Pedagogical Value of WhatsApp in Learning Inferential Listening Skill among students of Tertiary Institutions in Sokoto State Nigeria

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Abstract: *This study evaluates the value of WhatsApp in Learning Inferential Listening Skill among Students of Tertiary Institutions in Sokoto State. In view of this, the researcher formulated a research question to find out if there is any difference in the performance of students taught inferential listening skill using WhatsApp and those taught using lecture method. The population of the study comprised all tertiary institutions in Sokoto and the sample was drawn from two selected tertiary institutions in Sokoto. Quasi Experimental research design was employed for the study while Listening Performance Test (LPT) was used as instrument to test the subjects. Kudur Richadson (KR21) was used to determine the reliability index of the instrument based on the data obtained from the pilot testing of the instrument. Reliability index of 0.83 was obtained, which was reliable and satisfactory. The null hypothesis was tested at the 0.05 level of significance using T-test. The finding of the study shows that the experimental group taught using WhatsApp performed better than the control group taught using conventional methods in inferential listening skill.*

Key words: *Learning, Listening, Pedagogical, & WhatsApp*

INTRODUCTION

English language in Nigeria function as a second language, an official language, a lingual Franca and the medium of instruction at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education. The current use of English in Nigeria was as a result of colonization by the British and the linguistic diversity of the country. Teaching of English as a second language emphasizes on the importance of language skill such as reading and writing skills. It is no doubt that the listening ability of the student plays a significant role in the development of other English language skills.

Listening is the most frequently used skill in the English language; it also plays a significant role in daily communication and educational process as a general studies course for first year students across tertiary institutions. In spite of its importance, the development of listening skills has received little attention in teaching, especially in the tertiary institutions in the study area. This inability has made it impossible for students to understand the language. This makes them frequently have great difficulty in understanding English spoken by its native speaker.

WhatsApp, in recent time has been identified as one of the potential means of improving teaching and learning of listening skills among non-native speakers. It is defined as an internet-

based application that builds on the ideological and technological foundations of the web, which allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Kaplan & Haelein, 2010).

Apart from WhatsApp, there are different types of social media platforms which include Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, 2go, WhatsApp Telegram, Bado and so on. However, this study focused specially on WhatsApp. The application was chosen because of the availability of the android mobile phone among students which can be used in posting audio-visual material in teaching and learning listening skills. The effects of WhatsApp on our lives, culture and society keeps increasing globally. It is also becoming popular tool for marketing in business and publicity in politics. This growth has also drawn the attention of researchers to understand the implications and effects of WhatsApp on its user's social academic and personal life (Naveen and Sudhansh, 2017).

Statement of the Problem

It has been observed by English Language Teachers that Teaching Listening skills has been relegated to a secondary position particularly to First year students of tertiary institutions in their General Studies course. For example, question papers in Umar Ali Shinkafi Polytechnic Sokoto, were reviewed by the researcher from the year 2010 to 2015 and found that only a few questions on the theoretical aspect of listening skills. Same applies to all tertiary institutions where the research was conducted. This is due to the fact that listening is only taught theoretically not practically to students due to the unavailability of listening equipment. The researcher is of the thinking that, unavailability of listening material to teach the skills will affect the students' performance in listening. Similarly, the students will be miss interpreting information and that will surely affect their academic performance not only in language but in other subjects and their daily activities as well. Even at some tertiary institutions where listening is taught as a course, such as Shehu Shagari College of Education, it is only taught theoretically and not practically. The researcher was able to get this information after visiting all the tertiary institutions under review.

For the above reason, the researcher feels a strategy should be adopted towards teaching listening skills - by introducing WhatsApp so as to improve the performance of students in listening skills. The research seeks to evaluate the pedagogical value of using WhatsApp in improving listening skills among students of tertiary institution in Sokoto State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

This study examined the pedagogical value of WhatsApp in learning inferential listening skill to the students of higher education in Sokoto State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study was carried out to:

i. Evaluate the value of using WhatsApp and lecture method in teaching and learning of inferential listening skill to the students of higher education.

Research Question

In view of the above objective, the researcher formulated and sought to find answer to the following research question.

i. Is there any difference in the performance of students taught inferential listening skill using WhatsApp and those taught using the lecture method?

Research Hypotheses

Ho$_1$ There is no significant difference between the performance of the experimental group taught inferential listening skills using WhatsApp and the control group taught using the lecture method.

Significance of the Study

This study is expected to benefit the following categories:

It will help lecturers to establish pedagogical beliefs related to the effectiveness of implementing social media in the teaching and learning of listening skills. Also, it can benefit English language teachers by delivering their lectures without going to class by posting the materials through WhatsApp application and the students can respond from anywhere they are, with the present situation of Covid-19 pandemic

It magnetizes students to join a new way of learning through social network and "WhatsApp" in particular.

Traditionally, the inspection and supervision of tertiary institutions was done by supervisor/inspector from the ministry for Higher Education in collaboration with each tertiary institutions quality assurance unit through visitation to various schools and lecture rooms, which made the work more tedious and time consuming. Using WhatsApp, the work will be made easier for them. By so doing, the supervisor/inspector will participate actively and interact freely with both teachers and the learners through the use of WhatsApp application.

Scope of the Study

The study evaluated the value of WhatsApp social media in Learning Inferential Listening Skill in selected Tertiary Institutions in Sokoto State. The study was limited to two public tertiary institutions selected for the study. These include Sokoto State University and Umaru Ali Shinkafi Polytechnic, Sokoto. There are different types of social media platforms but the study used WhatsApp Social media, also Inferential Listening Skill was the only Listening skill tested out of numerous Listening Skills.

Conceptual Framework
Inferential Listening Skills

Listeners are required to achieve inferential ability using four different levels; the phonetic, the phonological, the lexical, the semantic and the pragmatic. According Shaozhong (2005), pragmatics distinguishes two (or more) intents or meanings in each utterance or communicative act of verbal communications. The first intent or meaning is informative intent or the sentience meaning, and the second intent or the role of inferential ability in listening comprehension. The ability to comprehend and produce a communicative act is referred to as pragmatic competence (Kasper, 1997) which often includes one's knowledge about social distance and the differences in the social status between the speakers involve. Cultural knowledge e.g. politeness and linguistic knowledge, both explicit and implicit.

The term inferential ability is to:

- Extract relevant information which is not explicitly given to listeners.
- Reconstruct relevant information both linguistic and non-linguistic clues.

‒ Understanding what a speaker really means at the pragmatic level.

The Importance of Listening

Listening is the first language skill developed; it comes before speaking, reading and writing (Coakley and Wolvin, 1988). Also, listening is the most frequently used language skill (Scarlella& Oxford, 1992). According to Rost (1991) "listening is vital in the language classroom because it provides input for the learner. Without understanding input at the right level, any learning simply cannot begin."

Listening makes the person who is talking feel worthy, appreciated and respected. When we give someone full attention, the speaker responses positively by interacting on a deeper level, perhaps by disclosing personal information or by becoming more relaxed. Listening is an activity that is vital to human existence and is the most common daily activity in human societies. Richard (2008) says that by providing aural input listening accelerates language learning. Language is dependent on listening and can connect learners directly to the target language (Peterson, 2001). By listening to a regular program of this skill, the learner's vocabulary and idioms can be enriched by developing their cultural appreciation, which facilitates their interpretation of the new language. So, language teachers must help the student to become good listeners because listening is also the basis of cognitive development (Saha, 2008:205). It is a system for the expression of meaning and has not only a combination of grammatical rules but also functions and communicative meaning (Richards and Rodger, 2001:161). From the statement listening is important not only to the development of students but also to their social development.

The importance of listening skills is related to the present study in the sense that, WhatsApp listening practice can be implemented through extensive. Extensive listening is an out – of – class activities that provides students to use any listening materials outside the classroom to increase their exposure to the spoken language (Vandergrift and Goh, 2012).extensive listening consist of activities beyond the classroom based listening setting. This type of activities focused on giving language learners more exposure to listening materials by considering the fact that they have more time than when they are doing listening activities in the classroom. It is vividly clear that when the findings of this study are put to use, staff, students, curriculum planers quality assurance stand to benefit from all the importance of listening treated in the study.

WhatsApp

The most recent popular social media is the WhatsApp application. The WhatsApp messenger is a proprietary, cross platform instant messaging application for smart phones. In addition to text messaging, users can send other images videos and audio media messages (Abdul, 2015). Thus, therefore, WhatsApp allows its users to use their internet connections to send messages to each other. And also it is like a chat program for mobile phones. Smart phones are becoming increasingly popular and WhatsApp is available for almost all smart phones. Furthermore, WhatsApp is considered to be a popular application available. It is a free platform that can be installed on the mobile phone to send messages, pictures, audio files and videos using an internet data connection. Alsaleem (2014) investigated how female Saudi undergraduate

English students used WhatsApp application to improve their writing, vocabulary, word choice and listening ability

WhatsApp is a free third party application, which allows you to communicate with your friends and family, share images, videos and links using network access. It's a simple and easy application that works on androids, window phones and blackberry and works smoothly. WhatsApp is an instant messaging app for smart phones that operates under a subscription business model. The proprietary cross platform application uses the internet to sends text messages, images, video, user location and audio network messages (VC, 2015 and WVC, 2015).

WhatsApp has the following features:

Group video and voice calling, WhatsAPP stickers, picture-in-picture support and some of it feature also include media visibility, group chats and forwarding restrictions and labeled forwarded message

WhatsApp Social Media and Learning Listening Skills

WhatsApp Messenger is a smart phone- and web-based instant message application that allows users to exchange information using a variety of media, including text, image, video and audio messages (Church & de Oliveira, 2013). It is a free, easy to use, fast, convenient, the personal mode of communication. Also, it is not only text messaging, but users can also send each other image, video and audio messages. WhatsApp allows its users to use their Internet connections to send messages to each other. WhatsApp is a chat program for mobile phones. Smartphones are accelerative popular and WhatsApp is available on almost every Smartphone.

As a free messenger application, it works across multiple platforms like iPhone and Android phones. This app is being widely used among undergraduate students to send multimedia messages like photos, videos, audios along with simple text messages (Chan & Holosko, 2017). Since internet facility is required for using WhatsApp, lots of information can also be accessed in real time and sharing that information through technology is both instantaneous and convenient. According to Aburezeq (2012), WhatsApp messenger has the following collaborative features: Multimedia, group chat, unlimited messaging, cross-platform, offline messaging, and no charges involved, two steps verification is also introduced to protect user account.

There is also emerging evidence that these Apps have a significant potential to support the learning process and have substantial implications on pedagogies, allowing direct access to lots of online resources, more focus on student's creativity, autonomy and responsibility on one's own learning (Ifenthaler & Schweinbenz, 2016). Language learners have more opportunities to listen and speak that language in their classroom with their friends and teacher. While they are not, they can extend their communication by connecting the application in their phones freely. It is such a considerable way to serve learners to communicative users' undertaking. Learners are served beneficially by the expanding exercise and experience through free knowledge.

Theoretical Framework

Technology Adoption Model

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is information Systems Theory that show users how to accept and use a computer based technology. It was developed to explain computer usage behavior (Davis, 1989). The model suggested that when users' are presented with a new software package, a number of factors influence their decision about how and when they will use it (Masrum and Hussein, 2008). Though, there are other models that can equally be used to predict and explain why users accept or reject an information system, this model include Diffusion of innovation theory (Roger, 2003) and Concern based Adoption Model (Deng and Yuen, 2009) as well as social influence Theory (Gao, 2005). However, some of these theories and models appear to be complex, while TAM is simple and robust enough as a model (Venkatesh and Devis, 2000). Therefore, in the study, Technology Acceptance Theory was used to explain students' attitude to Social Networking using WhatsApp application in testing their listening performance.

Research Methodology
Research Design

A quasi- experimental design with a pre-test and post -test was adopted for the study. In this design, two groups were involved, (Experimental and Control).

Population of the Study

The population of this research comprised all public tertiary institution in Sokoto State. According to the data collected regarding the population of the students by the researcher from various institutions, there are ten (10) public tertiary institutions with their respective students' population of 58,038 (Ministry for high education Sokoto State 2017).

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample of this study consists of two tertiary institutions with a total population of 381 UG I from Sokoto state university and HND I students from Umaru Ali Shinkafi Polytechnic Sokoto State which were purposively selected because of the availability of android phones and popularity of WhatsApp usage among students.

Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument for this study was a research-designed instrument tagged Listening Performance Test (LPT) with a view to measuring their performance in different listening activities.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

The instrument was validated by experts in the Department of Curriculum Studies and Educational Technology in Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto. To ascertain the reliability of the Listening Performance Test (LPT), the researcher conducted a pilot study at Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto.

The researcher administered a pre-test to both groups with a view to obtaining baseline data. However, another test (Post-test) was administered after an interval of two weeks. The two

tests were compared using the Kuder Richadson (KR21) statistical tool and a reliability index of 0.83 was obtained, which was reliable and satisfactory.

Method of Administration of Instrument

The administration of LPT to the subjects was made through a multi stage- process. In the first place, the researcher conducted a pretest one on one on inferential listening skill. In the second place, a WhatsApp group was formulated for the experimental group in which the participants' numbers were added successfully. Therefore, treatment (Teaching Listening skills) began through the WhatsApp for a period of 6 weeks.

In the third place, the researcher conducted another test (Post-test) for both control and experimental groups with the help of research assistants but in different times and place. The instrument was scored by awarding one mark for each correct answer by the students, Options were given.

Procedure on Administration of Treatment (WhatsApp Group)

The researcher used the following procedure to administer treatment to the experimental group (WhatsApp Group). In the first segment, which is the first class, the researcher introduced the lesson by explaining what the listening skill was all about.

In the next lesson, the researcher started by asking students some questions on what inferential listening skill was. They were not able to respond correctly because they did not have an idea about it. The researcher further explained to the subjects the meaning of inferential listening skill and different inferential abilities. A lot of examples were given to the class, such as videos containing inferential activities and the students were asked to watch and listen to the videos while other activities were picture read. This took the researcher two weeks to discuss on this segment to enable the subjects to understand what inferential listening skill was all about and also to know how to infer whenever they come across any inferential question, gesture or statement through WhatsApp. See Appendix ii lesson plan i for clarifications.

Method of Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics to analyze the data of the pretest and post-test of participants as well as answering research question. Mean score and t-test statistics were used in testing the null hypothesis.

Answering of the Research Question

The analysis of the research question was done using descriptive statistics. These was presented in Table below:

Research Question One: Is there any difference between the performance of experimental group taught inferential listening skills using WhatsApp and the control group using the lecture method?

Table 1: Difference in Performance in Inferential Listening Skills between WhatsApp Method and lecture method

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mdf
Experimental Group	40	7.40	1.355	2.40
Control Group	40	5.00	1.177	

Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2018.

Table 1 presents the result in the difference of students' performance in inferential listening skills between those taught using the WhatsApp method and those taught using the lecture method. Results showed that those taught using WhatsApp performed better, as indicated by a mean of 7.40 (SD=1.355) over those taught using the lecture method with a mean of 5.00 (SD=1.177). This adequately answered research question one and it is concluded that there is difference in the performance of students taught inferential listening skills using WhatsApp social media from those taught the same using the lecture method.

Hypotheses Testing

$H0_1$:　There is no significant difference between the performance of the experimental group taught inferential listening skills using the WhatsApp and the control group using the lecture method.

This hypothesis was tested by subjecting the performance scores of students in the WhatsApp social media group and those in the conventional approach group to a t-test analysis and result is presented in the table below:

Performance Difference in the Inferential Listening Skill between Students in the WhatsApp Group and those in the Lecture method Group.

Variables	N	Df	*t*-Cal	*p*-Value	Decision
Experimental Group	40	39	7.69	.000	H_0 Rejected
Control group	40				

Information in the Table above shows that there exists a significant difference in inferential listening skills in the performance of students taught using the WhatsApp and those taught using the lecture method because of the calculated t-value of 7.69 and a *p*-value of .000, which is less than the significance level of 0.05. Therefore, $H0_1$ which states that there is no significant difference in the performance of students taught inferential listening skills using WhatsApp from those taught the same using the lecture method is rejected.

Summary of Findings

The following is the major finding of the study:

1. The Performance of the students taught the inferential listening skills using WhatsApp was better than those taught using the lecture method. This means that students were able to construct relevant information both linguistic and non-linguistic

clues, extract relevant information which was not given to listeners as one of the types of inferential ability and also understand what a speaker really means at pragmatic level.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the present study, it is obvious that the performance of students taught Inferential Listening Skill using WhatsApp showed very good listening ability. In spite of the advantage mentioned above, the researcher suffered extra work load to find materials and prepare suitable audios and videos for the study.

Since technology is a continuous rapid development and with every sunrise there is a new application and as youth are using them, there is the need to be updated with these applications. That may at least help to succeed to catch students' attention towards learning different listening skills and using applications that are preferred by the students that will reinforce the regular academic process and help both lecturers and students.

Recommendations

i. In order to improve learning of listening skills in higher education level, there is need for the school management to make provision of internet facility.
ii. Lecturers should encourage students to learn how to use WhatsApp to comprehend information from a given through the WhatsApp.
iii. WhatsApp application if properly manage will surely improve the learning of inferential listening skill in higher education level.

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