

Mobile Instant Messaging (MIM) as a Tool in Teaching English Among ESL Learners: A Systematic Review (2019–2023)

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Abstract

Technology's proliferation in teaching and learning, specifically in mobile instant messaging (MIM) as a tool has changed the meaning of education around the world. MIM applications have changed the way teachers and learners communicate in a classroom. The impact on ESL learners' enhancement in learning English has proven that teachers' exploration on MIM can be widely done in classrooms. However, the reviews on MIM in teaching English is scarce, despite the importance it poses in language teaching and learning. Hence, Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) were adopted for reviewing current studies. Using three main journal databases, namely Scopus, Web of Science (WoS) and Educational Resources Database Center (ERIC), 21 articles were extracted out of 750, from 2019 to 2023, taking into consideration of exclusion and inclusion criteria. First, the findings found evidence that WhatsApp is mostly and widely used in teaching and learning. In addition, MIM is perceived as a significant learning platform that can aid in the enhancement of the four language skills (i.e., reading, listening, writing, and speaking) as well as integrated language skills and vocabulary. Besides that, MIM is found to help to increase motivation, increase interaction and lower learners' language anxiety. In general, this study is useful for future researchers to explore and employ MIM in teaching English among ESL learners.

Keywords: Mobile Instant Messaging (MIM), ESL Classrooms, PRISMA, Systematic Literature Review (SLR)

Introduction

Globalisation around the world has brought new changes and definitions in the education system. The expansion use of Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) in the education has become increasingly popular as mobile devices and the Internet have grown more widely available. From the traditional face-to-face method, MALL focuses on the

teaching and learning with the help of mobile devices such as mobile phones and personal digital assistants (PDA and tablet PCs) without the restrictions of both teachers' and learners' specific time limits and geographical limitations (Gonulal, 2019; Soria et al., 2020; Traxler & Kukulska-Hulme, 2021). The usage of MALL has become indispensable part of the learning process due to the authenticity and the language learning experience that learners can achieve (Cheng & Chen, 2022). This is in par with the fourth goal of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) where every learner is entitled for quality and equity in education as well as lifelong learning experiences (Boeren, 2019).

Mobile instant messaging (MIM), being a part of MALL makes learning easier because it is quick, non-threatening, tailored and effective. According to Statista, WeChat, Facebook Messenger, and WhatsApp have been the three most popular mobile messaging services in the world since 2020 (Statista, 2020). It was also identified that there were 1300 million WhatsApp users in 2018 and 2000 million in 2020. Furthermore, according to Statista, Malaysia has the second-highest market penetration for WhatsApp after Saudi Arabia (Statista, 2018). According to Attalla et al (2020), this mobile application technology was adopted in Malaysian organisations as a platform for communication and collaboration. Although MIM has been accepted and used widely as an effective learning tool in language classrooms, there are few empirical studies that have examined how MIM is utilised in language learning, thereby leaving a gap. Thus, the purpose of this review is to analyse and synthesise research articles on the use of MIM in English language teaching among ESL learners between the year of 2019 and 2023 in order to answer the following research questions

RQ1: What are the types of mobile instant messaging used in teaching English?

RQ 2: How is mobile instant messaging implemented in English language teaching?

Mobile Instant Messaging (MIM) in Teaching

Because of the improved user experience, increased media richness and increased social influence (the willingness to change behaviour or beliefs), using MIM for educational purposes and the levels of social presence demonstrated in the communication both contributed to the manifestation of social presence (Ogara et al., 2014). By examining the MIM interactive content, researchers were able to pinpoint particular social presence indicators such as the disclosure of personal information (Bouhnik & Deshen, 2014), salutations (Miller, 2016), the expression of compliments (Smit & Goede, 2013), the use of humour (Robinson et al., 2015) and the expression of affect (Wang et al., 2016). These researches, which looked at MIM and social presence are primarily descriptive or correlational. Studies on the application of MIM in education have exploded in recent years. The use of MIM in English language teaching and learning has been shown to promote student learning, particularly when it is utilised to facilitate classroom engagement and permit real language exposure and exchange.

In terms of pedagogy, teachers have used MIM group as a virtual meeting space where ESL learners can share multimodal resources (Zhang & Xue, 2015), an online tutor platform (Butgereit, 2007) and to support the teaching of English, particularly for the realisation of authentic communication (Fattah, 2015). In addition, MIM acts as a platform for personalised learning and it creates a larger community where learners may exchange ideas and work

together—even discussing sensitive subjects according to (Kim, 2014). Additionally, MIM can be used to promote improved student-teacher interactions (Andujar, 2016).

Mobile Instant Messaging (MIM) in English Language Teaching among ESL Learners

MIM has also been proven to be a great tool in teaching and learning English among ESL learners (Nasir et al., 2021; Yen et al., 2023). English teachers use MIM as a platform to develop and strengthen learners writing skills. Andujar (2016) explained that by using MIM, the errors made in writing such as grammatical and lexical have reduced tremendously among the learners. Learners' engagement and enthusiasm are more prominent by applying MIM in writing task compared to the traditional approach of teaching writing (Al-Shehab, 2020). It also provides learners the ability and opportunity to have interaction and discussion with teachers as well as other learners (Jiang, 2016; Tong, 2018). This is similar with findings by Rambe and Chipunza (2013) that MIM helps ESL learners to express their ideas freely through writing at any place and time compared to being in a traditional classroom setting. Listening being an important component in language learning has also helped the learners to enhance the skill with the aid of MIM. Mobility of MIM allows learners to practice listening at anytime and anyplace (Ghee et al., 2019). This is also supported by Kim and Kwon (2012) where the authors added that the originality and proper scaffolding of listening audios have effective impact on ESL learners listening skills. Learners could listen to recording or audios repetitively by downloading and keeping in the phones (Fattah, 2015; Ghee et al., 2019). It also creates an interesting atmosphere for learners to communicate among each other that not only promotes interaction but also a route to improve listening comprehension (Tendiami, 2017).

MIM is also used for its immediate response features and chat to help enhancing learners' reading skills (Napratilora et al., 2020; Silalahi & Pariyanto, 2021). Within the limited time spent in classroom with the learners, it is impossible for teachers to spend a lot of time in enhancing learners' reading comprehension (George, 2018). Thus, teachers can use MIM to send English texts, real-life materials or short articles that can be accessed by the learners at their own time and space (Bouhnik & Deshen, 2014). Learners in an ESL setting are also able to discuss about the reading materials before the class to have a better understanding and comprehension (Napratilora et al., 2020). Warman (2018) in the study done also added that learners' motivation to read and understand the text has improved with the help of MIM. It is supported by Rafiq et al (2022) in a study that motivation from teacher helps learners to elevate their language learning. The study by Warman (2018) also revealed that learners managed to gain new vocabularies during discussion with others which led to better grasp of the reading materials. As highlighted in the findings of a study done by Rafiq et al (2022), vocabulary acquisition is a vital part in language learning apart from other skills.

Aside from that, many studies investigated the effectiveness of MIM in helping ESL learners to improve speaking skill (Ajid et al., 2018; Binti Mistar & Embi, 2016; Bouhnik & Deshen, 2014; Ghee et al., 2019; So, 2016; Yin, 2016). These studies reported that speaking is an essential tool for learners to acquire because it enables learners to communicate and elicit thought effectively and MIM plays a great role in it. Tendiami (2017) also established that teachers use many features of MIM such as voice notes and recordings to improve learners' speaking skills. Here, learners are given the freedom to be able to express ideas freely without being judged and it improves learners' communication skills too. This is in line with the findings by Bouhnik and Deshen (2014) where MIM has proven to assist learners to share

knowledge with peers as well as encouraging cooperation which promotes higher motivation among learners to speak. Hence, MIM could bridge the gap between teachers and learners that could lead to an effective and meaningful learning.

Advantages and Challenges of Using MIM Platforms in Education Context

The fact that MIM enables real-time communication is one of its key advantages for learners. This allows for fast message reception and response, which would be helpful when collaborating with classmates or working on group assignments (Malecela, 2016; Zhu, 2006). Additionally, group discussions may be started by users of instant messaging, which facilitates information sharing and teamwork (Malecela, 2016; Yin, 2016). The fact that instant messaging is frequently less professional than email is another benefit for learners. As there is less need to utilise formal language and structure, learners may feel more at ease speaking with their teachers and peers (Yin, 2016; Zhang & Xue, 2015). Additionally, instant messaging applications frequently provide a variety of services, including the ability to transfer files, make phone conversations and send images making them a more versatile tool for learners and teachers (So, 2016). Learners that actively participate in sharing, debate and cooperative efforts to resolve disputes via negotiation are engaging in meaningful learning (Rafiq et al., 2022; Yen et al., 2022).

Typically, threaded messages are used in asynchronous online discussions. As a result, readers may easily follow the dialogue since a chain of messages will be uploaded as answers and shown visually as a line or tree. Asynchronous online discussion can often result in longer communication times, which makes it inappropriate for activities that call for speed, such as hasty group decision-making despite its benefits like temporal flexibility and the possibility for contemplation (Zhu, 2006). Additionally, there are other MIM applications for iOS and Android that are free. Due to this, many learners may access them regardless of their financial background (Tang & Hew, 2017). Besides that, end-to-end encryption is frequently included in instant messaging programmes, adding an extra degree of protection and guaranteeing that the discussion remains secret. While there are numerous advantages to instant messaging for learners, it is important to be aware that there may also be some drawbacks. MIM is one such habit that might keep ESL learners from paying attention in class (Fewkes & McCabe, 2012; Kaufmann & Peil, 2020; Leitch & Warren, 2011). In addition, as communication can be intercepted or hijacked, instant messaging may not be as secure as email (Bouhnik & Dshen, 2014). Teachers and schools should instruct learners on proper instant messaging usage and establish rules on how it should be used to reduce these hazards.

In conclusion, learners now often connect with their teachers and peers using MIM. It is frequently more informal than email and enables for real-time contact as well as group discussions. MIM is a flexible and available technology that may be utilised to enhance student cooperation and communication (Nasir et al., 2021; Zhu, 2006). However, it is imperative that educators and institutions create rules for when and how learners should use instant messaging while also educating them on the safe usage.

Methodology

The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) were used for this systematic literature review. PRISMA consists of four stages, which are known as the identification, screening, eligibility and included. The four stages can be shown

in Figure 1. PRISMA is preferred by researchers as it is simple to comprehend and can be adapted easily to other studies. Thus, stages of the systematic review of this research are as follows:

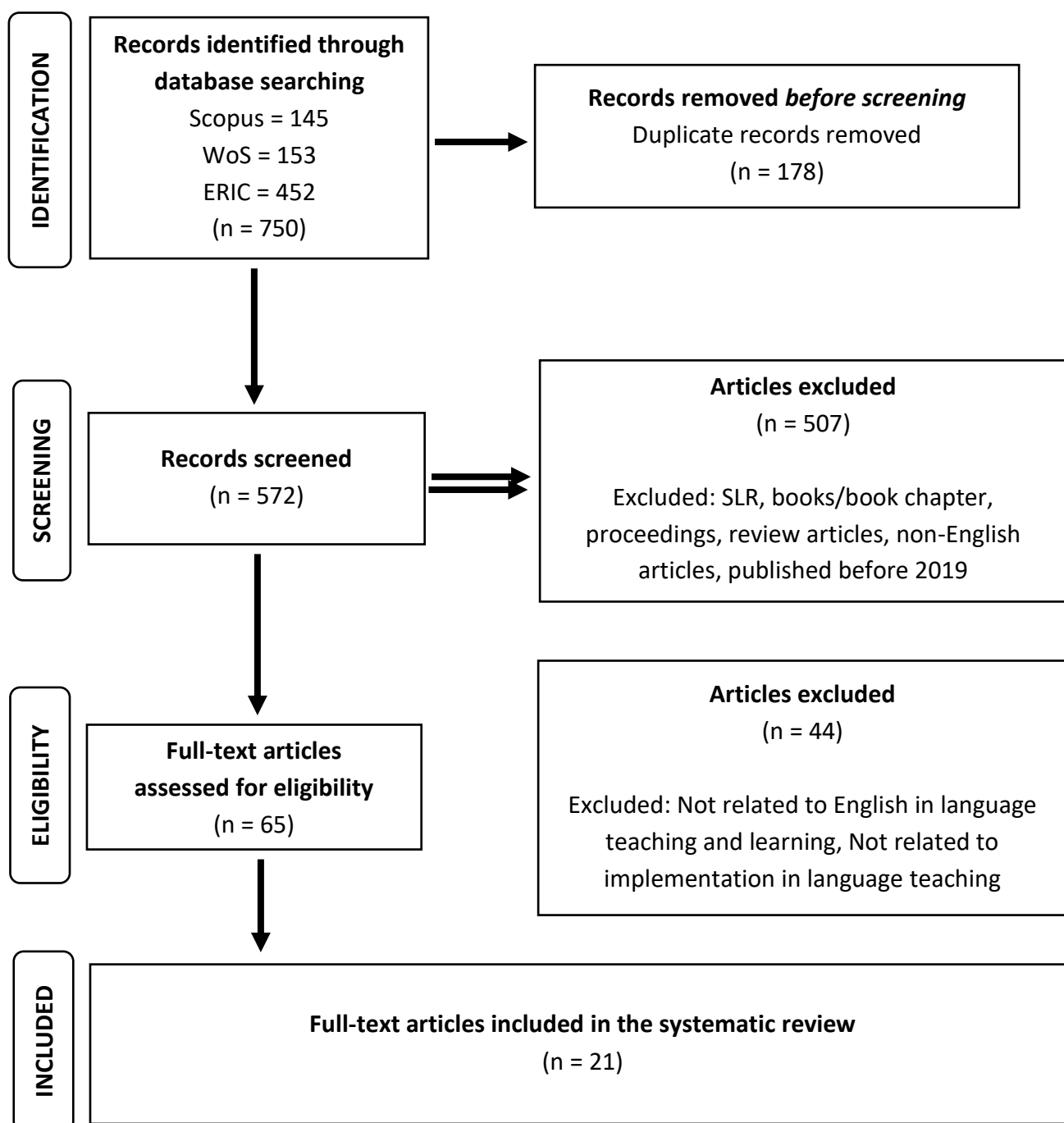


Figure 1. Steps of the systematic review based on PRISMA.

Phase 1: Identification

In this systematic review the initial step was to search for the articles related to the study. Three databases were compatible and used for this study's aim; Scopus, Web of Science (WoS) and Educational Resources Information Centre (ERIC). The articles were taken from 2019 to 2023, which is the recent five years. A total of 750 articles were found using these three databases. The key terms used to search for relevant articles were well thought

and constructed carefully. Words related to mobile instant messaging (MIM) and ESL learners were included. The search string used in all the three databases are as displayed in Table 1 below.

Table 1

The terms used to search for relevant articles.

| Databases | Search String |
|----------------------|---|
| Scopus | TITLE-ABS-KEY (("mobile assisted language learning" OR "mobile instant messaging" OR "m-learning" OR "instant messaging") AND ("language teaching" OR "teaching English" OR "learn English" OR "ESL learner*")) |
| Web of Science (WoS) | TS= (("mobile assisted language learning" OR "mobile instant messaging" OR "m-learning" OR "instant messaging") AND ("language teaching" OR "teaching English" OR "learn English" OR "ESL learner*")) |
| ERIC | mobile instant messaging and teaching English |

Phase 2: Screening

After identifying the articles, the initial step was to exclude duplicate articles found from the three databases. A total of 178 duplicate articles were removed, resulting in 572 articles for further screening based on the criteria listed in Table 2. During the screening process, 507 articles removed as they did not meet the criteria mentioned.

Table 2

Inclusion and exclusion criteria.

| Criterion | Inclusion | Exclusion |
|-----------------|------------------|---|
| Type of article | Journal articles | Book, book chapter, proceedings, review articles, SLR |
| Language | English | Non-English |
| Year | 2019 – 2023 | <2019 |

Phase 3: Eligibility

In this phase, the remaining 65 articles were analysed and checked for eligibility to make sure the articles met the researcher's requirements in which the articles should be related to MIM in English language teaching and learning as well as the implementation of MIM in the English language classrooms. A total of 44 articles were then excluded in this process.

Phase 4: Inclusion

The articles found were related to the use of MIM in the teaching and learning of English in classrooms. There were 12 articles from ERIC, 3 from WOS and 6 from SCOPUS. Most of the research was carried out in universities and colleges, followed by secondary school and primary school learners.

Results

The results of the articles found from the previous procedure will be analysed care-fully in this section. A total of 21 articles are chosen to be reviewed and the results are displayed in Table 3 below.

Table 3

Summary of the articles found.

| | Study | Database | Aim | Types of MIM | Samples | Findings |
|----|--------------------------|----------|--|--------------|------------------------|---|
| 1. | Chung and Choi, 2023 | WoS | to explore the use of MIM as a tool in online language classrooms and how it was utilised to create collaborative learning during the Covid-19 pandemic | Kakao Talk | 979 learners | The study indicated that the implementation of MIM was indeed very positive. Kakao Talk was used as medium of instruction where and to make announcements. Teacher-student and student-student communication using Kakao Talk were found to have positive impact on learners' satisfaction. They were able to receive personalized feedback which was a guidance and support for them. Student agreed that it was so convenient and easy to use Kakao Talk as they were able to access the learning materials shared by their teacher. It was also said to be 'safe' and 'less formal' as learners had the ability to seek help whenever needed. It was proven to be an effective learning tool to enhance English language learning. |
| 2. | Ghorbani and Ebadi, 2020 | SCOPUS | to investigate learners' opinions regarding utilising MALL applications, notably Telegram, as an additional teaching resource to enhance learners' grammar | Telegram | 40 female EFL learners | Telegram proved to be helpful in promoting grammar proficiency among the learners. Instructors used Telegram to give feedback to the learners which helped them to improve their grammar mistakes. Instructor reminded the learners on the correct usage of grammar by |

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|----|------------------------------|------|---|----------|--|---|
| | | | | | | repeating it. Through this study, it was proven Telegram played an effective role in motivating learners to learn English and also a great supplementary tool with traditional teaching practices. |
| 3. | Yan, 2019 | ERIC | to investigate the use of WeChat platform among learners in learning college English writing | WeChat | 88 undergraduate learners | The results showed that learners' writing skill were improved as well as their writing efficiency. Teacher's role was merely a facilitator, aiding and guiding them throughout the writing process. It was also agreed that the mode of writing can be done virtually without the constraint of time and place. Furthermore, teachers were able to communicate with the learners through WeChat which was far more relaxing than face-to-face lesson. |
| 4. | Alamer et al., 2023 | ERIC | to investigate instant messaging technologies especially WhatsApp in creating positive impact in learning | WhatsApp | 2 groups of Saudi undergraduate learners; 447 learners | The investigation proved that the implementation of WhatsApp in teaching and learning made learners to be more motivated and reduced language anxiety. It also helped learners to master the language skills better. Teachers were also to give feedback at the end of the tasks. Besides that, this type of learning was considered informal and could be done at anytime and anywhere. |
| 5. | Albogami and Algethami, 2022 | ERIC | to explore the use of WhatsApp | WhatsApp | 15 EFL English learners | The learners agreed that WhatsApp have helped in their |

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|----|-------------------|------|--|----------|---|--|
| | | | voice messages in teaching speaking among EFL Saudi learners | | | speaking skills. They preferred to speak using voice messages rather than speaking in physical class. It was also proved that learners felt more motivated and their fear of making mistakes when speaking had reduced. Besides that, the flexibility of WhatsApp was also agreed by the learners as they were able to send voice messages at any time and place. All the learners had the chance to speak anytime compared to their classroom teaching and learning where it may not be feasible. |
| 6. | Almogheerah, 2021 | ERIC | to examine the development of knowledge on idioms among Saudi university EFL learners utilising WhatsApp-based learning activities compared to traditional methods as well as learners' opinions on how WhatsApp was used in teaching idioms | WhatsApp | 70 EFL female learners in the Department of English Language and Literature | The findings revealed that learners' knowledge on idioms have increased in both the groups. Videos, pictures and texts were helpful in capturing learners' interest to learn and better memory retention of the idiomatic expressions learned. The result showed that WhatsApp was flexible and provided autonomous learning which enabled learners to learn beyond classrooms. |

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|----|-----------------------------|------|---|----------|---------------------------------------|---|
| 7. | Alubthane and Youssef, 2021 | ERIC | to analyse how utilising WhatsApp to assist learning and engagement in online courses has affected Saudi learners' attitudes | WhatsApp | 8 Saudi pre-service teaching learners | All the learners claimed that using WhatsApp was much convenient and easy compared to university's system. Besides that, it was much easier to get information from their classmates by using WhatsApp. Communication was so feasible and they were able to share materials and resources without any issues. Furthermore, they were able to communicate with other classmates and teachers about assignments or other tasks. However, there were some issues such as ignorance due to abundance of messages as well as misusing the WhatsApp groups. |
| 8. | Arifani et al., 2020 | ERIC | to find out if the individual flipped model through WhatsApp for individual writing activities can improve the cohesiveness of EFL learners more effectively than the small group flipped model via WhatsApp for small group writing activities | WhatsApp | 50 learners in 7 th grade | The results showed that EFL learners who were taught video materials on coherence using the group WhatsApp model scored much higher than learners who were taught using the individual WhatsApp approach. Using WhatsApp to teach cohesive writing skills also improved the learners' autonomy. It is also shown that the flipped writing class's collaborative WhatsApp group writing tasks supported the fundamental ideas of successful collaborative learning. Not only that, it also helped |

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| | | | | | | learners in improving their speaking as well as critical thinking. |
| 9. | Cetinkaya & Sutcu, 2019 | ERIC | to investigate the impact of multimedia annotations delivered via WhatsApp on learners' progress in English vocabulary learning, as well as their thoughts on the educational usage of WhatsApp and multimedia annotations | WhatsApp | 112 learners of age 14 to 15 | The study showed that learners' acquisition of vocabulary was a success using Text+Audio+Picture. This annotation was far more affective in helping learners to learning new vocabulary. Learners also stated that their motivation and willingness increased with the help of WhatsApp in teaching. |
| 10. | Cetinkaya, 2020 | WoS | to explore the use of WhatsApp and understand learners' experience as well as the contribution in language teaching | WhatsApp | 44 preparatory programme English majoring learners | The findings showed that WhatsApp was beneficial as a tool to helps learners in writing. Learners were able to remember the phrases and words during the conversation in WhatsApp thus allowing them to use it in their writing. It also helped the learners not to only master writing skill but speaking as well. Using WhatsApp allowed learners to practice writing out of the classroom setting which resulted in a better learning experience and language acquisition. Furthermore, learners' anxiety level also reduced and they became more confident thus contributing to active participation in the physical class. Teacher-student communication became better. There |

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|-----|---------------------------|--------|--|----------|---|---|
| | | | | | | were some drawbacks and challenges such as inconvenience, technical problems and the fear of making mistakes. |
| 11. | Fitriani, 2020 | ERIC | to investigate English teachers' perspectives about the integration of WhatsApp in a university-level English class | WhatsApp | 1 English teacher 15 English learners | The teacher used WhatsApp as a tool to teach speaking and it was done as same as the traditional learning. Games were implemented and learners' participation also increased. Learners were more confident to use WhatsApp for spoken test as they did not have speak in front of their peers. WhatsApp allowed teaching and learning to happen online even though there was internet problem among the learners. |
| 12. | Garcia-Ponte et al., 2023 | SCOPUS | to explore fluency and accuracy of 7 Mexican EFL learners in a repetitive narrative task using WhatsApp | WhatsApp | 7 Mexican EFL learners from a state university | The findings proved that there was an increase in the fluency of the learners. Learners' accuracy also showed a steady throughout repeating the task. It was agreed that repetition helped learners to be more familiar with the task, thus improving their fluency and accuracy. A more challenging task was said to be more beneficial in helping to improve learners' accuracy. |
| 13. | Imamyartha et al., 2022 | SCOPUS | to explore the interaction and motivating dynamics of EFL learners when they participate in team-based mobile learning | WhatsApp | 62 males and 313 females of different majors aged from 18 to 22 years old | The findings showed that learners were able monitor their own learning through WhatsApp besides taking part in discussions as well as helping their peers. Learners were able to |

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|-----|---------------------------|------|---|----------|---------------------------------------|---|
| | | | (TBML) using WhatsApp in the context of English for Academic Purposes. | | | improve their language competence by taking part actively in group discussions. Using WhatsApp motivated the learners intrinsically and extrinsically which aided them in language learning. Group chats provided learners the chance for self-learning and authentic learning community. |
| 14. | Karthika and Selvam, 2022 | WoS | to investigate the use of WhatsApp voice notes in teaching English to visually impaired learners | WhatsApp | 10 learners and 1 researcher | The initial stage of the study showed that learners were a bit pressured as they were being observed by other people. Some changes were made and learners became more enthusiastic to participate in discussion. The learners were provided feedback in order to improve their speaking. Learners themselves had the opportunity to rectify their errors based on the feedback given. It also helped the learners to realise where were their problem areas in related to English. The study proved to be helpful for the visually impaired learners as they were more engaged in learning and it improved their speaking skills by using WhatsApp voice notes. |
| 15. | Makoe and Shandu, 2019 | ERIC | to find out how WhatsApp can help to build communities and improve interaction in language learning | WhatsApp | 29 first-year English module learners | The findings showed that learners interacted well through the facilitation of virtual learning communities. Besides that, sharing through |

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|-----|--------------------------|--------|--|----------|---|--|
| | | | | | | WhatsApp among the learners also supported each other for distance education. Learners were able to share new vocabulary acquired about their culture using WhatsApp. Not only that, learners were seen to communicate freely using the side chats with the teacher. |
| 16. | Makoza and Bagui, 2022 | SCOPUS | to explore how WhatsApp is utilised by learners to organise their learning | WhatsApp | 152 first-year undergraduate learners | The results showed that WhatsApp was implemented as a learning support for the learners. Besides that, learners were able to access and share learning materials as well as issues related to the learning. Not only that, WhatsApp was proven to be helpful for lecturers and learners to communicate with each other. Learners preferred to use WhatsApp group for collaborative learning among both local and international learners. |
| 17. | Martinez and Appel, 2020 | ERIC | to investigate the motivation and reluctance of Spanish teenagers and young adults in using MIM as a tool for EFL classroom activities | WhatsApp | 22 EFL learners of age 13 to 18 years old | The learners agreed that WhatsApp was fun and it helped them to catch up with their studies if they missed it. Majority learners claimed that speaking was the most useful task as well as grammar. Learners enjoyed interacting with others and exchanging memes and stickers. It is found that learners were willing to use MIM in the classroom. It is also |

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|-----|--------------------------|--------|--|----------|---|--|
| | | | | | | proven to become a motivational support for the learners. |
| 18. | Martinez and Appel, 2022 | ERIC | to explore the communication of EFL learners among each other and with teacher in a WhatsApp group | WhatsApp | 14 learners of age 13 to 17 years old | The findings showed that learners used WhatsApp group to communicate and socialise with their peers and it was beneficial for them. It was also stated by the learners that there was improvement in their speaking and writing skills. |
| 19. | Menggo et al., 2023 | SCOPUS | to explore how using WhatsApp group video calls may enhance learners' communication skills and how much of an influence WhatsApp has on learning | WhatsApp | 119 learners from English Department | WhatsApp video calls proven to be great in improving learners' speaking skills. Learners' motivation and self-efficacy were also seemed to be increased with the help of WhatsApp. Not only speaking, but listening skill also was enhanced. Learners were able to listen to others and improve their communication skills. The anxiety to speak was lesser among them. Learners were motivated to use WhatsApp as it comes with various features. |
| 20. | Noni and Basri, 2019 | ERIC | to examine how using WhatsApp for recording chat-based EFL teaching and learning may improve the usage of mobile learning and boost learners' motivation and self-esteem in higher education | WhatsApp | 25 English Department learners aged from 18 to 20 years | In the initial stage, learners sent in shorter voice notes but at the time progressed, learners were able to send in longer recording based on the task given. The lecturer played a huge role in motivating and gave confidence to the learners so that they were able to speak well. Self-assessing was a little difficult in the beginning but after several weeks, learners managed to |

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| | | | | | | rectify their mistakes in choosing the correct words and grammar. Besides that, learners also felt freer to express themselves in the WhatsApp group. |
| 21. | Suhaimi et al., 2019 | SCOPUS | to explore the effect of teaching narrative writing focusing on grammar and vocabulary among Grade 6 pupils using WhatsApp | WhatsApp | 8 pupils of Grade 6 from a primary school | The results indicated that the learners were able to have long-term retention of the vocabulary learned as they were given immediate feedback. It allowed them to make corrections before posting in their WhatsApp group. Thus, learners were more aware of the sentences or words to be used in their writing. By having to read the sentences that have been rectified by the teacher, it helped the learners to construct sentences faster and more accurately to be used in their writing. However, WhatsApp proved to have no effect on the aspect of grammar. Thus, WhatsApp did not help with acquiring grammar among the learners. |

This systematic review was done by analysing the articles found in a thematic manner with the main purpose to answer the following research questions.

RQ1: What are the types of mobile instant messages used in teaching English?

RQ 2: How is mobile instant messaging implemented in English language teaching?

For the first research question, the articles were grouped in accordance to the types of MIM used in teaching English. As for the second research question, the articles were categorised based on how MIM is implemented in the language classroom. Findings from the research articles are then discussed thoroughly in the next section.

RQ 1: What are the types of mobile instant messages used in teaching English?

In this review, the types of mobile instant messages used in teaching English were grouped into (1) WhatsApp, (2) WeChat, (3) Telegram and (4) Kakao Talk. The findings are presented as below.

Table 4

Types of MIM used in teaching English.

| Types of MIM | Articles |
|---------------------|---|
| Whats App | Alamer et al. (2023) Albogami & Algethami (2022) Almogheerah (2021) Alubthane & ALYoussef (2021) Arifani et al. (2020) Cetinkaya & Sutcu (2019) Cetinkaya (2020) Fitriani (2020) Garcia-Ponce et al. (2023) Imamyartha et al. (2022) Karthika & Selvam (2022) Makoe & Shandu (2019) Makoza & Bagui (2022) Martínez & Appel (2020) Martínez & Appel (2022) Menggo et al. (2023) Noni & Basri (2019) Suhaimi et al. (2019) |
| WeChat | Yan (2019) |
| Telegram | Ghorbani & Ebadi (2020) |
| Kakao Talk | Chung & Choi (2023) |

Based on Table 4, a total of 18 research articles demonstrated that WhatsApp is the favoured MIM used in teaching English (Alamer et al., 2023; Albogami & Algethami, 2022; Almogheerah, 2021; Alubthane & ALYoussef, 2021; Arifani et al., 2020; Cetinkaya & Sutcu, 2019; Cetinkaya, 2020; Fitriani, 2020; Garcia-Ponce et al., 2023; Imamyartha et al., 2022; Karthika & Selvam, 2022; Makoe & Shandu, 2019; Makoza & Bagui, 2022; Martínez & Appel, 2020; Martínez & Appel, 2022; Menggo et al., 2023; Noni & Basri, 2019; Suhaimi et al., 2019). It is supported by Alamer et al (2023) that WhatsApp is indeed a great tool in helping ESL learners to learn and master all the language skills. However, a study done by Chung & Choi (2023) showed that Kakao Talk is the preferred MIM tool in the medium of instruction in the classroom. According to Ghorbani & Ebadi (2020), the study showed that Telegram is utilised to teach English. Yan (2019) on the other hand stated that WeChat is more preferred by the teachers to carry out teaching.

Even though WhatsApp appears to be the most often utilised MIM for teaching English, all the other MIMs are excellent learning resources for developing learners' skills. According to the analysis's findings, WhatsApp is by far the most used messaging service in classrooms (Hamad, 2017). In a similar vein, 97% of Malaysians use WhatsApp (Binti Mistar & Embi, 2016).

The results of this study are also in line with those of Cetinkaya (2020), who said that WhatsApp is one of the most popular smartphone applications. As explicated by Statista (2016) as well as Church and De Oliveira (2013), WhatsApp has been popular due to features like the ability to transmit real-time messages to a single person or several friends simultaneously and privately besides being a free platform for anyone to use. Other messaging services like Telegram, WeChat, and Kakao Talk have also seen an uptick in usage. These services have also managed to remain ahead of the competition by consistently coming up with new methods to engage users both within and outside of the classroom.

RQ 2: How is mobile instant messaging implemented in English language teaching?

In the second research question, the researchers analysed the skills practised by various MIM. The language skills in English in general are listening, speaking, writing, reading, vocabulary, grammar and integration of all the other skills. Table 5 below displays the language skills focused on in utilising MIM in English language teaching.

Table 5

Implementation of MIM in English language teaching based on language skills.

| Language Skills | Articles |
|--|--|
| Speaking | Albogami & Algethami (2022) Fitriani (2020) Garcia-Ponce et al. (2023) Imamyartha et al. (2022) Karthika & Selvam (2022) Makoe & Shandu (2019) Martínez & Appel (2020) Martínez & Appel (2022) Noni & Basri (2019) |
| Writing | Arifani et al. (2020) Suhaimi et al. (2019) Yan (2019) |
| Reading | - |
| Listening | Menggo et al. (2023) |
| Vocabulary | Almogheerah (2021) Cetinkaya & Sutcu (2019) Ghorbani & Ebadi (2020) |
| Integration of Skills | Cetinkaya (2020) Makoza & Bagui (2022) |
| Not specified (motivation, language anxiety, interaction, feedback tool) | Alamer et al. (2023) Alubthane & ALYoussef (2021) Chung & Choi (2023) |

Based on the data obtained in Table 5 it is evident that most of the implementation of MIM in English language teaching are based on speaking skills followed by writing skills and vocabulary. There are a total of 9 articles that discusses speaking as a skill that is focused in their research (Albogami & Algethami, 2022; Fitriani, 2020; Garcia-Ponce et al., 2023; Imamyartha et al., 2022; Karthika & Selvam, 2022; Makoe & Shandu, 2019; Martínez & Appel, 2020; Martínez & Appel, 2022; Noni & Basri, 2019). The research also includes other

components such as motivation and anxiety as well as interaction and feedback tool (Alamer et al., 2023; Alubthane & ALYoussef; 2021; Chung & Choi, 2023). One of the main reasons speaking skills is implemented and favoured the most in language teaching is the interactive environment that the MIM creates between learners (Fitriani, 2020; Karthika & Selvam, 2022; Martínez & Appel, 2020). The findings also point out that practicing speaking skills via MIM enables ESL learners to easily monitor themselves (self-learning) and it also eradicates the fear of making mistakes which are often encountered during face-to-face classrooms (Albogami & Algethami, 2022). One specific research related to speaking skills in terms of using MIM primarily focused on improving learners' fluency in speaking via repetitive exercises (Garcia-Ponce et al., 2023). The authors also specifically mentioned that the MIM platform has improved learners' fluency due to the facilities that it provides which allows learners to use language repeatedly at any time.

The high number in the implementation of MIM for writing skills are justified by the accessibility of platform which is mobile. This enables learners to write virtually any time and place (Yan, 2019). The ease of assessment for the teachers and the facility to connect with learners instantly to give feedback for the writings are added values for the MIM to be implemented in English language sessions (Suhaimi et al., 2019). Apart from the basic skills in English, there are researches that include vocabulary and grammar in the language teaching using MIM (Almogheerah, 2021; Cetinkaya & Sutcu, 2019; Ghorbani & Ebadi, 2020; Rafiq et al., 2022). ESL learners can grasp on to the details and retain vocabulary via the help of text, audio and picture which facilitates their understanding and brings meaning to the words compared to just knowing them via textbooks (Cetinkaya & Sutcu, 2019). The instant feedback from Telegram by the teachers and the ability to visually convey information regarding grammars immensely helped learners to improve their grammar skills (Ghorbani & Ebadi, 2020). The data also showed that listening skill is also improved with the implementation of MIM. The findings are in harmony with previous works which pointed out that by listening to others it helps learners to not only enhance listening skill but also learners' communication skills as well (Menggo et al., 2023). It is also discovered that listening skill activities could lower ESL learners' anxiety level.

Other components that are investigated in terms of using MIM includes motivation and anxiety (Rafiq et al., 2022; Soria et al., 2020). Learners tend to find immense pleasure in using MIM, especially when it provides learners to practice self-learning skills and ability to self-efficient in using the language (Abd Rahman et al., 2022). Learners also specifically lose their fear of making errors while interacting with their peers which could not be possible when it is done face-to-face (Albogami & Algethami, 2022; Cetinkaya, 2020; Noni & Basri, 2019). Anxiety in learners reduced drastically especially with the use of interesting features that indirectly gave learners the confidence to be involved in more interaction via the platform of MIM (Alamer et al., 2023). The use of MIM has also proven been a great tool in giving feedback to learners. Chung and Choi (2023) highlighted in the study that Kakao Talk was used by the teachers to give personalised feedback to the learners as guidance and support. Besides that, it was also found that learners preferred using Kakao Talk as it was safer and less formal compared to being in a physical classroom.

Discussion

It has been found that based on the criteria set up in line with the objectives of the study, 21 articles have been analysed. The results show that WhatsApp have been the most favoured application among other MIM platforms analysed with speaking skills being the most common skill that is enhanced via this platform. Moreover, it was found out from the studies that ESL learners who went through MIM intervention had a vast understanding on the subject learned. This finding is similar with Soria et al (2020) who found that the learners' academic performance improved after the intervention of WhatsApp. Similarly, Malecela (2016) indicated that the learners agreed learning through WhatsApp to be interesting and educationally useful. Sayan (2016) concurred on the use of WhatsApp which has significantly proven to improve the learners' final examination performance.

The findings from the articles also suggest that factors such as flexibility and the variety of features together with its accessibility is a major factor for ESL learners and teachers to use the specific MIM. This however limits the usage of other reliable MIM platforms that are dedicated primarily for language learning purposes. The interactiveness together with the features that could elicit learners' different sensory is a major contributing factor for the type of MIM used (Almogheerah, 2021; Chung & Choi, 2023; Ghorbani & Ebadi, 2020). The findings resonate with So (2016) that different features and services offered by MIM could make it as a great tool for both teachers and learners. The other factors that the results point out is that the lack of classroom environment which makes learners feel less rigid when they are communicating via MIM (Alamer et al., 2023; Albogami & Algethami, 2022; Chung & Choi, 2023; Makoe & Shandu, 2019; Yan, 2019). The present studies agree with the findings in which learning even takes place outside the classroom at any time during the day in a more informal environment (Rafiq et al., 2022; Yin, 2016; Zhang & Xue, 2015). It is also revealed that the anxiety among learners reduces when they speak via the MIM platform as compared to face-to-face interaction (Alamer et al., 2023; Albogami & Algethami, 2022). The fear of making errors and the redundant mistakes on similar exercises can be avoided while using MIM application and it is important in learners' willingness to participate in language activities. As discussed by Bouhnik and Deshen (2014), the use of MIM in teaching and learning allows learners to communicate and have peer discussion anytime and anyplace where learners feel more comfortable compared to being in a traditional classroom setting. In such settings, learners feel the sense of belonging and authentic learning occurs (Nasir et al., 2021).

The article by Garcia-Ponce et al (2023) shows that MIM has also been massively useful in enhancing specific components of major skills. Fluency among ESL learners can be enhanced and improved with repetitive exercises which is not practical among teachers and friends. Features such as audio messaging provides an opportunity for learners to massively improve their vocabulary through fun learning. This is proven in the article by (Almogheerah, 2021). The article also suggests that the presence of audio recording massively improved learners speaking quality especially when they are corrected and their interactions are given instant feedback. This feature also helps visually impaired learners to learn speaking skills (Karthika & Selvam, 2022). Tendiami (2017) agreed that features such as voice notes and video recordings are great assistance in guiding learners to improve speaking skills. As for other skills and content in language learning, MIM has proven to have good impact in the improvement of learners' vocabulary retention and word recognition as well as to understand the meaning effectively (Rafiq et al., 2022). However, it provides very little advantage to

learners in the area of grammar. Suhaimi et al (2019) notes that MIM platform do not have the same impact on learners' grammar levels as compared to the traditional method of learning.

Furthermore, MIM has also showed positive impact on learners' listening skills. Menggo et al (2023) explain that listening too can be heightened with the aid of MIM. Here, learners could listen to audios and recordings to improve listening skills. The authenticity of the audios helps learners to have a better scaffolding of the learning materials (Kim & Kwon, 2012). Menggo et al (2023) also pointed out that the listening audios not only helps learners to improve their listening skills but also creates an opportunity for better communication among the learners. This is in par with the study conducted by (Tendiami, 2017). Not only that, learners' writing skills also have been enhanced with the support of MIM. Yan (2019) stated in the finding that MIM allows learners to write without any constraints such as time and place. Rambe and Chipunza (2013) claimed that learners could be themselves and write at any place and time. It is completely different than being in a classroom where traditional writing lesson takes place. Besides that, MIM also provides the opportunity for learners to seek help from teachers outside school hours (Jiang, 2016; Tang & Hew, 2017). However, based on the selected articles, it is found that MIM was not used for reading skills. Since the absence of MIM in reading skills is obvious here, it is important for future research to acknowledge how it can be utilised in reading skill. It is because reading skills can also be used with MIM as it potent to be a useful tool (Napratilora et al., 2020; Silalahi & Pariyanto, 2021). Studies done by Bouhnik and Dshen (2014) as well as Warman (2018) have proven that learners are motivated to read and have better comprehension as learners have the access to the materials at anytime and anyplace.

The drawbacks of MIM platforms are the lack of focus that could potentially halter learners' performance (Alubthane & ALYoussef; 2021). As stated by Fewkes and McCabe (2012) as well as Leitch and Warren (2011), learners tend to misuse MIM which eventually affects teaching and learning process. Therefore, the usage of MIM needs to be constantly facilitated in order to maximise its full potential. The MIM in almost all the articles analysed have received positive results in relation to its skill enhancement among learners. However, all the studies are done in a very short span of time. An immediate effect on the learners could always return positively but the nature of its real impact relies on the long-term usage among learners. Hence, it is still unclear if the MIM platform really can contribute towards a better language learning experience. Despite the drawbacks, MIM proves to cater learners with adequate social interaction environment which they could lack in real life situations (Alamer et al., 2023). The virtual learning experience together with the teachers' instant feedback features within the platform can only add more value to the quality of language teaching (Tong, 2018). The systematic review does provide enough knowledge on the type of MIM platforms used, however its effectiveness is subjected to a more rigorous quantitative study in a longer time frame. Thus, this study agrees with Tang and Hew (2017) that there is a need for quantitative research designs which can compare and evaluate the differences between MIM and other platforms dedicated solely for language teaching purposes.

Conclusion

The results of the systematic study on the subject showed that MIM in education as a tool for teaching English had a favourable effect on teachers and learners. Due to its

adaptability, WhatsApp is found to be the most popular teaching and learning medium (Hamad, 2017). WhatsApp is regarded as the ideal collaborative learning technology since it had made communication in courses a success and had assisted teachers in using its advantages (So, 2016; Yin, 2016). Because they thought that mobile applications were simple to use, majority of the learners in the studies that were examined used WhatsApp, Telegram, Kakao Talk, and WeChat (Ajid et al., 2018). However, further research is required to fully understand how other instant messaging services like Telegram, Line, Bubble and others are used to identify the specific features in these applications that can improve major language skills among learners.

Based on the results of this study, it is strongly advised that teachers take MIM into account while choosing the right communication technologies for a collaborative learning environment. The evaluated research has offered empirical data on the most popular MIM application and the kinds of abilities that it may primarily enhance in an English language teaching setting. Additionally, MIM has shown to be helpful in boosting learners' confidence, technological competence and social interaction between ESL learners and teachers during class activities. More research is thus advised to offer in-depth insights on how to use these instant messaging platforms to help learners improve their language abilities. In the future if researchers want to investigate this topic further, the limitations of this work should be noted. For this investigation, only articles from Scopus, WoS and ERIC were examined and analysed due criteria that have been set in line with the objectives of the study. A more thorough search may have yielded more opinion from diverse researchers, as well as further strengthening the findings to support the study. Besides that, many of the articles found focus on only the major MIM platforms and not platforms that are proven to be student-friendly specifically for language teaching. Another limitation that can be found is that the studies are generally done in a short span of time. This might not give the correct impression on the long-term effect that MIM can contribute. Regardless, this systematic review will benefit teachers and learners as well as contribute significantly to language teaching and learning using MIM.

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