Abstract

WhatsApp is a well-known informing application around the globe. WhatsApp application has been synonymous with students. They show more interest to use reading messages sent by their peers, siblings and teachers and it is also used for sharing assignments. The current article aims to appraise the use WhatsApp messages in day-to-day life situations and to delineate the utility of WhatsApp messages as an aid to learn reading skills at the plus two level. A questionnaire was employed to seek perceptions of students in developing their reading skills thorough WhatsApp was administered on one hundred and twenty students drawn from Government funded institutions of Hyderabad District in Telangana State. The results indicated that the sample inclined towards using WhatsApp messages in developing their reading skills provided accessibility of resource teachers as well as learning materials. Implications as well as suggestions for further research were discussed succinctly.

I. RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

WhatsApp is the most globally popular messaging app. WhatsApp Inc. was founded in 2009 by Brian Acton and Jan Koum to make communication and the distribution of multimedia messaging more easily and faster. The WhatsApp instant messaging system is simplistic, intuitive, and very easy to use (Amy, 2014). Over the last two years, the...
application has become very popular, gaining over 350 million users and is rated the most downloaded application in 127 countries (Cohavi, 2013); everyday an average of 31 billion messages are sent (Tzuk, 2013).

In education field, WhatsApp is used for the enhancement of discussions and sharing information among students and teachers. Yalcinalp and Gulbahar (2010) articulated the value of these applications as follows: encourage learners to learn by anticipating needs, make collaborative learning efficient and effective, and build a relationship that stimulates learner-to-learner for consistent and progressive learning (Johnson, 2014). WhatsApp provides various functions, for instance text messages, audio files, attached images, link to any websites and video files which can be shared (Mistar, 2016). This new phenomenon is parallel with Vygotsky Constructivist Learning Theory which suits the use of WhatsApp. This theory aims to develop the students’ social interaction as well as to raise and share information (Vygotsky, 1978). This is where the learning resources can be accessed anytime, anywhere and in any features. It could help in developing the student’s learning performance though. Therefore, this application has become very popular in the last two years where it had gained over 350 million users (Cohavi, 2013).

Fundamentally, reading is the process of receiving and interpreting information encoded in language form via the medium of print” (Urquhart & Weir, 1998:22), or, “Comprehension occurs when the reader extracts and integrates various information from the text and combines it with what is already known” (Koda, 2005). Thus, reading is something many of us take it for granted. We read with what appears to be little effort and little planning. Nevertheless, reading is a basic life skill. It is a keystone for a student’s success in college, in fact entire life. Without the ability of reading, opportunities for personal fulfilment definitely will be lost (Muthaiyan, 2016).

Moreover, most reading has been characterized as a traditional reading setting in which teachers direct the reading process, and students are then assumed to be passive or marginalized (Wallace, 1992 & Al-Hazmi, 2008). In addition, reading has been criticized as only an in-class- reading practice due to the limited exposure of learners to reading taking place in the traditional classroom (Nasr, 2016). Accordingly, WhatsApp can have a promising role in formulating and changing the reading practices either inside or outside classroom through implementing certain features and applications.

II. PREVIOUS RESEARCH

A plethora of literature is documented on the topic and it is noticed that there are a number of reasons why people adopt WhatsApp as their main communication channel (Church K, de Oliveira R, 2013). Instant messaging through WhatsApp for academic purposes provides students with opportunities to interact together and to construct and share knowledge (Chan, L, 2005); Social interactions improve the effectiveness of learning and teaching (Vygotsky L.S, 1978); Instant messaging is considered to be an effective tool for learning and teaching through social interactions (Gillingham M.G, 1999); Lu (2008), Kennedy & Levy (2008), and Cavus & Ibrahim (2009) Gu

On the other hand, research on the use of WhatsApp in educational scenario in India seems to be in a nascent stage; whatever research is available is in an embryonic stage. Moreover, research using WhatsApp in learning English language at plus two level is lurking and undetected.

III. OBJECTIVES

1. To appraise the perceptions of the students at plus two levels on the use of WhatsApp messages in their day-to-day life situations in Hyderabad district of Telangana State.

2. To delineate the utility of WhatsApp messages as an aid to learn reading skills at the plus two level.

IV. HYPOTHESIS

The guiding hypothesis is that there is no significant difference between Whatsapp messages and reading skills among students at plus two level in Hyderabad District of Telangana State.

V. LIMITATIONS

1. This study is confined to the perceptions of students drawn from Government funded institutions at plus two in Hyderabad District of Telangana State.

2. This study is limited to study the WhatsApp messages in developing reading skills among the students at plus two levels in Hyderabad District of Telangana State.

V. METHODOLOGY

The study has been undertaken to identify the student’s perception of WhatsApp and its usage in developing reading skills among them. A survey method of research was adopted to collect the data using a self-developed questionnaire. The sample comprises of one hundred and twenty senior students an equal number of boys and girls at ten plus two level of Government funded institutions from Hyderabad district of Telangana State. Simple random sampling method was used to select the target population. The data collected was fed into SPSS and simple frequency calculation has been used to analyze the data.
VI. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for Using WhatsApp</td>
<td>Academic Work</td>
<td>Chatting</td>
<td>Videos</td>
<td>News</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys/Girls</td>
<td>04 (6.6%)</td>
<td>36 (60.0%)</td>
<td>17 (28.3%)</td>
<td>03 (5.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>02 (3.3%)</td>
<td>43 (71.7%)</td>
<td>13 (21.7%)</td>
<td>02 (3.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time spent on WhatsApp</td>
<td>5-10 mts</td>
<td>10-20 mts</td>
<td>20-30 mts</td>
<td>More than 30 Mts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys/Girls</td>
<td>06 (10.0%)</td>
<td>04 (6.0%)</td>
<td>16 (26.0%)</td>
<td>17 (28.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>02 (3.3%)</td>
<td>04 (6.0%)</td>
<td>14 (24.0%)</td>
<td>16 (26.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Areas of interest in reading</td>
<td>News Papers</td>
<td>Story/books</td>
<td>Comics/Jokes</td>
<td>Movies Litt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys/Girls</td>
<td>12 (20.0%)</td>
<td>05 (8.0%)</td>
<td>05 (8.0%)</td>
<td>38 (64.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>08 (13.0%)</td>
<td>08 (13.0%)</td>
<td>02 (3.0%)</td>
<td>42 (71.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WhatsApp messages are</td>
<td>Interesting</td>
<td>Distracting</td>
<td>Non-sensical</td>
<td>Boredom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys/Girls</td>
<td>28 (47%)</td>
<td>06 (10.0%)</td>
<td>21 (35.0%)</td>
<td>05 (8.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>29 (49.0%)</td>
<td>05 (8.0%)</td>
<td>22 (37.0%)</td>
<td>04 (6.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I usually get WhatsApp messages</td>
<td>Siblings</td>
<td>Peers</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Acquaintances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from my</td>
<td>07 (12.0%)</td>
<td>36 (60.0%)</td>
<td>08 (14.0%)</td>
<td>08 (14.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By reading WhatsApp messages</td>
<td>Developed vocabulary</td>
<td>Developed Skimming skill</td>
<td>Affected my grammar</td>
<td>Affected my spellings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys/Girls</td>
<td>18 (30.0%)</td>
<td>19 (31.0%)</td>
<td>14 (24.0%)</td>
<td>09 (15.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>22 (36.0%)</td>
<td>17 (28.0%)</td>
<td>16 (26.0%)</td>
<td>05 (8.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To develop reading skills through</td>
<td>Resourceful teachers</td>
<td>Relevant material</td>
<td>Internet facility</td>
<td>Like-minded peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WhatsApp it is essential to have</td>
<td>26 (44.0%)</td>
<td>17 (28.0%)</td>
<td>08 (13.0%)</td>
<td>09 (15.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24 (40.0%)</td>
<td>19 (31.0%)</td>
<td>07 (12.0%)</td>
<td>10 (16.0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table explicitly demonstrates that an overwhelming majority of girls (71.7%) and (60.0%) boys are using WhatsApp for chatting purpose; followed by (28.3%) girls and (21.7%) boys use it for watching videos. Contrary to this, little number (6.6%) boys and (3.3%) girls used it for academic purpose; another (5.1%) boys and (3.3%) girls confessed they used it for watching news. In another statement, it is admitted that (44.0%) of girls and (36.0%) boys spend more than thirty minutes of time on WhatsApp; followed by (28.0%) boys and (26.0%) girls devote twenty to thirty minutes of time on WhatsApp. Another (26.0%) boys and (24.0%) boys confirmed ten to twenty minutes, while, (10.0%) boys and (6.0%) girls confessed spending five to ten minutes.

With regard to areas of interest, it is revealed that a good majority of the sample (71.0%) of girls and (64.0%) boys showed interest in using WhatsApp for watching movies; followed by (20.0%) boys and (13.0%) girls prefer to read newspapers; (13.0%) girls and (8.0%) boys opted for reading story or other books; a meagre number (8.0%) boys and (3.0%) boys opted for reading comics/jokes.

As per the authenticity of WhatsApp messages. Nearly half of the sample (49.0%) girls and almost an equal number (47.0%) of boys confirmed them as interesting. Surprisingly, (37.0%) girls and (35.0%) of boys termed them as non-sensical. At the
same time, (10.0%) of boys and (8.0%) girls opined as distracting, while the residual sample (8.0%) boys and (6.0%) girls labelled them as boredom.

On a query from whom they usually get Whatsapp messages, great majority (70.0%) girls and (60.0%) boys reported they get messages from their peers; followed by (20.0%) boys and (10.0%) girls attributed to acquaintances. A meagre sample (12.0%) boy and (6.0%) girls confirmed from siblings and another (14.0%) girls and (8.0%) boys confessed they get them from their teachers.

On reading Whatsapp messages, a good majority of the sample (36.0%) of girls and (30.0%) of boys confessed that they developed vocabulary; another (31.0%) boys and (28.0%) girls admitted they have developed skimming skills. On the other hand, (26.0%) girls and (24.0%) boys confirmed that their grammar is affected, at the same time, another (15.0%) boys and (8.0%) girls were affected with their spellings.

To be successful in using WhatsApp, a good majority of the sample (44.0%) boys and (40.0%) girls admitted their teachers to be resourceful in imparting the reading skills; another (31.0%) girls and (28.0%) boys attributed to have relevant material. On the contrary, (13.0%) boys and (12.0%) girls opined internet facility to be provided and another (16.0%) girls and (15.0%) boys admitted like-minded peers would make them to develop reading skills through Whatsapp messages.

VII. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

It is established from the study that students are familiar with WhatsApp application. WhatsApp was more preferred by the students, with some reasons such as its convenience and easier usage for chatting purpose. They spend more than thirty minutes daily on WhatsApp. Their areas of interest as indicated were reading movie literature. They receive most of the messages from their peers. They confirmed they could develop good vocabulary by using WhatsApp. It is reported that resourceful teachers would make students to learn reading skills through WhatsApp application. It has found that WhatsApp, as a relatively new tool in education, has similar positive characteristics as previous technological tools that are implemented, but it seems that WhatsApp has some up-to-date features that encourage teacher and students to use it in order to enhance understanding. Nevertheless, there are also challenges and problems. Such as non-availability of internet and most of the students may not afford to have smartphones, accessibility of learning materials and availability of teachers help round the clock. At the same time, it is observed that teachers are apt to be annoyed by the flood of irrelevant and nonsensical messages. Thus, the hypothesis formulated is rejected. Hence, it can be seen that the situation is ripe for the policy makers to integrate the WhatsApp technology into learning process and the authorities can take necessary measures to form a user’s group on WhatsApp to provide a platform for students at plus two level to share the digital information in developing reading skills. The teachers are to develop their competencies to meet the academic demands from student community. If WhatsApp becomes a
common tool for teachers and students in the classroom in exploring reading skills, further research on this matter is highly commendable.

IX. REFERENCES


Dr. N. Samuel Babu :: WhatsApp Messages and Reading Skills: A study based on Government funded institutions of Hyderabad District in Telangana State


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