What’s up with WhatsApp?

Using a WhatsApp programme with adult EFL learners

Jessica Mackay, EIM-UB
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Introduction
  – Out-of-class learning
  – WhatsApp facts
Mobile language learning
The programme
Results & recommendations
Out-of-class learning

Beyond the Language Classroom
Edited by Phil Benson and Hayo Reinders
Out-of-class learning

• TL Contact = Increased proficiency (Sundqvist, 2009)

• *Space* – where language is encountered and (potentially) learned

• *Attachments* – language associated with a particular *space* (Benson, 2018)
LOOK!

THE ORIGINAL OAT-LY!

Know your rights.

AVENA AVEIA
MARRAN LAMngo

There's so much more to be said about this product, but we've been told that Spanish people don't read ads in English.
Out-of-class learning

• Target Language Contact:
  Ranking out of 11 European countries:
  10/11

  Vez, Martinez & Lorenzo (2013)

• Hours of TL Contact outside class
  4h30m / week

  Mackay (2015)
WhatsApp - facts

1 Billion
daily active users

1.3 Billion
monthly active users

55 Billion
messages sent per day

4.5 Billion
photos shared per day

60 languages
supported

1 Billion
videos shared per day
WhatsApp – facts - Spain

Biggest user of WhatsApp in Europe
WhatsApp – facts - Spain

1. Present on ..........% of smartphones in the country.
2. Used by .............% of users of social media.
3. .............% 18-24 year olds use instant messaging service.
4. Users = ..........% women ..........% men.
5. Consult WhatsApp average .......... times a day.

Source: Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) April, 2017 / Comisión Nacional de los Mercados y la Competencia (CNMC), 2015
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Mobile Language Learning

• Have you had any experience of teaching (or learning) ...online? ...via a mobile device? ...by WhatsApp?
• If not currently part of your teaching practice, do you feel you should be using it more?
• In your opinion, what are the main advantages / disadvantages of Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL)?
Mobile Language Learning

Reflects reality

‘Mobile devices are here to stay’

‘Teachers should catch up and teach with the tools our students really use’
Brooks-Young (2010)
Mobile Language Learning

Massive potential

‘Pull’ – learners’ access information on their own

‘Push’ – information is provided, learners are ‘pushed’ into action (underexplored)

Motiwalla (2007)
Mobile Language Learning

BUT...

‘Autonomy resides in being able to say what you want rather than producing the language of others.’


‘comparable with interactions within the walls of a face-to-face classroom’

Lamy and Zourou (2013: 3)
Mobile Language Learning

Can MALL recreate authentic communication?

Hawthorne effect or Observer’s paradox.

‘frustrated authenticity’ in real life

Labov (1972)

Henry (2014)
• Han and Keskin (2016): *Using WhatsApp to Reduce EFL Speaking Anxiety*

• Jafari and Chalak (2016): *The Role of WhatsApp in Teaching Vocabulary to Iranian EFL learners at Junior High School.*

• Gutiérrez-Colon et al., (2013): *Improving learners’ reading skills through instant short messages*
# The WhatsApp programme

## Summer 2017 intensive B2.1

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<td>Working</td>
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<td>(16.6%)</td>
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The WhatsApp programme
The WhatsApp programme

Interaction Online
The WhatsApp programme

Authors’ recommendations:
- Set up like classroom tasks:
  - Demo first
  - Clear instructions
- Break task up into stages
- Set deadlines
- Be present and positive, withdraw support gradually
The WhatsApp programme

Interaction patterns

Confetti

Pass the parcel

Breakout

Postal ballot
The WhatsApp programme

Confetti

Q&A
EIM level 4 summer... Angel, Angels, Anna, Arosel...

WELCOME TO THE GROUP! Task 1: Welcome to the level 4 summer course! This is your first WhatsApp task. I'd like you to post a quick introduction about yourself. Tell us about where you live, what you do, etc. Please also include the answer to one of these questions:

1. What is your favourite place in the whole world?
2. What are your two most precious possessions?
3. What is something you are very proud of?

I have written an example underneath to give you some ideas.

Part 2: interaction

Thanks everyone! Now read what others in the group have posted. Find the name of the person BELOW you. If you are the last person on the list then you are going to work with the first person on the list. You are going to ask that person two or three questions about their introduction. Please do this by replying to their introduction post. Here is the list of names:

Andrea
José
Sergi...
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Tip 1
First couple of activities:
- tell students who to ask
This is a picture of Comic Con. It is held every year in San Diego, USA. Ask some questions about this event and I will (try to!) answer. Post your questions by tomorrow. Thanks!

Pablo (Summer 4A)
The WhatsApp programme

*Tip 2*

In open (Q & A) tasks, always provide a model answer
Pablo (Summer 4A)
You
This is a picture of Comic Con. It is held every year in San Diego, USA. Ask some questions about this event.

How many people was in the Comic Con?

Sandra (4A Summer)
What year did it start?

Andrea (4A Summer)
What day is it celebrated?

Barbara (4A Summer)
Do you know anyone who has gone to Comic Con? How was your experience?

Sergi (4A Summer)

Sorry

Sergi (4A Summer)
Oscar (4A Summer)
It is the casualty that today 7th of July Japan celebrates the Tanabata festival.

What are those things that are in the tree?
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Tip 3
Activities with images spark curiosity and encourage genuine interaction.
Elba (4A Summer)

I took this picture this morning. The European Balloon Festival is taking place in Igualada these days!

14:18

Angel (4A Summer)

Elba (4A Summer)

I took this picture this morning. The European Balloon Festival is taking place in...

Nice picture Elba! Have you ever ridden in a balloon?

14:29
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Confetti

GUESSING GAME
Where in the world?
The WhatsApp programme

*Tip 4*

Photos of the students themselves generate the most activity

*privacy issues*
My angle on....

Choose an object that has a special meaning for you. Take a picture of a part of the object from an unusual angle. Try to make the picture so that it is difficult to see (but not impossible!).

You'll see my picture tomorrow, then I'll reveal the next part of the lesson.

Part 2:

Look at your classmates' pictures. Choose three to ask questions to try and find out what the object is. The owner can only answer 'yes' or 'no' e.g.:

Is it made of metal? Yes, it is.
Do you use it in the kitchen? No, you don't.

If three people have all asked questions about the object you chose, choose another picture. Post your questions by tomorrow (Thursday). If no one has found the answer by Friday, the owner should tell the rest of the class.

---

José Luis (4A Summer)

You

OK - 10 points?

Ohh!! -10 points!! Jessica is from Scotland and you are a weepy (llorón) man.

(Extra points to Marie Curie!)

20 Jul 2017

If you haven't already guessed the mystery objects, the owners should now reveal what they were. Mine was (the back of) a photo frame with a picture of my dad. What about you?
Tip 5

In Q & A tasks, set a limit (3) questions per contribution
Angel (4A Summer)
Mine was a painting by my girlfriend based on this picture where I'm giving back at the sea a rehabilitated seagull.

Anna (4A Summer)
My picture was a object to
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Tip 6
There’s no such thing as a stupid question!
José Luis (4A Summer)  
Josep (4A Summer)  
Yes Jose you discover me! Its my bike  
It was very difficult but I am a cycling expert 🚴‍♂️🚴‍♀️🚴‍♀️

José Luis (4A Summer)  
One part of the cycle looks like a shadow in the floor. You need to observe to realize completely!

José Luis (4A Summer)  
I can't see it. It looks floor tiles to me.

José Luis (4A Summer)  
One part of the cycle looks like a shadow in the floor. You need to observe to

Josep (4A Summer)  
For you Jose

José Luis (4A Summer)  
Guau! I like your bike!

I like the floor

21 Jul 2017

Anna (Level 4 Summer)
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Pass the parcel
Before you start, have a look at this list. These are some ways of agreeing in English (from emphatic to weak):

Definitely! (Emphatic)
For sure!
Absolutely!
Yes.
I guess.
I suppose (weak)

Task 1:
I'm going to write two things. You need to choose which one you prefer. Write the name of the thing you prefer and use one of the expressions from the list.

For example, I write this:
Travelling by bus or travelling by train?

You write:
Travelling by train, absolutely!

If you don't like travelling by bus and you don't like travelling by train, you can write:
Neither!

Ready? Let's start!
Travelling by bus or travelling by train?

If I have to choose between...
WhatsApp task 2: Interaction.
Thank you for your ideas. Now it's your turn. Think if two things that are different, but related. The first person who is ready can post their two things. The next person responds, then posts their two things e.g.

A: Bus or train?
B: Train, definitely! Cats or dogs?
C: Cats, for sure! Pasta or pizza?

And so on.....

Start when you're ready.
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This or that? Student suggestions

wine or beer?

summer or winter?

Harry Potter or Game of Thrones?

Apple or Android?
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*Tip 7*
Alternate drills for accuracy and open activities for fluency.
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Tip 8

Only correct if requested or if an error is becoming ‘intrusive’.
Olga (4A Summer)

Arosely (4A Summer)

It can be eaten?
09:17

Don't forget the word order in (most) questions: Aux-Subj-Verb e.g.
Can it be eaten?
Does it smell?
Is it a phone?
09:22

Oscar (4A Summer)

Is a phone?

Is it* a phone?? 😊😊😊😊
11:20

David (4A Summer)
Results

Total of 782 messages
673 (86%) from learners
Average:
29 messages per learner
21 messages a day
Results

Group dynamics:
Students joining the group late generally did not participate.
Results

Successful tasks

- Drills
  - ‘safe’ parameters, but ss often want to go beyond the demands of the task
- Exchange of personal information
  - Task 1 (introduction) 100% participation
- Involve images
  - average of 57 messages (3 x student)
Results

Attrition effect:
If a task has multiple stages, participation will drop successively.
Results

Agency

Students ‘took over’ the WhatsApp group and made it their own.
Off-task contributions:
1. Admin.
2. Social
Results

They became themselves in the group:

- Real-life behaviour
- Personalities
- Teasing/Joking

Öh!! -10 points!! Jessica is from Scotland and you are a weepy (llorón) man.

แซ้ (Extra points to Marie Curie!)

If you haven't already guessed the mystery objects, the owners now reveal what they are. Mine was (the back of) a photo frame with a picture of my dad. What about yours?

Oscar (4A Summer)

About food

Obviously

David (4A Summer)
Results

Their interaction continued (in English) after the course had finished.
Results

Students used the Target Language
(Only 8.7% of contributions in L1)
Conclusions

Similarity to successful speaking activities

— Clear instructions
— Model
— Exploit learners’ curiosity about each other
— Encourage off-task interaction
  • Take off your teacher hat
— Don’t interfere (except at ‘point of need’)
THANK YOU!
References


Benson, P. (2018) IATEFL ReSIG PCE Autonomy beyond the classroom.


