# Polo del Conocimiento

*Uso de Whatsapp para mejorar las habilidades de habla de los estudiantes*

*Using Whatsapp to Enhance Students' Speaking Skills*

*Usando o Whatsapp para melhorar as habilidades de fala dos alunos*

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## Resumen

Hoy en día, todos los seres humanos estamos fuertemente condicionados al uso de la tecnología. Por lo tanto, los teléfonos celulares son muy exigentes, ya sea para divertirse, para obtener información o para comunicarse con todo el mundo. Los dispositivos móviles hacen que sea más cómodo y rápido obtener la información que las personas necesitan, ya que presentan muchos beneficios. Por tanto, no sería complejo incorporar móviles para aprender cada día algo nuevo y emociónate. Cabe señalar que las aplicaciones son unas herramientas muy útiles para todo lo que queramos hacer desde nuestro celular, lo que nos facilita la vida a estudiantes y docentes. También se considera como el principal factor por el cual aprender inglés desde dispositivos móviles puede resultar una gran ventaja, y más aún, si se incorporar algo que sea atractivo para los estudiantes para comunicarse a diario. Como un ejemplo de esto, está la aplicación del WhatsApp. De esta manera, las personas crean hábitos del idioma al comunicarse regularmente. Este estudio analiza como WhatsApp puede ayudar a mejorar las habilidades de expresión oral de los estudiantes a través de métodos académicos incorporados en las metodologías de los docentes para sus estudiantes.

**Palabras claves:** Tecnología; dispositivos móviles; habilidades; expresión oral; métodos académicos; WhatsApp.

## Abstract

Nowadays, all human beings are strongly conditioned to use technology. Thus, cell phones are very demanding, either for fun, for information, or to communicate all over the World. Mobile devices make it more comfortable and faster to get information people need since they present multiple applications that provide many benefits. Therefore, it would not be complex to incorporate cell phones to learn something new and exciting every day. It should be noted that applications are a handy tool for anything we want to do from our cell phones, which makes our life easier for students and teachers. It is also considered as the main factor why learning English from mobile devices can be of great advantage, and even more, if it is incorporated into the most used application to communicate daily. For example, this is the application of "WhatsApp". In such a way, people create habits in the language by communicating regularly. This study analyses how WhatsApp can help to enhance the students' oral expression skills through academic methods incorporated in the teachers' methodologies for their students.

**Keywords:** Technology; mobile devices; abilities; oral expression; academic methods; WhatsApp.

## Resumo

Hoy en día, todos os seres humanos estamos fortemente condicionados ao uso da tecnologia. Por tanto, os telefones celulares são muito exigentes, ya mar para se divertir, para obter informações ou para se comunicar com todo o mundo. Os dispositivos móveis tornaram-se mais cómodos e rápidos para obter as informações que as pessoas precisam, você apresenta muitos benefícios. Por tanto, nenhuma série completa incorporar móveis para aprender cada dia algo novo e emocional. Cabe señalar que las aplicaciones son unas herramientas muy úteis para todo o que queremos fazer desde nosso celular, o que nos facilita a vida de estudantes e docentes. Também se considera como o principal fator para o cual aprender inglês desde os dispositivos móveis pode resultar de uma grande ventaja, e mais aún, se incorporar algo que mar atractivo para os estudantes para comunicar-se a diario. Como um exemplo de esto, é o aplicativo do WhatsApp. Desta forma, as pessoas criam hábitos do idioma para se comunicarem regularmente. Este estúdio analisa como o WhatsApp pode melhorar as habilidades de expressão oral dos estudantes a travessias de métodos acadêmicos incorporados nas metodologias dos docentes para seus estudantes.

**Palavras-chave:** Tecnologia; dispositivos móveis; habilidade; expressão oral; métodos acadêmicos; Whatsapp.

## Introducción

English has always been seen as a universal language, and this is the principal factor in creating a connection between different countries since it allows socializing and interacting in a better way in educational, scientific, technological, business and political aspects. English maintains a positive impact; therefore, it allows the development of skills and better work relationships for individuals who can speak it.

People who have little ability to speak English find it difficult to engage in conversation and express themselves to others. Now according to Newton's (2020) definition, he mentions that typical meaning-centered output thread activities involve learning through speaking and writing using productive language: speaking in conversations, giving a speech or lecture, writing a letter, writing a note to someone, keeping a diary, telling a story, and telling someone how to do something.

Therefore, it is essential that people must have the opportunity to learn the language differently. In this case, the sample was taken from the students of the second level of English at the Faculty of Economics of the University of Guayaquil. This sample indicated that speaking skills were underdeveloped when surveys were applied according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) levels in the Ecuadorian educational system; higher education students must reach a minimum of B2 level, but it is sometimes difficult for many students.

In order for students to better apply the language, it is necessary that they feel motivated to participate in the activities presented by the teachers, taking into account that the objective of language teaching is that students not only reach the level they need to finish the course, but rather, that they can further expand their knowledge of the language.

Nowadays, technology has contributed to technological resources that are both inside and outside the educational facilities, conceiving outstanding results in the teaching-learning process. Regarding the development of speaking skills, WhatsApp is an option. As it is being defined by Noni & Basri (2019), "WhatsApp is a potential medium to support teaching and learning". Furthermore, La Hanisi et al. (2018) stated that WhatsApp is a smartphone and web-based instant service. Messaging application that allows users to exchange information using a variety of media, including text, image, video, and audio images. Such the use of this application will be able to enhance the potential of students by using it, given that it is a digital medium widely used by the world at large, and students are no exception.

Second level EFL students of English at the Faculty of Economics of the University of Guayaquil had complications when working on their oral skills. This study determined that students lacked oral production, and interaction skills and it was recognized that speaking skills must be successfully developed.

In addition, it was noted that the English classes were not student-centered; the strategies were not according to the students' needs. Since the resources used by the teachers hardly included any use of technology. Therefore, all the above-mentioned characteristics are likely to be the reasons for the low development of speaking skills.

It was noticeable that students needed to practice more speaking activities where they are the center of the class; the strategies used to develop speaking skills and the resources are more modern such as technological tools. Instructions were probably not clear enough; perhaps teachers did not allow

students to interact, ask and answer questions, share ideas or opinions, and dramatize a story to develop their speaking skills.

Consequently, the few opportunities to improve language skills and the lack of technological tools did not allow students to feel motivated to participate in class. Therefore, it was necessary to analyze the way of teaching and the resources used in class.

**Background of the research**

The Internet and access to increasingly instinctual mobile devices have brought about a paradigm change in the use of technology. That shift is also evident in the field of education, where more and more things can be done, taking advantage of the network and its possibilities, both in the classroom and outside of it. (Curtin, 2017)

Technology has meaningfully underwritten to the growth of some skills that make acquiring new ones and knowledge in any medium easier. In such a way, ICT in the field of education has created spaces in which teachers adapt to the new changes to teaching their classes with different methodological strategies.

Globalization has reflected English as an international language in all fields. Therefore, English and technology play a relevant role not only in education but also; they are the fundamental requirements that most of the company demands to have. When people speak at least one unknown language other than their modern language, they become more competitive.

Education is the crucial factor that needs to be addressed because it has a profound impact on the formation of human beings. To be productive humans, they need to know how to use technology and communicate with people using an international language. English helps humans have a better exchange of information.

Presently, technology has managed to attract the attention of students, who in many cases do not usually give the interest to learn something new; however, the use of technology has been able to achieve exceptional results of students towards ICT.

**Technology in English classrooms.**

Technology also has positively invaded our lives removing obstacles and making it possible for higher education to acquire more knowledge where the emphasis is on the form and study of public speaking; group discussion, is mainly the method used with the sample of this research.

UNESCO (2014) emphasizes that technological tools allow accessibility, autonomy, access not only to education in general, but also to learn in particular way, participation, communication, information, mobility and adaptation to the environment. Tools that we can already carry in our pockets and their portability biases their use at any time and in any educational context. Whatever learner's situation, their needs and characteristics, they can have easy to handle devices that are connected to the network and therefore allow access to an infinite amount of information, content and resources. From the perspective of the personalization of learning process, mobile devices, have been a great advance, especially in those cases where the subject has problems of expression and communication. (Sanromà et al., 2017).

It should also be noted that the electronic mobility that accompanies ICTs, beyond biological and mechanical mobility (Bericat Alasuey, 2005), constitutes a form of displacement that has gradually conquered the most diverse social contexts of civic life. Human beings have been inventing ways to transmit information with a bidirectional character. Electronic mobility differs from biological and mechanical mobility in its very nature, as it transfers information converted into micro-matter, in space, not physical persons. The school must be prepared for the new challenges that are opening up. Inquiring into children's considerations, the result of their observations of the world, reveals the children's astonishment at adult practices concerning the use of ICTs, together with the information they hold and the processes generated in this regard. (Blanco, 2021)

Technology provides multiple benefits in human connections since it allows the interaction of many people regardless of their location. Therefore, according to the research work of (Zamora et al., 2007), the benefits and impact generated by technology can be listed:

- Social: The student takes the main importance in the process, since he builds his reality from his own motivations, experiences, initiatives and inquiries.
- Economic: Saves the country incalculable human, material, time, financial and economic resources.
- Psychological: This implies a development of the personality, based on the most updated conceptions. The student does not limit himself to repeat or conform to the existing, but transforms his reality and the one that surrounds him.
- Technological: It is an important tool that replaces traditional procedures that still persist in higher education and negatively affect the process. It is a novel contribution to educational technology within the technological branches of the country.

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● Ethical and Bioethical: It is the best way to form moral, ideological, patriotic, environmental and social values, avoiding the development of double standards.

**WhatsApp to improve English speaking skills**

English is established as an essential tool, the learning of which becomes an imperative need for any person. An individual with knowledge of this language can be competitive in today's world and be at the forefront of scientific and technological advances. (Ledesma, 2019)

Digital technology is a fundamental tool for teaching and learning in the online modality, the videoconferencing platforms that allow face-to-face communication for synchronous classes, among the most frequent are: Zoom, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, Jitsi Meet, Adobe connect, among others. In Moore's theory of distance education (1983), under a virtual environment, the separation, from the psychological and telecommunications aspects created between teachers and their students, establishes the idea of transactional distance. (Morán et al., 2021).

Within these technological tools, we can find the mobile application WhatsApp, this is an application that with its use will allow students to improve their language skills and make them feel encouraged as they use technological tools not only in the classroom but also to communicate with others, buying and selling products, learning something or looking for information on a topic, it should be noted that technology can replace outdated strategies and methods that did not give the best result to achieve success in oral communication.

According to the CEFT (2002) cited by Ferro et al. (2017) indicates that "lexical competence is the knowledge of the vocabulary of a language and the ability to use it. This is composed of lexical items and grammatical items". Which will be adapted to the different skills developed by the students, it is necessary to indicate that these skills are developed with practice and experience in speaking.

So, it can be indicated that the development of speaking skills is considered a high priority within the main objectives of the Integrated Practice of English, as the discipline in charge of guiding the formation of communicative competence in the foreign language. In most cases, teachers use the same types of exercises and think that it is not possible for students to cover all stages of practice. They usually concentrate their attention on average students and forget to devise activities for the rest. (Peña, 2010)

Enhancing speaking skills in English, it is crucial to develop workshops and activities of oral expression in the classroom using the WhatsApp application as a support, where audios are sent or group work is done, all this within the application. It was noted that using different methods as a strategy of communicative approaches motivates the student to communicate given the need, then decide the message and produce it orally. To learn the oral language, it is necessary to practice the phonological, morphosyntactic and lexical-semantic levels related to the competencies of the communicative approach. (Escalona et al., 2010)

## Material and methods

### Territorial context

The University of Guayaquil is a public institution that offers a systematic education to different people. It is located on Salvador Allende Avenue. This research was focused on the second level English students of the economics faculty who had some difficulties in expressing their thoughts, opinions and ideas inside and outside the classroom.

### Type and design of research

This research project was descriptive because it allowed the researchers to analyze the phenomena and their components involved in this study. This method referred to the analysis of qualitative data to obtain better results.

The observation was also considered in the realization of this project because it became familiar with the problems students presented in expressing themselves. Therefore, the information collected was better interpreted rather than in-depth.

### Study population

The sample that carried out this scheme was fifty-five students from the Faculty of Economics at the University of Guayaquil, located on Salvador Allende Avenue. The most inclined was carefully chosen, considering diversity, age, gender and number. In addition, the coordinator and three English teachers will be part of this sample in this relevant research.

**Table 1:** Description of the sample

| Article | Stakeholders | Population |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Coordinator | 1 |
| 2 | English Teachers | 3 |
| 3 | Students (women and men) | 55 |
| | Total | 59 |

**Source:** University of Guayaquil
**Prepared by:** María Ibáñez Apolo.

## Sample size

The sample of this research that contributed to this research was a coordinator of the area, three English teachers. In addition, the population was fifty-five students of the 185 students of the Faculty of Economics of the University of Guayaquil which means 74% of them.

## Data collection techniques

The technique used for collecting information in this study was descriptive; this method helped us to acquire the most truthful and relevant results according to the input of the stakeholders and the people around them. Beyond observation, facilitators analyzed the problems that students faced in the classroom.

## Data processing

The instruments for this study were the interview with the dean of the faculty and the coordinator who supported this research with their experiences and the survey for students in order to know their weaknesses and strengths in their speaking skills. A questionnaire was administered in class with a duration of 15 to 20 minutes in which they were asked for personal information moreover, the methodology and the resources that teachers applied in class.

In addition, to grow this study, a statistical data analysis consisted of requesting a pre-test and post-test aimed at our sample to infer the results of this project.

Furthermore, students were evaluated before, during and after the mediation using appropriate methods and techniques. Excel statistical software was used to achieve all data analysis and graphical results. The purpose of this package was to determine the improvement of our sample regarding students' oral production.

This report was a contract between the teacher and students in which they worked together as a team to achieve student performance in speaking skills.

## Recommendations

The use of technology in class helped students to reduce anxiety and strengthen relationships with teachers and peers. Therefore, one recommendation is to organize workshops, to instruct teachers on how to use WhatsApp and its functions to improve students' oral production.

## Analysis, interpretation and results

This section illustrates the statistical findings of this research information collected by a questionnaire conducted on google forms. For instance, graphs and tables detail the corresponding results obtained from the stakeholders. Therefore, the gathered information was interpreted in-depth.
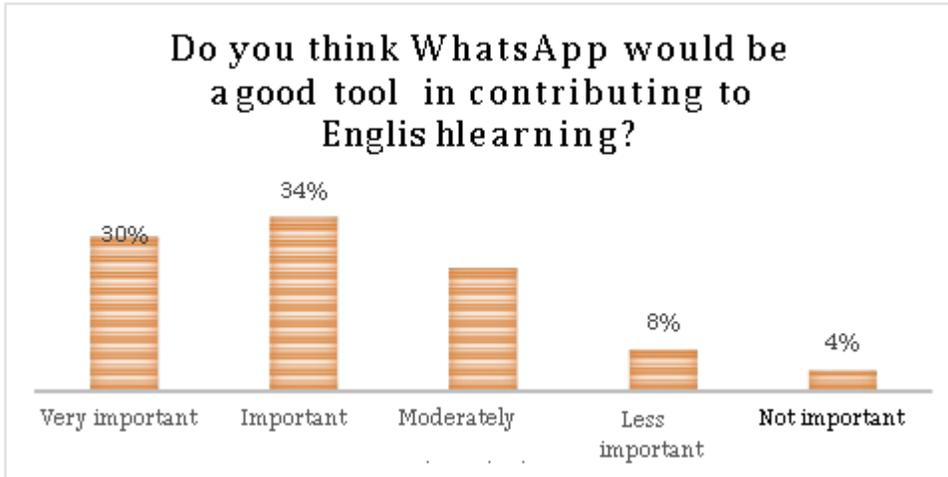
**Table 1:** Do you agree to use WhatsApp for educational purposes, such as for English?
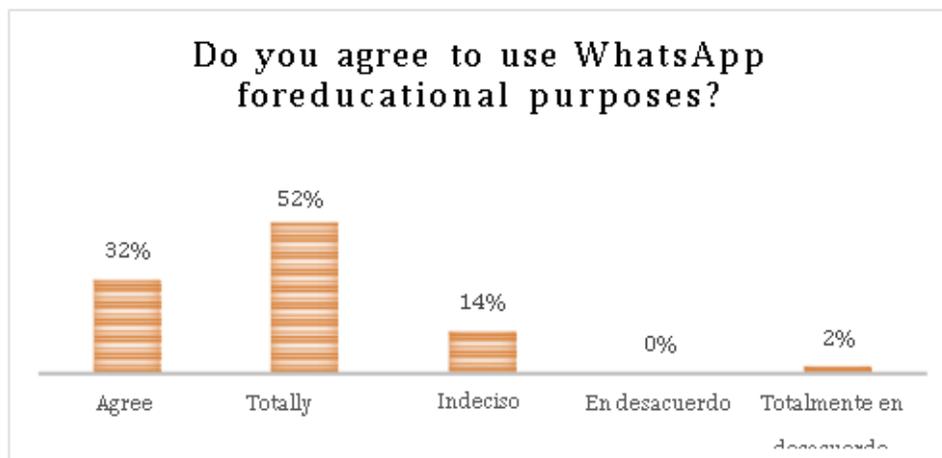


**Note:** Data obtained from the questionnaire to students of Universidad de Guayaquil (2021).
**Prepared by:** María Ibáñez Apolo.

The following results were obtained from the students surveyed in response to the proposed question, whether the students agreed to use WhatsApp for educational purposes, such as learning English. Where 32% of the students indicated to be in total agreement; 52% also indicated to be in agreement with the proposal; 14% of the respondents stated to be undecided before the question; and 2% considered to be in total disagreement with the proposal raised.

**Table 2:** Do you consider that WhatsApp would be a good tool in contributing to English learning?
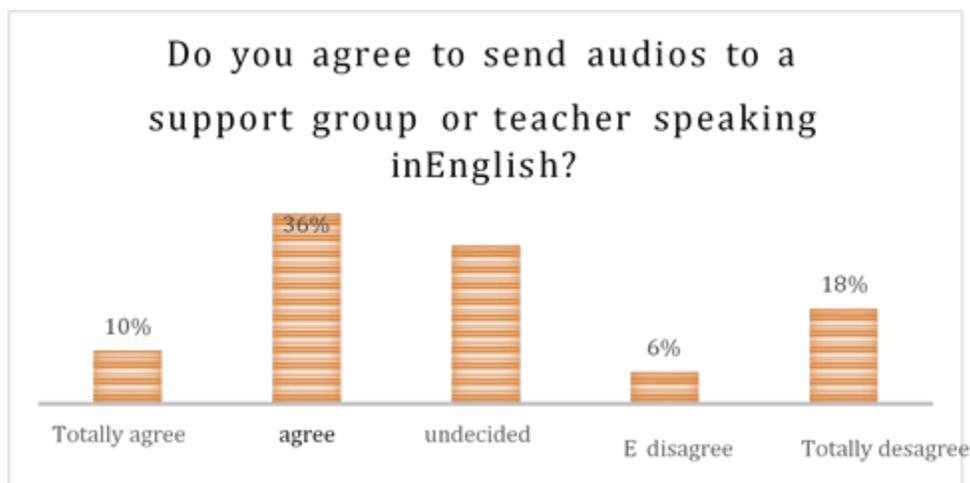


**Note:** Data obtained from the questionnaire to students of Universidad de Guayaquil (2021).
**Prepared by:** María Ibáñez Apolo.

In the following graph, one hundred and fifty students in level two were asked if they considered WhatsApp as a good tool to contribute to the learning of English. The 30% of the respondents indicated that it was very important as an educational support; 34% indicated that it was important; 24% considered it moderately important the question posed; 8% of the students indicated that it was less important; and 4; stated that it was no important WhatsApp as an educational tool.

**Table 3:** Do you agree to send audios in English to your WhatsApp group to practice speaking skills?
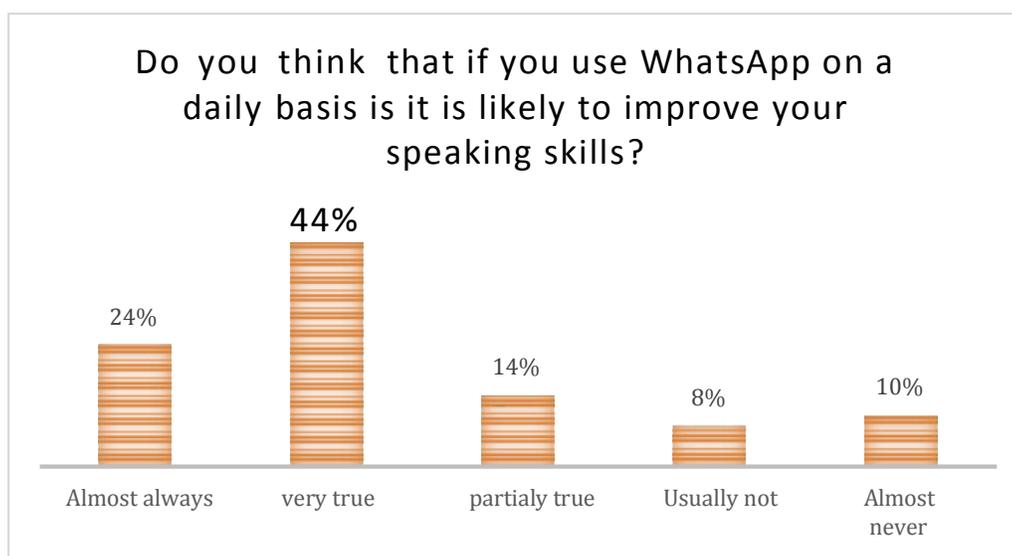


**Note:** Data obtained from the questionnaire to students of Universidad de Guayaquil (2021).
**Prepared by:** María Ibáñez Apolo

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The students were asked if they agreed to send audios speaking English to the teacher or to the class group. In which 10% said they totally agreed with implementing this in their educational methods; 36% said they agreed with the proposal; 30% of the students were undecided; whereas, the 6% of the participants disagreed with the question posed; and the 18% of the students surveyed said they totally disagreed with sending audios speaking in English.

**Table 5:** Do you think it is likely that if you use WhatsApp on a recurrent basis in English you could improve your skills?



**Note:** Data obtained from the questionnaire to students of Universidad de Guayaquil (2021).
**Prepared by:** María Ibáñez Apolo.

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When it was asked if they thought it was likely that using WhatsApp on a recurring basis in English would improve their English skills. In which 24% indicated that this situation was almost probable; 44% indicated that it was probable that it contributed to improve English skills; 14% stated that it was occasionally probable; 8% of the students indicated that it was usually not probable to improve skills; and finally, 10% of the respondents indicated that it was almost never probable that the proposal would work.

## Conclusions

The WhatsApp application as a tool to improve the students' speaking skills, it helped to encourage the habit of oral expression of the language since sending WhatsApp audios allowed them to practice the linguistic lexicon. In addition, this tool has been a popular mobile resource among students allowed them to develop this skill in a better way. It was noted that it was the highest support for academic methodologies, where the teacher participated in the activities or workshops that were carried out through this mobile application.

Due to that, it is necessary to point out that the use of WhatsApp encouraged students' speaking skills in class; thereby, learners can communicate better not only with the teacher but also among their peers and the teacher's expectations was achieved by setting class policies, assignments and deadlines.

## Recommendations

It is suggested that the accurate use of the WhatsApp application has to be applied in class in order to encourage and enhance students' speaking skills, therefore, the coordinator and directors has to work together with a higher level of commitment and accountability between teachers and students when using this sort of support to improve learners' ability to speak English. Another recommendation to take into account is to reflect on all aspects of these studies based on students' experiences and comments in order to get successful results.

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