

AN ANALYSIS OF SMARTPHONE APPLICATION USAGE IN IMPROVING ENGLISH SKILL; ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STUDENTS OF UNTIDAR

Astrid Daneshwari Pangestika
astriddaneshwari1998@gmail.com
Tidar University

Abstract

English mastery becomes a demand nowadays as it is used in various purpose in communication. Technology is one of the most used media to improve English skill. Specifically, in English Department of Untidar, some classes recommend students to use smartphone applications in order to improve their English ability. Therefore, to measure the efficiency of this learning method, a research is conducted to third-year English Department students of Untidar. This research is to explore the smartphone applications usage in improving english skill, and reveal the most significant application which has most role. Furthermore, the research also finding the obstacle they face during using the application, observe which language skill mostly developed, and the strength and weaknesses of the application used. This research recommends the use of smartphone application in English class, not only in English Department, but also in intermediate and basic English class.

Keywords: English Department, Smartphone Application, third-year students, English skill.

Introduction

Terminology definition: Smartphone

A ceratain mobile phone which can run their iOS or Android operating system and has an internet connectionwhich enables those applications to process is known as smartphone. “A smartphone is a phone which is embedded with an operating system which mostly utilized by internet connection.” (Yu, 2012).

“The barrier of location for people in different parts of the world has been removed by some of the latest technologies, such as the web, internet, mobile devices such as Personal Digital Assisstant (PDA’s), Iphone, etc.” (Sarica & Cavus, 2008, p.21). The role of technology in todays living is very significant. They can fulfill their needs without having to physically involve by face to face interaction with people. Through each single touch on smartphone, they get all they need clear. Start from finding rides, ordering food, hotel and travel bookings, even studying other languages are getting easier. Especially in English, because many of the application in smartphones are setted in english. This is absolutely because English is international language and most people speak English. Responding to this issue, English Department stakeholders take this advancement as a opportunity to conduct a research for improving English Language Skill for students.

As a standart state college, Tidar University has been starting to develop the quality of the campus by building cooperation with Malaysia. Regarding this issue, the campus support this idea by providing complex facilities, so through this supporting system, the students are expected to have and achieve better understanding and excellent in their English Language Skill. Mostly, in English Department where it has several subjects utilizing smartphone application as they have planned in a classroom and the course outlines. Those several

subjects, such as Phonology, Micro-teaching, and TEFL where it consists of technology strategy in conducting a class. These subjects expose and equip the students to use the smartphone application.

The 5th-semester students in the department experience this impact because they are asked to use those applications. This way also helps them in studying independently. As a 5th-semester student, they need to know that studying independently is highly important. This paradigm matters, because they are already in the higher skill of college as they should have mastered English well. Despite all the obligations they should do, they also have to maintain their goals well and independently. Therefore, one of the alternatives they can use to achieve their above expectation in studying independently is smartphone application. On the other hand, there are so many applications in the smartphone, which of those is most suitable? What is the most significant skill that improved? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the application they used? A research is conducted based on these questions to later explore the answers.

Review of Related Literature

Smartphone application usage in teaching and learning environment somehow has become a very researchable theme. Many journals, papers, thesis, even dissertation with this theme in various purposes are easily found in internet by search engine. Here, the researcher wants to give a brief related literature review by previous researcher. The first research was conducted by Bullen, Echenique, Molias (2015) in Spain. The aim of this research was to define educational intervention in the use of digital technologies for both social and academic purposes. The research explored WhatsApp to students for them to conduct a learning process. It showed that the use of WhatsApp impacted their social lives a lot. The result of this research showed the students' satisfaction in experiencing WhatsApp as a digital technology which was incorporated with their educational goals. At the end, the research recommended the use of this application to be implemented in the classroom yet be remodified based on the lecturer's pedagogical competence so that the objectives still achievable.

The second research was conducted by Eisa Amiri, Lamerd Branch (2012). The main idea of this research is concerned which is considering the practical applications of Information Communication Technology (ICT) and Virtual Learning Environments (VLE) to meet the demands of the era as information and communication technology has become a crucial part of the modern world. The result of this research showed that language and literature learning does not only occur in the classroom and should not stop after the learners leave the classroom. So, technological devices should be always be used by students and teachers.

Internet connections and mobile devices are the most popular and useful ways in language and literature learning. It can be said that, the researchers have enough research on web based language learning, from now on they should begin interactive language and literature lessons and encourage teachers to create their own web based activities. In other words, the digital application in conducting interactive language learning is highly needed here.

The last study that the researcher used as an example was done by Huang, et al (2010). The title of the study is The Add-on Impact of Mobile Applications in Learning Strategies. The focus of the research was almost the same as the first research by Bullen, which was practical

pedagogical strategies in learning using smartphone applications. From this research, can be concluded that both teachers and students can utilize the application =s to enhance pedagogical strategies that the teacher conducted. This research showed a learning process via mobile coach and moblie learner, so it happen in online. Therefore, internet connection became the primer requirement in order to sustain this learning process.

Actually, these three studies have similar purposes and conclusions. It can be said that learning process will get easier by using technologies. However, these studies do not use these application in the particular subject. In this research, the researcher will be going more specific to English subject.

Methodology

Looking on the purpose of the study and the targeted scope of conducting the research, the type of methodology which is used in this study is survey based research and counted in qualitative way. Regarding to Cresswell (2014) survey-based research is suitable to become a research method when it can be executed in a short period of time, analyzing the behaviour or distinctive characteristics of a population, and small scopes of samples can be benefits to a large population.

This research was done in English Department of Tidar University, in the 2015-class batch on Monday, October 16th 2017. The instruments which was used by the researcher was interview which was conducted to 15 students of English Department. There were basically three questiones, that will be discuss in the finding and discusiion part.

Finding And Discussion

As previously has been stated, here the questions will be divided into three parts, to be discussed one by one. The findings of this research are as follows:

Which of those is most suitable?

This research found nine smartphone application which are commonlu used by the English Department students. These nine application are: WhatsApp, Facebook, Grammarly, Youtube, Kamusku, Oxford Dictionary, Google Translate, Twitter and some of them also mentioned video game. Actually, most of them are not considered English language learning application. But, their roles in helping the students in learning English is very high.

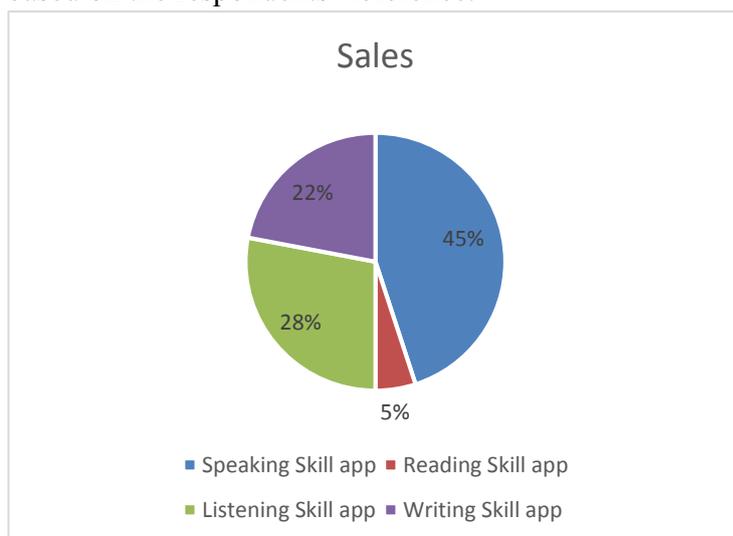
Application	Percentage
WhatsApp	5%
Facebook	13%
Grammarly	10%
Youtube	7%
Kamusku	17%
Oxford Dictionary	27%
Google Translate	14%
Twitter	4%
Video Game	3%

This data showed that most respondent choose Kamusku and Oxford Dictionary as the most useful learning tool they use in learning English. Oxford Dictionary as the highest percentage

achiever was chosen by all the respondents. Beside Oxford Dictionary, one of the most popular dictionaries used by students is Kamusku, an English Indonesian translation dictionary. This application not only gives the meaning of words, but also the pronunciation of the words. But, if students need to have the premium one to have that facility. In Oxford Dictionary also, it provide the pronunciation of the words and also the phonetic transcription. The respondents considered these feature is very useful, which not only help them to know the meaning of ceratin vocabularies but also knows its pronunciation. In these dictionaries, there will be also given the part of speech and example of the use of the word in context. On the other hand, the rest of the application which the presentage is below 17% are only used by one or two respondents. Therefore, Google Translate have higher presentage than others, because it is also used by most of the respondents, even if it is not as much as Kamusku and Oxford Dictionary. Google Translate is actually still in the third place and counted as the most useful application. However, it does not mean that the selected applications are based on their personal preferences.

What is the most significant skill that improved?

One of the question in this research asked about certain English Language Skills the respondents felt mostly improve during using the application. Below are the statistical data based on the respondents' reference.



Based on the categories above, the skills are divided into four parts: Speaking Skill Application are Youtube, Dictionaries, Reading Skills are Grammarly, Dictionaries, Twitter, Listening Skill applications are Youtube, Video game, dictionaries, Writing Skill application are Grammarly and Dictionaries. The data showed that most of the respondents choose speaking skill as the most developed skill, which is in the presentage of 45%. Listening skill in the second place also improved in most of the respondents, since some of them use Youtube to practice their phonology understanding. They are also use it as a media to learn Listening TOEFL test. As stated there, Dictionaries is used in many various skills. Because based on the respondents, dictionaries help them alot in choosing the words they will use in their writing to know if it is suitable with the context or not. Simply, dictionary useful in all skills because helping in term of vocabularies. Reading Skill App does not get many respondents choice, because there only one respondent who agree that it can improve reading

skill.

Furthermore, this idea of selecting Speaking skill as the most develop skill is regarding to their college lives. In the college lives public speaking ability is highly require, so the students will compete to make their speaking skill better excellent. Therefore, the samrtphone application such as Kamusku and Oxford Dictionary are very helpful in this case. They are can get more exposure to the new vocabulary, so that they know which words is suitable to use in which context, wether it is in speaking or writing. They will also able to look up the words they do not understand if they are conducting listening or reading activity.

What are the strenghts and weaknesses of the application they used?

Many learning applications become alternatives for the students to learn more as they are being exposed to more learning resources instead of using printed book only. "Using mobile phone feature enables the students to do collaborative learningwith their teacher regardless of the time and space." (Thomas and Orthober, 2011). It means that students in todays generation have easier way of learning. It argued that the use of smartphone application maximize the efficiency of learning process which means the students can access those application anytime and anywhere to conduct learning independently. As the result of the date showed that Kamusku and Oxford Dictionary as the most useful application in learning English, here are the strengths or benefit of using dictionaries application in developing fourskills:

1. Dictionaries enrich respondents' vocabulary by providing new words, followed by the pronunciation also.
2. Dictionaries help students to understand the words they never hear before, followed by the meaning and pronunciation
3. The application are easy to use with friendly memory usage, and it is very efficient for the respondents.
4. It helps the respondents in understanding meaning of words if they are conducting reading and choosing the words that suitable with the context in conducting writing.

On the other hand, digital application also have several weakness. Based on O'bannon and Tomas (2015) convey a worry of misusing applications by the students as they use them inappropriately. Example, they use the dictionary during examination to cheat. They add that the students might feell unmotivaredto leran from textbook and coventional book anymore because they already depended to the application. Even if mobile digital is very helpful and useful in teaching and learning process, it is not allowe to replace classroom setting of teaching and learning. The use of applications are only as instruments of the learning and not to replace the whole learning process.

Conclusion

This paper is conducted to know how is the role technology in teaching and learning english. It showed satisfying result, because the researcher goals of undersatnding this issue is answered. It is expected that both teacher and students, and smartphones userscan have base information that might become their consideration before using English language learning application in a classroom setting context.

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