

Exploring the Effect of Using WhatsApp on Saudi Female EFL Students' Idiom-Learning

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Abstract

The study aimed at investigating the effect of using WhatsApp-based learning activities on developing idiom knowledge among Saudi university English as a foreign language (EFL) students compared to conventional method. It also examined the students' perceptions towards the application of WhatsApp in idiom-learning. The rationale for conducting this study is to provide students with useful learning tools that may improve their idiomatic knowledge and also help them to practice English idioms anytime and anywhere outside the classroom. It also aimed to help teachers to streamline EFL instruction, making it more efficient, effective, and user-friendly. As such, the main research questions are what is the effect of WhatsApp-based learning activities on developing university female EFL students? and what are Saudi female EFL students' perceptions on learning idioms using WhatsApp?. To answer these questions, 70 EFL female students in the Department of English Language and literature at Imam Mohammad ibn Saud Islamic University (IMSIU) involved in the study. They were assigned into two groups; experimental group, who was taught English idioms via WhatsApp-based learning activities, and control group, who was taught English idioms conventionally in classroom. Two instruments were used to collect the data; a pre-post idioms achievement test and a post-study questionnaire. The findings demonstrated that the experimental group significantly outperformed the control group in idioms achievement post-test. Moreover, the results showed that the majority of the experimental group had a positive perception towards learning English idioms via WhatsApp.

Keywords: idiomatic expression, mobile assisted language learning, Saudi female EFL students, students' perceptions, WhatsApp

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Introduction

Idioms are essential segment of second language acquisition programs which aim to help students to achieve native-level language proficiency (Mahmoud, 2002). Unfortunately, the teaching of idioms in the Saudi EFL context has generally not received adequate attention in classroom learning environments. According to Alhaysony (2017), most Saudi EFL undergraduate students lack idiom competence. EFL teachers encounter various challenges in idioms teaching. The limited class hours and overcrowded classrooms do not allow EFL students to have enough exposure to idiomatic expressions and to be able to understand them and use them accurately (Haghighi, 2016). According to Noor and Fallatah (2010), the non-interactive environment in the conventional classrooms minimizes the opportunity to identify the meaning of idioms and to receive adequate feedback. In addition, teachers may struggle to motivate learners to use and pick up idioms outside the classroom (Al-Kadi, 2015). This raises several questions regarding the effectiveness and appropriateness methods for teaching and learning idioms employed in Saudi EFL context. Therefore, it is important for EFL teachers to integrate English idioms effectively in EFL classrooms to develop students' achievement as well as improve their language proficiency level.

The ubiquity, usability, and flexibility of mobile technologies can help to improve EFL learners' idiomatic knowledge (Chen & Chung, 2008). Nesselhauf and Tschicold (2002) claimed that learning applications are suited for teaching idioms and collocations as these are easy to implement in mobile learning (m-learning) applications. They also argued that vocabulary can easily be practiced beyond the classroom context. Undoubtedly, there is a need to incorporate new techniques and teaching aids that help EFL students to understand and use English idioms effectively.

WhatsApp is one of the most widespread messaging applications, and it is sometimes utilized as a source of communication between teachers and students. According to Yalcinalp and Gulbahar (2010), the advantages of using WhatsApp as an educational tool are as follows: it motivates learners, makes collaborative learning productive, and encourages learner-to-learner interaction. However, the potential of this educational tool has not been exploited enough by educators for learning idiomatic expressions. Therefore, WhatsApp can be operationalized in this study as a medium by which students share online resources, pictures, and videos.

The current study addresses a significant issue in language learning For EFL students, instructor and curriculum designers. It aims at providing students with useful learning tools that may enhance their idiomatic knowledge by practicing English idioms Anytime and anywhere outside the classroom. Furthermore, this study will help instructor and curriculum designers to create new and updated ways of teaching that will bridge the gap between formal learning inside the classroom and informal learning outside it.

Research Questions

This study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the effect of WhatsApp-based learning activities on developing university female EFL students?
2. What are Saudi female EFL students' perceptions on learning idioms using WhatsApp?

Literature Review

The Significant of Using Idioms in Learning English Language

Idiomatic competence is a necessary aspect of second language learning. The importance of idioms in developing fluency and understanding spoken and written languages is well-documented in the literature. According to Boers, Eyckmans, Kappel, Stengers, and Demecheleer (2006), there are three reasons why idiomatic expressions are beneficial for learners. Firstly, they help students to achieve native-like performance. Secondly, they are recalled from memory in units that help to reduce learners' hesitations. Thirdly, they facilitate fluent language production. Many researchers view mastery of idiomatic expressions as a step towards the fluency of native speakers (Liontas, 2002; Liu, 2017; Schmitt, 2000).

The Difficulties of Learning English Idioms

Mastery the meaning of English idioms has been an argumentative issue among EFL learners. The pragmatic, semantic, and syntactic features of idioms make it challenging for EFL learners to recognize their structures and comprehend their meanings (Al-Kadi, 2015; Andreou & Galantomos, 2007; Chen & Lai, 2013; Ghazala, 2004). Noor and Fallatah (2010) explored the difficulties encountered by EFL students in learning idiomatic expressions. The finding indicated that the insufficient coverage of idioms in language curricula is one of the problems that make idioms difficult for EFL students. Moreover, Haghghi (2016) clarified that teachers should find alternative ways to teach idiomatic expressions and make students responsible for their learning. One of the methods that could help teachers to teach idiomatic expressions is using various technologies that are accessible to students.

Mobile-Assisted Language Learning

The use of mobile devices to support language learning has presented a turning point in technology-enhanced language learning (Chinnery, 2006). Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) is considered a subdivision of both m-learning and computer-assisted language learning (CALL) (Viberg & Grönlund, 2012; Kukulska-Hulme & Shield, 2008; Chinnery, 2006).

The role of MALL in improving idiomatic knowledge among EFL learners has been examined to some extent (Amer, 2010; Basal, Yilmaz, Tanriverdi, & Sari, 2016; Haghghi, 2016; Hayati, Jalilifar, & Mashhadi, 2013; Thornton & Houser, 2005). One of the studies was conducted by Amer (2010), who tried to solve traditional EFL idiom-learning problems by developing an application called "Idiomobile." Data from the application showed that, the more learners used the program, the higher they scored on the application's quizzes. Findings also indicated participants' positive attitudes towards using mobile applications in language learning. In the Iranian context, Hayati et al. (2013) examined the effectiveness of three ways of English idiom instruction: Short Message Service (SMS)-based learning, contextual learning, and self-study learning. The findings showed that the SMS group scored the highest and the self-study group the lowest on the post-test. Furthermore, the post-experiment survey showed that mobile phones and SMS messages are effective and recommended teaching methods. Another example is a study carried out by Haghghi (2016), who examined the effect of Telegram—an instant messaging service—and movie clips on idiom-learning. The results of the study indicated that the Telegram and movie clip groups substantially outperformed the control group in the post-test. Moreover, the findings of the

questionnaire revealed that learners had positive attitudes towards using Telegram and movie clips in idiom-learning.

WhatsApp as a Language Learning Tool

The widespread accessibility of smartphones and wireless networks has led to a growing number of SNSs (Karpisek, Baggili, & Breiting, 2015). According to Alshabab and Almaqrn (2018), teaching and learning styles have been affected by the development and the availability of mobile applications. In Saudi Arabia, WhatsApp is the most popular messenger application, exceeding other social media tools such as Facebook and Snapchat (Fattah, 2015; Fodah & Alajlan, 2015). A study conducted by Baishya and Maheshwari (2020) concluded the importance of educational WhatsApp groups and the functions of these groups are mainly education related. According to Yalcinalp and Gulbahar (2010), the advantages of using WhatsApp as an educational tool are as follows: it motivates learners, makes collaborative learning productive, and encourages learner-to-learner interaction.

Given the ubiquity of smartphones and the heavy use of SNSs, a number of quasi-experimental studies have investigated the effectiveness of WhatsApp in vocabulary learning (Alsalem, 2013; Batawi, 2019; Bensalem, 2018; Castrillo, Martín-Monje & Bárcena, 2014; Çetinkaya & Sütçü, 2018; Fageeh, 2013; Jafari & Chalak, 2016) and some aspects of vocabulary such as collocations (Ashiyani & Saleh, 2016). These studies proved that WhatsApp is more effective and preferable language learning method than other social networking applications, printed materials, and computers. On the other hand, a study carried out by Dehghan, Rezvani and Fazeli (2017) did not support these purported effects of WhatsApp on vocabulary learning. The findings of the study indicated that there were no significant differences between the WhatsApp group and the traditional group in terms of post-test performance. The researchers attributed the lack of better performance in the WhatsApp group to students' distraction by irrelevant activities, the absence of rules regulating the use of this application for learning, the limited number of participants, and the choice of vocabulary words.

To date, most research on WhatsApp for language instruction has proven it to be an effective tool for foreign and second language learning. Nevertheless, the impact of this application for learning and practicing idioms has not been sufficiently researched. Therefore, this research tries to fill an academic gap by exploring the effect of using WhatsApp-based learning activities in improving the idiomatic knowledge of Saudi EFL learners, as well as their perceptions about the implementation of this technology in idiomatic practice.

Students' Perceptions of WhatsApp in Language Learning

One factor that may contribute to the effectiveness of mobile-mediated language learning is students' positive attitudes and perceptions towards mobile technology. Indeed, educational research (Alghamdy, 2019; Alshammari, Parkes, Adlington, 2017; Bensalem, 2018; Çetinkaya & Sütçü, 2018; La Hanisi, Risdiany, Dwi Utami, Sulisworo, 2018) has indicated that WhatsApp, in particular, has been positively received by students.

A variety of theories and models have developed to investigate learners' perceptions of the adoption of new technologies such as Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Innovation Diffusion Theory (IDT).

Technology Acceptance Model

TAM was developed by Davis (1989), and it included four main perceived constructs: perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, behavioral intentions, and attitudes towards the use of technologies. Perceived ease of use refers to a person's belief that a technology will be relatively effortless to use, while perceived usefulness refers to a person's belief that a technology will promote his or her job performance (Davis, 1989). In term of behavioral intention, it refers to a person's subjective likelihood to perform or not perform a specified future behavior (Davis, Bagozzi & Warshaw, 1989). Additionally, Attitude towards the use refers to a person's feelings about a particular stimulus object (Davis, 1989; Davis et al., 1989). To supplement these four constructs, Venkatesh and Davis (1996) expanded the TAM model by adding external variables (e.g., users' computer self-efficacy) that affect intention to use and actual use. According to Compeau and Higgins (1995), computer self-efficacy (CSE) refers to a person's perception of his or her capability to use a computer.

Based on the literature, TAM has been adopted and expanded in many studies for different types of technology. For instance, Huang, Huang and Huang (2012) used TAM to examine students' perceptions on the ubiquitous English vocabulary learning UEVL system. Turning our attention to more recent literature on technology acceptance, Rahman Ramakrishnan and Ngamassi (2019) utilized the TAM model and perceived risk to explore university students' perceptions of social media use and its effect on their satisfaction.

Innovation Diffusion Theory

Innovation Diffusion Theory (IDT), which is developed by Rogers in 1962, has been widely applied in disciplines such as education, sociology, marketing, and so on (Rogers, 1995). IDT devises a model to examine the transformation process of emerging innovations or existing technologies. Rogers (1995) proposed five main constructs in his diffusion of innovations model: relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability. In the present study, the researcher only adopts compatibility as an external variable because it is related to the reasons why participants adopted new innovations.

Previous studies (Cakir & Solak, 2015; Chang & Tung, 2008; Chung, Chen, & Kuo, 2015) integrated IDT into TAM to investigate different purposes. Chung et al. (2015) investigated the factors related to Taiwanese EFL university students' behavioral intentions towards mobile English vocabulary learning resources. Much like the present research, their study extended TAM by including self-efficacy and compatibility. The findings showed that students' behavioral intentions positively correlated with use of mobile devices.

The current study examines students' perceptions of using WhatsApp in idiom-learning by incorporating TAM and IDT. The researcher uses the TAM constructs of perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, and behavioral intention, alongside two additional constructs: self-efficacy and compatibility.

Methods

The present study followed a quasi-experimental design of nonequivalent groups. Brown (2004) describes a quasi-experimental design as one that involves a pre-test, treatment, and post-test on normally occurring groups. The independent variable of the study was WhatsApp-based learning activities, and the dependent variable was the achievements of Saudi female EFL students in idiom-learning.

Participants

The participants of the study were 70 EFL female students who were chosen purposefully from the seventh level of the Department of English Language and Literature at Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University. A convenience sample was used by selecting available participants from three intact classes and they were divided into two groups; the control group consisted of 35 students, and the experimental group consisted of 35 students. Their level is supposed to be defined as upper-intermediate or advanced proficiency level since they have accomplished the requirements of the previous English levels. Liu (2017) suggested that the acquisition of second language idioms correlated, to a degree, with the learner's proficiency in the target language. Accordingly, advanced learners could acquire idioms better than low-proficiency learners.

Research Instruments

To achieve the purpose of the study, the researcher utilized the following instruments:

The Idioms Achievement Test

The idioms achievement test was used as a pre-posttest. This test was designed and developed by the researcher. It consisted of 30 questions distributed in three sections. The test used common English idioms adopted from the Oxford idioms dictionary, Cambridge Dictionary, Macmillan Dictionary, and online idioms worksheets to measure the students' idiom knowledge (see Appendix A).

Post-study Questionnaire

The post-study questionnaire was adapted from Chung et al. (2015). It based on Davis' technology acceptance model (1989) and Roger's innovation diffusion theory (1995). The goal behind this questionnaire was to elicit the experimental group's perception regarding the use of WhatsApp in learning English idioms after the implementation of the treatment. The questionnaire was designed in the form of a five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree."

Validity and Reliability of the Research Instruments

Both content validity and internal validity were considered to evaluate the accuracy of the measures. The researcher assured the content validity of the instruments by giving it to a jury of three experts of applied linguistics to decide whether it is suitable for the research purposes, and whether it is appropriate for the students' English level. In accordance with their suggestions, the researcher made the due modifications. The internal validity was ensured through a pilot sample to assess the clarity of the items before administering it to the participants. Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to determine the correlation between each item of the instruments with the total mean. The correlation analyses showed that all 30 questions of the test and 15 items of

the questionnaire were highly significant at the 0.05 level and the 0.01 level, which confirm the validity of the questionnaire (see Appendix B).

To examine the reliability of the instruments, Cronbach's alpha was calculated from the pilot study. The reliability coefficient of the idiom achievement test was 0.861, and the calculated alpha of the questionnaire was 0.885. This indicates that the instruments have a high level of internal consistency.

The Design of Materials

The idiomatic expressions, that were chosen to be taught during the study, were selected according to their relevance and appropriateness to the educational environment and cultural background. Due to the limited period of the study, a total of 30 idioms were selected from many English dictionaries, such as the Oxford idioms dictionary, Cambridge Dictionary, and Macmillan Dictionary.

The Control Group

In the line with the finding of Amer's study (2010), which emphasized the importance of providing EFL learners with resources to assist their idiomatic expressions and collocation learning. The researcher developed a booklet that was designed as tables with three columns that sequentially present the idiom, the definition, and three examples. In addition, the idiom booklet provided various exercises, such as fill in blanks, choose the correct idiom from the brackets, and write the meaning of each idiom. The example is presented below.

Table1. *Sample of idioms booklet*

Idiom	Meaning	Examples
Vote with your feet	To show that you do not support a decision a place or organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When the price of skiing doubled, tourists voted with their feet and just stopped going. • Thousands of citizens are already voting with their feet and leaving the country. • I am prepared to vote with my feet if the meeting appears to be a waste of time.

The Experimental Group

The researcher selected a series of images, clipart, animations, and videos to promote students' idioms competence. Each idiom was presented by; displaying a picture that explained the meaning of the idiom (e.g., throw in the towel), showing a clipart or an animation that illustrated the idiom meaning (e.g., a character who cries and holds a surrender flag), presenting a video that showed the idiomatic meaning through a scenario or an instructor who explained the origin of the idiom and its meaning, and providing at least two written examples that presented the

usage of the idiom in different contexts (e.g., When John could stand no more of Mary's bad temper, he threw in the towel and left.)

Procedures of the Study

After receiving the required permission from the institution in which the data was collected, the participants were divided into two groups; experimental group and control group. The pre-test was given to both groups to determine their prior knowledge about idioms, and to ensure that the two groups had the same prior knowledge of English idioms.

After that, both the experimental and control groups received the same list of idioms using different teaching methods. The control group was given a printed paper-based list of educational material. The participants were taught by the researcher through conventional methods, without any assistance of any mobile applications. Classes were held once a week for 45 minutes covering an average of eight idioms per week over the course of four weeks. Accordingly, the experimental group received the same idiom lists via WhatsApp in a scheduled timetable. That is, three English idioms were sent four days a week by the researcher on time intervals between 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. Discussion and illustration of some idiomatic expressions were conducted between the researcher and participants. This process took three weeks to complete.

To measure the participants' progress after the treatment sessions and to determine the effect of each method for idiom-learning and retention, a post-test similar to the pre-test was given to both groups at the end of the study. Furthermore, the experimental group was asked to complete an online survey through Google Form on the final day of the treatment to obtain their perceptions toward the application of WhatsApp in learning English idioms. The statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) was utilized to analyze the research data.

Results

Results Related to the First Research Question

To answer the first research question, participants' achievement scores on the idiom pre-posttest were calculated by using means and standard deviations. Furthermore, degree of freedom, t-statistic and statistical significance are presented.

To compare the performance of the groups, an independent sample t-test was run between the pre-posttest scores of the control and experimental groups. The results are presented in Tables two and three.

Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations of Control and Experimental Groups' Pre-test Scores

Groups	N	Mean	S. D	DF	T	Sig.
Control	35	4.14	1.00	68	0.57	0.56
Experimental	35	4.09	0.89			

Table two shows that there are no statistically significant differences at the 0.05 level among the means of the students' scores in the pre-test of both groups. Accordingly, this could suggest that the participants' knowledge of idioms before the beginning of treatment are nearly equal. This

emphasizes that the control and experimental groups are homogenous in their idiom knowledge; thus, any change in their performance could be attributed to the treatment applied in the study.

Table 3. *Means and Standard Deviations of Control and Experimental Groups' Post-test Scores*

Groups	N	Mean	S. D	DF	T	Sig.
Control	35	19.63	6.17	68	2.40	0.01
Experimental	35	23.20	6.23			

Table three shows that there are statistically significant differences at the 0.01 level between the means of the control and experimental groups in their post-test scores. The post-test mean for experimental group is 23.20, which is higher than the mean of the control group 19.63. This result indicates that the differences were in favor of WhatsApp treatment than the conventional group. Consequently, this result could suggest that WhatsApp-based learning activities are effectively improve EFL learners' idiomatic competence.

To examine whether there is a significant improvement in students' scores from pre-test to post-test, a dependent sample t-test was run for each group. Table four illustrates the results.

Table 4. *Means and Standard Deviations of Control and experimental Groups' Pre- posttest Scores*

Groups	Test	N	Mean	S. D	DF	T	Sig.
Control	per-test	35	12.37	3.54	34	9.13	0.001
	post-test	35	19.63	6.17			
Experimental	per-test	35	11.77	5.03	34	11.50	0.001
	post-test	35	23.20	6.23			

Table four reveals that the control group' scores significantly improved in the post-test. The difference between pre-test and post-test means score is (7.26), which indicates that the conventional classroom lessons are effective in enhancing students' idioms competence. Nevertheless, students' achievement in the experimental group is higher than the control group' achievement. The difference between the mean scores of the experimental pre-test and the post-test reaches to (11.43), which indicates that there is a tremendous effect for WhatsApp-based learning activities on students' achievement scores compared to the conventional group's achievement. These findings show that the use of WhatsApp-based learning activities assist students to learn English idioms better than those who used conventional classroom lessons.

Results Related to the Second Research Question

To answer the second research question, the participants' responses to the questionnaire were calculated by using means and standard deviations. Furthermore, the percentage of the questionnaire items are presented. The results illustrate in tables five to nine.

Table 5. Mean and Standard Deviation of Participants' Responses on the Construct of Usefulness

N	Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	S. D
1	Learning idioms through WhatsApp is not restricted by time and place	% 2.9	2.9	0.0	25.7	68.6	4.54	0.89
2	Learning idioms through WhatsApp can help me accessing the information I need	% 2.9	8.6	17.1	28.6	42.9	4.00	1.11
3	Learning idioms through WhatsApp enhances the effectiveness of my learning	% 2.9	8.6	22.9	37.1	28.6	3.80	1.05

Table five demonstrates that the respondents of EFL learners have overall positive perception towards the usefulness of WhatsApp in English Idioms learning with an overall mean of (12.34). The table shows that "Learning idioms through WhatsApp is not restricted by time and place" was perceived as the most useful items when it comes to WhatsApp learning with a mean value of 4.54 and with standard deviation of 0.89. Furthermore, "Learning idioms through WhatsApp enhances the effectiveness of my learning" was the lowest rated with mean value of 3.80 and standard deviation of 1.05.

Table 6. Mean and Standard Deviation of Participants' Responses on the Construct of Ease of Use

N	Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	S. D
4	Learning idioms through WhatsApp saves my time	% 2.9	2.9	17.1	31.4	45.7	4.14	1.00
5	Learning idioms through WhatsApp is convenient	% 2.9	0.0	17.1	45.7	34.3	4.09	0.89
6	Learning idioms through WhatsApp is easy to use	% 2.9	0.0	2.9	28.6	65.7	4.54	0.82

Table six shows that the respondents of EFL learners have overall positive perception towards the ease-of-use WhatsApp in English Idioms learning with an overall mean of (12.77). The table shows that "Learning idioms through WhatsApp is easy to use" has received the highest rating in the construct with mean value of 4.54 and standard deviation of 0.82. On the other hand, "Learning

idioms through WhatsApp is convenient” was identified as the lowest mean value of 4.09 and with standard deviation of 0.89.

Table 7. Mean and Standard Deviation of Participants' Responses on the Construct of Self-Efficacy

N	Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	S. D
7	I can complete idiom tasks through WhatsApp without anyone's help	% 2.9	17.1	8.6	40.0	31	3.80	1.16
8	I can complete idiom tasks through WhatsApp if someone helps me	% 8.6	8.6	20.0	31.4	31.4	3.69	1.25
9	I can overcome the difficulties I encounter when I use WhatsApp to learn idioms.	% 2.9	5.7	17.1	42.9	31.4	3.94	1.00

It is obvious from Table seven that the respondents of EFL learners have overall positive perception towards self-efficacy of WhatsApp in English Idioms learning with an overall mean of (11.43). “I can overcome the difficulties I encounter when I use WhatsApp to learn idioms.” has been considered by respondents as the most self-efficacy in idiom-learning. It has got the highest mean value of 3.94 and standard deviation of 1.00. Furthermore, the lowest rating in this construct was received by “I could complete learning idiom tasks through WhatsApp if someone helps me” with mean value of 3.69 and standard deviation of 1.25.

Table 8. Mean and Standard Deviation of Participants' Responses on the Construct of Compatibility

N	Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	S. D
10	Learning idioms through WhatsApp does not require significant changes in my existing work routine	% 5.7	2.9	17.1	40.0	34.3	3.94	1.08
11	Learning idioms through WhatsApp is as same as using other applications I have used	% 14.3	48.6	14.3	20.0	2.9	2.49	1.07
12	Learning idioms through WhatsApp can be done through the computer	% 25.7	17.1	14.3	28.6	14.3	2.89	1.45

Table eight presents that the respondents of EFL learners have varying perceptions towards the compatibility of WhatsApp in idiom-learning with an overall mean of (9.32). In addition, it can observe that “Learning idioms through mobile applications does not require significant changes in my existing work routine” was perceived as the highest item in the construct of compatibility with mean value of 3.94 and standard deviation of 1.08. While “learning idioms through WhatsApp is as same as using other applications I have used” was the lowest rated with mean value of 2.49 and standard deviation of 1.07.

Table 9. Mean and Standard Deviation of Participants’ Responses on the Construct of Behavioral Intention

N	Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	S. D
13	I am willing to use WhatsApp in learning idioms	0.0%	25.7	14.3	37.1	22.9	3.57	1.12
14	I will continue using WhatsApp to learn idioms in the future	5.7%	11.4	8.6	40.0	34.3	3.86	1.19
15	I will advise others to learn idioms through WhatsApp	0.0%	8.6	5.7	42.9	42.9	4.20	0.90

It is obvious from Table nine that the respondents of EFL learners have overall positive perception towards the future intention of using WhatsApp in English Idioms learning with an overall mean of (11.63). The table shows that “I will advise others to learn idioms through WhatsApp” has been identified by respondents as the most users’ intention. It has got the highest mean value of 4.20 and standard deviation of 0.09. Furthermore, the lowest rating in the construct was received by “I am willing to use WhatsApp in learning idioms” with mean value of 3.57 and standard deviation of 1.12.

Discussion

The results of the first question revealed that participants’ idiomatic knowledge improved significantly in both the experimental and control groups, but that the experimental group, whose participants learned English idioms via WhatsApp-based learning activities, significantly outperformed the control group, whose participants relied on the conventional teaching method. This confirms the potential efficacy of WhatsApp as a tool for idiom-learning. This finding is consistent with the findings of other studies (e.g., Amer, 2010; Basal et al., 2016; Haghighi, 2016; Hayati et al., 2013) that confirmed the effectiveness of mobile applications in developing learners’ idiomatic competence. Furthermore, it matches the findings of previous studies (Alsaleem, 2013; Ashiyan & Saleh, 2016; Bensalem, 2018; Castrillo et al., 2014; Çetinkaya & Sütçü, 2018; Fageeh, 2013; Jafari & Chalak, 2016) that demonstrated the positive impact of using WhatsApp on vocabulary learning compared to traditional learning, other social networking applications, and

computers. However, it does not support the findings of Dehghan et al. (2017), which revealed that there were no statistically significant differences between learning by using WhatsApp and traditional method in terms of vocabulary learning outcomes.

There are a variety of underlying reasons that could explain the positive effect of WhatsApp in enhancing learners' idiomatic knowledge, as observed in this study. Throughout the experiment, the WhatsApp group was provided with several forms of multimedia. The multimodality of WhatsApp, which incorporates video, animated pictures, text, and sound to present the meaning of new idioms, may have facilitated the participants' significant progress in idiom-learning. It may capture learners' interest and help them to acquire and retain new idiomatic expressions. This finding is consistent with a previous study which was conducted by Batawi (2019), who found that using multimedia makes learning more valuable and enjoyable, thus it impacts learners' memory and recall. Moreover, this finding corresponds with Haghighi (2016), who reported that providing learners with various visual aids can attract their attention and stimulate their subconscious mind. Thornton and Houser's (2005) findings also aligned with the results of the current study. They concluded that rich multimedia can grab learners' interest and help them to comprehend the meaning of idioms. The dual-coding theory which was proposed by Paivio (1971) supported the impact of multimodality on idiom-learning. This theory states that learning could be enhanced by interconnecting verbal information such as text with visual imagery. The dual-coding theory posits that verbal information is more easily remembered when it is presented with visual information. Consequently, it is reasonable to assert that the experimental group, by using various types of multimedia, has learned the new idioms better than the control group.

The flexibility and ubiquity of WhatsApp may also have influenced the considerable improvement in the experimental group's scores. The advantage of learning on the move is that it produces a flexible and autonomous learning environment where learners can access learning materials anywhere and anytime beyond the classroom. Moreover, freedom from time and place barriers could give them greater control over their learning and thus enhance their motivation. Accordingly, the role of the researcher in this study shifted from a teacher to a mentor, materials provider, and on-demand guide. Therefore, the experimental group participants were indeed found to be more enthusiastic about learning than the participants in the control group. This confirms the main finding of Alghamdy's (2019) study, which revealed that most participants were enthusiastic about learning English through WhatsApp due to their enhanced motivation. Moreover, this finding corresponds with previous studies (Alshammari et al., 2017; Basel et al., 2016; Hamad, 2017; Hayati et al., 2011). Alshammari et al. (2017) stated that the use of WhatsApp in teaching and learning shifts control from teachers to students and increases students' autonomy through collaboration with their peers. Basel et al. (2016) clarified that one of WhatsApp's benefits is enabling instructional activities to take place anywhere and anytime and allowing students to engage asynchronously and synchronously with teachers and other students. Furthermore, Hayati et al. (2011) found that flexible and ubiquitous access to information encourage engagement in learning and help students to overcome the motivational obstacles of idiom-learning.

The collaborative and interactive capabilities of WhatsApp as a non-threatening environment may attribute to the improvement in the experimental group's scores. For instance, through the group chat, participants helped each other to understand the meaning of idioms and

contextualize new expressions by providing an appropriate equivalent in Arabic. They also asked questions, requested clarifications, shared their ideas freely without anxiety or fear of making mistakes. This finding aligns with those of Batawi (2019) and Yalcinalp and Gulbahar (2010), wherein WhatsApp increased students' interactive and collaborative learning.

With regard to the second question of this study 'Data collected from a post-study questionnaire revealed that learners were generally positive about using WhatsApp in idiom-learning. This indicated that participants were aware of the efficiencies and affordances of WhatsApp for learning English idioms. This finding corresponds with those of prior studies (Alghamdy, 2019; Alqahtani et al., 2018; Alshammari et al., 2017; Bensalem, 2018; Çam & Can, 2019; Çetinkaya & Sütçü, 2018) that indicated that students have positive perception about the use of WhatsApp in language learning.

The findings showed that, of the five given constructs, ease of use was perceived as the most important. The majority of the survey items relating to ease of use received positive responses ranging between "agree" and "strongly agree." Thus, it seems that WhatsApp's ease of use played an important role in students' positive perceptions and acceptance of the application for idiom-learning. This result corroborates Chung et al.'s (2015) study, which examined EFL college students' acceptance of m-learning in vocabulary learning and found that ease of use scored the highest among the five constructs. Furthermore, it supports La Hanisi et al.'s (2018) conclusions, which attributed participants' positive perceptions toward using WhatsApp in language learning to the application's ease of use. Cakir and Solaks' also found that perceived ease of use, self-efficacy, attitude, and satisfaction have a positive effect on learners' academic achievement.

Usefulness was perceived as the second most important construct, and responses to the related survey items were ranged from "agree" to "strongly agree." This indicates that participants recognized the usefulness of using WhatsApp in their learning. They admit that WhatsApp is flexible, accessible, and effective. This finding aligns with the result of Rahman et al. (2019), who concluded that perceived usefulness positively affects students' perceptions of social media's use in language learning. Furthermore, Huang et al. (2012) discovered that perceived usefulness positively influences active participants' perceptions on the UEVL system. However, Aloraini and Cardoso's (2018) findings did not match the current study results. Their results indicated that, compared to Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat, WhatsApp was perceived as the least useful SNS for both advanced and beginner students.

Regarding the constructs of self-efficacy, use intention, and compatibility were also positively perceived by students. Thus, it appears that students' positive perceptions of WhatsApp's ease of use, usefulness, self-efficacy, and compatibility affect their intention to utilize WhatsApp for their future idiom-learning. This finding aligns with some of Cakir and Solaks' (2015) findings, self-efficacy positively effects learners' academic achievement. Moreover, some of Chung et al.'s findings (2015) were also in line with the result of this study. They confirmed that the learners' intentions to use had positive correlations with mobile applications' compatibility, self-efficacy, and perceived ease of use respectively.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study sought to identify the extent to which WhatsApp-based learning activities could improve Saudi EFL university learners' idiomatic competence. In addition, it explored EFL learners' perceptions on using WhatsApp for idiom-learning. For this purpose, TAM and IDT models were combined to analyze students' acceptance of WhatsApp as an educational tool. Through this study, it is clear from the experimental and survey findings that WhatsApp can be regarded as an effective medium for learning English idioms. This study provided insights into the potential educational benefits of using WhatsApp for idiom-learning. Based on this evidence, the researcher believes that incorporating MALL into idiom-learning can solve many of the current challenges in idiom-learning, such as limited class hours, rare opportunities for learning English idioms outside the classroom, and lack of motivation on the part of learners.

Several limitations influenced the result of the study. The study was conducted on 70 university female students from the seventh level of the Department of English Language and Literature at Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University during the first semester of the academic year 2019/2020. Therefore, a more well-formed studying could be carried out in different EFL contexts, and with students at varying levels of language proficiency to obtain a more in-depth understanding of how MALL could help foster idiom-learning. Since the current study utilized WhatsApp as the main learning tool in an informal learning context, future research could tackle the use of WhatsApp as a supplemental tool that supports formal learning in the classroom. Because the current study paid special attention to learners' perceptions, further studies could focus on teachers' perceptions on this new environment. Teachers' opinions could also provide a better understanding of the potential of WhatsApp in idiom-teaching.

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Appendix (A):

Idioms Achievement Test

Name:

Phone Number:

Section 1: Determine the meaning of the bolded expression. Choose the best answer:

1. John wanted to fix his cousin's computer, but he was already having problems setting up his Aunt's Wi-Fi network and he didn't want to open a whole new **can of worms**.
 1. John was sick of spending his time helping his family.
 2. John wanted to go fishing instead of working on computers.
 3. John was having difficulties untangling the computer wires.
 4. John was not ready to begin working on a complicated new problem.
2. Mrs. Robison expects Cassie and my presentation to be good, but we have been working on it every night for the last week, so we are really going to **knock her socks off**.
 - a. Cassie and the speaker are not prepared to give a good presentation.
 - b. Cassie and the speaker intend on hitting Mrs. Robison rather than presenting.
 - c. Cassie and the speaker's presentation will far exceed Mrs. Robison's expectations.
 - d. Cassie and the speaker's presentation will meet Mrs. Robison's expectations.
3. When Cassie called Devon "stinky pants" on the playground, Devon wanted to call Cassie a mean name too, but Devon's mother had always taught him **to turn the other cheek**.
 - a. To forgive an act of aggression.
 - b. To return an act of aggression with equal force.
 - c. To delay an act of aggression for another situation.
 - d. To hide from aggression in order to protect oneself
4. Mr. John was sick for years. **He kicked the bucket** yesterday.
 - a. Mr. John hit the container.
 - b. Mr. John recovered from illness.
 - c. Mr. John died.
 - d. Mr. John got worse than before.
5. It was **raining cats and dogs** when we got off the bus.
 - a. There were many cats and dogs when we got off the bus.
 - b. It was raining really hard.

- c. We were getting really wet.
 - d. It was raining on the cats and dogs.
6. John would have been playing ball **until the cows came home** if it hadn't been for Suzie dragging him home for dinner.
- a. John was just about to stop playing ball.
 - b. John didn't even want to play ball to begin with.
 - c. John prefers nature to athletics.
 - d. John would have continued playing ball for a long time.
7. Cassie had to **eat his words** when it turned out that he had chosen the wrong horse in the race.
- a. Cassie admits that he was hungry
 - b. Cassie stops speaking.
 - c. Cassie admits that he was wrong.
 - d. Cassie was angry
8. I can only repeat that I want you to wait until Tuesday before you tell her, remember **mum's the word**.
- a. remember don't tell mum.
 - b. remember don't speak aloud.
 - c. remember don't say anything.
 - d. remember don't answer anything.
9. When John's father came home and saw the mess, he **hit the roof** and grounded John for one month.
- a. John's father was somewhat disappointed.
 - b. John's father was enraged.
 - c. John's father punched the ceiling.
 - d. John's father hit his son, John.
10. Catherine doesn't like her **run-of-the-mill** job.
- a. Catherine doesn't like her regular or ordinary job.
 - b. Catherine doesn't like her low- pay job.
 - c. Catherine's job is difficult or challenging.
 - d. Catherine doesn't like pulp mill.

Section2: Fill in the blanks with suitable idioms:

1. You will have to learn to speak clearly about what you want. You won't get anywhere if you_____.
- a. fits the bill
 - b. keep beating around the bush
 - c. throw in the towel

- d. kept a stiff upper lip
2. I need someone who can speak both French and Spanish. Do you know anyone who _____?.
- keep the wolf from the door
 - fits the bill
 - throw in the towel
 - hit the roof.
3. "That was such a difficult question! How did you get it right?" Reply: "I just took a _____."
- shot in the dark
 - stiff upper lip
 - storm in a teacup
 - a fish out of water
4. Don't worry about the silly row. It was just a _____.
- stiff upper lip
 - storm in a teacup
 - throw in the towel
 - a fish out of water
5. The investment scheme looked good initially, but I _____ when the adviser could not answer a few of my questions satisfactorily.
- smelt a rat
 - hear it straight from the horse's mouth
 - keep beating around the bush
 - throw in the towel
6. I have heard her excuses and they _____ with me.
- throw in the towel
 - cut no ice
 - smelt a rat
 - kept a stiff upper lip
7. My grandfather told me that he had worked hard even when he was not physically fit to _____.
- cut no ice
 - keep the wolf from the door
 - hear it straight from the horse's mouth
 - smelt a rat
8. I don't believe it that he did it. I'm going to go to him and _____.
- hear it straight from the horse's mouth

- b. smelt a rat
 - c. keep the wolf from the door
 - d. throw in the towel
9. Often enough, they try to maintain a good heart and a _____ when all the circumstances are against them.
- a. shot in the dark
 - b. stiff upper lip
 - c. storm in a teacup
 - d. throw in the towel
10. the competition is difficult, but Sara do not want to _____ and give up.
- a. fits the bill
 - b. throw in the towel
 - c. smelt a rat
 - d. hear it straight from the horse's mouth

Section3: Match the idioms to their correct meanings:

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. _____ Have a chip on your shoulder. 2. _____ keep your head down. 3. _____ Lets the cat out of the bag. 4. _____ Have a mountain to climb. 5. _____ Vote with your feet. 6. _____ Kill two birds with one 7. _____ go against the grain. 8. _____ below the belt. 9. _____ every cloud has a silver 10. _____ a fish out of water. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. get two things done at the same time. b. To oppose or resist a strong force. c. was unfair and cowardly. d. Be angry because you think you have been treated unfairly. e. show contempt or dislike by leaving a place. f. Attempt to avoid trouble by being unnoticed and quiet. g. Accidentally and unintentionally reveal a secret. h. have a very difficult goal to achieve. i. Some difficult or unpleasant situation has some advantage. j. uncomfortable in a specific situation: | <p>stone.</p> <p>lining.</p> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|

**Appendix (B):
The Internat Validity of the Instruments**

Table 9. *Pearson correlation between the items and the main mean of the idiom achievemnet test*

Items N	Correlations	Items N	Correlations
1	0.48**	16	0.47**
2	0.42**	17	0.49**
3	0.39**	18	0.33**
4	0.34*	19	0.56**
5	0.32*	20	0.44**
6	0.35*	21	0.52**
7	0.87**	22	0.54**
8	0.54**	23	0.12*
9	0.39**	24	0.16*
10	0.49**	25	0.33**
11	0.56**	26	0.44**
12	0.41**	27	0.30**
13	0.44**	28	0.21*
14	0.42**	29	0.17*
15	0.46**	30	0.16*

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

Table 10. *Pearson correlation between the items and the main mean of the post-study questionnaire*

Items N	Correlations	Items N	Correlations
1	0.64**	9	0.74**
2	0.70**	10	0.58**
3	0.81**	11	0.42*
4	0.83**	12	0.42*
5	0.81**	13	0.47*
6	0.70**	14	0.54**
7	0.74**	15	0.50**
8	0.51**		

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.