EXAMINING STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS AND ACHIEVEMENTS IN TERMS OF THE UTILIZATION OF WHATSAPP IN LEARNING EFL VOCABULARY

EFL Kelime Öğreniminde Whatsapp'ın Kullanımı Açısından Öğrencilerin Algılarının ve Başarılarının İncelenmesi

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Öz

This study mainly aims to find out whether there is any significant change in first year students' perceptions and any significant improvement in their learning EFL vocabulary via WhatsApp. To this end, eight-week long vocabulary learning through this application was implemented to the students. 79 students participated in the study from a state university. To answer the inquiry of the current study, they completed a pre- and a post-vocabulary knowledge test to identify their performances in learning EFL vocabulary, and a questionnaire to examine their perceptions. Findings showed statistically significant differences between the mean scores in favor of the students. Furthermore, the results showed that this improvement in learning EFL vocabulary performance may be largely attributable to WhatsApp application. Students' perceptions towards this application proved to be positive.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *WhatsApp, Vocabulary Learning, EFL, Perception, Achievement.*

Abstract

Bu çalışma temel olarak, birinci sınıf öğrencilerinin WhatsApp aracılığıyla algılarında önemli bir değişiklik ve EFL kelime öğrenmelerinde önemli bir iyileşme olup olmadığını tespit etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu amaçla, öğrencilere bu uygulama aracılığıyla 8 hafta süren kelime öğrenme uygulanmıştır. Bir devlet üniversitesinden 79 öğrenci çalışmaya katılmıştır. Mevcut araştırmaya cevap bulmak için, öğrencilerin EFL kelimelerini öğrenmedeki performanslarını belirlemek amacıyla bir ön- ve son- kelime bilgisi testi ve algılarını incelemeye yönelik bir anket doldurdular. Bulgular, ortalama puanlar arasında öğrenci lehine anlamlı fark olduğunu göstermiştir. Dahası, sonuçlar EFL kelime öğrenme performansındaki bu gelişmenin büyük ölçüde WhatsApp uygulamasına atfedilebileceğini göstermiştir. Öğrencilerin bu uygulamaya yönelik algılarının olumlu olduğu kanıtlanmıştır.

Keywords: *WhatsApp, Kelime Öğrenimi, EFL, Algılama, Başarı.*

Giriş

Globalization has aided to spread the utilization of English across the world, enhancing the need to share or exchange information, news, or ideas by putting this language into use and forming the function of English as a global interlanguage. In this respect, social media tools may be taken into consideration as one of the most notable advancements in the 21th century as individuals exchange information and affect each other. Since social media tools may be combined with educational environments, it may be possible to claim that the utilization of social media with the process by which humans gain the capacity to utilize language will permit students to ameliorate learning skills. Therefore, students may have better experiences in communicating and enjoying the classes instead of traditional classes and methods (Al-Ali, 2014, p.2).

Communication is a social process spreading among generations. This process is closely related to education and learning situation comes about thanks to the interaction and communication of students with the environment (Deryakulu, 1991, p.528). In this context, educators make attempts to utilize new technologies in communication and technology in different phases of teaching process. Students have access to all kinds of resources that a teacher uses and presents with new technologies. In this sense, it may especially be important for the educational community to figure out the influences of utilizing social media in the learning process, particularly regarding the role it plays in social networks and teaching settings (Boyd-Ellison, 2007, p.211). The process of controlling of social networks and their combination with organizational and didactic processes present the utilization of the potentials of a high-level approaches of how particular subjects will be taught and the removal of communicative jeopardies (Mora - Pont et al., 2015, p.891).

Mobile devices have changed the mobile learning from different aspects subsequent to ubiquitous access to these smart and online- wireless devices (Miangah-Nezarat, 2012, p.311). The mobile devices ubiquitously put forward a ready access to various materials for the students (Kukulska-Hulme-Shield, 2008, p.272). Advancements in mobile devices present opportunities for the mobile device users in attaining educational resources, involving in distinctive energetic interaction between individuals or groups and engaging via mobile phones (Comas-Quinn - Mardomingo et al, 2012, p.132). This mobile social interaction and engagement may be considered as influential means in foreign language development and form educational resources that are benefitted by foreign language teachers. Several researchers are of the same opinion on the productiveness of language

learning materials grounded on real-life interplay. At that point, it may be seen as crucial to put into effect not only materials, but real-life interplay. Moreover, mobile phones present a chance to go beyond the traditional limitations of time and place that regulate curricula in use and permit different skills to be implemented "actively", providing an opportunity to canalize the foreign language curriculum to more verbal communication (Demouy-Kukulska-Hulme, 2010, p.218; Kukulska-Hulme, 2012, p.248).

WhatsApp was defined as a simple social network (Fischer, 2013, p.2). On the other hand, Statista (2017, p.1) portrayed this application as one of the most favorable social media tools. WhatsApp allows to deliver meanings to the people individually or by creating group. This application makes use of the smartphone's online connection to permit the people to send and receive messages, images, videos and voice messages to the others. WhatsApp has become to play a fundamental role recently and has been investigated for experimental studies. Fouz-González (2017, p.633) indicated that WhatsApp may influence and raise levels of physiological or nervous activity in students to teach and learn more efficaciously since it may remove the physical barriers of the classroom and enable them to get into connection with one another outside the classroom. In the literature, the results of the studies have showed that it has capability to ensure a ubiquitous learning atmosphere, and to boost interest and wish to take action (Mistar-Embi, 2016, p.102; Jafari - Chalak, 2016, p.92).

Several studies have showed that it provides a learning atmosphere which was not controlled or supervised for students and may be utilized in a way to reach a desired result successfully (Norman - Nordin et al., 2015, p.200). These studies reveal that WhatsApp affects the imparting or exchanging of information or news among students and their language development during the course of education. This development of language puts forward positive perceptions on behalf of students (Wong - Looi, 2010), p.430). The latest technologies provide a multi-sided atmosphere to aid educational practices by allowing interaction, collaboration, engagement, knowledge and common utilization of resources, and the capability to think understandably and logically (Ajjan - Hartshorne, 2008, p.71).

Learning English in an environment that does not speak the language has always been an issue. Students nowadays have access to a wide range of alternatives to help in their learning and practice of the language. One such help is mobile phone technology, which puts forward various methods of conveying meanings from one entity or group to another such as instant messaging services like the WhatsApp. Through the effortless access to information presented by the global community which online connection has

built and the new social networks or applications such as WhatsApp, students in this modern age can be considered as more privileged. In this respect, they can acquire knowledge on various areas of immediate interest in a virtual world that can be visited at any moment and at almost any place. This means that the boundaries offered by instant messaging services such as WhatsApp are blurring and this blurring is paving the way to target languages (Almekhlafy - Alzubi, 2016, p.388).

In the literature, there is more room for associating social media tools and instant messaging services with the ability to communicate in foreign language (Alnujaidi, 2017, p.34; Sung - Chang et al., 2016, p.252).

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

WhatsApp has become a service that enables individuals, businesses, schools and government agencies to share information from diverse sources and this service has quickly shifted the way people communicate (Susilo, 2014, p.10). It may be noted that this service is one of the evolutions that have been frequently utilized on mobile phones and other devices (Yeboah - Ewur, 2014, p.157). As a unique, instant messaging subscription service used on different types of computers or with different software packages which are placed on the new generation of smart phones, WhatsApp permits its users to send free text messages to each other. It should be pointed out that various message types such as audio files, pictures, and videos are supported by WhatsApp (Alsaleem, 2014, p.213). Among social networks rapidly gaining ground, WhatsApp is coming forth as a tool that can be utilized for different educational aims. WhatsApp is already being utilized to instruct the body of words or to spread general information and links for language learning widely.

In a study by Hani (2014, p.73), the findings show a significant difference between the overall writing scores of the pretest and posttest of the participants. Moreover, test of individual item scores reveals that there are statistically significant advancements in vocabulary choice and voice as two basic writing characteristics. The study may be considered as helpful in allowing teachers understand the possible worthiness of WhatsApp electronic dialogue journaling to improve the vocabulary word choice and voice writing skills of their students. In another study by Maria (2016, p.47), using WhatsApp assists to motivate the learners to boost their writing skills, and the students respond in a better way when technology is included in their acquiring the capacity to perceive and comprehend language. The internet as a technological facilitator on the mobile phones of the students is engaging to a high degree for L2 learning.

Man (2014, s.28) pointed out that the findings revealed boosting

scores in favor of the students. Moreover, the interview data showed that the participants appreciated the utilization of IM in assisting them to be acquainted with academic words to a greater extent. Nedal (2014, p.73) showed that the findings indicate a significant difference between the overall writing scores of the pretest and posttest of the students that utilized journaling. Moreover, test of individual item scores reveals that there are statistically significant developments in terms of vocabulary choice and voice as two basic writing characteristics. The study may support an assertive educational change by helping teachers gain the possible qualities of WhatsApp electronic dialogue journaling to improve vocabulary, word choice and voice writing skills of their students. In another study, Awada (2016, p.1) showed that the utilization of WhatsApp was more influential than the traditional instruction in cultivating the proficiency of writing a critique and in boosting their drives for learning.

On the other hand, Andújar-Vaca and Cruz-Martínez (2017, p.43) revealed that there are significant improvements with regards to the student's ability to speak a language in real-life settings were monitored in the experimental group. The study indicated that mobile learning sets up an atmosphere where the students may omnipresently try to reach an agreement on meaning and think deeply and evaluate on their own performance by means of authentic interaction and feedback, forming a strong tool for boosting second language competence. Abraham - Marais et al. (2015, p.910), in their study, pointed out that using WhatsApp showed to allow students to improve understanding of and apply multiple performance expectations while involving them in managerial communication on the project.

Moreover, Ibtehal and Fawzi (2013, p.165) pointed out that WhatsApp platform suggests a space for communication, expression of opinions and interchanging information ubiquitously. Nevertheless, additional work load, interference with learning, and deficiency in the students' engagement were stated as the prominent hardships of influential WhatsApp utilization for learning purposes.

Basma (2013, p.213) pointed out that that student's writing skills may be developed with WhatsApp electronic journaling comparatively within a short space of time. The utilization of this method enables university EFL instructors to take advantage of modern technology as well as traditional methods to assist their students to improve writing skills.

Aicha (2014, p.116) indicated that the study revealed significant differences, at 0.05 alpha level, in the achievements and attitudes of the experimental group instructed with WhatsApp mobile learning activities in

comparison with the control group instructed only with conventional learning in the classroom setting.

2. SMARTPHONES AS LEARNING TOOLS

The rapidly growing of mobile technologies has assisted mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) and become higher than ever before (George, 2014, s.225). Smartphones as newly established platforms for language learning have taken the place of computers as these devices provide more easiness and simplicity for the users (Sharples - Vavoula, 2007, p.222). Smartphones have changed into advantageous tools for handing over learning materials to students (Thornton - Houser, 2005, p.218).

The initial ventures to utilize smartphones in teaching were not successful to a higher degree on account of crucial handicaps in relation to mobile devices technology. Students indicated dissatisfaction about the screen size of mobile phones (Hayati - Jalilifar et al, 2013, p.66), deprivation of the battery (Kim - Seo et al., 2013, p.52), and limited memory capacity (Zhang - Song et al., 2011, p.203). On the other hand, with the developing smartphone technology, those handicaps have been solved.

Smartphones in terms of being learning tools have become increasingly popular among various instructors who hold as an opinion that these devices present adaptability, adjustability and variability in terms of time and space (Demouy - Kukulska-Hulme, 2010, p.217; Kukulska - Hulme, 2012, p.254) and enable students to have an individual learning environment (Harley – Winn et al., 2007, p.229; Hayati - Jalilifar et al., 2013, p.66). Students have a tendency to enjoy utilizing their smartphones as they can access the learning materials without difficulty or effort and can go through the language ubiquitously (Chen - Hsieh et al., 2008, p.93) and maintain their learning following class time (Laurillard, 2007, p.154). White and Mills (2011, p.328) have put forward that students widely have optimistic mindsets towards utilizing smartphones for language learning.

3. WHATSAPP AS A LANGUAGE LEARNING PLATFORM

WhatsApp has become one of the most commonly used social-networking applications on mobile phones (Yeboah - Ewur, 2014, p.157). This application run identically on different platforms can be installed on different types of smart phones such as iPhone and Android. It allows mobile phone users to send free messages to each other via internet. These users can also share images, audio files, and videos. WhatsApp provides an option to create a group of users who can communicate among each other. The user that brings the group into existence on WhatsApp is also its manager. This

manager can add and delete users.

For foreign language learning, WhatsApp is a popular and influential way of using mobile messaging (Castrillo - Monje, 2014, p.51; Lam, 2015, p.27; Taj - Ali et al., 2017, p.262). As in SMS, WhatsApp boosts the development of language skills containing vocabulary, reading, and writing. Moreover, due to its new potential as a cooperative learning means in comparison to SMS, WhatsApp improves the conveying, sharing and establishing of language knowledge (Lam, 2015, p.28); and all the skills that are necessary for effective communication among students and teachers (Jain - Rahman et al., 2016, p.447). WhatsApp features can turn the application into an appropriate and practical means for educational aims. For example, Şahan - Çoban et al., (2016, p.1230) carried out a study aiming to examining the impact of WhatsApp on instructing English idioms to EFL students. The results revealed that the students made use of the consolidation of the platform as their proficiency of English language evolved in the positive direction according to the test. In another study by Amry (2014, p.116), the results revealed that the implementation of WhatsApp assisted the experimental group score to be higher than the control group in the achievement test in the final phase of the experiment. Another study by Ta'amneh (2017, p.143) intend to explore the impact of using WhatsApp in learning English language among university students. The results revealed that integration of WhatsApp into English teaching setting developed the EFL students' abilities. This study also pointed out that English lessons can be mastered more efficaciously by consolidating technological applications such as WhatsApp rather than the traditional methods.

Several instructors have chosen the use of WhatsApp as a platform in order to allow students to receive and submit their tasks of vocabulary learning. WhatsApp may assist instructors in saving time (Lauricella - Kay, 2013, p.1) and managing more effectively the classroom as well as keeping students informed with the latest classroom activities (Awada, 2016, p.1). WhatsApp may support active learning and improve high communicative expectations (Desai - Graves, 2006, p.174; Rambe - Bere, 2013, p.331). Other functions of WhatsApp contain connection with peers (Bouhnik - Deshen, 2014, p.217); and may promote a mutual influence between students and instructors (Cifuentes - Lents, 2011, p.1). This will provide students with a sense of being a member to a learning community (Doering – Veletsianos et al., 2008, p.45; Sweeny, 2010, p.121). On the other hand, students may consider tasks more seriously since their contributions in a WhatsApp group are overt (Sweeny, 2010, p.122).

WhatsApp has quality and capacity for learning enhancement (Smit, 2012, p.1). Moreover, WhatsApp has turned into an influential tool in improving L2 (Andújar - Vaca – Cruz - Martínez, 2017, p.44), boosting learners' language skills (Rambe - Chipunza, 2013, p.332) and aiding students become actively engaged in a language class (Baffour - Awuah, 2015, p.20; Cifuentes - Lents, 2011, p.2).

4. WHATSAPP AND VOCABULARY LEARNING

Before the prevalent and rapid use of mobile phones and social networking applications such as WhatsApp, several studies investigated the effect of Short Message Service (SMS) on vocabulary learning. Categorically, these studies examined different dimensions of vocabulary such as idioms (Hayati - Jalilifar et al., 2013, p.67) and English words that go together or form fixed relationships (Motallebzadeh - Behafarin et al., 2011, p.1514). Many of the studies that examined the use of SMS in learning vocabulary in relation to traditional methods revealed positive results (Alemi - Lari, 2012, p.1; Cavus - Ibrahim, 2009, p.78; Lu, 2008, p.515; Song, 2008, p.81; Thornton - Houser, 2001, p.1896; Zhang - Song et al., 2011, p.204). On the other hand, the cost of SMS indicated a concern which could be fairly high-priced. Thus, WhatsApp has placed itself as a better option as it is an unpaid application and it is uncomplicated to use (Barhoumi, 2015, p.221).

Despite the increasing popularity of WhatsApp, its impact as a platform in which students improve their foreign and second language skills has not been examined to the required extent (Church - De Oliveria, 2013, p.352 One of the early studies was conducted by Fageeh (2013, p.420) who examined the impact of using WhatsApp in terms of learning vocabulary among ESL students at a Saudi university. The experimental group (N=27) was given a list of words by using WhatsApp 3 times a week following each class. Participants of the experimental group were directed to define the words they were given using an Online Dictionary application, use the words by creating their own sentences and send those sentences to their peers and instructors for feedback. Participants of the control group (N=31) were given the same word lists in class. They were directed to fulfill the same homework assignment and hand back their sentences on paper each class period. Results revealed significant differences in posttest scores between the experimental and control groups. The WhatsApp group accomplished higher vocabulary scores.

In another study for South African students, Lawrence (2014, p.311) used WhatsApp to provide a group of five undergraduate learners of Afrikaans with vocabulary items prior to reading texts. Following the course of seven weeks, the researchers sent messages to the group that included

target words with their translations and other types of media such as image. Results pointed out that WhatsApp is an influential instrument as it provides beyond-the-walls-of-the-classroom opportunities to exercise repeatedly or regularly in order to improve or maintain the proficiency of students in terms of vocabulary, particularly for weak students.

On the other hand, the impact of WhatsApp was investigated in the Turkish context. Basal - Yılmaz et al., (2016, p.47) examined the degree to which WhatsApp is successful in producing a desired result in learning idioms from the Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English in comparison to traditional classroom activities. The participants were 50 first-year students from a university in Turkey. Results revealed that participants in the experimental group accomplished higher scores than the control group in the posttest. The researchers inferred that WhatsApp has a positive effect on acquiring the knowledge of idioms.

Another study by Dehghan - Rezvani et al., (2017, p.2), however, does not encourage the use of WhatsApp in instructing vocabulary. The researchers examined the impact of using WhatsApp on learning vocabulary items among 32 EFL Iranian teenage students. The experimental group was given the list of vocabulary from their textbook by means of WhatsApp. On the other hand, the control group was instructed to the same list of words through the traditional education inside the classroom. The results revealed no significant difference between the WhatsApp group and the traditional group. The researchers associated the results with distraction in the WhatsApp group who did not pay particular attention to gaining the target vocabulary items. They put forward that the insufficient number of participants and the restricted set of vocabulary items did not show any significant differences between the two groups.

The limited studies that have investigated the effect of WhatsApp on vocabulary learning have not sufficiently provided results serving to be decisive or convincing. Therefore, there is a room to further examine the potentials of internet-based social media applications, and carry out more studies on vocabulary acquisition by means of WhatsApp.

5. ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE USE OF WHATSAPP IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

WhatsApp has been positively considered by students that indicated high levels of fulfillment of their wishes, expectations, or needs in language activities that employ the application (Plana - Escofet et al., 2013, p.1). Moreover, there have been high levels of incentives to engage in activities that put WhatsApp's collaborative potential into effect (Castrillo - Barcena et al., 2014, p.52). Involving in WhatsApp directed language practices also

has a positive influence on students' reliance, cultivating their reading habits and inclination to read more in English (Plana - Escofet et al., 2013, p.2). On the other hand, students indicated positive attitudes to mobile devices in supporting English language learning (Almekhlafy - Alzubi, 2016, p.389). These positive results were also demonstrated by Şahan - Çoban et al., (2016, p.1231). The researchers explored students' attitudes towards the use of WhatsApp as a means to access learning content using mobiles. The findings revealed that there was an unanimity among students on the utility of smartphones in learning as their engagement cultivated their motivation.

6. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The effectiveness of learning vocabulary through WhatsApp has not yet been examined comprehensively particularly among Turkish EFL students. Therefore, this study lends support to further shed light on the impact of learning EFL vocabulary via WhatsApp. It also intends to explore students' perceptions of the utilization of WhatsApp in learning EFL vocabulary. The findings of this study will contribute to the growing body of literature related to MALL.

7. METHODOLOGY
7.1. DESIGN

This study intends to explore students' achievements and their perceptions towards the utilization of WhatsApp in learning EFL vocabulary. This study was conducted with a quasi-experimental design. The participants took Writing Skills class for three hours during a week. Before the study, the main aim of the research was meticulously described to the participants. The researcher checked whether the students had smartphones. It was seen that all students had smartphones and spent most of their time using these devices. For eight weeks (total duration of the study), they used WhatsApp application both inside and out-side the classroom and had the opportunity to tap the screen to listen to the pronunciations of the words time and again. Moreover, they had the chance of reading the written form of the words for stresses and unstressed syllables, the definitions and translations of each word. In this sense, target vocabulary items were selected and incorporated into this application. Before the selection process, a vocabulary knowledge test (including 250 vocabulary items) was administered to the students based on English File Pre-Intermediate Student's Book. The words that the students failed to recognize during the test were selected. For eight weeks, a set of 202 pre-intermediate level word-items –nearly 25 words for each week- was introduced to the students. For the purpose of examining the

achievements of the students, a vocabulary test to explore how many words they learned was administered to them at the end of eighth week as the post-test. On the other hand, at the beginning of the study, a pre-test (the same items as for the post-test) was administered to examine the perceptions of the students towards the use WhatsApp in learning vocabulary. Then, at the end of the experiment, the students completed the same questionnaire as the post-test. The aim was to compare students' perceptions towards the usage of WhatsApp application in learning EFL vocabulary before and after the experience in terms of Writing Skills course.

7.2. PARTICIPANTS

The participants were selected from the Department of English Language and Literature at a state university in Turkey by adopting a purposive convenience sampling strategy. The number of participants was 79 (16 males and 63 females). Their ages ranged between 20 and 23. All the students were from the first year at the university.

7.3. PROCESS

Prior to the beginning of the experiment, the students were informed about the aim of the study. All students took a vocabulary pretest before receiving their first list of vocabulary test items. They were notified that their test scores would not affect their final grade. They were briefed that the aim of the test was to check their knowledge about some vocabulary items. Following that, the students were given nearly 25 words each week and the classes lasted once a week for three hours. They received word lists via WhatsApp after the researcher created a WhatsApp group and each student was added to the group after their consent was obtained. They had five days to complete each vocabulary assignment in order to control the study and enable the researcher to receive feedback. The assignment included monitoring the pronunciation of the new words, gaining the meaning of them and producing a sentence using each vocabulary item. The students were to produce sentences by utilizing the target words and send these sentences by way of WhatsApp to receive the feedback of the researcher. Following the eighth week, a post test was administered to them to measure their new vocabulary knowledge. The pre-test and the post-test were similar in every detail. Then, at the end of the experiment, the students completed the questionnaire (the same as the pre-test) as the post-test. The aim was to examine the students' perceptions towards the utilization of WhatsApp application in learning EFL vocabulary before and after the experience in terms of Writing Skills course.

7.4. DATA GATHERING INSTRUMENTS

The instruments used to collect the data of this study was both the students' questionnaire and the vocabulary knowledge test. The test consisted of 90 multiple-choice items and 10 fill-in-the blanks items. The total hundred items were taken from the 202 word items that the students were to learn during 8 weeks. The test content and face validity of the questions as well as the difficulty level were controlled by expert EFL professors. The test reliability was calculated using Cronbach Alpha. The alpha value was 0,868.

The students completed a questionnaire consisting of six items. Each item is rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The aim of the questionnaire was to compare students' perceptions towards the usage of WhatsApp application in learning EFL vocabulary before and after the experience in Writing Skills course.

7.5. DATA ANALYSIS

7.5.1. Results of Questionnaire of Students' Perception of the Utilization of WhatsApp in Learning EFL Vocabulary

In relation to the students' perceptions of the utilization of WhatsApp in learning EFL vocabulary, the students were asked to attend to the questionnaire session in Week 1 of the study. Once again in Week 8, at the end of the study, in order to measure the changes in the students' perceptions, the same questionnaire was implemented. The results from the questionnaire are as follows:

Table 1 Descriptive statistics comparing the pre- and the post-questionnaire

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre Ques – Post Ques.	79	12,00	24,00	17,57	3,29
	79	14,00	30,00	20,79	3,45
Valid (listwise)	N 79				

According to descriptive statistics comparing the pre- and the post-questionnaire revealed that the mean score of the post- questionnaire (M=20,79) was higher than that of the pre-test (M=17,57). In comparison to those in the pre- questionnaire, the mean scores in the post-questionnaire show a positive approach to explore students' perceptions of the use WhatsApp in learning EFL vocabulary. On the other hand, the minimum and maximum scores (M=14 and M=30, respectively) in post-questionnaire were

considerably higher than those in pre- questionnaire (M=12 and M=24, respectively).

Table 2 Paired-samples t-test for the perceptions of the students

	Paired Differences			t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean			
Pre Ques. − Post Ques.	3,21	2,30	,26	12,44	78	,000

Paired-samples t-test was used to measure the difference between the means of scores of the students on the pre-questionnaire and the post-questionnaire. This difference was statistically significant (t=12.44, p<0.05).

7.5.2. Results from Pre-tests and Post-tests of Achievements of the Utilization of WhatsApp in Learning EFL Vocabulary

In relation to the students' achievements of the utilization of WhatsApp in learning EFL vocabulary, the students were asked to attend to the vocabulary knowledge test session in Week 1 of the study. Once again in Week 8, at the end of the study, in order to measure the changes in the students' achievements, the same vocabulary knowledge test was implemented. The results from the questionnaire are as follows:

Table 3 Descriptive statistics comparing the pre- and the post-vocabulary knowledge test

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre Voc. Test	79	1,00	2,00	1,30	,46
Post Voc. Test	79	1,00	4,00	2,45	,80
Valid N (listwise)	79				

According to descriptive statistics comparing the pre- and the post-vocabulary knowledge test revealed that the mean score of the post-vocabulary knowledge test (M=2,45) was higher than that of the pre-test (M=1,30). In comparison to those in the pre-vocabulary knowledge test, the

mean score in the post-vocabulary knowledge test shows the mean score of the post-test show a positive performance thanks to WhatsApp. On the other hand, the minimum and maximum scores (M=1 and M=4, respectively) in post-vocabulary knowledge test were considerably higher than those in pre-vocabulary knowledge test (M=1 and M=2, respectively).

Table 4 Paired-samples t-test for vocabulary knowledge test of the students

	Paired Differences				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Mean	Error			
Pre-Voc.Test–Post Voc. Test	1,16	,69	,078		15,01	78	,000

Paired-samples t-test was used to measure the difference between the means of scores of the students on the pre-vocabulary knowledge test and the post-vocabulary knowledge test. This difference was statistically significant (t=15,01, p<0.05).

8. Discussion

The current study aims examine if the utilization of WhatsApp assists to boost students' vocabulary learning. The results point out that the utilization of WhatsApp is an influential application in enhancing students' vocabulary learning. This study provide assistance to the constructivist theory as this application has supported the students in constructing their vocabulary knowledge.

The results of the current study put forward the positive perceptions of the students toward the utilization of WhatsApp in learning new vocabulary. The results of the pre- and post-questionnaires indicated that the perceptions of the students changed in a positive direction. This result coincides with the previous researches (Aicha, 2014, p.116; Almekhlafy - Alzubi, 2016, p.388; Şahan - Çoban et al., 2016, p.1230; Bansal - Joshi, 2014, p.26; Castrillo - Barcena et al., 2014, p.51; Plana - Escofet et al., 2013, p.1). For example, Aicha (2014, p.116) pointed out that the study revealed significant differences, at 0.05 alpha level, in the perceptions of the experimental group instructed with WhatsApp mobile learning activities in comparison with those of the control group instructed only with traditional

learning in the classroom environment. Moreover, Almekhlafy and Alzubi, (2016, p.388) showed that EFL students took pleasure in more exposing to the language by way of WhatsApp and they were able to in touch with native speakers and act in a reciprocally appropriate way. Also, the questionnaire and the interviews revealed positive perceptions towards utilizing mobile in boosting language learning. On the other hand, Şahan - Çoban et al. (2016, p.1230) pointed out positive attitudes and motivational aims in terms of students toward WhatsApp.

The results also showed that the achievements of the students changed effectively. This result coincides with the previous researches (Al Saleem, 2014, p.213; Hani, 2014, p.73; Maria, 2016, p.47; Man, 2014, p.28; Nedal, 2014, p.73; Awada, 2016, p.1; Basma, 2013, p.213; Aicha, 2014, p.116; Fageeh, 2013, p.420; Lawrence, 2014, p.310; Basal - Yılmaz et al., 2016, p.47; Jafari - Chalak, 2016, p.85). For example, Maria (2016, p.47) pointed out that WhatsApp assisted the students' interests and capabilities in motivating them to improve their writing skills. Moreover, Basal - Yılmaz et al., (2016, p.47) indicated that the students in the experimental group instructed through the use of the mobile application for idioms achieved significantly better than those in the control group instructed with traditional activities. The results showed that that utilization of the mobile application was more influential in teaching idioms than the traditional approaches. On the other hand, Lawrence (2014, p.310) suggested that WhatsApp is an influential means in providing opportunities beyond the classroom setting to learn vocabulary. In a study by Al-Saleem (2014, p.213), the findings revealed that WhatsApp provided a significant improvement in students' writing performance. In another study by Jafari and Chalak (2016, p.85), the results showed that the utilization of WhatsApp played an important role in vocabulary learning development of Iranian junior high school EFL students.

9. Conclusion

Today, there is a need for the improvement of higher education in terms of learning technologies. At the same time, there is a movement to further interactive approaches. The current study has provided empirical data about the benefits of utilizing WhatsApp in teaching EFL vocabulary. It was a venture to open path for teachers and researchers in Turkey to make use of new models in education to get the better of circumstances for the practice of working with language and the classes under the control of teachers. Therefore, the current study was conducted on EFL university students to examine their perceptions and achievements in terms of WhatsApp in teaching EFL vocabulary. The results of this study reveal that WhatsApp enhanced the students' performances and improved their perceptions

towards the utilization of WhatsApp in learning EFL vocabulary. On the other hand, this method promoted the motivation and engagement of the students during in-class hours and outside of the classroom. It can be concluded that this method facilitated the responsibilities of the students in their learning EFL vocabulary, and they were highly involved during in-class hours. The students could feel more confident thanks to this learning way with WhatsApp.

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