged as a strong and successful collaboration tool for learners with a beneficial impact on their educational achievement. According to a study by Dain et al. (2023), the majority of study participants had favorable opinions about using WhatsApp in an ESP environment. It suggested that ESP students concurred that utilizing WhatsApp to learn a language was simple, practical, and successful in boosting their motivation, interest, confidence, and activity levels. Additionally, they believed that using WhatsApp would improve their spoken, written, and listening English abilities. Contrary to the other research described above, Garca-Gómez (2022) found that using WhatsApp did not give individuals who did not speak English a natural environment for their interactions with native speakers. Due to the lack of pragmatic competency, the results also indicated negative attitudes toward the use of WhatsApp. Jafre et al. (2017) also mentioned that some students can experience difficulties when utilizing WhatsApp as a learning aid, such as anxiety disorders, internet connectivity challenges, etc. Overall, the findings about ESP students' favorable perception of using WhatsApp for language learning were consistent with those of earlier studies.

Research Questions

How do EFL teachers and students feel about the usefulness of WhatsApp in strengthening English-language writing creativity?

Is there any correlation between EFL students' and teachers' voices about the usefulness of WhatsApp in strengthening English-language writing creativity?

What are the difficulties encountered by EFL students while using WhatsApp to strengthen their writing creativity?

METHODOLOGY

Design

The research adopted a quantitative and qualitative approach with two research tools: students' and teachers' questionnaires and students' semi-structured interviews. The sample for the study included 10 writing-skills instructors and 50 undergraduate students majoring in English at the Department of English, College of Languages and Translation, Najran University, Saudi Arabia. The results of the questionnaires were compared and contrasted using the IBM SPSS data analyzer to determine how the participants felt about the usage of social media to improve writing. To confirm the validity and reliability of utilizing WhatsApp to improve writing skills, an interview with a semi-structured format was undertaken.

Participants

50 EFL students and 20 teachers from the Department of English at the College of Languages and Translation, Najran University, Saudi Arabia, were selected through a stratified selection technique to collect data in order to meet the objectives of the current study. Hayes (2021) described sampling as, in the course of a sampling procedure known as stratified random sampling, a population is separated into smaller, more manageable groupings known as strata. In stratified random sampling or stratification, the strata are created according to shared traits or features, such as the level of education, age, gender, and income of the participants or population. All of the students were from the English department, were enrolled in the same course and educational level; all of the participants were between the ages of 17 and 25, which allowed the researchers to assure homogeneity. The homogeneity of a population's sampling units is a function of their uniformity. All the items in the sample were chosen because they have the same or similar features, in accordance with the traditional meaning of homogeneity i.e., individuals in a homogeneous sample can share the same age, location, or educational capacity (Homogeneity and Heterogeneity, n.d.).

Instruments

The descriptive survey method was applied in this study with two research instruments: (i) A survey to collect teachers' and students' perspectives on the usefulness of WhatsApp and (ii) a semi-structured interview of the students to find out challenges they face while using WhatsApp. The interviewee's responses also confirm the reliability and validity and reliability of using WhatsApp to improve EFL learners' writing abilities.

Validity and Reliability

The study tools were content-checked by a jury of ten experts who specialize in technology-based education. They verified that the tools could collect data to answer the research questions. Based on their observations related to language, style, and study context, the researchers incorporated the comments and finalized the tools. The study tool was applied to a survey sample consisting of (20) teachers and (50) students. The Pearson correlation coefficient was then calculated between the items and the total score. The results showed that Pearson correlation coefficients between the items with the score for the domain were statistically significant at the significance level (0.01) and (0.05). Pearson correlation coefficients between the items and the total score of the domain ranged between (0.465* - 0.955**). The correlation coefficients between the domains and the total score of the questionnaire ranged between (0.721** - 0.951**) and were significant at (0.01).

Table 1 Pearson correlation coefficients

Items	Correlation coefficient with the domain	Correlation coefficient with the total scale	Items	Correlation coefficient with the domain	Correlation coefficient with the total scale
SPELLING	1	.951**	CAPITALIZATION	1	.751**
1	.935**	.838**	11	.878**	.838**
2	.955**	.910**	12	.771**	.899**
3	.506*	.484*	13	.516*	.528*
4	.955**	.910**	14	.771**	.899**

5	.883**	.887**	15	.740**	.905**
PUNCTUATION MARKS	1	.895**	GRAMMAR	1	.721**
6	.751**	.892**	16	.587**	.898**
7	.686**	.636**	17	.516*	.528*
8	.506*	.484*	18	.539*	.630**
9	.702**	.748**	19	.465*	.775**
10	.516*	.528*	20	.592**	.474*

According to Table 1, Pearson correlation coefficients between the items with the score for the domain were statistically significant at the significance level (0.01) and (0.05). Pearson correlation coefficients between the items and the total score of the domain ranged between (0.465* - 0.955**). The correlation coefficients between the domains and the total score of the questionnaire ranged between (0.721** - 0.951**) and were significant at (0.01).

Table 2 Scale reliability

N	Domain	Cronbach Alpha	Test-retest
1	SPELLING	0.90	0.91
2	PUNCTUATION MARKS	0.80	0.86
3	CAPITALIZATION	0.91	0.93
4	GRAMMAR	0.78	0.84
	TOTAL	0.94	0.96

Table 2 shows that the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient reached (0.94) and ranged between (0.78 - 0.91) over the domains. The test-retest reliability coefficient also scored (0.96) and over the domains ranged from (0.84 - 0.93), which are high and appropriate reliability coefficients.

Data Collection

The researchers created a Google Form survey to get feedback from students and teachers. A set of prompts was also prepared to conduct semi-structured online interview about challenge when using WhatsApp. The best interview for obtaining information to address the research questions, as stated by Merriam (2009, p. 114), is semi-structured, which is "guided by a set of questions and issues to be explored, but neither the exact wording nor the order of questions is predetermined." Similarly, Pollock (2019) stated that in a semi-structured interview, just a few predefined questions are asked, while the remaining inquiries are spontaneous. Semi-structured interviews give the ability to explore subjects naturally while also allowing for the objective comparison of candidates.

Ethics Statement

The study has been approved by the Ethics Committee at the Deanship of Scientific Research at Najran University with the code (NU/RG/SEHRC/12/41). Also, the participants' signed consent letter was collected.

DATA ANALYSIS

The analysis of quantitative data was computed using the SPSS software 26 version to examine the participants' perceptions of the effectiveness of EFL learners' English language acquisition about the use of WhatsApp. Furthermore, a content analysis of the semi-structured interviews was used to assess WhatsApp's utility and the student's academic performance in EFL classes to adequately respond to the study's research objectives.

RESULTS

Teachers' and students' views about the usefulness of WhatsApp in strengthening English-language writing creativity.

Table 3 shows the means, standard deviations, and level of the study sample's responses to their views about the usefulness of WhatsApp in strengthening English-language writing creativity it also sheds lights on the

means and standard deviations of the opinion of EFL students and teachers regarding the usefulness of the WhatsApp application in enhancing creativity in writing in English.

Table 3 Means, standard deviation and level of the students' responses

Domain-item	Respondents	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level
SPELLING	Students	50	4.01	.554	Large
	Teachers	20	3.56	.443	Large
The use of WhatsApp assists in strengthening phonological awareness in making writing creative.	Students	50	4.04	.925	Large
	Teachers	20	3.50	.827	Large
The use of WhatsApp assists in strengthening the knowledge of CVC structure to double the last consonant in making writing creative.	Students	50	4.28	.730	Very large
	Teachers	20	3.35	.813	Medium
The use of WhatsApp assists in strengthening morphological ideas in making writing creative.	Students	50	3.96	.856	Large
	Teachers	20	3.75	.639	Large
The use of WhatsApp assists in strengthening etymological knowledge in making writing creative.	Students	50	3.86	.833	Large
	Teachers	20	3.80	.616	Large
The use of WhatsApp assists in strengthening the letter vs. sound compatibility variations in making writing creative.	Students	50	3.90	.735	Large
	Teachers	20	3.40	1.046	Medium
PUNCTUATION MARKS	Students	50	3.96	.602	Large
	Teachers	20	3.04	.730	Medium
The use of WhatsApp improves the use of ellipsis in strengthening writing creativity.	Students	50	4.04	.727	Large
	Teachers	20	3.50	.827	Large
The use of WhatsApp improves the use of quotation marks in writing creativity.	Students	50	3.86	.990	Large
	Teachers	20	2.90	.852	Medium
The use of WhatsApp improves writing Creativity while using apostrophes.	Students	50	4.10	.735	Large
	Teachers	20	2.95	1.191	Medium
The use of WhatsApp improves the use of hyphens in strengthening writing skills.	Students	50	3.94	.978	Large
	Teachers	20	2.80	1.152	Medium
The use of WhatsApp improves exclamation use in strengthening writing creativity.	Students	50	3.88	.961	Large
	Teachers	20	3.05	1.050	Medium
CAPITALIZATION	Students	50	3.96	.573	Large
	Teachers	20	3.04	.817	Medium
The use of WhatsApp develops the use of capital letters for the first word of a sentence.	Students	50	3.80	.926	Large
	Teachers	20	3.70	.979	Large
The use of WhatsApp develops the use of capital letters in all proper nouns.	Students	50	3.96	.903	Large
	Teachers	20	2.95	.999	Medium
The use of WhatsApp develops the use of capital letters for the first word in a quotation.	Students	50	3.94	1.077	Large
	Teachers	20	3.00	1.026	Medium
The use of WhatsApp develops the use of capital letters for the first word after a colon.	Students	50	3.92	.752	Large
	Teachers	20	2.90	.968	Medium
The use of WhatsApp develops the use of capital letters in all abbreviations and acronyms.	Students	50	4.18	.825	Large
	Teachers	20	2.65	.988	Medium
GRAMMAR	Students	50	3.88	.577	Large
	Teachers	20	3.31	.529	Medium
The use of WhatsApp enhances grammar in terms of (Morphology) the system of word formation in developing writing creativity.	Students	50	3.90	.789	Large
	Teachers	20	3.45	.686	Large
The use of WhatsApp enhances grammar in terms of (Phonology) sounds in developing writing creativity.	Students	50	3.82	.825	Large
	Teachers	20	3.15	.745	Medium
The use of WhatsApp enhances grammar in terms of (Syntax) patterns of word arrangement in developing writing creativity.	Students	50	3.82	.800	Large
	Teachers	20	3.60	.681	Large
The use of WhatsApp enhances grammar in terms of (semantic) meaning in developing writing creativity.	Students	50	3.94	.740	Large
	Teachers	20	3.25	.786	Medium
The use of WhatsApp enhances grammar in terms of (Parts of Speech) Noun, Pronoun, and Verb, etc. in developing writing creativity.	Students	50	3.92	.778	Large
	Teachers	20	3.10	.852	Medium
Total	Students	50	3.95	.443	Large
	Teachers	20	3.24	.509	Medium

Table 3 shows that the total score for the opinions of EFL students regarding the usefulness of the WhatsApp application in enhancing creativity in writing in the English language was large ($M=3.95$, $SD=0.443$), while the opinions of EFL teachers regarding the usefulness of the WhatsApp application in enhancing creativity in writing in the English language scored moderately ($M=3.24$, $SD=0.509$). According to the domain, both students and teachers highly perceived spelling as a crucial component that WhatsApp contributes to enhancing writing creativity. Punctuation marks, capitalization, and grammar were medially perceived by teachers whereas students rated them large. To interpret the result, students see that WhatsApp highly assists in enhancing their

writing creativity in terms of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and grammar whereas teachers do not see much advantage of WhatsApp in improving students' creativity.

Correlation between EFL students' and teachers' voices about the usefulness of WhatsApp in strengthening English-language writing skills.

Table 4 presents the results of differences in the study sample responses according to their participation role. Mann-Whitney test was used to analyze the data because the data did not distribute normally. Table 3 shows the results of the analysis.

Table 4 Mann-Whitney test for showing the differences attributed to the participation role

Domain	Participant	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mann-Whitney U	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Spelling	Students	50	40.54	2027.00	248.000	.001
	Teachers	20	22.90	458.00		
	Total	70				
Punctuation marks	Students	50	41.74	2087.00	188.000	.000
	Teachers	20	19.90	398.00		
	Total	70				
Capitalization	Students	50	41.61	2080.50	194.500	.000
	Teachers	20	20.23	404.50		
	Total	70				
Grammar	Students	50	41.04	2052.00	223.000	.000
	Teachers	20	21.65	433.00		
	Total	70				
Total	Students	50	42.19	2109.50	165.500	.000
	Teachers	20	18.78	375.50		
	Total	70				

Table 4 shows that there were statistically significant differences at the level of (0.05) for the participants' responses (students, teachers) about the usefulness of WhatsApp in enhancing creativity in writing in the English language for students. This result means that the participant role (student, teacher) affected views about the usefulness of WhatsApp in enhancing writing creativity, and thus the responses were different based on the participation role.

Content Analysis of the Difficulties Encountered By EFL Students While Using Whatsapp To Strengthen Their Writing Creativity.

A content analysis of the interviews was employed to evaluate the challenges encountered by EFL students while using WhatsApp to strengthen their writing creativity. WhatsApp is a popular tool for teaching English writing skills to EFL students, but students face challenges such as internet access, navigation, improper planning, missing crucial information, a lack of strategic awareness, not having enough storage space on the phone and online activities. EFL learners find writing the most difficult language skill and struggle with collaborative instruction, cohesion, and network connectivity. They also face difficulties in organization, grammar structures, and vocabulary use. Some students find instant messaging to be problematic, leading to mistakes and omissions. Some students find the material offered on WhatsApp challenging to understand, and excessive use can demotivate them. Despite these challenges, WhatsApp can be a useful tool for improving writing performance and motivation in EFL students. However, it is crucial to be aware of its limitations and potential drawbacks to ensure effective use. Following are the semi-structured interview excerpts:

S1: I am unaware that WhatsApp can be utilized for English language learning, particularly for writing assignments. Whenever I use it, I experience challenges like the internet, getting information, and interacting with activities online.

S5: We experience challenges and find WhatsApp to be unappealing in terms of learning and improving our writing abilities and innovation.

S13: I struggle with group instruction through WhatsApp, which is one of the main issues in developing our writing abilities.

S14: Sometimes I discover that utilizing WhatsApp to develop creative writing is less successful than doing so in a traditional classroom.

S20: I think that when utilizing WhatsApp to develop writing skills, the network connectivity was occasionally erratic, which prevented me from engaging in the lesson.

S26: I understand that a lack of strategic awareness contributes to a variety of writing challenges faced by us, making it harder to develop writing skills in terms of structuring texts through WhatsApp.

S37: I struggle with issues like inconsistent concept structuring, improper language structures, and employing inappropriate vocabulary in writing assignments while using WhatsApp to generate ideas.

S38: I consider the drawbacks of using WhatsApp for writing assignments, such as instant chatting, which can result in errors, improper planning, missing crucial information, and the usage of colloquial language.

S43: I think one of the challenges students face in writing using WhatsApp is not having enough storage space on the phone. This is a hurdle and challenging to understand to keep the updated information that the teacher sent us.

S49: I believe that using WhatsApp excessively can hinder academic writing assignments since it discourages students from spending a lot of time on technological gadgets.

DISCUSSION

The study findings reveal that EFL students and teachers highly and moderately perceived WhatsApp's usefulness in strengthening EFL learners' academic writing creativity respectively with special reference to spelling, punctuation marks, capitalization, and grammar. The reasons for students' high perception for WhatsApp may be due to its user-friendliness, rapid feedback, multimedia support, accessibility, group and community engagement, convenient atmosphere, and privacy settings. However, the reasons for teachers' moderate perceptions towards WhatsApp in strengthening students academic writing creativity may be attributed to its informal use, potential for distraction, absence of an organized learning environment, limited formatting and editing features, privacy concerns, and a variety of access and connectivity options. The findings of this study somewhat agree with Hamad (2017), whose results found that using WhatsApp can encourage students to work on their writing, which is thought to be the most challenging of the four language skills. When technology, particularly the internet, is used in language acquisition, learners respond more favourably to it. The findings of the current study are also corroborated by research done on WhatsApp (Bouhnik & Dshen, 2014; Church & de Oliveira, 2013; Nguyen & Fussell, 2016). The findings pointed out that WhatsApp can be a helpful medium for learning collaboratively, especially when it comes to writing abilities, and for learning anytime, anywhere. Furthermore, the findings of this study correspond with earlier research on WhatsApp use. According to Cavus and Ibrahim (2008), WhatsApp is a valuable educational tool that helps students succeed with their writing abilities. Additionally, the results of the current study regarding the significance of mobile phone applications as a learning tool and a means of facilitating social contact were corroborated by a study conducted by Kukulska and Shield (2008). However, the researchers could not find any study with adverse results compared to the current study's findings.

Additionally, the participant role (student, teacher) affected views about the usefulness of WhatsApp in enhancing writing creativity, and thus the responses were different based on the participation role. The study found significant differences in students' and teachers' responses on WhatsApp's effectiveness in enhancing English writing creativity, indicating that participation roles significantly influenced views on WhatsApp's usefulness. The reasons for this difference may be attributed to the fact that teachers prioritize learning objectives and structured feedback, while students value convenience and social connections. Teachers may be more critical of the app's ability to facilitate in-depth inquiry and critical analysis, while students may disregard this aspect of the app. Interestingly, the researchers could not find any study with either in support or opposition results compared to the current study's findings.

Finally, the content analysis results revealed that students face challenges like internet access, navigation, and lack of strategic awareness and students struggle with the organization of ideas, grammar structures, and vocabulary use. The reasons for these findings may be attributed to the fact that WhatsApp is generally used in informal context. In addition, distractions, limited formatting or editing features, and connectivity issues can hinder academic writing. The findings of this study agree with Sari and Putri (2019), whose results revealed that there were some technological issues while engaging WhatsApp chats like abundant conversations, poor connection, and worthless alerts. However, the researchers could not find any study with contrary findings compared to the current study's results.

CONCLUSION

Based on the study's findings, it can be concluded that the students' perceived WhatsApp as a great assistance in improving their academic writing creativity in terms of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and grammar, whereas teachers showed apprehension in WhatsApp usefulness in fostering students' writing creativity. The study results also revealed the statistically significant difference for the participants' responses in terms of their role (students, teachers) about the usefulness of WhatsApp in enhancing creativity in writing. Moreover, the findings from the student interviews enlisted several challenges that students face when using WhatsApp. Based on the findings, the current study suggests integrating mobile apps like WhatsApp across all educational levels in order to facilitates communication between instructors and learners. Additionally, teachers should capitalize on the different WhatsApp features and manage educational resources while keeping in mind the challenges that students encounter when using the app. This research is significant in terms of integrated technology in the EFL writing classroom with special reference to teachers and students voices. The intended beneficiaries are EFL teachers, students and other stake holders. This study is limited to a selected population i.e. a single gender. The results might vary if it is implemented on a different situation, level, or population sample. Further researcher is recommended to include the variables like female gender and other areas of academic writing creativity.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors are thankful to the Deanship of Scientific Research at Najran University for funding this project under the Research Groups Funding program grant code NU/RG/SEHRC/12/41.

REFERENCES

- Ahmad, I., Borman, R.I., Fakhrurozi, J., & Caksana, G.G. (2020). "Software Development Dengan Extreme Programming (XP) Pada Aplikasi Deteksi Kemiripan Judul Skripsi Berbasis Android," *INOVTEK Polbeng-Seri Inform.*, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 297–307, 2020.
- Akyildiz, S. T., & Çelik, V. (2021). Using WhatsApp to support EFL reading comprehension skills with Turkish early secondary learners. *The Language Learning Journal*, 50(5), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09571736.2020.1865433>.
- Alamer, A., & Al-Khateeb, A. (2021). Effects of using the WhatsApp application on language learners' motivation: a controlled investigation using structural equation modeling. *Computer-Assisted Language Learning*, 1–27
- Alber-Morgan, S., Hessler, T., and Konrad, M. (2007). Teaching writing for keeps. *Education and treatment of children, Journal*, 30, 107–128,
- Alsalem, B.I.A. (2013). "The Effect of 'WhatsApp' Electronic Dialogue Journaling on Improving Writing Vocabulary, Word Choice, and Voice of EFL Undergraduate Saudi Students."
- Alshammari, R., Parkes, M., & Adlington, R. (2017). Using WhatsApp in EFL instruction with Saudi Arabian university students. *Arab World English Journal*, 8(4), 68–64. <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol8no4.5>
- Annamalai, N. (2019). Using WhatsApp to extend learning in a blended classroom environment. *Teaching English with Technology*, 19(1): 3–20.
- Baffour-Awuah, E. (2015). Institutional case-based study on the effect of research methods on project work in the curriculum of mechanical engineering programs in Ghanaian polytechnics. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6, 20–32. [Google Scholar]
- Bouhnik, D., & Deshen, M. (2014). WhatsApp goes to school: mobile instant messaging between teachers and students. *Journal of Information Technology Education: Research*, 13, 217–231.
- Calvo, R., Arbiol, A., & Iglesias, A. (2014). Are all chats suitable for learning purposes? A study of the required characteristics *Procedia Computer Science*, 27, 251–260. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.procs.2014.02.028>
- Candra, L.K., & Qodriani, L.U. (2019). An Analysis of Code Switching in Leila S. Chudori's *For Nadira*. *Teknosastik*, (16)1, 9-19. doi: 10.33365/ts.v16i1.128.

- Cavus, N., & Ibrahim, D. (2008). M-Learning: An experiment in using SMS to support learning new English language words. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, (40)1, 78–91.
- Cheng E.C.L., Huei H.C., & Dzafran A.A. (2023). WhatsApp Use in a Higher Education Learning Environment: The Perspective of Students of a Malaysian Private University on Academic Performance and Team Effectiveness. *Education Sciences*, (13)3 <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci13030244>
- Church, K., & de Oliveira, R. (2013). What's up with WhatsApp? Comparing mobile instant messaging behaviors with traditional SMS. *Proceedings of the 15th International Conference on Human-computer Interaction with Mobile Devices and Services* (pp. 352-361). New York, USA: ACM. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1145/2493190.2493225>
- Dian, P., Jannatul, L.N.B., & Rizka, M.W. (2023). ESP Students' Perceptions of the Use of the WhatsApp Application as a Learning Tool *Riwayat: Educational Journal of History and Humanities*, 6 (2), 2023, pp. 359–366 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24815/jr.v6i2.31421>
- Farahian, M., & Parhamnia, F. (2022). Knowledge sharing through WhatsApp: Does it promote EFL teachers' reflective practice? *Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education*, 14(1), 332–346. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JARHE-12-2020-0456>
- García-Gómez, A. (2022). Learning through WhatsApp: Students' beliefs, L2 pragmatic development, and interpersonal relationships. *Computer-Assisted Language Learning*, 35(5–6), 1310–1328. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2020.1799822>
- Hamad, M. M. (2017). Using WhatsApp to Enhance Students' Learning of English Language “Experience to Share.” *Higher Education Studies*, 7(4), 74. <https://doi.org/10.5539/hes.v7n4p74>
- Hanafi, H. (2019). The Effect of WhatsApp in a Flipped Classroom on Students' Writing Achievement at MTsN 1 Konawe. *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal*, 6(12), 253–268.
- Hayes, A. (2021). Reading Into Stratified Random Sampling. *Investopedia*. https://www.investopedia.com/terms/s/stratified_random_sampling.asp#:~:text=Stratified%20random%20sampling%20is%20a
- Haron, H., & Rahmat, N. H. (2020). Exploring the Theory of Activity in English Language Writing: The Case for WhatsApp. *International Journal of Asian Social Science*, 10(11), 00671-684.
- Irawati, Lulus. (2015). Applying Cultural Project-Based Learning to Develop Students' Academic Writing. *Dinamika Ilmu*, 15(1).
- Jafre, N.A.B.M., Osman, N.B., & Hussain, N.A.B. (2017). Students' Perception of the Use of the WhatsApp Application to Enhance Communicative Skills.
- Kardiansyah, M.Y. (2019). "Wattpad as a Story Sharing Website: Is it a Field of Literary Production? *ELLiC Proc.*, vol. 3, pp. 419–426.
- Kieft, M., Rijlaarsdam, G., Galbraith, D., & Van den Bergh, H. (2007). The effects of adapting a writing course to students' writing strategies. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 77, 565–579.
- Konetes, G., & McKeague, M. (2011). The effects of social networking sites on the acquisition of social capital among college students: A pilot study. *Glob. Media J.* (11) 1–10.
- Kukulka-H.A. and Shield, L. (2008). An overview of mobile assisted language learning: From content delivery to supported collaboration and interaction. *ReCALL*, (20)3, 271–289.
- Kuswanto, H., Pratama, W.B.H., & Ahmad, I.S. (2020). "Survey data on students online shopping behavior: A focus on selected university students in Indonesia," *Data Br.*, vol. 29, p. 105073.
- Ningrum, A. S. B., Latief, M.A., & Sulisty, G. H. (2016). The effect of mind mapping on EFL students' idea development in argumentative writing across gender differences and learning styles. *Dinamika Ilmu*. 16(1).
- Noor, D.S., Maslawati, M., & Hamidah, Y. (2019). The Effects of WhatsApp on Teaching Narrative Writing: A Case Study Noor Diana Suhaimi. *Humanities & Social Sciences Reviews*, 7(4), 590–602. <https://doi.org/10.18510/hssr>.
- Nguyen, D. T., & Fussell, S. R. (2016). Effects of conversational involvement cues on understanding and emotions in instant messaging conversations. *Journal of Language & Social Psychology*, 35(1), 28-55. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0261927X15571538>
- Pollock, T. (2019, June 13). The difference between structured, unstructured & semi-structured interviews. *Oliver Parks Consulting LLC - Technology Sector Recruitment Experts*. <https://www.oliverparks.com/blog-news/the-difference-between-structured-unstructured-amp-semi-structured-interviews>
- Rambe, P., & Chipunza, C. (2013). Using mobile devices to leverage student access to collaboratively generated resources: A case of WhatsApp instant messaging at a South African University. In the *International Conference on Advanced Information and Communication Technology for Education*. Amsterdam: Atlantis Press [Crossref], [Google Scholar].
- Riyanto, A. (July 2013). "English Language Learning Using WhatsApp Application". AkhmadRianto, Love for All, Hatred for None. WordPress, the Splendid Theme.
- Rosenberg, H., & Asterhan, C.S.C. (2018). Students' perspective on teacher-student WhatsApp interaction in secondary school. *Journal of Information Technology Education Research*, Vol. 17.
- Sabri, T.S.A. (2019). WhatsApp and Learn English: A Study of the effectiveness of WhatsApp in developing reading and writing skills in English. *ELS Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies on Humanities*, (2)2, 148–156.

- Saleh, S. T. (2019). Chat and Learn: The Effectiveness of Using WhatsApp as a Pedagogical Tool to Enhance EFL Learners' Reading and Writing Skills. *International Journal of English Language and Literature Studies*, 8(2), 61–68.
- Sari, F. M., & Putri, S. N. (2019). Academic WhatsApp group: Exploring students' experiences in writing class. *Teknosastik*, 17(2), 56-65.