



The Innovative use of WhatsApp to Teach Academic Communication Skills during the Covid-19 era: Lecturers and Students Experiences

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Abstract: *This study aims to explore lecturers' and students' experiences on the innovative use of WhatsApp in the teaching and learning of Academic Communication Skills course during the lockdown period. Covid-19 has brought new challenges to world's economies, social livelihoods and education. Following recommendations from Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Innovation, Science and Technology Development (MHTEISTD) in Zimbabwe, lecturers and students at Women's University in Africa (WUA) Zimbabwe had to adopt a suitable online platform in place of face-to-face lectures, thus creating Montessori lecture rooms at convenient locations for the participants. This study adopts a qualitative approach which is interpretive in nature. The study is hinged on Vygotsky's (1978) Social Cultural Theory and McCroskey's (2006) Instructional Communication Model. Five students and three lecturers were purposively sampled to understand their experiences in the innovative use of WhatsApp. Data from interviews and documents were analysed using the inductive thematic analysis to reveal the phenomenon under study. Major findings of this study revealed that lecturers and the majority of the students were fully supportive of the initiative to receive and conduct lectures online. WhatsApp data was much cheaper. The study recommends that students and lecturers may learn new skills on WhatsApp. Ensuing studies may compare blending WhatsApp lecture format with conventional lectures.*

Keywords: *Academic Communication Skills, Covid-19, crisis, lockdown, social media, WhatsApp*

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1. Introduction

The use of social media has become a trend in the teaching of English in many higher institutions of learning (Wijaya, 2018) and Academic Communication Skills as a subject is not an exception. The crisis brought by Covid-19 has necessitated all institutions to seriously consider and innovate the use of social media in teaching students under these extraordinary trying circumstances. At Women's University in Africa, WhatsApp is one of the platforms that is now being used to teach Academic Communication Skills. WhatsApp was originated in 2009 by two former workers at Yahoo (Minhas, Ahmed, & Ullah, 2016). The declared reason for starting that platform was to replace the available SMS platform with a system that is affordable in an ad-free environment.

The staff compliment has grown from two to fifty-five people (Linda & Ri'aeni, 2018). Global Web Index (2020) delineates WhatsApp as a popular network platform that has the most monthly active users throughout 2019. To date, WhatsApp is one of the most popular social media platforms used by the majority of people (Kustijono & Zuhri, 2018), including students at Women's University in Africa. Globally, it is ranked the third popular network after Facebook and YouTube. WhatsApp also caters for direct person-to-person interaction as well as in groups of up to a maximum of two hundred and fifty-six participants in each group. WhatsApp as an online or e-learning platform allows students to do instant messaging, make videos, make voice calls, send voice messages and many other activities with Wi-Fi connection (Cohavi, 2013;

Barhoumi, 2015; Dhawan, 2020). Wijaya (2018) describes WhatsApp as a type of learning that is mobile. It approximates a chat program that is available in almost all smart phones (Linda & Ri'aeni, 2018). This kind of learning is flexible in that students may utilize electronic gadgets like personal digital assistants (PDAs), Internet Protocol Adapter (IPAD) and smart phones with internet connectivity (Fattah, 2015; Tarisayi, & Manhibi, 2017; Wijaya, 2018). This kind of learning ‘...denotes not just physical mobility but the opportunity to overcome physical constraints by having access to people and digital learning resources regardless of time and place’ (Kukulska-Hulme, 2010:181). For that reason the lecturer and the student experience a contemporary way of learning which is done outside the lecture room. The WhatsApp platform has been known and is popular for helping people to get in touch with other people who make their own network (Ferreira-Meyers & Martins, 2020). It also serves to facilitate online communication, interrelation and cooperation despite its cost and disciplinary challenges that come with its use. While it is not extensively and formally used as a teaching platform, the Women’s University in Africa have taken advantage of its popularity as a social media platform and have innovated to use it for teaching and learning Academic Communication Skills. The WhatsApp platform is used for making PowerPoint presentations, sending text messages, sending audio and video notes. The platform assists students and lecturers to get instant feedback and it also caters for students with different abilities (Dzvapatsva, Mitrovic, & Dietrich, 2014). The innovative use of this WhatsApp platform has assisted the University to mitigate the loss of an academic year due to lockdown restrictions inter-alia limiting movement and gathering of groups of people. In addition, WhatsApp has allowed a smaller number of students to interface as focused groups whilst hundreds of students from different faculties doing the Academic Communication Skills course were able to participate in a mass lecture over the WhatsApp platform.

Academic Communication Skills is an important subject that every student at University level in Zimbabwe should undertake in their first year of studies. This subject assists students to manoeuvre in all their courses as they proceed with their studies. It equips them with the skill to transmit their thoughts to the reader in an assignment and to communicate effectively during presentations. This means students have to be competent in writing to show that they are proficient (Kitchakarn, 2013). This course also trains students for their future workplaces and generally for life too. For students to be successful they need to master technical skills and positive attitudes (Asemanyi, 2015). It requires learning and understanding of social factors and necessitates student’s success in the contemporary workplace environment (Ihmeideh, Al-Omari & Al-Dababneh, 2010). Some of the topics covered in communication skills are academic writing, oral communication, reading skills, listening and nonverbal communication. During these unique times of the Covid-19 era, different methods and approaches have been tried in order to develop students’ writing, speaking, reading and

listening skills, one of them being teaching via WhatsApp (Kitchakarn, 2016). This study aims at exploring the lecturers’ and students’ experiences on the innovative use of WhatsApp in the teaching and learning of Academic Communication Skills course.

2. Literature review

The Covid-19 era has seen institutions of higher learning departing from the traditional methods of teaching and learning to online WhatsApp learning. WhatsApp is a form of e-learning that uses electronic technologies to regulate learning outside the traditional classroom (Wijaya, 2018). It is housed in one specific application that is suitable with the device’s operating system. In this type of learning students are separated by distance. WhatsApp learning can be done in multiple contexts to foster social interactions (Vygotsky, 1978). This means WhatsApp platform will allow students to learn at anyplace and at any time (Crescente & Lee, 2011). It has an opportunity to improve students’ interaction especially those who do not participate during face to face lectures because of its ability to cater for students with different attributes. The lecturers use WhatsApp instant messaging that requires connectivity and data (WhatsApp, 2010). This platform allows lecturers to create a class by adding participants in a group. The formed class or group can have learners and their lecturer to interact through text messages, pictures, video and audios (Cohavi, 2013). Wijaya (2018) claims that lessons on WhatsApp may motivate students during the social interactions. Bouhnik and Deshen (2014) gives the motive of WhatsApp in academia as, communicating with students, creating a social setting, interacting, and creating a group of students who are learning common course.

WhatsApp as an online platform that has been adopted at Women’s University comes with its merits and demerits. The major setback that it has, is that students may not concentrate during the learning process and communicate with friends on other social networks (Kustijono & Zuhri, 2018). However this major setback is outweighed by its merits. Some of its merits are that it is an easier way to communicate between lecturer and students in an intimate, fruitful, natural and enjoyable way (Rambe & Bere, 2013). The use of WhatsApp has also an advantage of using visuals like pictures and videos which assists students to understand and conceptualise an idea in a vivid manner. This means students will use most of their senses and it develops their critical thinking skills. According to Maphosa, Dube and Jita, (2020) WhatsApp is suitable for 21st century learning because it is collaborative and student centred. This platform dispenses ideal surroundings for discussing different topics. The lecturer can suggest concepts and include students in the discussion who can come up with information on any subject. This platform is ideal for giving instant feedback to the students on the topics that they would have covered. This can be done by sending voice messages or even marked work before the next lesson (Ferreira-Meyers, & Martins, 2020). It is also much easier for the lecturer to check on the learners’ participation on this platform and motivate

those lagging behind. Even those with problems of paying attention are advantaged in that they can rewind and forward voice or video messages as much as they need to get a better understanding of what has been sent on the group. Another advantage of the WhatsApp learning is that it is affordable to students because they use the same bundles they have for their social communication for learning (Tarisayi & Munyaradzi, 2021). Students do not have a separate budget for bundles to access WhatsApp for learning. .

Studies on WhatsApp learning have been done before in Zimbabwe and elsewhere. In Indonesia, Wijaya (2018) established that reading and writing skills improved through WhatsApp online learning. In Pakistan, Cetinkaya (2017) studied the impact of WhatsApp use on success in the education process and found that students developed positive opinions about the use of WhatsApp in their courses. Another study in Pakistan by Minhas, Ahmed, and Ullah, (2016) established that WhatsApp is an important device used mainly for one to one or group communication. In the aforementioned study students opined that WhatsApp assists them to interact among themselves in the process of sharing information and communicating. In Zimbabwe Tarisai and Munyaradzi, (2021) carried out a study on a simple solution adopted during the Covid-19 pandemic and found that WhatsApp promoted interaction between lecturers and students during the lockdown period. Although there are many studies on the digital platforms that can be used to teach at university level this study is unique in that it aims to deal with the experiences of the lecturers and students on the innovative use of WhatsApp to teach Academic Communication skills to undergraduates. There is a dearth of research showing teachers experiences on the creative use of WhatsApp online learning platform for Academic Communication Skills.

Theoretical framework

This study is hinged on the Socio-cultural theory (SCT) by Vygotsky (1978), Instructional Communication Theory (ICT) by McCroskey et al. (2004). Vygotsky's SCT (1978) and McCroskey ICT (2004) are theories that may assist in comprehending how WhatsApp may be adopted and used in multifaceted social settings with regards to interaction, scaffolding, and collaborative learning in the construction of new knowledge. Vygotsky's Socio-cultural theory (1978) and McCroskey Instructional Communication theory (2004) have been used on many studies. One of these studies is "Misunderstanding during instructional communication as related to oral proficiency." These theories were suitable in the aforementioned study because they referred to teachers' communicative skills, which may include competence in their spoken language, as they interact with their students, verbally and non-verbally in the classroom (de Jager & Evans, 2013). Another study that uses instructional communication is on "Shaping instructional communication competence of preservice teachers" The Instructional Communication theory indicates the

communication event in the setting of instruction (Tandyonomanu, & Setianingrum, 2018). The aforementioned theories remain relevant to the study because they assists in providing a clear picture of the participant's experiences when they explain how they interact on the WhatsApp social media during the learning and teaching of Academic Communication skills. The Covid-19 regulations passed by the Zimbabwean government barred physical face-to-face interactions in all institutions of higher learning without losing the academic year. Whilst universities needed to operate and continue with lectures during the Covid-19 era the use of WhatsApp was adopted during this era. To unpack the creative use of WhatsApp by both lecturers and students in the learning of Academic Communication Skills during the Covid-19 era. The researcher used Vygotsky's SCT (1978) and McCroskey's ICT (2004). The aforementioned theories may be used to understand communication through multifaceted collective environments which help students to interact. The multifaceted environments may develop skills in students such as innovation, interacting, entertainment, content selection, electronic writing, editing, evaluation, critical thinking and problem solving (Hicks & Turner, 2013). In this study students will collaborate on WhatsApp thereby developing writing and communication skills. Students share their experiences as they communicate, interact and scaffold each other through the WhatsApp platform. They also write electronically as they share their experiences in the academic communication skills lesson. They will also be constructing new knowledge (Savage & MCGOWN, 2015). Engestrom (2001), Devane and Squire (2012) revealed that Vygotsky's SCT (1978) views students' learning activities as socially, culturally and historically positioned. Grounding from the SCT and ICT WhatsApp was viewed as providing mechanisms for students to engage in the learning process actively. Fundamentally, the researcher used SCT and ICT to understand how WhatsApp was used by undergraduate students and their lecturers to access knowledge, engage in the learning process and construct new knowledge.

3. Methodology

The study is hinged on the interpretivist paradigm which is qualitative in nature. Creswell (2013) defines interpretivism as a paradigm that assigns meaning to the participants action and how social constructions yield knowledge about their practices. The study involves both lecturers and students in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret the creative use of the WhatsApp platform in the learning of academic communication skills in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Interpretivists are of the opinion that reality is not objective but it is a constructed phenomenon Nieuwenhuis (2010). Socio-cultural theory is a constructivist theory which is interpretive. The qualitative approach assisted the researcher to explore the creative use of WhatsApp to teach Academic Communication Skills. An exploratory case study was

used in this study because the use of WhatsApp has become an option that is likely to be used as a learning platform during this Covid-19 era since it was only known to be used for social communication. The researcher used exploratory case study because of its ability to address exploratory or descriptive questions (Yin, 2015).

3.1 Selection of participants

The study was carried out during the Covid-19 era when universities were restricted from having face-to-face lectures. A purposive study of three lecturers and five students who teach and learn Academic Communication Skills respectively was used. The criteria used to come up with a sample was full time lecturers at Women's University in Africa who lecture undergraduates and the five students who are undergraduates and currently doing Academic Communication Skills as a course. The criteria used to choose the lecturers and students was influenced by the need to understand the creativity employed by both the lecturers and students to use the WhatsApp platform during the Covid-19 era as an alternative to the traditional face-to-face lectures. In addition the selection of the small sample was suitable because the participants had rich data and were typical holders of required data that answered research questions (Nieuwehuis 2007; Holliday, 2010). Findings are not going to be generalised to other Universities unless they reflect a similar setting. All the selected participants had used the WhatsApp platform before for social purposes. The researcher used a small sample and pseudonyms were used as a measure of not disclosing participants' names for ethical reasons and confidentiality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Kaiser, 2009; Maree, 2007). Permission to carry out the study was sought from the participants.

3.2 Data collection and analysis

Data was collected using open ended interviews and document analysis. These were necessary and aided the researcher in understanding how the lecturers and students creatively used WhatsApp in the teaching and learning of academic communication skills (Flick, 2014). Selected participants were interviewed and recorded and documents analysed through electronic texts and PowerPoint group presentations. Collected rich data was inductively used to develop understandings and generalisations from it. In this way the creative use of WhatsApp to teach Academic Communication Skills was brought out clearly.

4. Results and Discussion

Through the interviews and document analysis, it was evident that the innovative use of WhatsApp platform to teach Academic Communication Skills was very positive and it came with a lot of advantages which may not be realised in a face-to-face lecture. The document analysis showed this positivity which was cross checked by the interviews. From the collected data, the

researcher developed the following themes: an affordable and flexible platform, immediate feedback, interactive and convenient.

4.1 Affordable and flexible platform

The researcher wanted to verify numerous arguments that are associated with WhatsApp learning from participants. From the findings this is what the participants said;

- Student 2: *I was so worried when I was told there are no face-to-face lessons. My worry was eased when I learnt that we were going to use the WhatsApp platform for learning. I knew I was going to carry on with my education since I was already on WhatsApp and I could afford the data.*
- Student 3: *The good thing about WhatsApp platform is that it caters for us students living in the rural areas. When there is no network or when I have no money for data the day I get online I will always get the lessons that I missed. This makes WhatsApp learning accessible and convenient. What I know is I definitely do get money for data because I can afford it.*
- Student 4: *We tried other platforms with our lecturer but they were very expensive and only a few students attended lectures. But with WhatsApp almost everyone is participating and our lessons are now very interesting. Besides, it is better to learn using it because I do not have expenses of bus fare to and from college as well as money for lunch. I have always had a budget for my WhatsApp bundle so it is a lot cheaper for me to use the WhatsApp online learning platform.*
- Lecturer 1: *When some students suggested we use a platform that has video chats only a few students logged in. Most of them could not afford to be online. I think with WhatsApp I have almost all students attending my lectures except for one or two without smartphones*
- Lecturer 2: *WhatsApp is very flexible, I can do my lecture anywhere, even in remote areas as long as I have a day's data. So, WhatsApp is cheap and affordable.*
- Lecturer 3: *I never imagined WhatsApp platform being used to deliver lectures. I applaud Women's University in Africa for this creativity. I know many students buy WhatsApp data for social purposes are now doubling up and using it for educational purposes.*

The issue of affordability was echoed by the participants. Students from both rural areas and cities afforded buying WhatsApp data for both educational purposes and socialising. As a result, WhatsApp was cost saving as compared to other online platforms that they tried with their lecturers. Findings show that the use of WhatsApp has also come with financial savings to the students. They indicated that their parents did not have to budget for their bus fares to travel to and from college.

Even though the WhatsApp platform is affordable it was evident that it was also very flexible and easily accessible to students who live in both towns and rural areas. Lectures still continued despite the fact that they were not being conducted at their usual place at the university premises where there is Wi-Fi. This finding corresponds with Dhawan (2020:6) who noted that WhatsApp as a "... mode of learning is easily accessible and can even reach rural and remote areas." Flexibility was provided through the liberty to be involved with content at any given time when they had network or data bundles. This made students not to miss lectures as they eventually engaged with the content before the next lecture. Because of its flexibility students who did not understand had an opportunity to rewind and fast forward the content they did not understand

4.2 Immediate feedback

The following excerpts show what students and lecturers said when they were asked about the benefits of WhatsApp platform

- Lecturer 2: *There is so much good about WhatsApp. When I give my students group work, they respond before the lesson ends. To me it feels like a face-to-face lecture. In addition, the feedback I give for a particular group or student is viewed by everyone helping the whole class that is in the group.*
- Lecturer 3: *I prefer WhatsApp because my students get instant feedback from me. When I ask questions or when they respond to the questions I ask.*
- Student 1: *I think WhatsApp is good because it does not take time for me to respond to the questions asked. I think it is a better platform compared to other online platforms.*
- Student 4: *As long as there is network WhatsApp is very fast, we get instant answers from our lecturers.*

The above findings suggest that WhatsApp gives instant feedback to both the lecturer and the student. This finding is supported by Barhoumi (2015) and Ferreira-Meyers and Martins (2020), who opine that WhatsApp has instant feedback which benefits all the students on the WhatsApp platform. Students also went on to state that the feedback that they get on the WhatsApp platform is helpful as it gives them group feedback which is better than individual feedback. Student 5 went on to say;

Looking at other students' mistakes and having them corrected opens our eyes and we learn even more. We appreciate the use of WhatsApp as a learning platform because it assists us to answer questions asked effectively. We never experienced group feedback after handing in an assignment. Rather than just looking at your own essay you can easily see your own mistakes from other students' work and correct it.

The findings suggest that WhatsApp gives immediate feedback which affords students to get adequate

experience that helps them to improve cognitive skills. According to Poyatos-Matas, and Allan (2005) feedback enables students to participate and lead an effective discussion with their lecturers and colleagues. Without feedback styles, the e-learning design will thus become just plans to broadcast specific contents (Afifi & Alamri, 2014).

4.3 An interactive platform

It emerged that participants viewed the WhatsApp platform as interactive. Both students and lecturers who participated in this study validated this view.

- Lecturer 1: *This platform is highly interventional. It has promoted students participation where by their thoughts are easily combined during the lecture.*
- Lecturer 2: *I have noted that WhatsApp has promoted student to student interaction and students feel free to interact among themselves and with me too.*
- Student 3: *The WhatsApp platform makes us interact a lot with our peers. We also become active and we are at liberty to ask our presenters questions and our lecturer usually comes in when we are not given a satisfying answer from our presenters. We are learning a lot of things in our course outline because of the interaction we have.*
- Student 4: *The WhatsApp platform has always been used for social purposes. I would say our college was innovative to use it as learning platform because interact a lot more than we did face to face and we also socialise in an academic way.*
- Student 5: *This is a very convenient platform. At first when I heard that we were going to use it I wondered how. But I am amazed at the innovative use of this platform which I have known to be a social platform. If our lecturers give us assignments, we find it easier to discuss with our colleagues via WhatsApp which is better than going to meet them face to face like we used to do before.*

Findings from both students and lecturers indicate that the creative use of WhatsApp to deliver lectures promoted interaction and activity among the undergraduate students. This platform assisted the students to freely interact with both their peers and their lecturers. This finding is supported by Nyamayedenga and de Jager (2021) who state that learners construct new knowledge through interaction. Moreover, interaction is important in the teaching of Academic Communication Skills because students share knowledge with their teachers, solve problems they have and thereby improving their communication skills and language proficiency (Hurst, Wallace, & Nixon, 2013).

Data from documents also indicated that there was good interaction between the lecturers and students. On the topic "Academic essay writing" most students participated as seen in Figure 1 below. Students asked

questions, and they responded to each other. They also used digital skills that they already had like composing messages, texting them as well as sending voice notes. Students also had an opportunity to interact even after the lecture. Students would come with different responses that made it easy for the other members of the groups to understand. During the interactions, students accompanied their texts with emojis which they said showed their cheerfulness during interaction. Student 1 and Student 3 had this to say about emojis

- Student 1: *When we are interacting through WhatsApp we learn and play at the same time. We play in the sense that we can use funny emojis to emphasise what we have communicated. So lessons and discussions are not as boring as face to face lectures because we will be learning on social media.*
- Student 2: *When we started learning our lecturer would discourage us to use emojis but*

now she seems to be relaxed about it because we use them at all times and I guess she has learnt they are not harmful but they make learning lighter. We are also free to ask any questions.

- Student 4: *When we use emojis we get some form of confidence and it encourages us to discuss more.*

The above finding is supported by Rwodzi and de Jager (2020), Sun, Lavoué, Aritajati, Tabard and Rosson (2019) who state that emojis are capable of raising student's emotional appeal and visually enrich text communications to create a common level of familiarity in them. Contrariwise, lecturers can use emojis to make online learning and teaching more chromatic, available and collaborating.

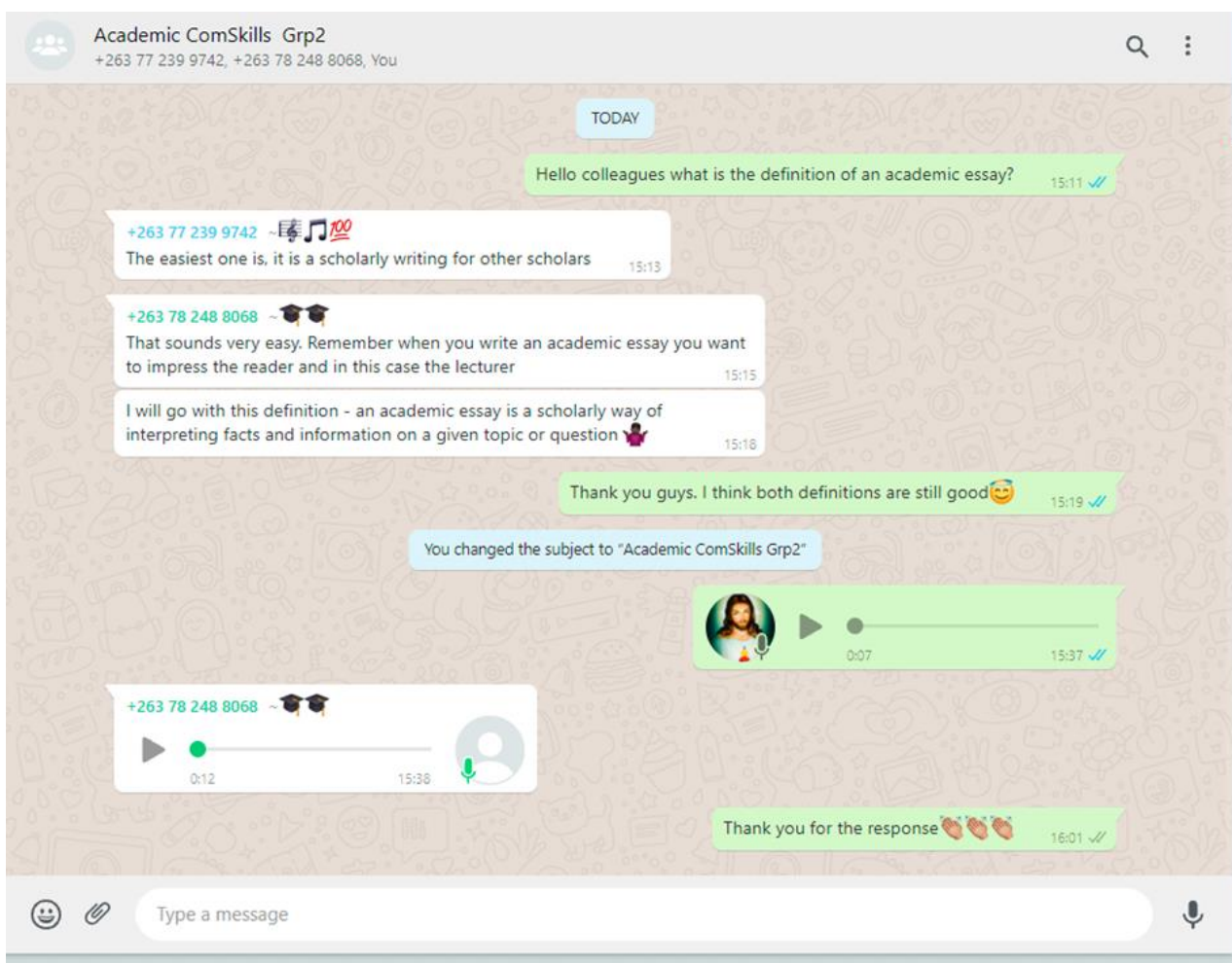


Figure 1: WhatsApp academic Grp 2

Participants also indicated that the interaction that they had on WhatsApp gave them confidence as they interacted with their peers and lecturers on line. These interactions assisted them to form relationships with their peers and lecturers on their online groups. This finding is similar to Gillett-Swan (2017) who states that relationships are central to effective group work. Working in their groups made students to collaborate when given learning tasks. As well, students also

brought up the issue of confidence which could have been by the fact that they were familiar with the WhatsApp platform and that they were not shy to ask for assistance whenever possible. WhatsApp not only supports collaboration, since each student is creating their own content for sharing in the group, but it also promotes, cooperation as knowledge is constructed by a group through discussions (Ferreira-Meyers, & Martins, 2020).

4.4 Convenient Platform

Both lecturers and students agreed that the University was innovative in using WhatsApp online platform because of its convenience. They said the following:

- Lecturer 1: *Students made oral presentations which were readily available.*
- Lecturer 2: *To prepare for the lecture I would prerecord my lessons in form of PDF or word documents or even in form of oral presentations and send five minutes before the lecture.*
- Student 3: *I revisited the lectures each time I wanted to clarify something.*
- Student 4: *WhatsApp was more convenient compared to the face to face lectures we had. Everyone participated and we received feedback from or peers and lecturers.*
- Student 5: *WhatsApp was convenient because we shared all the documents online. We now did not have to photocopy and print any materials. Revision became very easy for me for I carried my work on the smart phone.*

The participant's views restate the convenience brought about by WhatsApp. Moreover, some participants revealed that WhatsApp allowed them to revisit their work thus, revising what was learnt in the lesson. This finding is in line with Tarisayi and Munyaradzi (2021), who found that students are able to go back to earlier lectures and listen to the learning materials on WhatsApp online platform. As a result students who have problems with paying attention can always fast forward or rewind a video or audio recording if they did not understand any given information. WhatsApp is inclusive can cater for students of different needs.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

From the study, it was established that the WhatsApp platform is a familiar platform that most of the students have used before. Therefore it brought about encouraging experiences to the students and lecturers who used it. The most common features used by the students and lecturers were text, video, calling, voice messages and PowerPoint presentation. It was evident that the use of WhatsApp platform brings a sense of belonging to students where they learn and socialise. The practice resonates well with the Socio-Cultural Theory (SCT) and Instructional Communication Theory (ICT) where learners assist each other through interaction and socialisation during learning. This learning takes place through scaffolding, interacting and collaboration. What is novel about this study is that there was a lot of innovation on the use of WhatsApp because of the activities that can be done on the platform. These were the reuse of material through, reproducing and validating the material that has been posted before. As a result, it assisted students to use different genres of information in the process creating new knowledge. The

participants highlighted the suitability of the use of WhatsApp was one of the best to use during the Covid-19 era. They highlighted that it was cheaper compared to other platforms thereby not segregating students from disadvantaged backgrounds (Drane, Vernon and O'Shea, 2020; Therborn, 2020) who cannot afford adequate internet data. Furthermore, WhatsApp integration had a remarkable gain of using the smartphones that both lecturers and students were already using before the Covid-19 pandemic. It can further be argued that WhatsApp was innovatively used, by manipulating the video, audio and text functionalities fully, that ensured no students were left out during the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions and lockdown. The sharing of colourful PowerPoint presentations, passionate audio presentations and descriptive texts by lecturers and learners clearly bolstered the innovative use of WhatsApp in teaching Academic Communication Skills.

5.2 Recommendations

The study recommends that both lecturers and students get training on how they can employ other WhatsApp skills in order to use it more effectively as a learning platform. The University may consider the use of other platforms like the Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams, Skype and Zoom to facilitate learning and teaching experiences. Additionally, as this study focused on the teaching and learning of Academic Communication Skills, it is vital that the phenomenon be investigated in other courses using both undergraduates and post graduates students to get a comprehensive picture. The study recommends future research to compare the WhatsApp and other learning platforms like Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams, Skype and Zoom among others where lectures can be blended to include face-to-face and online lectures.

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