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# The Use of Whatsapp Group Discussion to Improve Grammar Competence in MAN 1 Banyumas

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## Abstract

Since the pandemic disease of coronavirus or colloquially known as COVID-19 in 2020 most of educational activities are constrained. This leads to the problem in the learning process at schools. Due to the event, schools are temporarily could not implemented face-to-face learning, yet the education process must go on, however. Thus, the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia recommend a series of distance learning in this situation. WhatsApp is used as the distance learning media to teach English in MAN 1 Banyumas. WhatsApp is an application provided by now well-known company Facebook. WhatsApp was intended on conducting people in easier and convenient instant messaging which uses end to end encryption and requires internet data network to operate it. The English teacher in MAN 1 Banyumas uses WhatsApp as the media. Thus, it become phenomenon following the situation which was able to lead the curiosity of the researchers to conduct the study based on what is occurring in the current time. The study uses a qualitative method to find out the effectiveness of WhatsApp media group discussion to improve grammar competence in MAN 1 Banyumas, to discover the grammar competence of the students, and the advantage of WhatsApp group discussion to improve grammar competence according to the teacher. Otherwise, the teacher also stated that online learning through WhatsApp group discussion is easier to be done even though there are issues in the internet signal and data plan.

**Keywords:** *grammar competence, man 1 banyumas, students, whatsapp group*

## INTRODUCTION

Grammar is one of important aspects in English subject course. According to Gerot and Wignel (1994) grammar is a theory of language on how language works and how it is put together. It can be stated that grammar is a study of wordings particularly. Besides, traditional grammar focuses on the rules to producing correct sentences. When the learners do not understand grammar, there will be some difficulties in arranging sentences in English, especially when they are in the communication either between teacher or fellow students. Discussing communication, these days, it is easily affordable to communicate among people

thanks to technology as long as it is still connected through the internet. Interaction has been defined as a process whereby two or more people engage in reciprocal actions. In that process, there is grammar that takes an important role. Grammar could ensure that the communication can be either good or not. Thus, the students' grammar competence should have improved.

In this pandemic era, teaching English which also included grammar lesson, could not be done in face-to-face with the students. This is in accordance with the recommendation issue from Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture and several regional governments in approval of taking course from home starting simultaneously in mid-March 2020. Several school began to execute the recommendation including MAN 1 Banyumas in this case. Thus, online classes had become an alternative way to continue the education process. As an English teacher, it is an opportunity to apply the technology in online class in order to make it more interactive. WhatsApp application can be used as a solution to deal with the issues as a learning media to improve grammar competence. Through this application, students can share photos, videos, and voice notes as its features. WhatsApp can also be used to bring up video conference that accommodates up to 50 participants.

In this research, the use of WhatsApp as a learning media process would have found out the effectiveness of the functional shift of the group chat to establish a valuable tool both for classroom interaction among the students and the teachers. Students can seamlessly intertwine the connection with others during the online class to create learning activity and group discussion. Thus, the researchers expected that using WhatsApp group discussion could improve grammar competence with the exclusive features it has provided so that it becomes more interesting to share the idea in text format.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Grammar**

According to Brown (2001) grammar is the system of rules governing the conventional arrangement and relationship of words in sentences. The words in sentences means the grammar unit contains of words, phrases, clauses, and sentences.

Nunan (1998:101) suggests that grammar instruction will be more effective in classrooms where: learners are exposed to authentic samples of language so that the grammatical features being taught are encountered in a range of different linguistic and experiential contexts, it is not assumed that once learners have been drilled in a particular form they have acquired it, and drilling is seen only as a first step towards.

According to Richards C. Jack and Schmidt, grammar is a description of a language's structure and the way linguistic units such as words and phrases are combined to produce sentences. In generative grammar, a grammar which describes the speaker's knowledge of the language. Grammar provides the practising language teacher with a clear and straightforward overview of this complex subject. It describes the nature of grammar, its role in language learning and language use, and how it can be taught most effectively (Batstone, 1994). Furthermore, Penny Ur points out that "grammar is described as words that are placed together to produce correct sentences; it impacts not only how the units of words are linked to make

correct sentences, but also their meaning.” In other words, grammar is a verbal structure having functions.

### **Competence**

Richards & Rodgers (2003) defined the competences as the description of essential skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours required for effective performance of a real-world task or activity. So, the competence is the useful ability includes skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours.

According to the integrated conception, competence is conceptualized in terms of knowledge, abilities, skills and attitudes displayed in the context of a carefully chosen set of realistic professional tasks which are of an appropriate level of generality (Gonczi et al., 1990; Hager, 1994; see also Biggs, 1994).

### **WhatsApp**

WhatsApp is a free messenger application which is available on multiple operating system such as iOS and Android. Since now people are required to use WhatsApp to stay connected, bunch of information can be accessed in real time. Thus, sharing that information through technology is both convenient and instantaneous.

Bere (2012), stated that WhatsApp messenger has the following essential features:

1. Multimedia that exchange videos, text, photos and voice notes.
2. Group chat supports the interaction of up to 50 group members.
3. Unlimited messages are able to be shared on WhatsApp. It uses internet data plan or Wi-Fi to ensure continuous data transmission across platforms.
4. Cross platform engagements which allows users with different devices are able to message one another through various media.
5. Messages can be saved automatically when the device is offline or outside coverage area signal.
6. No charges involved for using WhatsApp as it uses same internet data plan.
7. Pins and username that need to remember as it works via user’s phone numbers and integrates with the contacts.

WhatsApp allows its users to use their Internet connection to send messages to each other. WhatsApp is like a chat program for mobile phones. Smartphones are becoming increasingly popular and WhatsApp is available for almost all smartphone. This social network has opened up new opportunities of interaction and collaboration between teachers and learners (Fattah, 2015).

### **Learning Media**

Learning media is used as a supporting aspect of the learning process for learning objectives to be achieved. It is defined as a tool both in physically and non-physically used by teachers to convey the material for students to be more effective and efficient. So that the

learning materials are more quickly accepted by students. It can also attract students to learn more. (Musfiquon, 2012).

Learning media that is utilized appropriately in the learning process will become a more effective and efficient support tool in achieving the learning objectives. In addition, learning media will also increase students' learning motivation, this is sophisticated with the statement expressed by Sanaky (2009) that the benefits of instructional media include: (a) By using learning media, the learning process will be more interesting, so it can lead to motivate student learning; (b) Can clarify learning materials, so that students can easily understand the material and enable students to master the learning objectives; (c) By using instructional media, the learning process becomes more varied. The material is not only delivered orally, so students are not bored as soon and learn more productively; and (d) Students are listening to the material offered by the teacher and engaging in other learning activities such as observing, doing, exhibiting, and others. Learning media features can help to promote the experiential classroom and increase student learning engagement.

According to Sanaky (2009), learning media needs to be utilized to overcome the limitations of the learning process. As an example of learning media in the process of learning is in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade of elementary school in the subject of social studies with material "Meaning of National Heritage of the Hindu-Buddhist and Islam in Indonesia". This material is usually delivered with a didactic method of lecturing and using material books as a supporting medium. The current technology can be utilized as a learning medium to support the learning process. "This article advocates the use of technology in social studies as a technique to encourage students by involving them in the learning process with the use of a familiar instructional tool that improves students' self-efficacy and self-worth," according to Heafner (2004). The usage of technology in social studies as a technique to encourage students by involving them in the process can be concluded from the article.

### **WhatsApp Application for Active Learning**

According to Bonwell and Eison (1991) in their seminal work "Active Learning: Creating Excitement in the Classroom" need by the students' active participation in learning activities during face-to-face sessions with the teacher (Lage et al., 2000). It covers a range of activities that involve asking students to do or produce something and can also include tasks intended to assess the students' understanding (Handelsman et al., 2007). Nowadays, students rely so much on social media to stay connected to their surroundings and the world. One of the most significant applications that almost every student use is WhatsApp. WhatsApp—from the English phrase "What's up?" meaning "What's new?"—is an instant messaging application for smartphones. It allows users to exchange images, videos, and audio or written messages using their Internet connection. WhatsApp has positioned itself as a superior alternative to SMS messaging, which can be expensive when used in foreign countries because of roaming charges; WhatsApp, in contrast, relies on an active Wi-Fi network. Consequently, such an application can be a potential learning tool in the classroom to enhance students' interaction with their professors and among themselves.

In the study conducted by Rambe and Chipunza (2013, p. 333) revealed that "WhatsApp usage enabled students to share information on various issues about the course. Conversations

between and among students using WhatsApp demonstrate the sharing of academic information”.

In some cases of the research which is aimed to test the effectiveness of WhatsApp usage in a structured form via implementing tasks and assignments that require the students to engage with content and discussion on WhatsApp. Therefore, there are able to pull out the measurement of the students’ level of engagement in responding to the assignment requirements of actively posting their responses to the WhatsApp platform and then comparing this engagement with another assignment given to the same students with equal difficulty, grade weight, and requirement, but whereas the responses are to be posted on iLearn. The two assignments were assessable as part of the students’ participation grade in the course. This was done through a game-like system of bonuses and minuses for activity—or lack thereof—on WhatsApp. The author applied this method as part of the MCM 309 Social Media for Mass Communication class at the American University of Sharjah. The study examines the use of the WhatsApp messaging app in a structured class environment to enhance collaborative and active learning. The results were obtained via surveying and interviewing students who took the course and determining how effective WhatsApp was in engaging the students to participate actively in online discussions and to prepare for class discussions through the content shared pre-class on WhatsApp.

### **Related Studies**

These following researches adequately abundance in elaborating the use of WhatsApp as a learning media for especially English teaching and learning process :

### **The Impact of WhatsApp on EFL Students’ Vocabulary Learning**

This study was meant to determine if the use of WhatsApp mediation helps improve students’ vocabulary learning compared to the common method used to be in face-to-face learning in school. The results seek that using WhatsApp is more effective than traditional instruction in enhancing learners’ vocabulary learning. Since WhatsApp has helped students construct their vocabulary knowledge on this study it has lent support to the constructivist theory. The researchers made an argument that the outcomes were considered to be affected by the participants’ lack of commitment to the tasks more than by the usefulness of WhatsApp as a learning media.

The findings of this study also highlight the participants’ or the students’ positive attitudes towards the use of WhatsApp in learning some new vocabularies. The effectiveness of WhatsApp in increasing the vocabulary of the learners reported in this study can be attributed to several distinguishable factors. First of all, the new experience of using smartphone applications to complete class assignments has attracted students’ interest and made them more involved in the learning process. They really like the sense of closeness because they can send and receive messages instantly.

A second possible factor is the sense of virtual community that has been created between students and their instructors, on the one hand, and among the students themselves through the use of WhatsApp group chats. In such an environment, special bonds can be made between different members as is the case with experiments. In addition, participants’ sense of belonging

to the learning community also encourages them to complete tasks more actively. Another plausible reason for the positive results of this study is that the use of WhatsApp has freed students whom had lack confidence to participate in class. Using WhatsApp may have helped the participants feel less inhibited and thus increased their confidence to be actively involved in the learning process.

### **Chat and Learn: Effectiveness of Using WhatsApp as a Pedagogical Tool to Enhance EFL Learners' Reading and Writing Skills**

This research has examined the pedagogical role of WhatsApp. When comparing their learning through WhatsApp groups and learning in traditional classrooms, the participants emphasized that the chats, discussions and assignments given to them through WhatsApp groups during these two months were more effective in developing their reading and writing skills than the in-class courses they attended four month in a semester. They added that such WhatsApp groups gave them more time to practice reading, writing and communicating in English compared to their traditional classroom learning where the Teacher and some of their students participated in the exercises while most of the students were just passive listeners. But this does not mean that classroom learning is unnecessary and must be replaced with learning through WhatsApp, but this study aims to highlight the importance of WhatsApp as a learning tool in foreign language learning in order to create various learning styles. And strategies that help students acquire foreign languages and to support communicative classroom learning. This study has highlighted above the many advantages of using WhatsApp as a pedagogical tool in foreign language learning, there are also some obstacles that teachers should consider when using WhatsApp in foreign language learning. These limitations include the unavailability of a Wi-Fi connection for some students, internet fees that students have to pay to access WhatsApp. In some contexts, female students may also be unwilling to participate in mixed gender groups or share their phone numbers with male teachers and classmates due to social and cultural concerns. Some students may also abuse study groups and interfere with learning, or show a lack of commitment to actively participate in WhatsApp learning and so on.

### **Effectivity of E-learning through Whatsapp as a Teaching Learning Tool**

In this field of study that was conducted, groups of 40 students were created on WhatsApp and TL activities were carried out. More interactions in the form of questions and answers, sharing learning materials and various emotional signs of gratitude, good done, etc., attending TL WhatsApp sessions compared to didactic lectures. Rambe and Chipunza (2013) also observed that WhatsApp supports knowledge sharing between students, and between students and teachers. Students in their study refer to WhatsApp as a "communication, transnational platform" where they can express themselves freely in an unrestricted environment thereby removing the constraint characteristic of low participation from lectures. Bansal and Joshi (2014) also observed in their research that 82% of students are eager to post videos, audios, texts about problems and also learn from other people's posts.

Most students agreed that WhatsApp is easy to use and available and downloadable, but 89.95% of students disagree that it is free because campuses still don't have Wi-Fi enabled and they have to take a plan with mobile data which costs more. Little more than a no-data plan. Mobile. Bouhnik & Deshen (2014) concluded that WhatsApp is simple and provides privacy

along with low-cost applications compared to other social networks such as Facebook or twitter. Because the students in this study were also used to doing social networking on Facebook and Twitter,

Interaction between students, sharing learning materials, easy accessibility of learning materials, high interaction with facilitators and immediately clearing doubts are other educational advantages of WhatsApp TL activities with more than 70% of students agreeing. Fifty-six percent of participants in the Bansal and Joshi (2014) study agreed that learning via WhatsApp e-learning has educational benefits such as direct feedback on problems; learn to move; greater clarity on issues; revision of previously studied topics; learn from other people's problems; healthy discussion; and the availability of learning materials around the clock. WhatsApp allows learning beyond the classroom boundaries and the high availability of teachers for student questions has the potential to improve the learning process. It also allows easy and fast transfer of links to course materials. However, students who disagreed mentioned that the low internet speed to accept context after a while caused the disruption of the TL activity flow, causing confusion.

In addition to these advantages, there are also many challenges faced by students as well as facilitators during TL activities via WhatsApp. Although 87.21% of students agreed that a smartphone was a prerequisite for WhatsApp, it was temporary and students who did not have a cell phone initially set it up for the session. Bouhnik and Deshen (2014) also observe the fact that not all students have access to the app on a temporary basis, as the number of students with Smartphones is increasing every day.

### **Using the WhatsApp Social Media Application for Active Learning**

These interviews conducted after the survey validated the survey responses with 13 participating students and reported that during assignments requiring WhatsApp, they not only interacted more with each other and collaborated on assignments but also participated in weekly discussions. Some also point out that other effects of regular use of WhatsApp groups for discussion; they keep up to date with what is happening in class. WhatsApp is proving to be an easier way of communication than using email; as Student 2 noted, "I think it's much better than using iLearn or email, because it's fast and on your phone, sometimes you get an email and you don't check it, but with WhatsApp it's instantaneous." Student 5 said,

"It felt normal, it was nothing weird. It makes it so much easier to reach the professor because sometimes they won't respond quickly by email and people are always on their phones so when you WhatsApp with them you probably would get a prompt response which is good, meaning easier contact with them and makes the course easier."

Additionally, Student 4 mentioned, "I think it makes things easier if you want to get your point across very quickly, it also builds a strong relationship between student and professor." Many other students emphasized how communication through WhatsApp builds better relationships with lecturers by eliminating the formality factor. They also agreed that the less formality, the more motivated they were to ask questions and try to learn more. As student 7 said, "I feel more relaxed, like the professor is not someone very superior to me, I feel like I can communicate more easily. I feel much more comfortable." Using WhatsApp groups as a means of active learning was as familiar to some students as in other courses, but most mentioned that

this was their first experience in class, and they were delighted with the experience. Student 9 said,

“This never happened before with me, so it felt like a different experience. I feel like it brought him [the professor] closer to his students because he told us that we could interact with him and ask questions whenever we want, which for me it was better than using email, of course because it was faster.”

When teachers and school children were interviewed about the use of WhatsApp groups in class environments, it was shown to promote “dialogue between students, whether spontaneous or directed by the teachers and creates an atmosphere of cooperation, solidarity, and coming together to solve problems and deal with challenges” (Bouhnik et al., 2014, p. 229). This can be particularly important for students who come from disadvantaged educational environments but are accustomed to using the app, which will even up the field for them and allow for more access and more participation in class discussions (Chipunza, 2013; Jones, 2008).

## **METHOD**

### **Types of The Research**

This research was conducted using a qualitative method. According to Bogdan and Biklen in Zuriyah (2009: 92) qualitative research is research that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observable behaviour.

Researchers collected the data in this research that was carried out in the following ways: interviews, questionnaire tables and conclusions from the teacher of MAN 1 Banyumas and the researcher analyses how effective WhatsApp group discussion in improving grammar competence.

### **Object/Subject of The Research**

The subject of this research is the English teacher of MAN 1 Banyumas who has been frequently involved in the online classes using WhatsApp group chat as a primary learning media, whereas the object of this research is WhatsApp group chat media learning to improve student’s English grammar competence.

### **Data Sources**

#### **1. Primary**

The data that would be shown were received transparently from the outcome of the interview with the teacher who involved in. The researcher were encouraged to utter several questions surrounding the effectiveness of WhatsApp groups to improve grammar competence of the students. Also there will be any other emphasized questionnaire for the advantages until how it will be utilized temporarily during pandemic.

#### **2. Secondary**

Another data according to the paper had a connection with the relevancy of the already accomplished journals related to this research. The researchers had to mention several papers



which have closely familiar idea. The reason is that the paper can be avowed for its authenticity, along with other research papers or observation journals. These journals were enabled to take a role as proponent of the ideas and consideration of equivalency of the research.

### Techniques of Data Collection

Qualitative research method used in this research provide insight into the perceptions, values, and opinions, are being conducted. Interviews are one of the most commonly recognized forms of qualitative research instruments (Mason, 2002). The interview was used to collect data from open-ended inquiry methods, the mainstay of qualitative interview techniques, are essential in formative research for exploring contextual factors. There are questions related to exploring contextual factors.

Table 1. Interview questions

<b>Questions</b>
How important is grammar for the students?
How understand the students about grammar?
How is the possibility to improve grammar competence using WhatsApp group?
In your own way, how you manage students to improve their grammar competence?
What is the minimum percentages of a students should master the grammar competence?
What is your reason to use WhatsApp as a media?
During grammar teaching, is there any obstruction with the use of WhatsApp?
Did you use any kinds of teaching aids to improve grammar competence through WhatsApp group?
What is the advantage of using WhatsApp group to improve grammar competence?

Techniques of data collection in this research was carried out in the following ways: interviews with open ended questions and conclusions.

### FINDINGS

In accordance with the instructions of the Ministry of Religious and Cultural Education, it is agreed that COVID-19 pandemic requires all schools to conduct a learning process at home or distance learning, and substitute the learning system from face to face to online learning. In

addition, students were instructed to study from home by doing online-based learning with adapted facilities. The researcher of this writing aims to determine the extent to which a WhatsApp media is very useful to improve grammar competence.

Table 2. Result of the interview

Questions	Answers
How important is grammar for the students?	Its really important. In English lesson there are four skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. In writing skill, the students can not skip about grammar so they have to understand how to write English well using grammar.
How understand the students about grammar?	I think, based on the student's competence specially in MAN 1 Banyumas, only 50% student understand about grammar though.
How is the possibility to improve grammar competence using WhatsApp group?	It's very possible to do, because it's so effective in the distance learning, I can deliver the material with ease and it's flexible with only through WhatsApp group. Besides, the material source are not so hard to get when there are some e-books or anything else you can buy.
In your own way, how you manage students to improve their grammar competence?	In pandemic era it is so hard to explain the grammar material so one way I use to learning detail about the pattern or each tenses, for easier to know about time present and past. Because without tenses they can't make a sentence based on the time.
What is the minimum percentages of a students should master the grammar competence?	I mean the student in MAN 1 Banyumas should at least 50% understand learning about grammar.
What is your reason to use WhatsApp as a media?	It's simple and easy to check the students every time.
During grammar teaching, is there any obstruction with the use of WhatsApp?	Of course, some of them have slow response in learning online. Low signal when giving zoom meeting etc. So to explain the material is not done well. The solution is, I just give video, PowerPoint about grammar material in file to WA group.

Questions	Answers
Did you use any kinds of teaching aids to improve grammar competence through WhatsApp group?	By giving picture to describe it, making sentence based on tenses I give. That would give an attractive aspect for students to feel enthusiastic in learning grammar.
What is the advantage of using WhatsApp group to improve grammar competence?	I think is interesting and effective for share all information, so that many teachers using this media to make communication easily.

## DISCUSSION

From the interview result as shown most of the students use WhatsApp applications in learning media. Based on the interview with the English teacher said that:

“I think, based on the student’s competence especially in MAN 1 Banyumas, only 50% student understand about grammar though in pandemic era it is so hard to explain the grammar material so one way I use to learning detail about the pattern or each tenses, for easier to know about time present and past”

In this pandemic era, teachers have experienced many difficulties in teaching grammar material. Because of that Grammar is a subject that stresses many students out, as it can be quite confusing and complicated. The English teacher assumed that only half of the students understand learning about grammar.

Moreover, the results obtained from interviews using WhatsApp show that during the COVID-19 pandemic it was easier for teachers to implement teaching and learning using WhatsApp media. This is because WhatsApp is more efficient because all students have and understand. From the interview teacher say that:

“Some of them have slow response in learning online. Low signal when giving zoom meeting etc. So for explaining material is not done well, the solution I just give video, PowerPoint about grammar material in file to WA group”.

“I think is interesting and effective for share all information, so that many teachers using this media to make communication easily”.

## CONCLUSION

The WhatsApp group application utilized in MAN 1 Banyumas as the implementation of social distancing to avoid the COVID-19 virus makes learning activities committed online or in distance learning, however, learning must remain active and run smoothly. The results found that in MAN 1 Banyumas implement a platform such as WhatsApp for the teaching process in improving student’s grammar competence. Approximately half of the students have mastered the English grammar competence.

During he COVID-19 pandemic, problems that often arise in online activities or online learning are internet data packages or limited internet signals by the students. Although, the

outcome that was received from the English teacher of MAN 1 Banyumas which uses WhatsApp stated that during the COVID-19 pandemic it was not find any hard and crucial problems for teachers to implement teaching and learning using WhatsApp media. Because of the WhatsApp efficiency, all students of MAN 1 Banyumas become easily understand and it was the way to improve grammar competence.

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