

MALL in English Language Teaching: The Instructional Model of Integrating Four Skills Facilitated by WhatsApp Application

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Abstract:

With the rapid advancement of information and communication technology (ICT), mobile devices have become increasingly integrated into educational environments. This paper focuses on the use of WhatsApp, a popular messaging app, as a powerful tool for enhancing English language learning by efficiently managing student tasks. It presents an instructional model that incorporates four key English language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—through WhatsApp. This model allows both students and teachers to explore the practicalities, challenges, and achievements associated with using WhatsApp for academic tasks, both during and outside of school hours. The instructional model utilizes WhatsApp in both synchronous and asynchronous modes, offering flexibility in delivering content. Activities for each language skill leverage WhatsApp's capabilities, such as voice notes, text messaging, and multimedia sharing, to enhance the learning experience. This model fosters real-time communication and enables students to practice their language skills even in resource-limited environments. This instructional model implies that WhatsApp is a valuable tool for language teaching, especially for educators with low digital literacy. Its accessibility and flexibility allow for the continuation of education in difficult circumstances. Besides, the instructional model presented provides a framework that can be adapted by English teachers for various learning contexts, supporting both synchronous and asynchronous learning environments.

Keywords: Instructional Model; WhatsApp in education; Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL); English Language Skills

Article History:

Received : 24 August 2024

Revised : 05 October 2024

Accepted : 26 October 2024

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Introduction

Information and communication technology (ICT) has penetrated into most aspects of human life so that people can do anything through ICT such as recording what is happening around them where this is due to the support of advances in digital technology. This condition is inseparable from the characteristics of digital technology which is simple, fast, and practical to operate via a mobile device. Related to the current development of this sophisticated technology, language researchers view ICT not only as a tool that can motivate students and teachers in learning and teaching but as an important tool to facilitate them learning and teaching of a foreign language as well.

In this regard, it is undeniable that technology is developing rapidly and educational institutions have begun to adopt and implement mobile devices as instructional tools to facilitate students for learning. As known, the practicality and the portability of mobile device technology are the factor supporting the effectiveness of language learning and teaching today. Therefore, there is a label to call mobile device technology used for language learning purposes with its very popular name today as MALL, an acronym for 'mobile-assisted language learning'.

Long before the term of MALL exists, there was a name for integrating technology into English language teaching (ELT) which was termed as CALL (computer-assisted language learning). CALL is the earliest approach in computer technology-based learning and provides many opportunities for students to learn independently. Kern (1995: 457) states that the CALL program offers students the freedom to choose a topic, to repeat input, to decrease the difficulty of an assignment, and to get help whenever needed. However, the CALL program can be said to be familiar with foreign or second language learners for a period of approximately forty years since 1960s before being replaced by MALL by the early 2000s. Needless to say, CALL was able to become a pioneer in the language learning through a touch of computer technology for four decades though the devices used were still not mobile and portable on performing their tasks.

The History from CALL to MALL

The term of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) was firstly introduced to public in the last quarter of the 20th century by Carol Chapelle dan Mark Warschauer. By referring to its term, CALL is a language learning program which relies on a 'computer' as a medium to deliver its applications (Al-Kadi, 2018).

There is another term in the USA before the CALL is introduced, that was CALI, an acronym for *Computer-Assisted Language Instruction*. When the term of CALL started to be used by educational practitioners in the early 1980s, the term of CALI naturally lost its popularity at the same time. The reason why CALI began to be abandoned among language teachers was because it tended to use a teacher-centered approach. However, its counterpart CALL is more likely to use a student-centered approach where its focus tends to be on learning rather than instruction (Davies & Higgins, 1982). Hence, CALI began to be replaced by CALL in the early 1980s. The characteristics of CALL currently gives emphasis on student-centered materials by providing opportunity for students to work independently orienting them to become independent learners.

During its development CALL went through different phases according to the instructional needs of the time. It is Warschauer & Healey (1998) that has distinguished the three phases of CALL throughout its use in which these three phases can be classified according to the underlying pedagogical and methodological approaches. The first phase of call was identified as behavioristic CALL (Kern & Warschauer, 2000). This phase run around 1960's to 1970's. This phase may be said a "traditional phase" of CALL since it was based on the behaviorist learning model where the focus of learning is on repetitive drills and habit formation (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Therefore, the content of learning

relied on drill-and-practice materials in which the computer presented a stimulus and the learner provided a response (Taylor, 1980).

Then, the second phase of CALL is named as communicative CALL where it emerged around 1970s to 1980s to replace the behavioristic CALL. Why to be named as communicative CALL, it is a reaction to the behaviorist approach to language learning. Unlike behavioristic CALL, this CALL format did not use drill format but it facilitated students more in some ways such as how to choose, control, and interact. In this phase, the computer was initially used as a tool to facilitate students' activities in terms of discussion, writing, and critical thinking (Underwood 1984).

Finally, it started from 1990s the communicative CALL was replaced by integrative CALL, and this is the drawback era of communicative approach in which the integrative CALL merged the teaching of language skills into student learning tasks and activities (Warschauer & Healey, 1998). It was in this phase that CALL had a complete change from its use, in which the computer was no longer for the purpose of drill and tutorial but as a medium to extend the education beyond the classroom. In this regard, the teacher's view of communicative language teaching shifts from a cognitive view to a socio-cognitive view where the language teaching emphasizes the use of language in a real and meaningful context (Wertsch, 1985).

As time goes by, technology is always evolving with all its simplicity and practicality. It is undeniable that CALL has begun to have many limitations. The first problem when using CALL as a language learning tool is the size and weight of the computer itself that it cannot be easily carried anywhere so that the efficiency of the CALL program is not optimal. Besides, with CALL according to Hartoyo (2006), the computers are available in school or in language laboratory only, and it can be used in limited hours. Therefore, not everyone can run this CALL program because it can only be used by those who have a personal computer at home or a laptop. The same disadvantage is also asserted by Lai and Kritsonis (2006) that with CALL the cost of education increases because the school will make computers the main need for students. Noticeably, this will have an impact on some schools that really need but they cannot provide computers due to the cost problems they have.

Types of MALL Devices

Starting from this point, learners and instructors are looking forward to how to be free from the limitation of computer use in terms of time and place. By the invention of notebooks, computer tablets, and smartphones, there may be more facilitating and more flexible devices in accessing to language learning materials. The matter is the size and weight where they are smaller and lighter in comparison with the CALL device. That is why MALL (Mobile-Assisted Language Learning) shifts the role of CALL since the invention of portable and light computer-based devices.

As known, today the technology of mobile learning is always evolving and there are many different types of mobile devices used by instructors and learners to facilitate their teaching and learning. There are four MALL devices which are popular from time to time and regarded to be flexible facilitate language learning. Those are personal digital assistants (PDAs), smartphones, laptop computers, and tablet PCs.

PDA is the first mobile technology which simplifies a computer from its size, weight, and data capacity. As noted by Viken (2009), PDA is known as a mobile device in the form of cellular whose main function is to manage user's personal information. This tool has multi-functions where it can be used as a mobile phone, web browser, and fax machine. In terms of feature, the PDA has been equipped with a pen-based stylus so that it can replace the keyboard function for input which basically can recognize handwriting features. In its development, PDA cannot survive to be longer. This is, according to (Smith

& Caruso, 2010) that the popularity of PDAs began to fade in the early 2010s after the proliferation of smartphone use where this device has operating systems which are based on iOS and Android. Besides, devices such as touch-screen smartphones and tablets make the PDA has become obsolete. And, those devices received an enthusiastic reaction from language instructors and learners till today.

Since then, the era of smartphone is inevitable to its development and the technological updates embedded in it. A smartphone, as cited from Pourabad (2016) is a mobile device that allows users to do more than just for calling and delivering text messages. With smartphone users instead of being able to browse the Internet, they can also run application programs just like a computer did. In addition, with smartphones users easily interact with others by simply touching their fingers on the screen. In other words, a smartphone is a mobile device that can integrate all the capabilities of a computer through features that are easier and more practical than a handheld device such as PDAs.

Moreover, the other mobile devices that also can assist learners and teacher in language learning are laptop computers. A laptop computer or what is often called a notebook is a portable personal computer that as the name implied is identified as a type of computer that is light, small, easy to carry everywhere and can be placed on the lap of its users. Actually, a significant difference between a laptop computer and a desktop computer is in its design and features equipped. As known, all features of equipment in desktop computers such as monitor, keyboard, touchpad (functioning to replace the mouse) and speakers are designed integratively into one device package in laptop computers. Meanwhile, in desktop computers, these parts are still in a separate form and not portable. Therefore, according to Thornton & Houser (2005), the advantages of laptop computers which are unbeatable by desktop computers are their user-friendliness access, wide ownership, and varied designs. Not less equally important thing is that they can connect to the Internet network anytime and anywhere wirelessly.

Then another MALL device is tablet PCs. This mobile device is generally recognized as light-weighted computing device or shortening its name as 'Tab' where it has been introduced in many different sizes and capabilities by a number of manufacturers (Pourabad, 2016). In terms of shape comparing to laptop computers, tablet PCs undeniably are easier to use, more portable, and more convenient. Furthermore, for browsing the Internet, reading emails, browsing social networking sites, and watching videos, tablet PCs are the most reliable because its simplicity can compete laptop computers. With the continuous updating of technologies and applications embedded in tablet PCs and their benefits for education, they are more popular among students for an alternative as their personal computers (Li et al., 2010). Therefore, since 2010 tablet PCs have been popular to be used among people rivaling smartphones.

From those all-mobile devices aforementioned in terms of flexibility, low expense, small size and user-friendliness, MALL technologies provide many advantages (Huang et al., 2012). In addition, Thornton and Houser (2005) assert that through mobile device language learning materials can be delivered more effectively to students even they can collaborate each other for doing practice in listening and speaking (Kukulska-Hulme & Shield, 2008). Today, mobile devices offer many tempting applications that can be used to facilitate online learning. To mention some such as Youtube, Zoom, Google meet, Google Class, Edmodo, and even mobile instant messaging like WhatsApp can provide easy and practical facility to enable teachers carry out the class from home. Therefore, the mobile application last mentioned is very popular to be used for anticipating learning from home by many teachers who have less-literate in the digital technology.

WhatsApp as one of Mobile Applications Supporting English Language Teaching

Every teacher knows that WhatsApp is one of user-friendly mobile applications for supporting teaching English as a foreign language. In accordance with Tartari et al., (2019) this technology platform provides real-time synchronization of communication among users in which they can share creative and authentic works on the application. Apart from that, WhatsApp is an application that is more practical and simple to be used than any other messaging applications in terms of some basic things such as being free of advertisement and the subscription fee. In addition, it provides accessibility via group platforms to receive and send messages instead of facilitating users with photo and video sharing features. Then, what is no less important from this application is that it can share files in any format with a total capacity up to two gigabytes (Suhaimi, et al., 2019). For this reason, teachers have chosen WhatsApp as their main choice for conducting remote classrooms during the distance learning activities. To opt this mobile application, for teachers and students, is based on the consideration of communication infrastructure owned by them such as unstable internet signals or mobile devices that they have not designated for 4G network. With this situation, the WhatsApp platform is able to anticipate such condition.

Indeed, not few studies in the education field discuss their findings regarding the effectiveness of teaching and learning using WhatsApp platform. Gon and Rawekar (2017), for instance, do not deny that WhatsApp is a convenient mobile application for teaching and learning activities. This is similar to what Cetinkaya (2017) states that WhatsApp has proven its effectiveness to increase student success in the educational process. In addition, this instant messenger mobile application can support many things such as sharing pictures and videos directly taken in teaching and learning activities. So, by adopting WhatsApp for teaching and learning activities, instructors can take advantage of the features provided by the platform easily (Ghee, et.al., 2019). Regarding with teaching and learning English as a foreign language, WhatsApp really helps students develop their language skills such as listening (Fauzi and Angkasawati, 2019), speaking (Hamad, 2017), reading (Plana, et al, 2013), and writing (Suhaimi, et al., 2019).

Additionally, based on the following studies the positive impact that students feel while using WhatsApp for learning activities is undoubtedly to substitute for face-to-face learning in the classroom. More students who are treated using mobile learning via WhatsApp instant messaging, as reported by Amry (2014), have better achievements and attitudes compared to students who are subjected to face-to-face teaching in classroom. Related to this, Plana et al., (2013) also assert that students' motivation and willingness to learn through the WhatsApp instant messaging application was much increased. The same thing is also confirmed by Barhoumi (2015) where in his study reveals that WhatsApp brings benefits to students, especially in relation to their achievements and attitudes.

The most recent study about how WhatsApp facilitating online learning during pandemic Covid-19 is carried out by Fauzi (2021) which find the impact for students and the implication for English teachers. The result shows that whatever the condition of the communication infrastructure of a region as long as there is a 3G signal or even 2G, the WhatsApp platform can positively support student learning success and increase students' knowledge and learning motivation so that they can change their negative perceptions and attitudes regarding online learning practices that are difficult for them to carry out.

Instructional Model of Integrating Four English Skills in WhatsApp Mobile Application

As a mobile instant messaging, WhatsApp platform can be used to simplify teacher's instruction in teaching and to manage students in learning. For this regard, the author offers a model of instructional design in WhatsApp Mobile Application (WMA) of teaching four skills of English, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This model, indeed, has already been tried-out and implemented by the author to several English teachers of a secondary school in Palangka Raya (the capital city of Central Kalimantan Province). The idea of designing this instructional model was to anticipate a "lock down" period during Covid-19 Pandemic in 2021. Then, the author tried to give a solution for teachers of English by designing a model of teaching using WMA. This instructional model can be implemented by either synchronous or asynchronous depending on language skills to be taught.

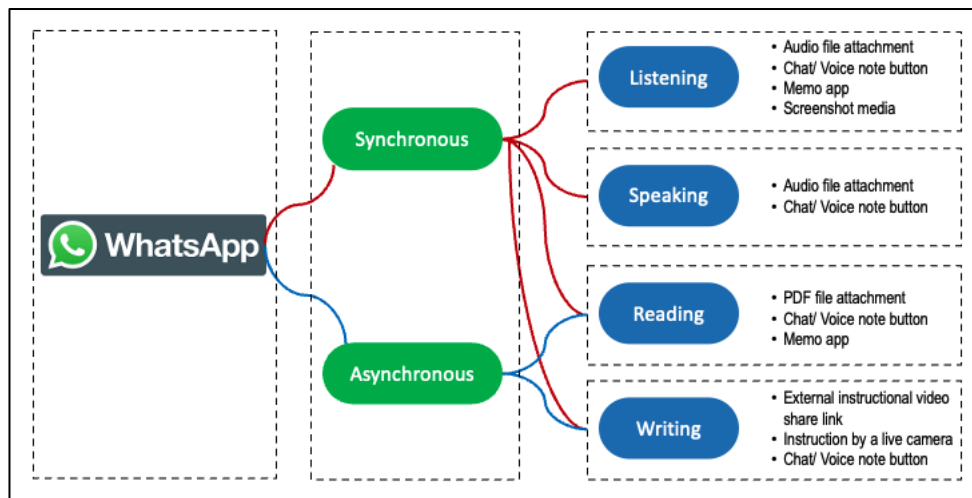


Figure 1. Instructional model possibly used in the WhatsApp for English language learning

The following is the depiction on how the instructional material given by the teacher on the WMA platform based on the model above.

(1) Using WMA to teach listening skill.

To use WMA in teaching listening, teachers can insert an audio file on WhatsApp application screen as a medium for listening learning materials. Then, teacher gives prompts what to do next related to the uploaded audio file. If the prompt asks students to speak, a voice note button available allows students to do so. And, if the prompt asks students to write, they may do their writing on a memo application. Then, students may screen-shoot their writings and upload them to the WhatsApp screen. This teaching model must be synchronous on its implementation.

(2) Using WMA to teach speaking skill.

There are two model of speaking which can be used via WhatsApp; independent speaking and integrated speaking. In independent speaking teachers only send a prompt to students on the WhatsApp screen and they can perform to speak-up through the voice note facility that is already available on the application. However, if the speaking skill is integrated with listening (termed as integrated speaking), teacher inserts an audio file first to the screen, and students listen carefully to the audio related to the material content taught. Then, teacher asks students to speak based on the audio played. Again, the available voice note button allows students to perform

their speaking on the WhatsApp screen. This teaching model must also be synchronous on its implementation.

(3) Using WMA to teach reading skill.

For reading skill, this is very simple skill to be taught via WhatsApp since a teacher simply uploads a text or a reading document then ask students to read the text. To evaluate students' comprehension, a teacher asks students to write their answers on the Memo application and record them by using screen-shoots, then simply upload them to the WhatsApp screen. This teaching model could be implemented either synchronously or asynchronously.

(4) Using WMA to teach writing skill.

Writing skill is a little bit complicated skill to be taught than the three others. The model of learning for this skill via WhatsApp inevitably demands teachers necessarily to prepare an instructional video whether it is made by the teacher herself and directly uploaded to the WhatsApp screen or it is taken from a link of video platform and share it to the screen (e.g., Youtube). If the teacher can make the instructional video by herself, she may take directly from her smartphone camera. However, the best choice is to share the link from Youtube. The instructional video is very important to prompt the students before they start to write. For instance, a topic of writing such as how to write *a procedure text* or *an announcement* requires a teacher that must prepare an instructional video guiding her students to do so. Considering this complexity, the instructional video is better taken from Youtube than being made by the teacher since it saves much time. In its implementation, this model might be employed either synchronously or asynchronously.

With regard to this instructional model, using WhatsApp as a teaching platform both in synchronous and asynchronous has evidently become the most user-friendly mobile application among teachers, especially for those with low digital literacy. Accordingly, for managing teacher-given instructions for academic tasks, both during and outside of school hours, WhatsApp is undeniably quite accommodative and well-facilitating in its usage for teaching and learning. Moreover, this instant mobile messaging can also facilitate teaching four skills of English at once on its screen without leaping to any other applications.

Conclusion and Implication

No matter the circumstances, WMA can be one of the most practical, easy, and user-friendly teaching platforms for English teachers. In addition to WMA being very helpful for teachers who have low digital literacy, it is also quite accommodative in managing the instruction that teachers provide their students during learning from home. In terms of instructional model of teaching in WMA, teachers can modify by themselves for what they want to teach in accordance with the students' need and their digital technology literacy.

The implication for the instructional model implemented in WMA is no reason for English teachers not to teach when the situation and condition need to make them teach when their schools implement hybrid platform in teaching and learning since this model is practicably supported in WMA especially for facilitating English language teaching. What is no less important is that WhatsApp as one of the application platforms in instant mobile messaging can make a positive contribution to MALL since the WhatsApp learning model offered in this paper can be used by EFL teachers to facilitate their students in learning four integrated English skills either by synchronous or asynchronous.

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