

Feedback provision through WhatsApp for L2 grammar learning: Participants' views

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Attaining an advanced level of a foreign language can be an arduous task for many learners, being grammar one of the most challenging aspects to master (Jean & Simard, 2011). Nevertheless, with the rising popularity of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL), new approaches to language teaching have emerged, such as the use of instant messaging applications (Tragant et al., 2022), which have been shown to promote grammar development (Murphy et al., 2023). Moreover, feedback plays a crucial role when learning grammar (Valezy & Spada, 2006), but learners' perceptions of such learning process tend to be overlooked. The present study tries to fill this gap by inspecting learners' views on using WhatsApp, a worldwide famous instant messaging application, as a means of receiving feedback for grammar learning.

Three groups ($N=78$) of pre-service primary education teachers, with a pre-intermediate level of English, participated in the study. During an academic semester, they were taught three grammar structures following the Presentation-Practice-Production approach (Larsen-Freeman, 2014) and received extra exposure through WhatsApp. Participants did six WhatsApp tasks (two per structure) and received feedback on their performance, indicating whether their productions were (in)accurate and prompting them to try again if needed. One group received metalinguistic explanations, another reformulations, and the last one repetition prompts (Ellis, 2009). At the beginning and end of the study, participants completed two grammaticality judgement tests to measure their grammatical ability of the target structures. Together with the post-test, learners answered a questionnaire asking about their views of the intervention and their self-perceived usefulness of receiving feedback through WhatsApp to foster English grammar skills.

Results showed that, regardless of the type of feedback, the intervention was valued positively by learners, who found it innovative, fun, engaging and, to a lesser extent, motivating yet repetitive. Overall, participants were fully satisfied with the feedback received and its immediacy, and claimed it had been useful to develop their grammar skills. However, satisfaction levels of those exposed to metalinguistic explanations were higher than those exposed to repetition prompts and reformulations, in this order.

Conclusions drawn yield insights into the potential of WhatsApp and MALL as tools to provide feedback in the English as a foreign language classroom, at the same time they help to narrow the gap between classroom practices and extramural exposure.

Keywords: English grammar learning, learners' views, MALL, type of feedback, WhatsApp

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Biodata

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