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Learning English as a Foreign Language in the Disruptive Digital Era: The Smartphone Use in EFL Instructions

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Abstract

This research aims to investigate and understand high school students' perspectives of using Smartphone use in learning English as a Foreign Language. In the era where learning can be done anytime everywhere, Smartphone become one of significant tools in education. Students can learn English from mobile applications and from open access courses available for them to access anytime everywhere. They can also seek online learning support around the world only by using their Smartphone. We were sending online survey to our potential respondents and gained 250 high school students from five high schools in Gorontalo, Indonesia who participated in this research. The results show that the majority of respondents

(93%) have used Smartphone to learn English. Even though only a small number of respondents (17.82%) disagree that the presence of teacher or others are not significant anymore in learning English, more than half number of the respondents think otherwise. The Mobile applications that are often used in learning English are mostly referencing tools, such as *Kamusku* and Google translate. Most of the respondents are not familiar with applications that specifically designed for learning English as a foreign language.

Keywords: *EFL, smartphone, mobile application, online learning*

Introduction

The fast development in mobile technology has been indicated with the significant increase of the smart phone users around the world. This condition has provoked some studies on the use of mobile technology in education over the years. The findings have suggested that the use of mobile technology benefits teaching and learning process. However, a specific model integration of mobile technology, especially the use of smart phone, in language learning has not been investigated and designed for a secondary education, while the majority of the digital natives, the active users of mobile technology, nowadays, are those in secondary education level.

Teaching by using smartphone can be called *mobile learning*. Guy (2009, p.2). He further defines mobile learning as electronic learning through computational tools. Learning must be focused on mobility and limited to learning by using electronic devices. Keegan (as cited in Guy 2009, p.3) also explained that mobile learning can facilitate education and training using PDAs / cell phones, including smartphones, cell phones, mobile phones and other gadgets.

Buck, McInnis, and Randolph (2013) argues that the 21st Century students are not limited to the knowledge of life, even in the classroom setting, where there are now various forms of technology. The face of the contemporary classroom is ever changing. Innovations in technology are influencing how students' access, learn, retain, and apply information. Studies suggested that Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) is likely to benefit the English teaching field (Buck, McInnis & Randolph, 2013; Machmud & Abdulah, 2018; Machmud & Baliu, 2017). Mobile learning is an important technology to minimize the problem of lack of time, and also to minimize the peer pressure in the process of teaching and learning, and to encourage the learners' autonomy.

The use of technology integrated in language learning is one significant way to be considered to address the need of both teachers and students in engineering department, for instance. Integrating CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) in language instruction is not aimed at just developing students with computer skills, instead, the objective of integrating CALL in the curriculum of language teaching is “associated with self-contained, programmed applications such as tutorials, tools, simulations, instructional games, tests, and so on” (Kern and Warschauer, 2000, p. 1 as cited in Machmud, 2018). Students who are the respondents of this research are aware of the importance of integrating the use of technology into the teaching and learning process in their department (Machmud, 2018).

Pytash, Ferdig, Kist, and Kratcoski (2013) argues that teachers have multiple goals for bringing social networking into the classroom, including attempting to unite in-school and out-of-school literacies (Bowers- Campbell, 2011); helping to teach argument (Doer- Stevens, Beach & Boeser, 2011); creating classroom community (Richard, 2011); and getting students ready for colleges that are increasingly wired and multi-modal (ACT, 2012). Networking can be done easily with the use of technology. This research is emphasizing on students’ perception of the use of smartphone in EFL instructions.

Methodology

The data for this research are gained from online survey that has been spread to high school students in Gorontalo, Indonesia. We asked EFL teachers from five high schools in Gorontalo, Indonesia, to spread the online survey to their students. The survey as the main instrument in this research is used to gain students’ perspectives of the smartphone use in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) instructions. There are 250 students participated as the respondents in this research. They are students from five high schools in Gorontalo, Indonesia. The results were calculated by using Likert Scale and presented in figures and tables.

Results

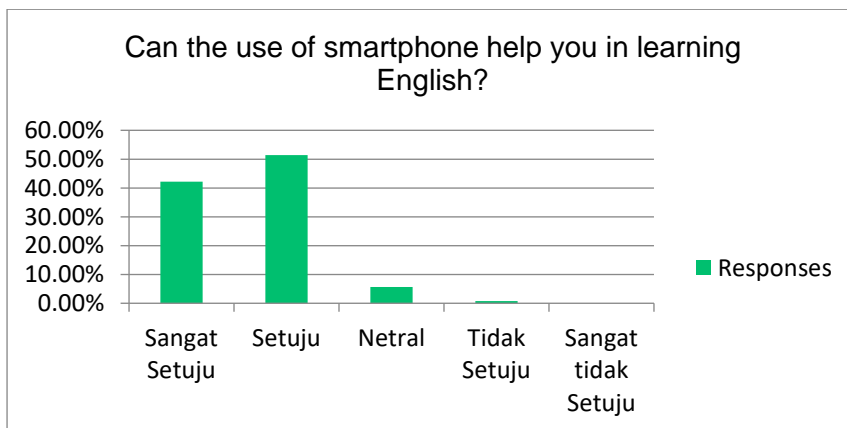
There are tremendous evidence shows that today’s generation, those who were born after the year of 2000, have different relationship with information and learning due to the fast development of information and technology and better access to the Internet. A recent study conducted by Machmud (2018) shows that more than 50% of 250 high school students spent more than 15 hours a day using their smartphone. Another study shows that by the age of 21, students, would have spent 10,000 hours playing video games, sent 200,000 emails, watched 20,000 hours of television, spent 10,000 hours on cell phone, but less than 5000 hours reading.

The study also shows that based on the trend, children age 6 and under will spend 2.01 hours per day playing outside, but 1.58 hours using computers. They will spend only 40 minutes reading daily or ask being read to. It also shows that 48% of these children have used a computer Oblinger (2004). Further, this study suggested that the intense interaction between children and technology has significantly affected the way they learn and interact with their environment.

The research result that presented in this article specifically elaborates and discusses the respondents', who are high school students, perspectives toward the integration of mobile technology in EFL Instructions. The results presented in this article are arranged and discussed based on the questions asked in the online survey, which covered their responses on whether smartphone can help them learning English as a Foreign Language; whether they use smartphone learn English independently; what language skill that they think will be enhanced with the use of smartphone; and, what mobile applications that they mostly used in learning English as a Foreign Language.

Smartphone Can Help Learning English as a Foreign Language

We asked the respondents about the use of smartphone in teaching and learning English as A Foreign Language. The figures shown in the following part shows the data from the online questionnaires.



Sangat setuju = Totally agree

Setuju = Agree

Netral = Neutral

Tidak Setuju = Disagree

Sangat Tidak Setuju = Totally disagree

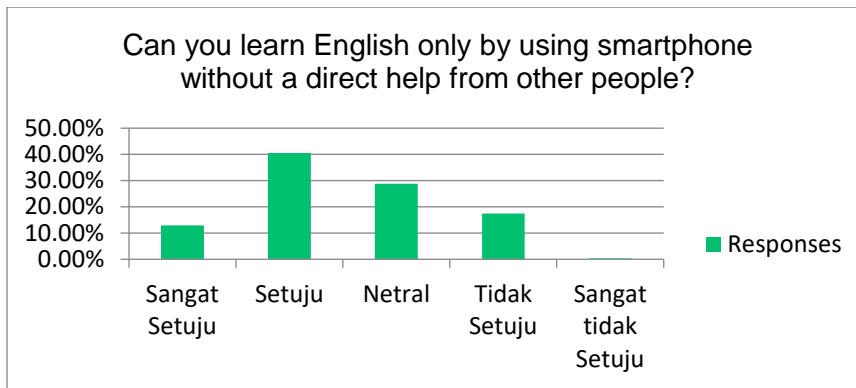
Figure 1. Students' responses on whether the use of smartphone can help them learning English

Answer Choices	Responses	
Totally agree	42.17%	105
Agree	51.41%	128
Neutral	5.62%	14
Disagree	0.80%	2
Totally Disagree	0.00%	0
	Answered	249
	Skipped	1

The data shows that almost all students agree (51.41%) and they even totally agree (42.17) that the use of smartphone can help them in the process of teaching and learning English. It is found that from 249 respondents who answered this question, only 2 respondents (0,80%) answered disagree. This notion shows that most students aware about the importance of using smartphone in English teaching and learning process.

Using Smartphone to Learn English Independently

Learning English needs a large amount of time to practice. This can be done if the time provided for practice is adequate in school; unfortunately, in Indonesia, the time provided is only 100 minutes each week, which is not enough to use to explain the lesson as well as practice, especially if the number of students is large in one class. This creates uneven opportunity for all students to practice in class. Thus, learning English after school time is essential for students. Smartphone as a learning tool that can be used everywhere anywhere become handy and useful to learn English. We asked the respondents regarding this matter, and the following figure shows their answer.



Sangat setuju = Totally agree

Setuju = Agree

Netral = Neutral

Tidak Setuju = Disagree

Sangat Tidak Setuju = Totally disagree

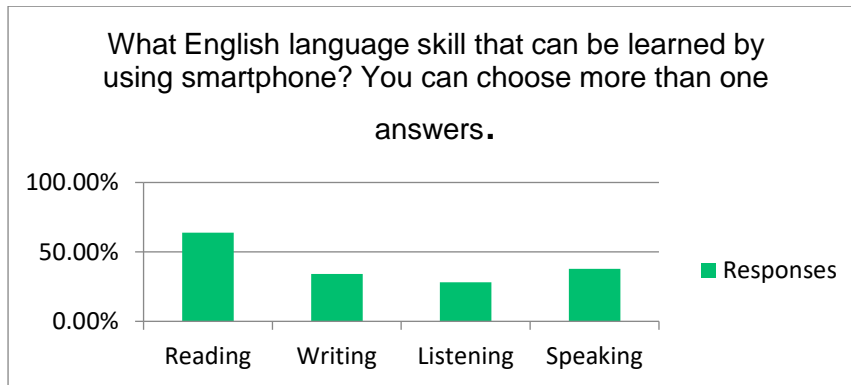
Figure 2. Students' response about autonomy in learning English as a Foreign Language

Answer Choices	Responses	
Totally Agree	12.96%	32
Agree	40.49%	100
Neutral	28.74%	71
Disagree	17.41%	43
Totally Disagree	0.40%	1
	Answered	247
	Skipped	3

The figure and the table above show that more than 50% students as respondents in this research agree and totally agree with the statement that they can learn English without a direct help from other people if they are using smartphone. Only a small number of respondents (17.41) disagree with the notion that using smartphone can promote autonomy in learning English as a Foreign Language. This means that using smartphone can minimize the students' need of teachers in a classroom, because by using smartphone they can access any resources they need in learning English as a foreign language.

Language Skills that can be enhanced with the Use of Smartphone

Using smartphone in classroom interactions need a specific design for English Instructions; therefore, we need to investigate what language skills that can effectively and efficiently taught by using smartphone. The following figure shows the results.



Figur 3. Skills that can be learned by using smartphone

Answer Choices	Responses	
Reading	63.86%	159
Writing	34.14%	85
Listening	28.11%	70
Speaking	37.75%	94
	Answered	249
	Skipped	1

To design English instructions, we need to know the language skills that can be facilitated by the use of smartphone. The result shows that 63.86 % of the respondents answer ‘Reading’ as the skill that can be learned by using smartphone, followed by ‘Speaking’ (37.75%), Writing (34.14) and Listening (28.11%) respectively.

The result above is interesting, because on our previous research (Machmud, 2018a), shows the results that students are most likely to benefit more on increasing their speaking skill when the teachers are using technology in teaching English, whereas in this research shows that more than half of the respondents chose reading as the skill that is most likely can be learned by using smartphone.

Frequently Used Mobile Applications

The following findings shows the reason of why reading becomes the dominant skill, which can be learned by using smartphone, according to the respondents in this research. We asked the respondents what smartphone applications that they most likely used in learning English as a foreign language. The following figure shows the result.

Aplikasi apa yang sering anda gunakan dalam mempelajari bahasa Inggris? Sebutkan!

Answered: 242 Skipped: 8



Figure 4. The most used mobile applications in learning English as a Foreign Language

Smartphone can provide lots of applications that can be used to facilitate human's life. Some applications can be used in English Instructions. We asked the respondents about applications that mostly used by them in learning English. The results show that the most used applications are google translate, *Kamus Bahasa Inggris*, *Kamusku*, *Google terjemahan*, dan UC browser. The respondents' choices show that they only familiar with the translation application, which has a great impact in teaching and learning Reading skill, even though there is a small number of respondents have used learning language applications such as dualingo dan joox.

Conclusion

The findings show that the use of smartphone can minimize the students' need of teachers or instructors, because by using smartphone they can access any resources they need in learning English as a foreign language. Even though the respondent chose reading as the skill that is most likely can be learned by using smartphone, the results also shows that other English skills can also be taught and learned with the use of smartphone.

The reading skill choice is relevant to the students' knowledge of applications they can use in learning English. The results show that they only familiar with the translation application, which has a great impact in teaching and learning Reading skill. We need to be

aware that the importance of reading literacy skill appears has become priority of EFL teachers (Basalama & Machmud, 2018).

To sum up, this research shows that students are mostly aware of the importance of using smartphone in English teaching and learning process, thus, it is highly recommended for teachers to use smartphone in EFL Instructions.

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