

SOCIAL MEDIA REVOLUTION AND ITS INFLUENCE ON CONTEMPORARY WRITING SKILLS: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF WHATSAPP USAGE AMONG THE UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

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ABSTRACT

The study examined WhatsApp and the development of writing skills of undergraduate students of University of Ghana. The objectives of the study were to ascertain how School of Communication Studies students currently use WhatsApp, to examine whether they want to use WhatsApp to develop their writing skills, to investigate the relationship between WhatsApp and writing skills of students and to discover if WhatsApp affects their writing skills positively or negatively. Three theories were used in relation to this study namely: The Uses and Gratification theory, Connectivism theory and Diffusion of Innovation theory. The nature of the study was quantitative. The main instrument for data collection was the questionnaire. Purposive sampling technique was adopted to ensure that students chosen have relevant knowledge towards the study with a sample size of 250 respondents. The discussions of the findings indicated improvements in writing skills of students, but students said their intention to use WhatsApp is not meant for developing writing skills. Evidently, WhatsApp is a tool that can enhance the writing skills of the students if used positively. The study found that Whatsapp has impacted negatively on the writing skills and academic performance of students in the School of Communication Studies, University of Ghana. The researcher recommends that lecturers use the WhatsApp tool to help students better their writing skills and also use it for discussion of other academic work.

Keywords: *Social Media, WhatsApp, Writing Skills, Undergraduate Students, Media Influence*

I. INTRODUCTION

Higher education (HE) teaching and learning practices have evolved over the last twenty years, with more emphasis on student-centred training. There is an increased expectation placed onto the role that technology can

play to harness effective learning. However, one could argue that there remains a disconnection between our ambition for interactive learning through technology and the realities of our practice (Roblyer *et al*, 2010). This study explores the concept of interactive learning by focusing upon a specific use of mobile and portable technology. The role of Whatsapp as a social media may offer a new construct to enhance the learning experience.

The proliferation of technological devices such as computers and mobile phones in the past two decades has impacted upon the various aspects of our life, including the way we learn and teach, (Godwin-Jones, 2011).

Technology has 'transformed' the field of higher education and more specifically the field of English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching and learning. This influence has been reflected in the amount of available literature that has discussed the benefits of computer assisted English language learning and the wide range of educational resources available to the general public in the World Wide Web (www), (Gasmi, 2014).

More recently, there has been a heated debate about the usefulness of the new generation of mobile phones namely smart phones for academic purposes, and their possible uses in English language instruction. Researchers have argued that along with their regular uses i.e. sending text messages, surfing the www, etc... the diverse applications (apps) available in smart phones open up a plethora of other choices for educators and consequently ample opportunities to enhance students' learning and to make studying a worthwhile experience for them (Yang, 2013).

There is an increased expectation placed onto the role that technology can play to harness effective academic work. However, one could argue that there remains disconnect between our ambition for interactive learning through technology and the realities of our practice (Roblyer *et al*, 2010).

Greenhow and Gleason (2012) explore the use of WhatsApp as a new literacy practice. They suggest that when used in higher education (HE), it may lead to increased engagement and better interaction between students and teachers.

This view is also shared by Fusch (2011), who argues that the tools of the trade are as important as the learning objectives, and that tools are needed which promote social presence, create a more interactive learning environment and foster collaborative study.

The weaknesses of not being able to communicate to large audiences led to the development of mass media, such as writing (Idakwo, 2011).

New media is a term meant to encompass the emergence of digital, computerized or networked information and communication technologies in the later part of the 20th century. Most technologies described as new media often have characteristics of being manipulated, networkable, dense, compressible, interactive and impartial (Flew, 2008).

Neuman, cited in Croteau and Hoynes (2003) adds that new media will alter the meaning of geographic distance thereby allowing for a huge increase in the volume and speed of communication. It will also provide opportunities for interactive communication and allow forms of communication, previously separate, to overlap and interconnect.

The impact of WhatsApp as a new technology on the characteristics of higher education students environment seems to have an impact on a person's intellectual development. As a result, it is likely that the rapid societal and technological changes can have a huge impact on how students think and learn (Small, 2008).

The high rate of social networking sites, and the impact they have on young people's lives, offers striking testimony to the global impact of today's Internet. Some treat this new medium as a danger, and others treat it as the road to ideal. The truth is somewhere in between. In view of the seeming student's activeness on Facebook, Blackberry Messenger, WhatsApp etc, it became imperative to understand what WhatsApp was used for and the role it plays in the writing skills of students. Yeboah & Ewur (2014), noted that while they agree with most of the writers on both negative and positive impact of social media and academic performance, it important to broaden the scope of thinking of decision makers to reflect on the realities and to create and maintain a system that can change students' attitude that will promote quality image and improve upon performance in our tertiary institutions

The findings of the study done by Yeboah & Ewur (2014), indicated that among other things unveiled the Whatsapp takes much of students study time , results in procrastination related problems, destroys students' spellings and grammatical construction of sentences, leads to lack of concentration during lectures, results in difficulty in balancing online activities (Whatsapp) and academic preparation and distracts students from completing their assignments and adhering to their private studies time table.

II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study are the answers the researcher has set out to seek in this study. Specific study objective are:

- i. To ascertain how School of Communication Studies students currently use WhatsApp.
- ii. To examine whether they want to use WhatsApp to develop their writing skills.
- iii. To investigate the relationship between WhatsApp and writing skills of students.
- iv. To discover whether WhatsApp affects their writing skills positively or negatively.

The above objectives would guide the researcher in the organization of this research to obtain the answers she seeks.

III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The measurable research questions put forward by the researcher will help her to receive information from respondents and find answers to the research objectives include the following:

- i. How do university students currently use WhatsApp?
- ii. Do they want to use WhatsApp to support their writing skills?
- iii. What is the relationship between WhatsApp and developing writing skills for the undergraduate student?
- iv. Does WhatsApp positively or negatively affect the writing skills of students?

IV. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Uses and Gratifications Theory

According to Katz, Blumer and Gurevitch (1974), Uses and Gratifications theory establishes a phase in mass media research challenging the traditional focus of what the media do to the audience to and what the audiences do with the media. It further focuses on why the audience uses the media and the purposes for which it is used (Baran and Davis, 2009). The theory holds that people have preconceived needs, which they bring to the communication process. Expanding on the theory, McQuail (2010, p. 423) states that the central question posed is: why do people use the media, and what do they use them for?

Uses and Gratifications theory is the emphasis on the audience as active in the reception of media. However, this would suggest no passivity within the audience whatsoever. A person may, for example, be too lazy to turn off their television and as a result consume any media that is available, regardless of need. But in the case of social networking, a person deliberately registers his or identity with the social networking site, logs in when he/she decides to, and engages in activities he/she chooses to. Historical criticisms situate the meta-narrative of effects theory within a long history of distrust of new forms of media, dating as far back as Socrates' objections to the deleterious effects due to the written alphabet. Supporters of effects theory contend that commercials, advertising and voter campaigns prove that media influence behavior.

The Uses and Gratifications Theory (a limited effects theory) is a popular approach to understanding mass communication. The theory places more focus on the consumer, or audience, instead of the actual message itself by asking "what people do with media" rather than "what media does to people" (Katz, 1959). It assumes members of the audience are not passive but take an active role in interpreting and integrating media into their own lives.

V. DIFFUSION OF INNOVATION THEORY

This theory is simply known as the DOI. It was developed in 1962 by E.M Rogers. It originated in communication to explain how, overtime, an idea or a product gains momentum and diffuses through a specific population or social system. The end result of this diffusion is that people as a part of social system adopt a new idea, behavior or product. The adoption means that a person does something differently than what they had previously. Rogers (1962) says that the key to adoption is that the person must perceive the idea, behavior product as new or innovative. He said it is through this that the diffusion is possible.

Researchers have found that people who adopt an innovation early have different characteristics than people who develop an innovation later. There are five established adopter categories and when promoting an innovation, there are different strategies used to appeal to the different adopter categories.

The five adopter categories are: the Innovators, the Early Adopters, the Early Majority, the Late Majority and the Laggards.

The stages, by which a person adopts an innovation, and whereby diffusion is accomplished, include awareness of the need for an innovation, decision to adopt (or reject) the innovation, initial use of the innovation to test it,

and continued use of the innovation. There are five main factors that influence adoption of an innovation, and each of these factors is at play to a different extent in the five adopter categories.

Relative Advantage - The degree to which an innovation is seen as better than the idea, program, or product it replaces.

Compatibility - How consistent the innovation is with the values, experiences, and needs of the potential adopters.

Complexity - How difficult the innovation is to understand and/or use.

Triability - The extent to which the innovation can be tested or experimented with before commitment to adopt is made.

Observability - The extent to which the innovation provides tangible results.

VI. CONNECTIVISM THEORY

This theory was introduced in 2005 by two publications, Siemens' *Connectivism: Learning as Network Creation and Downes'*, *An Introduction to Connective Knowledge*. According to Siemens (2006), when students use digital tools to connect, they are able to "reflect on dialogue about, and internalize content in order to learn." This connection helped students develop the ability to create new knowledge at any point in time. Technology allowed for students to connect to each other. On the other hand, journals were not used for connecting in the same pattern although Siemens did highlight the ability to organize knowledge as a characteristic of Connectivism. Using a journal to reflect, internalize, and process knowledge allowed the student to progress to the personalization stage in the Knowledge Flow Cycle (Siemens, 2006). Journaling, as a method of writing, allowed different means of connecting which allowed the students to collaborate and learn from each other. Learning and knowledge are related to the connections between people with digital resources (Siemens, 2005). Connectivism is the theory that acknowledges that learning is no longer an individual activity, but rather a process that allows for students to flourish in the digital era (Siemens, 2005). (Siemens and Tittenberger, 2009) also offers that the capacity to connect to others and form networks will become more important as the influx of information continues to increase. The main criticism against the theory is that, it has not been widely accepted as a learning theory. Some authors have argued that the theory is rather a pedagogical view.

VII. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURES

Definition of Social Media

Social media can be defined as forms of electronic communication through which users interact among people in which they create, freely share, exchange and discuss information, ideas, personal messages, and other content about each other and their lives using a multimedia mix of personal words, pictures, videos and audio, utilizing online platforms while they are connected to the Internet (Cox & Rethman, (2011). Since their appearance, social media have changed different aspects of people's lives. Social media that were emerged by the rise of Web 2.0 technologies are characterized by several significant features such as user generated content, online identity creation and relational networking (Margo, 2012).

VIII. ACADEMIC MEDIA

Academic media include things such as textbooks, educational programming and other such forms that are produced specifically with educational aims in mind. While these forms of media do standardize seemingly high-quality material for lots of different students, educators such as Leon Kamin assert that when education becomes standardized in this way, excellence is impossible. Kamin states that when educational media companies start to push pre-packaged curricular materials, including textbooks and informational videos, the individual creativity of students and teachers is bulldozed in favor of a so-called “universal” educational program (Hamilton, 2013).

Societal foundation of the study

The 21st century society makes great demands on its members because of rapidly developing and ever-changing political, cultural, social, economical and technological situations. Personal computers, cell phones, and social networks, all of which were once considered frivolous, have made such a huge impact on our culture that our daily lives will not be easy without them. Consequently, the society expects its members to keep pace with these changing situations, and adapt their skills and expertise in all aspects of life. Many societies around the world strongly believe that it is the duty of higher education institutions to provide its youths with these skills and expertise. This raises increasing societal concern for the quality of learning and teaching at higher education institutions. As a result of such unprecedented pressure on educational institutions to keep pace with the ever-changing societal needs and expectations, the emphasis in educational approaches has shifted over time in order to reflect the transition from less formal schooling in the agrarian society to remedial repetitive learning in the industrialization age to learning with an understanding (rather than teaching) in today’s knowledge society (Thornburg, 2000).

The scope of ICT in higher education

If African countries cannot take advantage of the information revolution and surf this great wave of technological change, they may be crushed by it... Catching this wave will require visionary leadership in Africa..... Naidoo and Schutte (1999, p. 90). Although modern technologies have had huge impact on most aspects of our lives, and the society in general, they did not have the same transformative effect on higher education in Botswana. In the following sections, the Researcher throws some light on why she thinks technology-supported learning environments, when developed correctly and used appropriately, can engage students in learning and can have a positive impact on student outcomes in higher education because that is the underlying driver of this study. The discussions focus on ICT’s impact on higher education students’ characteristics, ICT’s benefits to students in their learning process and associated challenges. Further, this section addresses the research objective, “to understand the strengths of ICT in higher education context and the rationale of using it in teaching and learning in relation to conventional face-to-face instructional approaches, and to identify the way forward to realize these strengths,” (Thornburg, 2000).

The impact of new technologies on the characteristics of higher education students

Environment seems to have an impact on a person's intellectual development. As a result, it is likely that the rapid societal and technological changes can have a huge impact on how students think and learn. Neuroscientists are advancing their research into areas relevant to education. Dr. Gary Small, one of America's leading neuroscientists and experts on brain function and behaviour in a new book called 'iBrain: Surviving the Technological Alteration of the Modern Mind' argues that daily exposure to digital technologies such as the internet and smart phones can alter how the brain works (Small, 2008). According to him, as we continue to learn, our brains continue to develop and create new pathways and new connections which are continually shaped, reshaped and controlled by advancing societal and technological advances. Recently, social networking applications such as blogs, wikis, and twitter have seen an unprecedented uptake by many people, especially by the youth. Growing in an interactive, socially interconnected technology environment, as compared to such passive activities as watching television or listening to a lecture can cause a huge change in the demographics, interests, needs, expectations and work habits of today's student population.

New ways of learning with technology

Major advances in the fields of cognitive psychology and neuroscience have significantly impacted the educational landscape. The convergence of these disciplines with technology is increasing at a fast pace, and it is affecting academia and their professional practice in many ways. The emergence of the Internet as a mainstream communication medium has resulted in the development of new educational opportunities, such as instruction delivered via asynchronous learning networks, synchronous online seminars, blogs, wikis, podcasts, etc. "Internet-based tools can facilitate communication, interaction, and collaborative learning in ways that were not possible before" (The Node, 2001). Paradigms such as just-in-time learning, constructivism, student-centred learning and collaborative approaches have emerged and are being supported by technological advancements such as simulations, and virtual reality.

Sample Size, Sampling Technique and Questionnaire

A sample size is a subset of the population which is used to represent the whole population in a research. The sample would purposively select all level 200 students. A purposive sampling was to ensure that students chosen have relevance knowledge towards the study. A sample size of 250 respondents is assumed to be sufficient in providing comprehensive results. Both primary and secondary sources of data were used for the study. Saunders et al. (2007) opined that the method for collecting research data is linked to research approaches adopted. The data collection method will prove useful in providing detail information needed for the studies. The primary data would help to obtain current, adequate and accurate data through the use of questionnaires. A questionnaire is a tool for collecting and recording information about a particular issue of interest. Secondary data were collected from documents for the study. Such sources will include: books, reports and academic reports. Past research work and articles on the study area and findings were used.

Data Analysis

A total amount of 250 questionnaires were distributed and 240 (96%) were returned. Of the 240 returned, 40 questionnaires were barred, leaving 200 (80%) which were therefore processed. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data. Collins & Hussey (2003) noted that tabulation is the simplest way of summarizing data for individual variable so that specific values can be read.

Table 1: Demography of Respondents: Gender

| Sex of Respondents | Frequency of Respondents | P e r c e n t a g e |
|--------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| F e m a l e | 8 2 | 4 1 % |
| M a l e | 1 1 8 | 5 9 % |
| T O T A L | 2 0 0 | 1 0 0 % |

Source: Author's constructs, 2015

The table above shows the gender demography of respondents who participated in the study and of the total 200, 59% were males while 41% represent females.

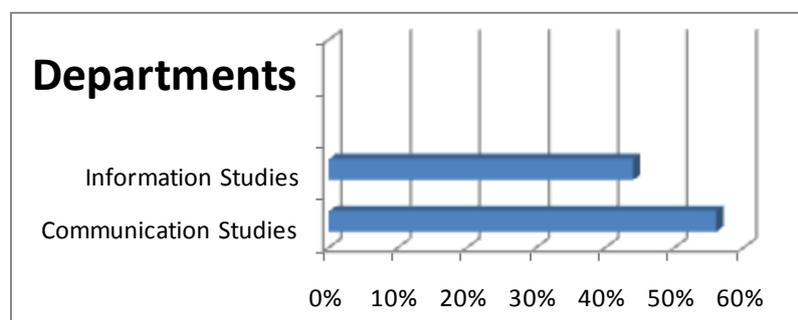
Table 2: Demography of Respondents: Age

| Range of Ages | Frequency of Respondents | P e r c e n t a g e |
|---------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| 1 8 - 2 2 | 7 9 | 3 9 . 5 % |
| 2 3 - 2 7 | 1 0 2 | 5 1 . 0 % |
| 28 and above | 1 9 | 9 . 5 % |
| T O T A L | 2 0 0 | 1 0 0 % |

Source: Author's constructs, 2015

The age of respondents ranging from 18-22 was 39.5%, those who were 28 and above was the minority representing 9.5%. The age group of 23-27 represents 51%, forming the majority. This may be an indication that this age group forms the majority at level 200 of their studies at the undergraduate level.

Figure 1: Demography of Respondents-Departments



From figure 1, it is seen that only two departments of study exist at the undergraduate level of the School of Communication Studies, University of Ghana. Out of these 55% who participated in the study were from the Communication Studies Department while 45% represents the Information Studies Department.

Table 3: Reasons for Using WhatsApp

| Reasons | Frequency of Respondents | | | Percentage | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|---|---|------------|---|-----|
| | | | | | | |
| General Academic work | 2 | | 2 | 1 | 1 | % |
| C h a t t i n g | 9 | | 2 | 4 | 6 | % |
| Writing /Journalizing | 8 | | 6 | 4 | 3 | % |
| T O T A L | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 % |

Source: Authors constructs 2015

The results in the table above shows that majority of the students use the application for chatting with friends on different issues rather than academic work on campus, and this is represented by 46% of the total number of respondents. The study looked at students engaged in the use of the application for other purposes including academic work and developing writing skills. The above table indicates that only 11% of the respondents use the application for academic work, 43% mainly for journalizing or developing writing skills.

Table 4: Time Spent on Using WhatsApp

| Time per Day | Frequency of Respondents | | | Percentage | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|---|---|------------|---|-----|
| | | | | | | |
| Less than 1 hour | 1 | | 8 | 9 | | % |
| 1 h r - 3 h r s | 6 | | 4 | 3 | 2 | % |
| 3 h r s - 5 h r s | 1 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 1 | % |
| More than 5hrs | 1 | | 6 | 8 | | % |
| T O T A L | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 % |

Source: Author' constructs, 2015

Table 4 has shown that 51% of respondents spent 3-5 hours on using WhatsApp, 32% spent 1-3hours, and 9% spent less than 1hour while 8% spent more than 5hours.

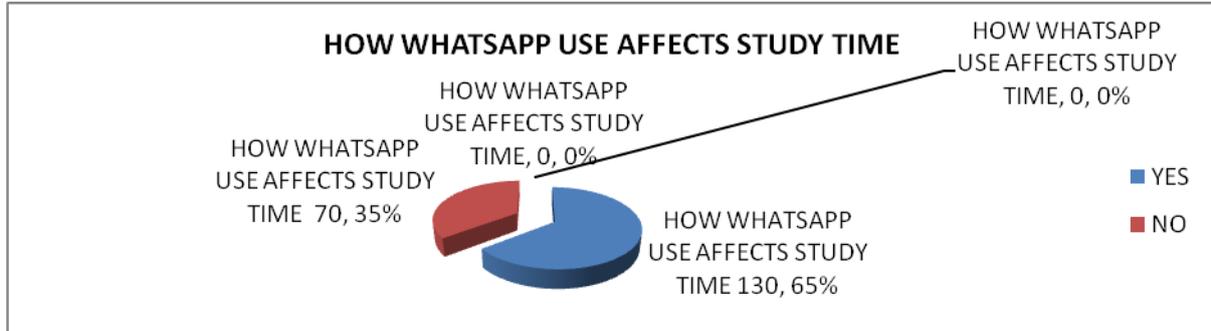
Table 5: How does Using WhatsApp affect your writing/journalizing skills?

| Effect | Frequency of Respondents | | | Percentage | | |
|----------|--------------------------|---|---|------------|---|-----|
| | | | | | | |
| Positive | 1 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 1 | % |
| Negative | 9 | | 8 | 4 | 9 | % |
| TOTAL | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 % |

Source: Author' constructs, 2015

Per table 5 above, 51% of students indicated that WhatsApp has contributed positively to their writing skills, as it easier to type and compose words and sentences. While 49% think that WhatsApp use has negatively affected them.

Figure:1. WhatsApp has affected my study time.



Source: Author’s constructs, 2015

As indicated in the figure above 65% of the respondents said the use of WhatsApp has more negative effect on their studies and only 35% percent said it has positive impact on their studies. Most of them explained why they said it affects them negatively.

Table 6: Do you use WhatsApp because it has a high quality of influence on your writing skills?

| Response | Frequency of Respondents | Percentage |
|-----------|--------------------------|-------------|
| Y e s | 9 | 4 5 . 5 % |
| N o | 1 0 | 9 5 4 . 5 % |
| T O T A L | 2 0 | 1 0 0 % |

Source: Author’ constructs, 2015

From the table above 54.5% of the respondents indicates that the use of WhatsApp has no influence on their writing skills while 45.5% appreciated the impact it had on their writing skills.

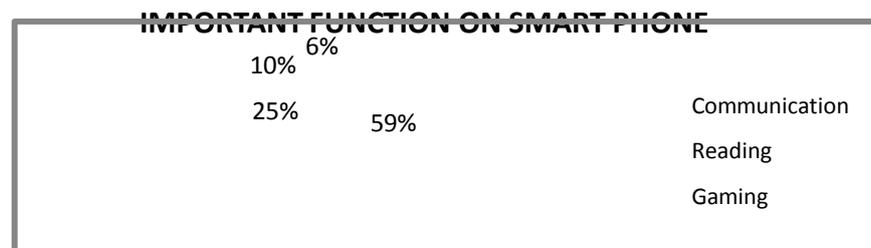
Table 7: Using WhatsApp reduces the need/use of face-to- face communication with my lecturers and friends and improves interactive learning

| Item | Frequency of Respondents | Percentage |
|------------------------|--------------------------|------------|
| Strongly Agree (SA) | 8 | 4 1 % |
| A g r e e (A) | 9 | 4 9 % |
| D i s a g r e e (D) | 8 | 6 % |
| Strongly Disagree (SD) | 1 | 2 4 % |
| T O T A L | 2 0 | 1 0 0 % |

Source: Author’s constructs, 2015

According to respondents in table 7, Whatsapp has been strongly accepted as a tool which supports and improves communication among families, friends, lecturers and interactive learning. This reflects in the response of 41% and 49% who SA and A as against 6% and 4% D and SD.

Figure 2: Which function is more important on a smart phone?



The important function on many smart phones used by the respondents was indicated by figure 2, above. For them, communication is the most important, forming 59%.

Table 8: Why do you need a group chat?

| Response | Frequency of Respondents | Percentage |
|---|--------------------------|------------|
| P r o j e c t w o r k | 4 6 | 2 3 % |
| M a i n t a i n r e l a t i o n s h i p | 8 4 | 4 2 % |
| To improve communication skills | 7 0 | 3 5 % |
| T O T A L | 2 0 0 | 1 0 0 % |

Source: Author's constructs, 2015

Students were asked why they need group chat and 23% indicated due to project work, 42% needed it to maintain relationships while 35% said in order to improve communication skills.

Table 9: What aspect does WhatsApp improve in your communication skills?

| Response | Frequency of Respondents | Percentage |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|------------|
| C o m p o s i t i o n | 1 1 2 | 5 6 % |
| V o i c e m e s s a g i n g | 1 7 | 8 . 5 % |
| Vocabulary word choice | 7 1 | 3 5 . 5 % |
| T O T A L | 2 0 0 | 1 0 0 % |

Source: Author's constructs, 2015.

From table 9 above, 56% of respondents indicated that WhatsApp helps to improve their composition skills, 35.5% said it improved their vocabulary word choice while 8.5% said voice messaging has improved for them.

Table 10: Do you think there is a relationship between writing skills and WhatsApp?

| Response | Frequency of Respondents | Percentage |
|----------|--------------------------|------------|
| Y E S | 1 8 4 | 9 2 % |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|-----|
| N | O | 1 | 6 | 8 | % |
| T | O | T | A | L | |
| 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 % |

Source: Author's constructs, 2015

There is an indication that WhatsApp electronic journaling showed significant improvement towards writing, suggesting the task would be a good option to improve writing skills. This reflects in the responses as 92% agreed there is relationship.

Table 11: Do you think WhatsApp helps lecturers to teach writing skills better?

| Response | Frequency of Respondents | Percentage |
|-----------|--------------------------|------------|
| Y E S | 6 9 | 3 4 . 5 |
| N O | 1 3 1 | 6 5 . 5 |
| T O T A L | 2 0 0 | 1 0 0 % |

Source: Author' constructs, 2015

From Table 11 above, 65.5% indicated that WhatsApp use does not help lecturers in teaching writing skills. The study has revealed that WhatsApp is a tool which can significantly improve writing.

IX. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the role of WhatsApp in developing writing skills as part of the academic work of undergraduate students of University of Ghana, School of Communication Studies. Writing is a complex activity, and as students enter the workforce, they will be asked to convey ideas and information in a clear manner. Alber-Morgan, Hessler & Konrad (2007), noted that writing is importance as well as the eventual writing skill development that will allow the students to graduate with a skill that will benefit them for life.

The study was organized into five chapters. These include the introductory chapter and it comprises of sub-headings such as the introduction of the research topic, the purpose of the study, theoretical basis of the study, research questions, scope of study, etc. Chapter two consists of theoretical and empirical literature. While chapter three, the methodology adopted in carrying out the study. In chapter four, the results will be presented and analyzed. Also findings are discussed. Chapter five is the summary of findings. Conclusion is drawn and some recommendations made accordingly.

The specific objectives of the study include: to find out how School of Communication Studies students currently use WhatsApp; to find out whether they want to use WhatsApp to develop their writing skills; to find out the relationship between WhatsApp and writing skill of students and to find out whether its usage affects them positively or negatively.

The nature of the study was descriptive and qualitative approach with survey method. It focuses on the study objectives and data collected were aimed at analyzing the various data collected. A total amount of 250 questionnaires were distributed and 240 (96%) were returned. And 200 representing (80%) were finally processed and analyzed descriptively.

The results indicated that students use WhatsApp on their mobile phones and most often for chatting with friends on different issues rather than academic. They also use WhatsApp for academic work and developing

writing skills. The study showed there was an improvement in writing skills for students. Though there were improvements in writing skills of students, some say their intention for using it was not for developing writing skills. The study revealed that WhatsApp has improved composition skills and vocabulary word choice for students. The study noted that WhatsApp encourage them to write more and regularly. The study also observed that there were no formal arrangements which were meant to inculcate WhatsApp as a teaching and learning tool at the university, so students only use it for the sake of it. They were not able to fully harness the benefits that WhatsApp could contribute to interactive learning at higher level of education. The study again noted that students have trouble seeing the distinction between formal and informal writing, and consequently use informal message abbreviations in more formal writing situations which has negative impact on their academic work.

In addition, the study revealed that WhatsApp and electronic journaling has a relationship and significant improvement towards writing, suggesting the task would be a good option to improve writing skills. It revealed that to tie the advantage of adapting literacy education to the reality that electronic messaging is the dominant mode of written communication in the lives of many undergraduate students. Educationists can incorporate writing and electronic journals as they may improve students' writing skills. New communicative applications such as WhatsApp should not be used just for the sake of wasting time and chatting. There has to be a goal that the teacher is trying to reach. It may help students in improving their writing products in a delightful way.

X. CONCLUSION

From the discussions of the findings, it is evidently clear that: Whatsapp is a necessary evil for students in the University of Ghana, School of Communication Studies. This stems from the fact that, it can enhance the writing skills of the students if used positively. In that, it makes communication easier and faster thereby enhancing effective writing and flow of information and idea sharing among students and lecturers. However, if used negatively it has adverse impacts on the communications skills and performance of students. Among the negative impacts the study identified include the following: it takes much of the students studies time, results in procrastination-related problems, destroys students grammar and spellings, leads to lack of concentration during lectures and difficulty in balancing online activities and academic work.

The study found that, instead of making communication easier and faster thereby enhancing effective writing skills development, flow of messages and idea sharing among students, friends, family and lecturers, Whatsapp has rather impacted negatively on the writing skills and academic performance of students in the School of Communication Studies, University of Ghana.

XI. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study made the following recommendations based on the findings:

1. In light of the results of this study, School of Communication Studies, University of Ghana lecturers need to be aware that WhatsApp electronic dialogue journaling methodology could be an effective method of helping their students to improve their writing scores.
2. English language instructors in the university need to be made aware of the implications of this study because it will give them options in teaching their students to write.

3. Moreover, as this research was an academic short term study, there is the need for a lengthy study looking at the development of writing skills over a longer period of time, following students for at least one year but possibly four years, while they complete undergraduate level coursework.

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