Application of WhatsApp as an Online Distance Learning Platform in Teaching Mandarin during COVID-19 Pandemic

*Foo Terng Hoe[1], Teck Heng Lim[2], Boon Yih Mah[3], Rasaya Marimuthu[4] and Kai Chee Lam[5]

[1,2,3,4]*Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA Penang Branch, MALAYSIA.*
(E-mails: [1]hoefo964@uitm.edu.my, [2]limth309@uitm.edu.my, [3]mahboonyih166@uitm.edu.my, [4]rasay386@uitm.edu.my)
[5]*Faculty of Language and Communication Studies, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, MALAYSIA.*
(E-mail: [5]kclam@unimas.my)

*Corresponding author:[1]hoefo964@uitm.edu.my

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has posted a serious threat globally. Most of the governments worldwide have implemented movement control orders to curb the spread of the virus. Since teachers and students are unable to participate in teaching and learning activities in schools, online distance learning (ODL) has become the major lesson delivery mode using various instant messaging platforms such as WhatsApp. WhatsApp has become a very popular teaching and learning tool as it is an easy-to-use instant messaging application. Thus, the objectives of this study are to discuss the experience of a Mandarin lecturer in using WhatsApp and identify its advantages and disadvantages to teach Mandarin courses. Based on the lecturer's experience, WhatsApp is just an instructional tool that cannot guarantee the success of conducting ODL. Several advantages and disadvantages of using WhatsApp include suitability for poor internet speed and coverage users, cost saving, easy to use, avoidance of disruptions during ODL, inappropriate evaluation tool, high distractions, and need for early and careful lesson preparation. In conclusion, students and teachers are the main factors to guarantee the success of teaching and learning besides the instructional tool or platform.

Keywords: COVID-19 pandemic, movement control order (MCO), online distance learning (ODL), Chinese language courses, WhatsApp; instructional tool