

# THE USE OF WHATSAPP IN ENHANCING LEARNERS' ORAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

**KAMARIAH BINTI YUSOF**

**SULTAN IDRIS EDUCATION UNIVERSITY**

**2021**



**THE USE OF WHATSAPP IN ENHANCING LEARNERS' ORAL  
COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE**

**KAMARIAH BINTI YUSOF**



**DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN FULLFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT  
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF EDUCATION  
(TEACHING ENGLISH AS SECOND LANGUAGE)  
(MASTER BY MIXED MODE)**

**FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION  
SULTAN IDRIS EDUCATION UNIVERSITY**

**2021**





Please tick (✓)  
Project Paper  
Masters by Research  
Master by Mixed Mode  
PhD

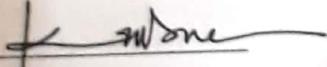
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>

**INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES**  
**DECLARATION OF ORIGINAL WORK**

This declaration is made on the 14 day of July 2020.

**i. Student's Declaration:**

I, KAMARIAH BINTI YUSOF (PLEASE INDICATE STUDENT'S NAME, MATRIC NO. AND FACULTY) hereby declare that the work entitled THE USE OF WHATSAPP IN ENHANCING LEARNERS' ORAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE is my original work. I have not copied from any other students' work or from any other sources except where due reference or acknowledgement is made explicitly in the text, nor has any part been written for me by another person.

  
Signature of the student

**ii. Supervisor's Declaration:**

I ASSOC. PROF. DR GOH HOCK SENG (SUPERVISOR'S NAME) hereby certifies that the work entitled THE USE OF WHATSAPP IN ENHANCING LEARNERS' ORAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE (TITLE) was prepared by the above named student, and was submitted to the Institute of Graduate Studies as a \* partial/full fulfillment for the conferment of MASTER OF EDUCATION (TESL) (PLEASE INDICATE THE DEGREE), and the aforementioned work, to the best of my knowledge, is the said student's work.

6/4/2021  
Date

  
Signature of the Supervisor



**INSTITUT PENGAJIAN SISWAZAH /  
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

**BORANG PENGESAHAN PENYERAHAN TESIS/DISERTASI/LAPORAN KERTAS PROJEK  
DECLARATION OF THESIS/DISSERTATION/PROJECT PAPER FORM**

Tajuk / Title: THE USE OF WHATSAPP IN ENHANCING LEARNER' ORAL  
COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

No. Matrik / Matric No.: M20132001599

Saya / I : KAMARIAH BINTI YUSOF

(Nama pelajar / Student's Name)

mengaku membenarkan Tesis/Disertasi/Laporan Kertas Projek (Kedoktoran/Sarjana)\* ini disimpan di Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (Perpustakaan Tuanku Bainun) dengan syarat-syarat kegunaan seperti berikut:-

*acknowledged that Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (Tuanku Bainun Library) reserves the right as follows:-*

1. Tesis/Disertasi/Laporan Kertas Projek ini adalah hak milik UPSI.  
*The thesis is the property of Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris*
2. Perpustakaan Tuanku Bainun dibenarkan membuat salinan untuk tujuan rujukan dan penyelidikan.  
*Tuanku Bainun Library has the right to make copies for the purpose of reference and research.*
3. Perpustakaan dibenarkan membuat salinan Tesis/Disertasi ini sebagai bahan pertukaran antara Institusi Pengajian Tinggi.  
*The Library has the right to make copies of the thesis for academic exchange.*
4. Sila tandakan ( ✓ ) bagi pilihan kategori di bawah / Please tick ( ✓ ) from the categories below:-

**SULIT/CONFIDENTIAL**

Mengandungi maklumat yang berdarjah keselamatan atau kepentingan Malaysia seperti yang termaktub dalam Akta Rahsia Rasmi 1972 / Contains confidential information under the Official Secret Act 1972

**TERHAD/RESTRICTED**

Mengandungi maklumat terhad yang telah ditentukan oleh organisasi/badan di mana penyelidikan ini dijalankan. / Contains restricted information as specified by the organization where research was done.

**TIDAK TERHAD / OPEN ACCESS**

(Tandatangan Pelajar/ Signature)

(Tandatangan Penyelia / Signature of Supervisor)  
& (Nama & Cop Rasmi / Name & Official Stamp)

Tarikh: 6/4/2021

**DR. GOH HOCK SENG**  
Prof. Madya / Assoc. Prof.  
Fakulti Bahasa dan Komunikasi  
Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris  
35500 Tanjung Malim, Perak D.R.

Catatan: Jika Tesis/Disertasi ini SULIT @ TERHAD, sila lampirkan surat daripada pihak berkuasa/organisasi berkenaan dengan menyatakan sekali sebab dan tempoh laporan ini perlu dikelaskan sebagai SULIT dan TERHAD

Notes: If the thesis is CONFIDENTIAL or RESTRICTED, please attach with the letter from the related authority/organization mentioning the period of confidentiality and reasons for the said confidentiality or restriction.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Firstly, I would like to be thankful to Allah s.w.t for good health and wellbeing that were necessary to complete this paper. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to my advisors, Associate Professor Dr. Goh Hock Seng and Associate Professor Dr. Ainin binti Omar for the continuous support on my Master Degree study and related research, for their undeniable patience and trust, motivation and immense knowledge. Their guidance has helped me and taught me to be independent and responsible on my own learning. I would also like to dedicate this to my parents, family members and my colleagues for their endless support and encouragement. Without their precious support it would not be possible for me to complete this study.





## ABSTRACT

English language instructors have always pursued new and interesting approaches that may help to overcome language teaching and learning barriers. Therefore, this study was conducted mainly to explore Media Assisted Language Learning Approach (MALL) using one of the most prominent media application known as WhatsApp as an instructional tool in communicative language learning classroom. This study was specifically proposed to examine the effect that WhatsApp voice and video features may have towards learners' oral communicative competence as well as exploring their perception towards its use by conducting a social media learning scale survey. This research adopted a quasi-experimental approach that compares experimental and control group which were assigned with different treatment. The learning process of both experimental and control group were based on two hours of in-class learning but supplemented with different treatments for informal classroom tasks. Experimental group was given the tasks to do voice and video recording of communicative dialogue and shared them in the group's WhatsApp channel. On the other hand, control group's participants were assign with traditional approach tasks such as paper-based dialogue construction, open-ended writing exercise, and presentation. This study conducted independent sample t-test analysis to compare both means of control and experimental groups pre-test and post-test scores. The result for independent t-test analysis for pre-test score is  $t(43) = 0.372, p=0.712$ , which proposed that both groups of respondents possessed the same level of oral communicative competency prior to the treatment given. After the treatment, the independent sample t-test then reported that there was a significant difference between post test score for control and experimental group,  $t(43) = -2.99, p = 0.005, p < 5$ . The result proposed that the experimental group with WhatsApp integrated treatment has outperformed those in control group with traditional learning. It was concluded in this study that WhatsApp manage to affect learners' oral communicative competency positively.

**Keywords:** *WhatsApp, Voice-Video Recording, Oral Communicative Competence*





## PENGGUNAAN APLIKASI WHATSAPP DALAM MENINGKATKAN KEMAHIRAN KOMUNIKASI LISAN PELAJAR

### ABSTRAK

Tenaga pengajar Bahasa Inggeris sentiasa mencari dan menggunakan pendekatan-pendekatan baharu dan menarik bagi membantu mengatasi cabaran dalam proses pengajaran dan pembelajaran. Oleh itu, kajian ini dijalankan terutamanya untuk meneroka satu pendekatan yang dikelanali sebagai MALL (*Mobile Assisted Language Learning*) menggunakan salah satu aplikasi media yang terkenal pada masa kini yang dikenali sebagai WhatsApp sebagai alat bantu mengajar dalam kelas pembelajaran komunikasi bahasa. Kajian ini secara khususnya bertujuan untuk mengkaji keberkesanan penggunaan fungsi rakaman video dan suara WhatsApp terhadap kemahiran komunikasi lisan pelajar serta meneroka persepsi mereka terhadap penggunaannya dengan menjalankan soal selidik menggunakan skala media sosial. Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuasi eksperimen yang membandingkan kumpulan percubaan dan kawalan yang diberikan dengan rawatan yang berbeza. Proses pembelajaran kedua-dua kumpulan eksperimen dan kawalan akan menghadapi dua jam kelas pembelajaran setiap minggu tetapi masing-masing akan diberi tugas luar kelas dengan kaedah yang berbeza. Kumpulan eksperimen diberi tugas untuk melakukan rakaman suara atau video bagi dialog komunikasi yang telah dibentuk dan memuatnaik rakaman tersebut ke dalam saluran WhatsApp ahli kumpulan mereka. Sebaliknya, peserta kumpulan kawalan pula telah ditugaskan dengan tugas yang berbentuk konvensional atau tradisional seperti pembinaan dialog berasaskan kertas, latihan menulis terbuka dan pembentangan. Kajian ini menggunakan analisis ujian t-sampel bebas untuk membandingkan kedua-dua skor pra ujian dan pasca ujian kedua-dua kumpulan. Keputusan untuk analisis t-ujian bebas untuk skor pra-ujian adalah  $t(43) = 0.372$ ,  $p = 0.712$ , yang mencadangkan bahawa kedua-dua kumpulan responden mempunyai tahap kompetensi komunikatif oral yang sama sebelum rawatan diberikan. Selepas rawatan, ujian t-sampel bebas melaporkan bahawa terdapat perbezaan yang signifikan antara skor pasca ujian bagi kumpulan kawalan dan eksperimen,  $t(43) = -2.99$ ,  $p = 0.005$ ,  $p < 5$ . Hasil kajian mendapati bahawa responden kumpulan eksperimen yang telah ditugaskan dengan rawatan menggunakan aplikasi WhatsApp telah dapat mengatasi responden dalam kumpulan kawalan yang menjalankan tugas secara tradisional. Kesimpulannya, kajian ini mendapati bahawa aplikasi WhatsApp berjaya mempengaruhi kecekapan komunikasi lisan pelajar dengan positif.

**Kata kunci:** *Aplikasi WhatsApp, Rakaman Suara & Video, Kemahiran Komunikasi Lisan.*



## CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
<b>DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY WORK FORM</b>	ii
<b>DECLARATION OF DESSERTATION</b>	iii
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</b>	iv
<b>ABSTRACT</b>	v
<b>ABSTRAK</b>	vi
<b>CONTENTS</b>	vii
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>	x
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b>	xii
<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</b>	xiii
<b>LIST OF APPENDICES</b>	xiv
<b>CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION</b>	
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Background of the Study	2
1.3 Problem Statement	7
1.4 Rationale of the Study	13
1.5 Objectives of the Study	15
1.6 Research Questions	15
1.7 Research Hypothesis	15
1.8 Significance of the Study	16
1.9 Operational Definitions	18

1.10 Summary	19
--------------	----

## **CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

2.1 Introduction	20
2.2 WhatsApp as a MALL Device	21
2.3 Theoretical Framework	28
2.4 Social Constructivism Theory	29
2.5 Connectivism Theory	30
2.6 Community of Practice (CoP)	33
2.7 Prior Studies	35
2.7.1 WhatsApp as a Language Learning Tool	36
2.7.2 WhatsApp on Learners' Anxiety and Motivation	44

2.7 Summary	50
-------------	----

## **CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY**

3.1 Introduction	51
3.2 Research Design	52
3.3 Participants	53
3.4 Instrumentation	53
3.4.1 Pre-test and Post-test	54
3.4.2 Social Media Learning Scale	55
3.5 Study Procedures	58
3.6 Framework of Analysis	62
3.6.1 Statistical Test	63
3.6.2 Descriptive Statistics	63

3.7 Summary	64
-------------	----

## **CHAPTER 4 ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS**

4.1 Introduction	65
4.2 Statistical Test	66
4.2.1 The Differences between Control Group and Experimental Group Regarding Learners' Test Scores	66
4.2.2 The Differences between Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores For Control and Experimental Groups	74
4.3 Analysis and Findings of Social Media Learning Scale	82
4.3.1 Demographics	82
4.3.2 Learners' Perception towards the Use of WhatsApp Application as a Language Learning Tool	84
4.4 Summary	90

## **CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

5.1 Introduction	91
5.2 Discussion	92
5.3 Implication	98
5.4 Limitation	101
5.5 Recommendation	102
5.6 Conclusion	103

<b>REFERENCES</b>	104
-------------------	-----

<b>APPENDIXES</b>	112
-------------------	-----



## LIST OF TABLES

Table Number		Page
3.1	Social Media Learning Scale	56
3.2	Test of Reliability	57
3.3	Sample of tasks given to experimental and control group	60
3.4	Framework of Analysis	62
4.1	Tests of Normality for Pre-Test Scores	67
4.2	Descriptive Statistics for Control and Experimental Groups for Pre-Test Scores	69
4.3	Independent Samples T-Test Result for Pre-Test Scores	70
4.4	Tests of Normality for Post-Test Scores	71
4.5	Descriptive Statistics for Control and Experimental Groups for Post-Test Scores	73
4.6	Independent Samples T-Test Result for Post-Test Scores	74
4.7	Tests of Normality for Control Group's Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores	76
4.8	Descriptive Statistics for Control Group's Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores	77
4.9	Paired Samples T-Test for Control Group's Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores	78
4.10	Tests of Normality for Experimental Group's Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores	79
4.11	Descriptive Statistics for Experimental Group's Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores	81





4.12	Paired Samples T-Test for Experimental Group's Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores	81
4.13	Demographic of Participants	83
4.14	Frequencies and Percentage for Perception Towards the Use of WhatsApp Application as a Learning Tool	86



## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure Numbers	Page
2.1 General Theoretical Framework of the Study	28
3.1 Non-randomised Pre-test Post-test Control Group Design	52
3.2 Study Procedure	61
4.1 Outliers Test for Pre-Test Scores in Control and Experimental Group	68
4.2 Outliers Test for Post-Test Scores in Control and Experimental Group	72
4.3 Boxplot for Outliers in Control Group's Dependent Variables	76
4.4 Boxplot for Outliers in Experimental Group's Pre-test and Post-test Scores	80
4.5 Samples of Videos Posted in the Experimental Group WhatsApp Channel	87
4.6 Samples of Feedbacks and Comments from WhatsApp Group Members and Instructors	89



## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
CoP	Community of Practice
EFL	English for Foreign Language
ESL	English Second Language
JPKK	Jabatan Pengajian Politeknik dan Kolej Komuniti
MALL	Mobile Assisted Language Learning
SML	Social Media Learning





## LIST OF APPENDICES

**Appendix A** SOCIAL MEDIA LEARNING SCALE

**Appendix B** PRE-TEST QUESTION PAPER

**Appendix C** POST-TEST QUESTION PAPER





## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION



#### 1.1 Introduction

Since 1983, English language has been established as a second language in the Malaysian education system (Omar, 1983). Therefore, the emphasis has always been on ensuring that every Malaysian has basic English language skills in order to function well in the language environment (Darmi & Albion, 2013). Every level of English educators, including those at the tertiary level, has constantly been reminded that the most important task is to achieve learning objectives and outcomes of the courses that have been developed. However, English as a Second Language (ESL) educators who wish to teach successfully and achieve these learning objectives may face many challenges.





On a personal basis, having taught at two community colleges for almost nine years, achieving the intended objectives and outcomes itself is a challenging task due to several barriers: large class size, low motivation among students, high anxiety and classroom time limitations. Community college learners seem to share the same characteristics that make it difficult for them to achieve the required objectives and outcomes. In order to overcome these barriers, educators need a new way of instruction that can attract learners and broaden the opportunities for learning. One of the most widely studied learning approaches recently is Media Assisted Language Learning (MALL). Aburezeq and Ishtaiwa (2013) pointed out that a range of interventions, including the integration and the use of information and communication technology, are needed to address the challenges in teaching and learning. This study was therefore conducted to explore an appropriate and up-to-date learning tool using the MALL approach that can help to improve teaching and learning of English.

## 1.2 Background of the Study

Community college is a tertiary institution which English language is made a compulsory subject. The institution was founded in the year 2000 with the objective of being an institution that prepares skills and training for post-secondary students or as a platform for the development of higher education (Community College Curriculum Development Department, JPKK, 2015). It provides professional certificates and diplomas for education in a number of technical programmes. Although these programmes highlight technical courses as the main focus being taught, there are also compulsory soft skills courses such as Entrepreneurship Skills, Islamic Education, Computer Applications and Communicative English.





Learning English as a second language at a tertiary level can be a challenging task and require more effort especially for the community college students. In contrast to primary and secondary education, this institution focuses more on strengthening the learners' communication skills in English, which requires them to function well in the language, mainly on oral communication (Community College Curriculum Development Department, JPCK, 2015). To be more precise, it can be said that learning English language at a community college focuses further on building their communication skills with people and their surroundings, as well as on social, work-related or academic situations (Community College Curriculum Development Department, JPCK, 2015).

There are two English courses offered in the community college, namely Communicative English and Workplace English. Both are a concern to learners' communicative skills that relate to their daily conversation topics and contexts such as making greetings and telephone skills, giving instructions and directions, providing descriptions, ideas and opinions as well as explaining processes and procedures. These courses have always used Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) as an approach because it emphasizes interaction as both a means and the ultimate goal of learning language (Manan, 2017). However, instructions are still being used in conventional ways: writing and reading dialogues, role-playing, games, quizzes and a number of technological approaches (e.g. Google classroom, Mentimeter presentation software, and Podcasts).

Apart from the conventional classroom activities conducted, there are other several numbers of obstacles that also stand in the way of putting the principles of





communicative language instruction into practice. The first concern deals with the learners of low-level English proficiency that has been brought over since their schooling years. Learners who enrolled in community colleges have a minimum or satisfactory overall grade for Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) including English itself. Looking at samples of English-language grades, it has shown that only a few enrolled students obtained credit (B, C, and D) while the majority of them have very low grades or even fail (E, F, G) their SPM English paper (Bagan Serai Community College Admission Unit, 2017). This is a similar problem faced by Hassan and Ahmed in 2018 which revealed that most of their students had a poor background knowledge in English language since their secondary school years, which later created a major barrier to the English course in the university. The lack of knowledge and proficiency is only one of the obstacles seen. Having meagre background knowledge to the targeted language may lead to greater obstacles that relate to the learners' attitude; interest, motivation, and anxiety towards the process of the language teaching and learning.

Most of the studies related to oral communicative skills enhancement have shown the same behavioural problems occurred in language learning, which are lack of interest, motivation and high level of anxiety (Azad, Alipour & Talebi, 2018; Hassan & Ahmed, 2018; Kheryadi, 2017; Minalla, 2018; Jafre, Osman & Hussain, 2018; Zhang, 2016). These studies, which are based on the researchers' own experience, have shown that their learners are neither interested in nor motivated, to learn and highly anxious towards the targeted language. For example, Kheryadi (2017) in his study noted that most of his learners focused only on the core courses (e.g. computer networking) and had a negative attitude towards learning English and thought that this was not the core competency they should learn in college.





Anxiety is also one of the key issues in the language learning process. Wilson and Brooks (2014) reported that most learners rate communicative activities as the most feared and unnerving activity in an anxiety-provoking situation. Anxiety is transparent can be clearly seen through their timidity, reluctance to speak, and their lack of confidence in the classroom. Mufanti (2015) stated that an act of timidity, worry, fear, lack of confidence and discomfort in communicating in English is a barrier to oral communication in language learning. Jafre, Osman and Hussain (2018) also listed several problems related to their learners' anxiety in English language learning. Their learners were described to be very passive, rarely ask and respond to questions and afraid to speak voluntarily. Due to these anxiety conditions, it will not be able to improve their communicative skills and performance (Jafre, Osman and Hussain, 2018). These related episodes can be clearly observed in community college contexts, where I can see many learners hesitate and sometimes reluctant to take part in activities due to their negative language learning attitude, making them unable to improve their oral communicative skills.

Apart from learners' language learning attitudes problems, communicative activities and instructions in the classroom are also usually time-consuming especially if it involves a large group of students (Jafre, Osman, & Hussain,). Zhang (2016) also mentioned that teaching writing and speaking skills are more demanding and time-consuming than teaching reading and listening skills. Provided with only 2 contact hours per week, with a total of 28 hours per semester, it is difficult to fully achieve the objectives outlined in the courses due to the lack of teaching and learning time. This may result in teacher-centred instruction that does not give learners more opportunities





in communicative interaction and language learning practices. Such combination of grammar-based teaching limits oral communication between students in the classroom and insufficient opportunities to speak outside the classroom will not support the development of communicative competence (Sad, 2008).

It is well known that to have a successful language learning experience, learners should be given sufficient exposure to the language accompanied with enough practice. In his study, Bataineh (2014) reported that language learning can be confounding because students may not have the real and sufficient opportunities to practice the language thus impact on their overall development of language skills. Many researchers agree that the effectiveness of language learning depends not only on real-life learning materials but also on the real-life interaction (Andújar-Vaca, & Cruz-Martinez, 2017). However, this may not be the case for a number of community college learners, who generally have not been exposed to the target language environment. This is especially true in countries where learners are used to speak in their mother tongue and there is no pressure for them to use English outside the classroom setting (Minalla, 2018). Facing all these barriers in teaching, it is certain that the development of communicative competence in the Community College English class is sometimes a disappointment. It is, therefore, necessary to identify effective interventions to overcome these barriers and help learners to achieve the objectives of the course, and it has shown that the MALL approach may be effective in addressing the problems mentioned.





### 1.3 Problem Statement

Oral communicative competence is the main objective of the Communicative English course at Community College, which will also be the main focus of this study. The concept of communicative competence of linguistics is more on the production of a context-specific language (Canale, & Swain, 1980). The context was further elaborated by Dubin and Olshtain (1986) as doing the right thing to the right person at the right time. The analysis of English Language Teaching Methodology reveals that the achievement of communicative competence in the second language involves not only grammatical rules of the language but also the knowledge of when, where, and with whom to use the language in a contextually appropriate manner (Ellis, 1984). It requires more than mere knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, but most importantly, knowledge of how to use English in various communicative situations. This aligns with the objectives and outcomes of the Communicative English course in Community College. It has been determined that, by the end of the course, learners should be able to communicate competently and effectively using English Language in various context, for example, doing greetings and self-introduction, making and receiving telephone calls, giving instructions and directions, making purchases and enquiries, as well as mastering the knowledge of formal and informal language styles. It is expected that the learners will be able to comprehend the audience, purpose, and environment of language context for the communication to be carried out successfully. The acquisition of communicative competence plays a crucial role in language teaching and learning. In order to have effective communicative language learning, learners should be allowed to practice the targeted language, as it is used in a speech community, and as regularly as possible (Brown, 1994).





The conventional way of teaching communicative languages in the classroom has always been in a measure of learning useful phrases and producing written dialogues or role-play. The dialogues will then be used as an oral communicative drill and a practical material by performing read-aloud or role-play activities. It was also noted that learners are not able to spend more time communicating not only in the classroom due to time limitation but also unfavourable environmental settings that take place outside the classroom. Taking into account of the other barriers mentioned; poor background knowledge, lack of motivation and interest, and towering level of anxiety, the challenges remain apparent. These barriers and the conventional ways of instruction demonstrate how challenging it is to achieve the overall success of learners' oral communicative competence in Community College. Hence, it is believed that a handful interventions, including the integration and use of information and communications technology, are needed to address these challenges (Aburezeq & Ishtaiwa, 2013). In order to enable learners to achieve their intended level of communicative competence, technological intervention is needed to help minimise learning barriers and challenges, as well as to provide a broad opportunity for language learning.

In exploring the appropriate approach to intervention, it is noted that mobile education technology has frequently been used for English Second Language (ESL) learning in recent years (Jafre, Osman, & Hussain, 2017). One of the most popular technical approaches to learning in this era is Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL). MALL is defined as formal or informal learning of a foreign language with the help of small, autonomous, and unobtrusive mobile devices that can accompany us at all times (Shamsi, Altaha & Gilanlioglu, 2019; Chen, 2013). MALL uses a variety of





mobile devices such as MP3 Players, laptops, mobile phones, smartphones, iPads, iPods, tablets and more. Chen (2013) has provided several explanations on why MALL is a relatively new common area of research. First, because of its mobility, it can be used or carried at anytime and anywhere. It can be argued that time and space constraints of formal and informal language learning can be significantly reduced, hence offering more flexible informal learning activities and opportunities. Another distinguishing feature of MALL is its connectivity. With built-in internet access, modern mobile devices allow language learners to engage in meaningful real-context interactions, which are usually lacking in traditional language learning environments (Chen, 2013; Jafre, & Hussain, 2018). Jafre and Hussain (2018) furthermore added that MALL brings many benefits to learners, enabling them to engage consistently with peers working in groups, enhance opportunities and improve learning styles.



Smartphone is one of the most important MALL devices due to its myriad functions. As smartphones and their attached various applications become more prevalent, their potential for ready-made communication activities in the classroom has recently become very important. There are numerous free applications embedded in mobile devices that are suitable for communicative language learning and instruction, e.g. *Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Podcast, and Skype*. In this context, it is essential to make use of these applications to provide authentic learning experiences, interest and assist learners in the optimal practice for their language learning (Kheryadi, 2018). Zhang (2016) mentioned that educators can explore smartphone messaging applications and their ability to exchange not only text but also other multimedia formats to enhance communicative language learning within and without the ESL classes. Hence, for this recent study, the focus will be put on the use of mobile application known as WhatsApp.





Based on the previous MALL studies, this application can be considered as one of the easiest, most familiar and effective tool that can be used by teachers (Kheryadi, 2018), and its widespread use among teachers and students in their private lives made it a prime choice (Bouhnik & Deshen, 2014).

WhatsApp is one of the most downloaded mobile applications in the world and widely used with hundreds of millions of users in 2019 alone. According to WhatsApp statistics, the application is close to the top of the list of the most popular messaging applications for almost 10 years and seems to be going stronger than ever. It has 1.5 billion active users in more than 180 countries and ranks third in the world's most downloaded Android application. On average, it is statistically stated that the users check WhatsApp more than 23 times per day and 58% of users access WhatsApp several times a day (<http://www.WhatsApp.com/>). The application is a means of communication at present, it is used to share information, files, images, audio and video, to send messages and to engage in real-time conversation (Ibrahim, Hafiz & Idris, 2015). All of these features provided by WhatsApp make it as a remarkable educational tool to strengthen learners' communicative language learning in ESL classes (Zhang, 2016). As for this study, the focus will be on utilizing WhatsApp video and voice recording function to enhance learners' oral communicative competence. These particular features of WhatsApp are considered compatible to be implemented in the communicative language classroom, as they may provide a generous medium for communication among the users.

It is widely known that a high concentration of target language use in a variety of communicative contexts, settings and environments is needed to master a





second or minority language particularly in communication (Carey & Crittenden, 2000). Bataineh (2014) mentioned in his study that English language can be complicated to learn because learners may not have real opportunities to practice the language and the classroom is not well prepared for interaction. For these reasons, WhatsApp is believed to be able to provide those learning opportunities and the environment needed for communicative language practice. Learners seeking to learn ESL and EFL require further language support and hence, productive language skills are needed to develop essential experience and skills (Azad, Alipour & Talebi, 2018).

Interaction plays a significant role in exchanging the amount of real learning and fosters a community atmosphere. However, fostering a consistent level of interaction is a challenge for educators (Muirhead, 2005). It is believed that messaging through WhatsApp can be an effective tool for learning and teaching by enabling students to interact with each other to build and share knowledge (Amry, 2014). WhatsApp is a well-known mobile application for its communicative functions that allow two or more people to interact in real-time — through written, image, audio and visual forms. With its communicative capacity, it can create a wider range of opportunities for interaction between learners and educators, as well as remove time and place constraints when learning. More specifically, Firth and Wagner (1997) argued that interaction serves as a goal of collaborative learning that can lead to a lot of learning benefits. Hence, providing a medium for interaction with a wide range of features, it is believed that WhatsApp can help to improve learners' participation and attitudes, develop communication skills as well as providing a medium for learners to practice, and giving and receiving feedback.





WhatsApp was also chosen due to its familiarity among mobile device users. It is important to note that learners, especially younger generations, are likely to be familiar with such technologies. Most of them use mobile devices and are actively using social media applications such as Facebook, Twitter, Line, WeChat, and Instagram. It is important to use something interesting and familiar because it can help to reduce their anxiety about learning the language. It has been mentioned in the previous study that, although learners may have negative attitudes towards language learning, however, the use of media devices and applications can help them reduce their anxiety, increase their enthusiasm and encourage them to take part in learning because of its familiarity among the learners (Mufanti, 2016; Han & Keskin, 2016; Jafre & Hussain, 2018). Due to its repetitive use, a study was conducted by Han and Keskin (2016) to examine the effect of the application towards learners' anxiety in communicative language learning. It was later proven that the application managed to reduce learners' anxiety towards language learning due to its familiarity and regular usage among the learners themselves.

It is further convinced that a familiarity towards an application, such as WhatsApp, will also be able to improve the learners' motivation and engage them in various ways of learning (Azad, Alipour & Talebi, 2018). The application allows interactive learning and encourages cooperation between learners and hence, leads to good motivational reinforcement for learners. In their study, Bouhnik, Deshen, and Gan (2014) revealed that WhatsApp managed to become a shared platform for learners to enhance accessibility, encourage cooperation and participants in taking active part for language learning assignments. Another study conducted by Plana et al. (2013) found that there was a reported increase in their learners' motivation to learn foreign language once they had been exposed to the use of WhatsApp in English language studies.





Provided with the relevant features that seem to be able to support communicative language learning, it is therefore decided that this study will be focusing on the use of WhatsApp as one of the MALL approach devices to enhance learners' oral communicative competence. Among various useful features of the application, this study will be specifically focusing on using the voice and video recording features. By the end of the study, it is expected to see whether such applications can be useful in a communicative language learning environment.

#### 1.4 Rationale of the study

Due to its relevance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, mobile devices have been explored in a number of ways to assist language learning and teaching. There are ample MALL approach studies previously conducted particularly on the use of WhatsApp application. Several studies dealt with the subject from the point of view of general effect and impact (Azad, Alipour & Talebi; Bataineh, 2014; 2018; Jones, Edwards, & Reid, 2009; Miangah & Nezerat, 2012) while others focus on skills development, such as writing and reading (Andujar, 2016; Karim, Abu, & Khaja, 2017; Kheryadi, 2017; Mufanti, 2016), vocabulary (Alemi, Sarab & Lari, 2012; Basoglu & Akdemir, 2010; Hayati, Jalilifar & Mashhadi, 2013; Zhang, Song & Burston, 2011) and pronunciation (Saran, Seferoglu & Cagiltay, 2009). However, only a few studies have been conducted to explore the relationship between the MALL approach using WhatsApp application with oral communicative competence (Andújar-Vaca & Cruz-Martinez, 2017; Bataineh, 2014; Shamsi, Altaha, & Gilanlioglu, 2019). This may be due to the logic of the WhatsApp





application itself, which is seen primarily as a medium for written conversation and most likely does not involve in any oral communication transaction.

As a result, it can be seen that most of the studies previously focused on improving language learning skills that can be improved through written conversations, such as reading, vocabulary, and writing. It is important to realize that this application is more than just a written communication. WhatsApp is also embedded with other important communicative features, such as video and voice recording. By manipulating these features appropriately in communicative language learning, WhatsApp can become a remarkable tool in enhancing learners' communicative competence (Zhang, 2016). Due to its high capacity to promote unlimited levels of interaction between learners and educators themselves, it is believed that this application can provide what is needed; a medium for communicative language practice and collaborative learning, a tool that can improve learners language learning attitudes; reduce anxiety level and enhance motivation as well as the enjoyment of language learning itself. As a result of these great capabilities, a recent study is made to explore the use of WhatsApp specifically in its video and voice recording features towards learners' oral communicative competence.





## 1.5 Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To investigate the effects of WhatsApp voice and video features in the oral communicative skills of learners.
2. To analyse learners' perceptions about the use of WhatsApp as a communicative language learning tool.

## 1.6 Research Questions

This study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. Is there a significant difference in the learners' oral communicative competence before and after the use of WhatsApp voice and video features?
2. How do learners perceive WhatsApp as an integrative communicative language learning tool?

## 1.7 Research Hypothesis

This experimental study aims to explore the use of WhatsApp for oral communication skills in English compared to learning without mobile application mediation.

The hypotheses guiding the study are as follows:

***H<sub>0</sub>***: There is no statistically significant difference in oral communicative competence between the control and the experimental group.

***H<sub>1</sub>***: There is a statistically significant difference in oral communicative competence between the control and the experimental group.





## 1.8 Significance of the Study

The results of the study may play a significant role in several related educational stakeholders. First and foremost, students are the most important stakeholder in education. They have been taught with a variety of teaching approaches and strategies in recent years. Recycling of the same approach may not lead to much improvement especially for those with a lower level of proficiency. It is essential to have an approach that can meet their needs and preferences to maximise targeted language acquisition thus improve their performance. Using the latest and up-to-date mobile application, such as WhatsApp, it helps the students observe second-language learning in a new and rewarding way. The convenience of the application enables students to have access to a targeted language environment between themselves and educator as a community, with appropriate techniques, it can help to improve their language acquisition. Finding out whether the social media learning such as MALL learning strategy is effective and helpful for students can help to contribute to existing studies.

Nurturing students to be able to perform well in the targeted language is the primary responsibility of a language teacher. Efforts are made to brainstorm and study new strategies for teaching the English language, and this study may contribute to this effort. It is therefore also expected that the findings for this study will help educators to use them as a consideration for teaching the second language particularly for the lower level of students to perform well in the targeted language.

As for research per se is concerned, given that there is a great deal of effort to keep track of students' improvement and language practice in a short period, this





study may allow the researcher to find a way forward improving their oral communication skills. Investigating WhatsApp functions by integrating them into the teaching and learning can be a useful way to ensure that students have the full potential to learn English. This research can be a step forward in the exploration for more technological devices or applications that can be further developed in the field of language learning.

Finally, this study may somehow provide policymakers with insight into how simple and available technology can be integrated into the teaching and learning process. Based on Malaysia Education Blueprint (2013-2025), the Government's goal is to prepare Malaysian students for the needs of the 21st century and increase public and parental expectations of education policy. Looking at the research outcome, policymakers can keep up with the needs of the generation of the 21<sup>st</sup> century by trying to consider integrating technology into the implementation of the syllabus or the development of education policy.





## 1.8 Operational Definition

**MALL** : Mobile-Assisted Language Learning, formal or informal learning of a foreign language with the help of small, autonomous and unobtrusive mobile devices that can accompany us at all times (Shamsi, Altaha & Gilanlioglu, 2018).

**Oral** : Spoken rather than written; verbal.

**Communicative Competence** : Communicative competence in the second language involves not only knowing the grammatical rules of the language, but also knowing when, where, and with whom to use the language in a contextually appropriate manner (Ellis, 1984)

**WhatsApp** : A cross-platform mobile messaging application allows users to exchange written conversations, images, voice or video in real-time (Bensalem, 2018; Vaca & Martinez, 2017).





## 1.9 Summary

Communicative language classrooms may face a lot of challenges in instruction and learning such as time constraints, lack of interest and motivation, anxiety presence and lack of authentic language environment. In order to overcome these challenges, a technological intervention using the MALL approach was seen to be a great notion. Hence, using one of the MALL devices; WhatsApp was chosen as a tool to be examined in this study. The use of WhatsApp, particularly on its video and voice recording functions, was seen to be capable in enhancing learners' oral communicative competence. These were contributed due to its portability and connectivity, as well as its familiarity among learners and educators.

