



IRAQI  
Academic Scientific Journals



العراقية  
المجلات الأكاديمية العلمية

ISSN: 2663-9033 (Online) | ISSN: 2616-6224 (Print)

## Journal of Language Studies

Contents available at: <http://jls.tu.edu.iq>



### WhatsApp Messenger as a Collaborative Learning Tool during COVID-19 in Iraq

Inst. Afraa Husam Sami\*

College of Education for Women- Tikrit University

E.mail: [afraa.husam27@tu.edu.iq](mailto:afraa.husam27@tu.edu.iq)

<b>Keywords:</b>  - Coronavirus ( Covid-19)  - WhatsApp Messenger  - Collaborative learning tool	<b>Abstract</b>  In Iraq like in the rest of the world, Coronavirus has produced a downward slope within the economy of the world and produced an enormous effect on the upper education system. The unexpected closing of universities as a social distancing procedure has transferred traditional learning to e-learning. This has thrown the concentration on utilizing online learning tools which may have boundaries of attainability and affordability for many learners. Thus makes teaching faculty should be creative enough to find an appropriate tool to rescue the situation. One of these tools is WhatsApp due to its advantages, especially the advantage of the collaborative feature (which is achieved within a group). This study aims at 1) reviewing the literature and research that talks about the advantages of WhatsApp as a learning tool, especially the advantage of creating a group and its collaborative feature. 2) Focusing on the importance of the WhatsApp group chat as a collaborative learning tool among Iraqi universities students during the pandemic. The study found that Iraqi university students, during the pandemic, preferred WhatsApp group chat because of its advantages, especially collaborative feature. The WhatsApp group helped them in overcoming difficulties of e-
<b>Article Info</b>	
<b>Article history:</b>	
Received:22-12-2020	
Accepted: 17-1-2021	

\* Corresponding Author: Inst. Afraa Husam Sami , E-Mail: [afraa.husam27@tu.edu.iq](mailto:afraa.husam27@tu.edu.iq)  
Tel: +9647709580853 , Affiliation: Tikrit University –Iraq

Available online	learning, knowledge gaps and physical distancing. These groups permitted the creation of a supportive atmosphere, the creation of a learning community, and the sharing of knowledge and inspiring dialogue. Dialogues between teacher and students or among students themselves created a secure environment of learning, cooperation and unity. They also provided them with motivation and greater enthusiasm to learn online.
------------------	---

### تطبيق الواتساب كأداة تعليم تعاونية خلال جائحة كورونا في العراق

م. عفران حسام سامي

كلية التربية للبنات, قسم اللغة الإنكليزية, جامعة تكريت

<p><b>الخلاصة:</b> في العراق كما هو الحال في بقية العالم ، أحدث فيروس كورونا تأثير عظيم في اقتصاد الكون وتأثيراً هائلاً على نظام التعليم العالي. وقد أدى الإغلاق غير المتوقع للجامعات كإجراء للتباعد الاجتماعي إلى تحويل التعلم التقليدي إلى التعلم الإلكتروني. مما دفع إلى التركيز على استخدام أدوات التعلم عبر الإنترنت والتي كانت بعضها محدودة الاستخدام نتيجة لضعف الإمكانيات باستخدام تلك الأدوات لدى بعض المتعلمين وكذلك التكلفة العالية لها. وبالتالي وجب على الهيئات التدريسية ان تكون مبدعة بما يكفي لإيجاد أداة مناسبة لإنقاذ الموقف. إحدى هذه الأدوات هي واتساب نظراً لمزاياه وخاصة صفة الميزة التعاونية (التي تتحقق داخل مجموعة). تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى (1) عرض الأدبيات والدراسات والأبحاث التي تتحدث عن مزايا واتساب كأداة تعليمية ، وخاصة ميزة إنشاء مجموعة وميزة التعاون الخاصة بها. (2) التركيز على أهمية مجموعة الواتساب كأداة تعليمية تعاونية بين طلاب الجامعات العراقية أثناء الوباء. ووجدت الدراسة أن طلاب الجامعات العراقية ، خلال فترة الوباء ، فضلوا الدردشة الجماعية عبر تطبيق واتس آب لما تتمتع به من مزايا ، وخاصة خاصية التعاون. لقد ساعدتهم مجموعة واتساب في التغلب على صعوبات التعلم الإلكتروني والفجوات المعرفية والتباعد الجسدي. وسمحت هذه المجموعات بخلق جو داعم ، وخلق مجتمع تعليمي ، وتبادل المعرفة والحوار الملهم. تلك الحوارات خلقت بين المعلم والطلاب أو بين الطلاب</p>	<p><b>الكلمات الدالة:-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- تطبيق واتساب</li><li>- تعليم تعاونين</li><li>- كورونا فايروس</li></ul> <p><b>معلومات البحث</b> <b>تاريخ البحث:</b> الاستلام:2020-12-22</p> <p><b>القبول:2021-1-17</b></p> <p><b>التوفر على النت</b></p>
--	--

أنفسهم بيئة آمنة للتعلم والتعاون والوحدة. كما أنها وفرت لهم الحافز والحماس الأكبر للتعلم عبر الإنترنت.	
---	--

## **Introduction**

In December 2019, a new transmissible aerobic disease coming in Wuhan, Hubei, China and was termed by the World Health Organization (WHO) as COVID-19 (Coronavirus disease 2019). Coronavirus continuing its unfold across the globe, over forty million confirmed cases in 189 countries and over one million death. WHO has declared this disease as pandemic and regarded it as the most significant global health disaster that the humankind met since the Second World War ( Alabri, 2020).

The outburst of the COVID-19 pandemic has prompted most countries to take exceptional strategies to save lives including community isolation that “could help to flatten the infection curve and reduce total fatalities from the disease”, and the complete or limited closing of educational organizations and workplace, quarantine for whole areas or countries, in addition to inside or outside border closures and other urgent procedures ( Rashid and Yadav, 2020: 1) .

The joint effect of the spreading of the disease and the previous strategies has influenced every field of life, and may evermore convert how we have permanently lived and managed our business, and nobody can withstand the wind of convert that is blowing ( Aborode et al., 2020: 2). Saeed (2020: 1) mentioned that economy, society, business and education across the world have conspicuously been affected by COVID-19 pandemic.

According to Abshir (2020: 21), Education in general and Higher Education particularly across the world has been hit extremely by this disease, with 1:53 billion learners out of universities and schools and 184 countrywide school closures, impacting 87.6% of the world’s total enrolled learners; In addition to the shift from the traditional method of education ( face to face learning) to the modernized approach (e-learning) as an urgent solution which has introduced by many countries to continue their instruction smoothly and successfully amid COVID-19 pandemic (Alabri, 2020: 6). TV broadcasts, video lectures, online libraries, online channels and e-learning platforms like (Google Classroom, Google Meet, WhatsApp Messenger, Viber) etc. are the modernized ways in education were introduced in at least 96 countries ( Basilaia & Kvavadze, 2020).

The process of replacing campus study by online teaching-learning has differed from one country to another according to the social, economic, educational structures of these countries (Saeed, 2020: 1). She added that the situation is very different in developed countries ( USA, UK and most European countries) than in developing countries in the

type and level of challenges encountered in the transition process. Main challenges included financial preparation, infrastructure, staff skills, digital literacy and social trust.

Sherwani (2020) clarified the previous lines by saying that the process of transition to e-learning was slightly smoother and less demanding in UK and USA as developed countries than in developing countries such as Arab countries. Supplying the infrastructure and funding needed for e-learning was extremely difficult for most universities in developing countries. Also arranging online course in a short time was more challenging and stressful in developing countries than developed countries. Saeed (2020) said that “ moreover, even though online courses were prepared and provided, the whole process was delivered on a tested basis and many students could not access the material provided due to the lack of equipment or internet access”. In addition to the poor e-learning skills.

In Iraq like in the rest of world, the impact of COVID-19 on Higher education has been exciting and transformative and a current movement in education systems around the world has been to reply to the disease by “emergency e-learning protocols”, making the fast alteration from conventional classes to electronic learning ( Rashid and Yadav, 2020: 2).

This type of shifting in this region, just like in some Arab countries and other developing countries, is a complex issue (Abshire, 2020: 23). It is connected with many obstacles and challenges such as:

- limited availability of internet connection.
- Internet costs and data bundles.
- Limited availability of equipment such as smartphones, tablets and laptop to use them at home (Saeed: 2020: 3)
- “Limited digital and pedagogical skills of instructors for online teaching, students assessment, etc.”
- “ Limited digital skills of students to access and learn online”. mentioned ( N & Bassett, 2020 :1).
- Also he said, that finite obtainability of online classroom material/ constrained probability of moving electronic classroom (on account of the course nature, like lab work in Biology) is another challenge.

According to Miliszewska (2007) that the most problematic challenge which “ the scholars confront with remote learning as face to face communication may be a bunch of contributing to the educational process, presenting a much better chance to sharing information and inquiring for “easier” and further communicating”. The companionship and feeling of pertinence are fixed in online learning. The learners who

have minimal ability to self-organize or learning autonomously challenge with no tutor and no colleagues introducing in-person support.

Abshir (2020) summarized these lines by saying that, worries have been articulated by learners and parents of undergraduates about the isolating of online, or that “students will be left to fend for themselves”. This challenge of lack of interaction between tutors and students can lead to decrease students’ motivation to learn by electronic education.

Despite all of these challenges, Iraqi universities have made a tremendous effort to overcome the negative effect of COVID-19 on Higher education. They have broadly succeeded in implementing electronic education with different digital platforms such as Google Classroom, Edmodo, Viber and WhatsApp.

## **Literature Review**

### **WhatsApp as a Learning Tool**

Recently, in line with the rapid development of technology, the implementation of modern means, high tech is quickly turn on orientation within the educational milieu. Awarded the growing publicity of social media, it has become pertinent to understand and adopt social media networks in developing education (Udenze, 2020: 24).

One of the advantages of social media among the tutor and learners is WhatsApp. Since 2009 WhatsApp has appeared on the market as a free communication platform. It works on nearly all present kinds of devices and operating systems such as iPhone and Android. This application allows users to receive and send images, audio and text message, video and location information” in real-time to individuals and groups and friends at no cost” (Church& Oliveria, 2013: 352). It permits communication with anybody who possesses a smartphone, has installed the application, has a strong internet connection (Dounnik& Dshen, 2014: 20).

Sari ( 2018: 1) defined it as a simple mean which can be used for learning with self-assisted. It can be used freely for calling, texting, sharing content such as video, images, contact, and location. The users can create a group which is specific to share knowledge, information and communicate outside the classroom. This application is widely used between teachers and students and among students themselves (Gon& Rawekar: 2017: 17).

Many studies about features of e-learning tools, such as ( Calvo, Arbiol & Iglesias, 2014; Smit: 2012; Gon& Rawekar: 2017 and Udenze: 2020) found that WhatsApp as all learning tools has advantages and disadvantages. WhatsApp disadvantages out pars its advantages as compared with other e-learning tools.

Academically speaking, WhatsApp has a set of benefits reachability of education contents, the possibility of education every place and any time in a safe milieu----- exist aboard obstacles like the improper practice of language besides dependence on the teachers’ facilitate making an attempt laborious operating severely. The talent to

approach content, information, help and private assistance regularly, regardless of the physical existence of learners within the course, probably reinforce the erudition process. Like these choices seem to be of special worth for learners who of the in the nourishing milieu and want inducement and someone to whom learners may straight their inquiries ( Bouhnik & Deshen, 2014: 299-230).

Checking the educational aspect of WhatsApp ( by the previous studies which are mentioned before) has been explained a variety of advantages. The open vogue discussion permits the tutors to induce to find their students in-depth and to make a positive atmosphere, additionally to a way of pleasure. Nonetheless, obstacles like the need to teacher's steady presence, students' unpleasant behaviour plus language and then viewing the learners' world, may reason adults to sense inconvenient. It is additionally vital taking into consideration that using like this group needs the tutors exploit time over their fixed work times, also he will be occupied with messages. These drawbacks would like attention and special means that to assist lecturers cope, to feel a lot of relaxing, and to be skilful and fewer burdened. Some resolutions are discovered, several instructors felt that their occurrence within the group has a great effect on the learners. if the tutor was controlling or quiet audiences, the learners were aware of their occurrence then performed accordingly in respect to the method of lettering, the style they treated one another and therefore the style they articulated themselves with the material.

Church & De Olivera (2013: 110) said that the technical advantages of WhatsApp are gap the manner for the introduction of WhatsApp into the classrooms. It looks that WhatsApp consists of many pros more than other technological platforms used by the learning system, like simplicity, accessibility, inexpensive payment, efficiently and everyday language. Till recently there was no technological mean which used naturally by students and adults alike.

Jointly tutors and learners employ it in their usual life, so this tool facilitates their communication. For a long time, there were a lot of attempts to teach the lecturers many types of instructive technologies which directors idea could participate in learning institutions WhatsApp might be the first tool that entered the classroom with no training and manager supervision, as tutors and learners are using through their real life, and these benefits permitted WhatsApp to be, naturally a tool for learning and developing.

Bere (2013: 4) says that one of the whatsapp effective features is the choice to create students' group chat. These groups are used for students' group and groups of teachers and their students. As said by Bouhnik and Deshen (2014: 3) that four objectives are achieved by tutors who initiated WhatsApp groups with their students: generating a discussion, employing a learning stage, communicating with students, preparing an interesting atmosphere, and a feeling of belonging in the lecture. Church & De Olivera ( 2013: 2) claimed that WhatsApp group chat enables the students & teacher to co-operate and work as a team. a secure milieu of cooperation is created among students whether unrestrained or directed by the instructor.

### **WhatsApp as a Collaborative Learning Tool in Iraq during COVID-19**

Due to the collaboration learning advantages in WhatsApp group, it is necessary to talk about this feature and about its effect on education in Iraq, especially Higher education during the pandemic.

Dillenbourg(1999: 223) defined collaborative learning as “ when two or more people come to learn something together”. It attaches students in energetic group participation within the process of education (Monteiro and Morrison, n. d ). Collaborative learning can be achieved through various instruments, such as blogs, debate boarded and immediate messenger (Kim, Lee and Kim, 2014). Collaborative learning is simplified in the socials media's inherent displays evident, and it is delivered by academic literature (Lunco et al,2011; Brown, 2012; Novak et al, 2012). Consistent with Johansson (2016: 4) “when students learn together with others, for instance in discussion settings that provide group solving tasks or content, they are part of a collaborative learning environment”. This type of learning can stimulate participation, in addition to growing their attention (Njoku and Prince, 2015; Yin, 2016; Monteriro and Morrison, n. d ). “opine that collaborative learning requires team-related skills and task-related skills to allow members to work together efficaciously and smoothly” added Kim, Lee and Kim (2014). Soomro, Kale and Zai(2014: 105) denoted in their articles, that the social media or the other ICT device to realize its overall potential in cooperative learning is manner entrusted on each student stays dynamic and desires to participate to the educational method. Yin (2016: 18) said that students employ WhatsApp “ to create class publication by publishing their work in the group”. WhatsApp tool supports electronic collaboration besides interaction and increases students' success (Barhoumi, 2015: 3).

In Iraq, a state of overstrain and stress among the teaching faculty and students has happened as a result of the sudden transfer to adapt and implement e-learning. Students need to re-imagine the development of e-content, curriculum planning, assessment and reporting which may have been made without suitable planning and deliberation. Students should be provided with skilled self-efficiency, and confidential at their decisions, and confirm obvious and sympathetic communication among students and between teacher and students; In order to gain more focused education results and improve attractive e-learning devices ( Rashid& Yadav,2020: 2). To achieve that the Ministry of Higher Education decided to use various electronic platforms and tools, such as Google Classroom platform, Viber, Whatsapp etc. (Abdulkareem et al, 2020). After some time, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Iraq issued a decision to begin online learning using Google Classroom and Moodle. Despite that decision and based on the answering from some interviews ( with students in some Iraqi universities), it has been found that Whatsapp group chat is the most used and preferable platform. They prefer it over other platforms, because of its advantages, especially the large extent of collaboration feature in WhatsApp groups. According to them, it is the best way to interact with their tutors and the remainder of the class, that it is creative of prolific talks about related issues in an unceremonious milieu wherever

students could learn warmly and genuinely. Such collaboration was felt to cross over holes in understanding and physical remoteness. In general, WhatsApp has become the platform for learning which supports accessibility, encourages assistance, besides strengthens enthusiasm to take a dynamic part in educational tasks.

### **Conclusion**

Choosing the appropriate teaching-learning platform, during the pandemic, have led to optimistic attitudes of learners and motivate them to learn through the virtual class.

WhatsApp group chat is the preferred learning tool among most of the Iraqi students because of its advantages especially its collaborative feature. It donated significantly in helping the students to inspire meaningful learning among the students, communicate and interact actively.

### **References**

- \Arnhold, N., and R. Bassett. (2020). "The COVID-19 Crisis Response: Supporting Tertiary Education for continuity, adaptation, and Innovation". World Bank Washington, DC, April 9.
- Arwa Hilal Alabri (2020). " COVID-19 and Education. [http:// research.gate.net/publication/344672059](http://research.gate.net/publication/344672059)- COVID-19 and education.
- Barhoumi, C. (2015). "The Effectiveness of WhatsApp Mobile Learning Activities Guided by Activity Theory on Students Knowledge Management". *Contemporary Educational Technology*, 7(1), 29-35.
- Bashir Ahmed Bashir (2020). "The Effect of Coronavirus (COVID-19) on Face to Face Learning of Undergraduate Students in Mogadishu, Somalia."<https://www.researchgate/publication/344036265>.
- Basilia, G., & Kvavadze, D. (2020). "Transition to Online Education in schools during a SARS. COV- Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic in Georgia," *Pedagogical Research*, 5(4), emoo60. [https:// doi.org/ 10.29333/pr/7937](https://doi.org/10.29333/pr/7937).
- Bere, A. (2013). "Using mobile instant messaging to leverage learner participation and transfer pedagogy at a South African University of Technology." *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 44 (4), 544.651.
- Bouhnik, D. and Dshen, M. (2014). "WhatsApp Goes to school: Mobil Instant Messaging between Teachers and Students ". *Journal of Information Technology Education: Research* .13.217-231.[https://www.jite.org/documents/Vol13/JITEv13\\_Research\\_P217-231Bouhnik0601.pdf](https://www.jite.org/documents/Vol13/JITEv13_Research_P217-231Bouhnik0601.pdf).
- Brown, S. (2012). "Seeing Web2.0 in context: A Study of Academic perceptions". *The Internet and Higher Education*.15 910. 50-57.
- Calvo, R. Arbiol, A. & Iglesias, A. (2014). "Are all chats suitable for Learning Purposes? A study of the required characteristics." *Orocedia Computer Science*, 27, 251-260.



- Cuban, L.& Cuban, L. (2009). *Oversold and Under Used: Computers in the Classroom*. Harvard University Press.
- Dillenbourg, P. (1999). "Introduction: What Do You Mean by Collaborative Learning?". Dillenbourg (ed.) *Collaborative Learning: Cognitive and Computational Approaches*. (1-19). Oxford, UK: Elsevier Science.
- Fatimah Mulya Sari (2018). Undergraduates Students Attitudes to the Implementation of WhatsApp Group as their Learning Media in the EFL Classroom. <http://www.researchgate.net/Publication/335320213>.
- Gon, S. & Rawekar, A. (2017). Effectivity of E-Learning through WhatsApp as a teaching Learning Tool. *MVP Journal of Medical Sciences*, 4(1), 19-25. DOI: <http://DOI-org/10.5539/hesv7n4p74>.
- Junco, R., Heiberger, G., Loken, E. (2011). "The Effect of Twitter on College Student Engagement and Grades". *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*. 27 (2).119-132.
- Karen Church & Rodrigo de Oliveira (2013). What's Up with WhatsApp? Comparing Mobile Instant Messaging Behaviors with Traditional SMS. <http://www.researchgate.net/10.1145/2493190.24.93225>
- Kawa Sherwani (2020). Higher Education in the Kurdistan Region after COVID-19. <http://en.AboutofMe/82f2c882.75b6-4efe-95336eaGC6e2fb5e>.
- Kim, H., Lee, M., Kim, M. (2014). "Effects of Mobile Instant Messaging on Collaborative Learning Processes and Outcomes: The Case of South Korea". *Educational Technology & Society*. 17 (2). 31-42.
- Medium.com/ @UNPP Arabic/ e-learning – in- Iraq embracing-modern- technologies-to-overcome-COVID-19-21a99df71993Miliszewska, I.(2007). Is it fully 'on' or partly 'off'? The case of fully-online provision of transnational education.