Effect of WhatsApp on English Language Academic Writing Skill: A Gender Based Study

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Article Info	Abstract
	This research project is exploratory in nature that investigates the gender-based effect of WhatsApp messaging on English language academic writing skills of secondary school students. A quantitative approach with a survey design is used. The sample size of this research was 210 students from eight High Schools of District Rahim Yar Khan, randomly selected from the population. The data collection instrument consisted of learners' narrative essays. SPSS-20 is used for data analysis and is shown using tables and pie charts. The findings of current study showed some light on the relationship of gender with the influence of WhatsApp on the writing skills of the high school students. Some of the outcomes included the usage of abbreviations, misspellings, overly simplified terms and the use of digits rather than the full word type more from male students than female students.

Introduction

Language is a comprehensive means communication that uses sounds, expressions, symbols or marks. It's the code for expression and communication. Communicating means exchanging knowledge, or exchanging what one knows, and communicating with others (Bonvillain, 2019). It requires a method of putting together words to make context. Communication needs language, and thus language remains presumably a conversational medium able to communicate ideas and notions together with emotions, attitudes and perceptions (Canale, 2014).

At the same time, the use of cell phone apps by teen-age is on the rise year after year. Not only are cell phones considered very important equipment for teen-age, but worries about child safety often encourage parents to offer cell phones to kids at an increasingly early age (Bonvillain, 2019). Most children between the ages of 15 and 18 in Pakistan own cell phones, and WhatsApp is a popular phone feature among this age range. Most frequently friendship in this age group begins with communicating by WhatsApp chatting and expanding this relationship further to its well-being (Nouwens, Griggio, & Mackay, 2017). The use of these cell phone devices has resolved parents' problems and their growing concerns about children. Now they're well connected and can continue to watch their children's social and educational process throughout the day (Nikken & Schols, 2015). In recent decades, the use of WhatsApp in classrooms has resulted in texting as a medium of instruction(La Hanisi, Risdiany, Dwi Utami, & Sulisworo, 2018). This lifelong communication and exchanging interpreted knowledge independently from the conventional notion of learning language skills (Lee, 1994).

The rapid shift in language use and expectations has paved the way that WhatsApp messaging can affect learners' language acquisition constructively or destructively, eventually resulting in diversity and difference in language (MILOUD, 2019). As a result, in light of the importance of WhatsApp and its role in learning English as a foreign language, the researcher decided to conduct a study on the Impact of WhatsApp on English Language Writing Proficiency of Male and Female Students at High School Level in Rahim Yar Khan to ascertain if there is a perceived difference of performance between male and female students as a result of WhatsApp's effect.

The purpose of the present study is to find out the impact of WhatsApp messaging on learning competencies in academic writing of high school male and female students at District Rahim Yar Khan. The present study will find to be significant as no such study has yet been carried so for at high school Level. This study may be useful for the teachers to adopt those methods and techniques which are easy and helpful for students in English language learning process. That's why the researcher has thought of highlighting the role of WhatsApp messaging on English academic writing with special reference to Gender at high school level because young high school students spend most of their free time using WhatsApp not only for social networking but also for study concerns. We need to understand weather WhatsApp cast its effect on male and female students of high school level in learning English language academic writing skill and to what degree it is significant. The researcher tried to identify the effect of WhatsApp messaging in male and female students' performance in

English academic writing at high school with the hypothesis that a relationship may be found between high school students' WhatsApp texting ratio and their performance in the academic writing tasks basing on their gender.

Literature Review:
WhatsApp is an app that was released in 2009 for text and voice messaging. Ever since, it has become extremely popular, thanks to its usability and versatility. WhatsApp provides for messaging and calls on computer, laptop and smart phones, as a free feature (Taipale & Farinosi, 2018). Precisely what makes this software desirable is that it runs on multiple devices such as mobile and laptops, aiding with texting. To make one-on-one or group calls, it can also benefit from Wi-Fi and mobile internet (Fiadino, Schiavone, & Casas, 2015).

WhatsApp is now one of the most significant social media platforms, as well as in the process of English language learning, it plays a vital role because it can be used by English learners to transfer texts, records, documents, pictures, videos and audio files. WhatsApp Messenger is a high-speed text messaging service used by cell phone users (Awada, 2016). English learners directly use WhatsApp to exchange photos and therefore can get support from these online social media platforms to acquire information and communicate information in a simple and structured way (Kaid Mohammed Ali & Rashad Ali Bin-Hady, 2019). The other significant argument is that English learners might share the pdf file directly and ask questions to their instructors and if they are uncertain at some argument, they may exchange the page directly instead of asking each other about the book reference and page number to refer towards any misunderstanding (Seufert, Hoßfeld, Schwind, Burger, & Tran-Gia, 2016). The other notable argument is that WhatsApp is used at the global level for networking rivalry and message exchange. Globally, there are millions of daily users who use WhatsApp for messaging (Wan, Dastane, Mohd Satar, & Ma'arif, 2019).

WhatsApp Messaging and Threats to Learning:
With the ever-expanding utilization of WhatsApp messaging among students, particularly youngsters, there has been a developing worry among instructors, guardians, specialists and overall population that this training might be harming the utilization of language in talking and composing and will influence the standard structures in future (Cremades, Onieva-López, Maqueda-Cuenca, & Ramírez-Leiton, 2019). While the drawn-out effect of social media messaging on the nature of juvenile correspondence is obscure, innovation exists in the lives of our students (Indrajith & Varghese, 2018). The present age of 21st century utilizes social media correspondence more than some other age (Indrajith & Varghese, 2018). Messaging is a contracted type of short informing administrations (SMS) and texting has become young people's prevailing method of correspondence, surpassing calls and personal communication (Minalla, 2018). An educational reality about Adolescents, they spend around an hour and a half every day to WhatsApp message correspondence (Toh, Howie, Coenen, & Straker, 2019). Internet access to electronic gadgets have allowed us to change customary verbal and face to face correspondence. Undoubtedly, we have been extraordinarily profited by the incessant utilization of text information which happens between a particular social gathering, among students and business groups (Kumar, Anandhan, Kumar, & Damodharan, 2021). Frequently companionship begins with sharing through WhatsApp and further building strong relationships (Abbas, 2021). Busy daily routines usually don't permit us to make long calls or pay visits independently however text messaging has made correspondence very easy without intruding on one another and offer increasingly casual, loose, individual structures for correspondence (Chambers, 2017). Advanced mobile phone students are a lot quicker in utilizing social media as contrast with prior cell phone gadgets. Internet ages went above and beyond and offered a lasting dialect condition with fervor and inspiration (Talaue, AlSaad, AlRushaidan, AlHugail, & AlFahhad, 2018).

Features of WhatsApp Language and Vocabulary:
Allagui (2014) notes that it is possible to separate WhatsApp messages into logical and informational messages that needs a shift in the register. Moreover, the physical signature of these enclosed messages is based on facts such as acronyms and feelings and the size of the message. This orthographic and typographic communication is socio-linguistically comprehensible which formed the vocabulary of WhatsApp users.

Following are known features of the Vocabulary and language used in WhatsApp messaging, these days:

Use of Pictograms:
The use of pictograms and logograms is predominantly a form of WhatsApp text messaging. Words are either simplified by using word representation symbols, or by using symbols whose names sound like a word syllable (Ayan, 2020). Texting 'to date' may be made, for instance, as '2d8',' for you' as '4 U' and 'before' as 'b4'.

Use of Brief Terminology:
Brief Terminology is a prominent feature of WhatsApp messaging (Yus, 2017). For e.g., in text 'to whom it can concern' one might merely write 'twimc'. It was also possible to text 'Love you with all my heart' as 'luwamh' (Songxaba & Sincuba, 2019). In the academic writing of students, Omotoyinbo (2021) noted the influence of social media writing. Asare (2019) indicated that several variables were influential in shaping the language of a learner. The use of brief terminology in writing, which is not permitted in formal language, was one such practice which was also studied in the research. Some samples of these words were: plz for please, b / w for

between and, gud nyt for good night, thnx for thanks, b4 for before, BTW for by the way and thanku for thank you. The review of the errors identifies several similar mistakes. The research further highlights the problem of the language of WhatsApp media being used so often that it is implicitly used by students in academic writing (Asare, 2019).

Use of Homophones of Letters and Numbers:

Homophones of letters and numbers are used for words, so as to decrease time and being quick in composing, letters are supplanted by numbers (Salem, 2013). English being a general language has its extension widespread, for instance letter homophone and number homophones of words as given below:

B	Be
C	See
O	Oh
R	Are
4	for
8	ate
Y	why

By using numerical representations, multiple syllables in a phrase may also be replaced. Numbers alone can also be used to convey a whole message (Plester, Wood, & Joshi, 2009).

Negative Effect of WhatsApp Messaging on English Language Learner:

To vindicate the claim that there is a substantial and meaningful influence of WhatsApp, Hussain and Lukmana (2019) gathered evidence from teachers and this is reflected in the question:' *Have you observed any grammatical irregularities in written work that might be traced to WhatsApp-speech*? out of the five instructor participants, two replied "agree" and the other three replied "strongly agree." Upon asking to highlight, the teachers clearly outlined the kinds of mistakes found in the written work of students such as:

- The use of the wrong verb
- Shorten words and sentences
- The answering of questions in as short as possible ways with incorrect spelling

The use of abbreviations for certain words that are commonly used with electronic media such as "u" or "v" Students ignore certain simple rules and overuse it in their academic writing such as tests, assignments and reports and often express anything they want to express as they are not very acquainted with differentiating context and situation due to unnecessary use of message language. Further, they consider this message language as the standard language (Shahid, 2018).

Gender and Language:

When you look around, you'll find that masculinity and femininity are portrayed in a multitude of ways. Any of these choices, from how people dress to how they wear their hair, convey a message about their own relationship to the social concept of gender, or how a person interacts with the divisions of man and woman (Eder & Parker, 1987). Gender has such a heavy effect on how we express ourselves that it can also influence the vocabulary we use on a regular basis (Fontecha, 2010). This might come as a shock to you. Gender can seem to be unrelated to language at first glance. Gender, on the other hand, has been related to how language is learned, created, and used by researchers on various occasions. Also, in very diverse historical and cultural settings, gender tends to have an influence on language production (Grace, 2000).

Gender and Language Acquisition:

To begin with, gender may affect language learning, or how young children acquire their native tongue. Since babies and toddlers in many cultures spend more time with female parents, early language is often mimicked by a female speaker (Snow, 1977).

Young girls learn language at a marginally higher pace than boys in most language classes, though this appears to level out by middle childhood (Clark, 1995). Female gaps in language usage arise early on; girls are more likely to use language to identify objects and activities, while boys are more likely to use language to describe interpersonal interactions with others (Cole, 1997).

Girls learn to read somewhat faster than boys on average, but this, too, evens out by the middle of puberty. Nonetheless, on average, women score marginally better than men on measures assessing linguistic cognitive ability and success over their lives (Coles & Hall, 2002).

All the above-mentioned studies reveal that a relationship may be found between high school students' WhatsApp texting ratio and their performance in the academic writing tasks basing on their gender.

Research Methodology:

This research project is exploratory in nature. A survey research design was followed in this research to collect the data. The data collection instrument is consisted of learners' narrative essays. SPSS-20 is used for data analysis and is shown using tables. In order to identify and determine the use of WhatsApp language, the researchers counted the mistakes and errors made by the participants. The results were presented in tables. Tables were used to quantify the errors committed by male and female respondents. On the tables the errors committed by the respondents were shown using percentages.

Population:
populace of this current examination was every one of those students who were enrolled in grade nine and ten in government high schools of Rahim Yar Khan.

Sample:
Sample size of this current study was two hundred and ten (210) students both male and female who were selected randomly from the population.

Research Tool:
The data collection instrument is consisted of learners' narrative essays. The researchers gathered information on orthographic errors in academic English essay writing of the sample. The mistakes and errors committed by the participants were counted in order to classify and evaluate the effect of use of WhatsApp language. The researchers graded and manually analyzed the essays that were submitted. The errors were divided into three categories: WhatsApp language errors, WhatsApp language errors involving numbers, and WhatsApp language errors involving words with missing letters.

Results:
Table 1 WhatsApp Language Errors Committed by Respondents in Essay Writing with Correction

Error	Correction
My father works @	My father works at
I (wz) (nt)	I was not
I visit a friend(z) house	I visit a friend's house
I asked him to (cm) to (mi)	I asked him to come to me
I remember (tis)	I remember this

Table 2 Use of Numbers for Words Errors Committed by Respondents in Essay Writing

Errors		Gender	Total	Frequency	Percentage
1.	He works (4)	Female	102	2	1.96
		Male	108	11	10.18
2.	Be(4)	Female	102	0	0
		Male	108	7	6.48
3.	(2) nite	Female	102	1	0.98
		Male	108	8	7.40
4.	(2)	Female	102	3	2.94
		Male	108	11	10.18
5.	(9)t	Female	102	2	1.96
		Male	108	6	5.55

The data analysis described in Table 2 that use of numbers for words errors were less than 3% in the essays of female students, whereas in the essays of the male students, the use of numbers for words errors were more than 10%. Hence it might be assumed that use of numbers for words errors occur much more in academic writing of the male students who use WhatsApp, whereas use of numbers for words errors are negligible in the academic writing of the female students who use WhatsApp.

Table 3 Use of mis-spelled words or omitted letters Errors with Correction

Error	Correction
D	The
Nvr	Never
N	And
Wen	When
Coz	Because

Table 4 Use of mis-spelled words or omitted letters Errors Committed by the Respondents of the Study

Errors		Group	Total	Frequency	Percentage
1.	D	Female	102	1	0.98
		Male	108	6	5.55
2.	Nvr	Female	102	2	1.96
		Male	108	12	11.11
3.	N	Female	102	4	3.92
		Male	108	11	10.18
4.	Wen	Female	102	5	4.90
		Male	108	13	12.03
5.	Coz	Female	102	4	3.92
		Male	108	15	13.88

The data analysis described in Table 4 illustrated that use of mis-spelled or omitted letters words errors were less than 5% in the essays of the members of female group, whereas in the essays of the members of male group, the use of mis-spelled or omitted letters words errors were more than 13%. Hence it might be assumed that use of mis-spelled or omitted letters words errors occur much more in academic writing of the male students, whereas use of mis-spelled or omitted letters words errors are negligible in the academic writing of the female students who use WhatsApp.

Table 5 Sentence construction Errors Committed by the Respondents of the Study

	Gender	Total	Frequency	Percentage
Sentence Construction Errors	Female	102	20	19.60
	Male	108	22	20.37

The data analysis described in Table 5 illustrated that Sentence Construction errors were more than 20% in the essays of the members of female and male groups. Hence it might be assumed that sentence construction errors were almost same in both groups of gender.

Table 6 Poor Vocabulary Errors Committed by the Respondents of the Study

Poor Vocabulary Errors	Gender	Total	Frequency	Percentage
	Female	102	31	30.39
	Male	108	33	30.55

The data analysis described in Table 6 illustrated that Poor Vocabulary errors were almost same in both groups of gender.

Discussion and Conclusion:

Despite the technologically sophisticated period of the twenty-first century, a variety of writing errors that have arisen from the usage of WhatsApp tend to be prominent in learners' writing. This article has shown that, by using error analysis, a majority of mistakes in male and female learners' writing and poor vocabulary can be traced back to WhatsApp messaging. Moreover, such errors were committed comparatively more by male learners. The results of this research on WhatsApp errors can help language instructors, as well as course and syllabus creators, develop training and learning resources that can help male and female students stop making these mistakes. Educators can make language teaching and learning more effective and reliable by using WhatsApp error analysis methods and methodologies to make learners aware of the errors.

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