

Double Ticked: The Impact of Using WhatsApp as a Pedagogical Tool to Improve German Spoken Skills in Times of Covid-19

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Earlier in Sri Lanka, online learning was considered a supplement learning method and later was part and parcel of blended learning. However, with the pandemic outbreak, teaching and learning in Sri Lanka evolved into an only online based process. Electronic devices, online applications and social media platforms therefore received a vital role to be played in achieving the teaching learning targets. Improving the spoken skills of a foreign language on the other hand is greatly influenced by the current virtual learning trends. The purpose of the study, therefore, was to examine the impact of employing WhatsApp mobile application as a pedagogical tool to improve the German spoken skills of tertiary level learners. The study involved 30 second year students representing the Higher National Diploma in Tourism and Hospitality Management (SLIATE) who learn German as a foreign language. The learners joined in a WhatsApp chat group and the spoken activities were shared along with the guidelines for their oral responses. Pre and post-oral tests and a focus group discussion were carried out to collect data while Excel Analysis and Qualitative data analysis Model (Seidel,1998) were engaged in the analysis. The findings revealed utilizing WhatsApp to improve German spoken skills had a noticeable impact on the learners. Their familiarity with pronunciation, grammar and basic German expressions has been improved. The test results indicated that 73.3% of the learners have improved their spoken skills showing evident changes in the skill. Focus group discussions highlighted that most learners perceive WhatsApp based learning as a productive approach which is novel, interesting, and inspiring. The majority observes this method as an opportunity to communicate in German as in authentic scenarios. Thus, the study recommends German teachers to use WhatsApp as a pedagogical tool to enhance the spoken skills through online teaching as well as in blended learning approaches.

Keywords: German as a Foreign Language, WhatsApp, Online learning, Spoken skills, Pedagogy