THE EFL STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARD THE USE OF MOBILE APPLICATIONS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, mobile assisted learning provides potential possibilities for EFL students to practice their English language skill through their mobile devices such as smartphones or tablet PC. A number of mobile applications provided by application stores can be used by EFL students to support their English language learning. Hence, this study aimed to find out the EFL students' perceptions toward the use of mobile application in English language learning. This study used case study method to reach the objective of study and semi-structured interviews to collect the data. The participants were three vocational school students in Central Java, Indonesia and they were purposively selected. The findings showed positive perceptions toward the use of mobile application in learning English. The students perceived mobile applications as beneficial tools to facilitate them in English language learning activities. They stated that a number of mobile applications that they used such as online dictionary, speaking English application, YouTube, Facebook and Instagram can help them to create more opportunities to practice English, self-study and improve their vocabularies. However, they also mentioned several challenges in using mobile applications such as technical problem and unstable internet connection thus some strategies are needed to overcome those challenges.

Keywords: *students' perceptions; language learning; mobile applications up*

INTRODUCTION

In this 21st century, the development of mobile technology has influenced human lifestyles, including in educational sectors. Mobile technologies provide direct access of information resources needed for teaching and learning process. Teachers or students can access learning material easily, browse the internet, and do many more activities in teaching and learning process by using mobile technologies. Liaw, Hatala, & Huang (2010) say that mobile technology can be used to provide more learning opportunities. Mobile technology enable students to study regardless of location such as at home, on the bus, on the train, etc (Evans, 2008). Moreover, mobile technologies enable students to experience informal learning (Kulkusma-Hulme et al., 2009). The students can acquire knowledge not only in the

classroom but also outside classroom.

Learning through mobile technology is term as mobile learning (m-learning) which is a subset of e-learning (Brown, 2003; Pollara, 2011; Martin et al, 2013). Mobile learning is defined as teaching and learning which can take place anytime, anywhere supported by mobile communication devices such as mobile phones or smartphones, PDA, tablet PC, iPod or any such small portable devices (Kukulska-Hulme, 2005; Kadirire, 2009; Gangaimaran&Passupathi 2017). Therefore, learning through m-learning can make easier for the students to do learning anytime and anywhere, without having to visit a certain place at a certain time. Furthermore, according to Miangah&Nezarat (2012) and Bahera (2013), m-learning has several advantages, including emphasizing collaborative learning, increasing mobility, saving time, interactive and inexpensive because it uses the latest technology. M-learning that deals with the use of mobile technologies in language learning is called MALL (Mobile- assisted Language Learning) (Miangah&Nezarat, 2012; Kulkusla-Hulme, 2013). Learning language through MALL, the students do not always have to learn language in the classroom. They have opportunity to learn language by using their own mobile devices whenever they want and wherever they are. Moreover, MALL can be used as an ideal solution for barriers to language learning in a terms of time and place. It provides a combination of flexibility, accessibility, with mobile apps in language learning (Liu, Tan, & Chu, 2009).

In addition, mobile phone or smartphone with computing capabilities like PCs with Android system or iOS system is one of mobile technologies that are mostly owned and used by people. Mobile phone has become one of the crucial means of teaching and learning, including in English language learning. The extensive usage of smartphones has changed the traditional learning methods and learning processes (Kukulska-Hulme, 2009). With the help of mobile applications that are provided by application stores in mobile phones, language learning entered a new era. A large number of mobile applications are being designed for the purpose of English language learning (Hockly, 2014). Those mobile applications are easy to obtain online and can be downloaded easily and freely by language learners from their smartphone. There are numerous advantages of mobile applications in language learning. The students can find learning materials, reading learning materials, practicing their language skill, and watching lecture from anywhere and at any time (Cui & Wang 2008, Ferry, 2009). Moreover, Hutchison et al. (2012) state that mobile application offered new opportunities for both teachers and students. It can create an active learning environment.

Taking those facts into consideration, this study investigates the EFL students' perceptions toward the use of mobile application in English language learning. Perception itself is defined as a process of how a person selects, organizes, and interprets the information inputs to create meaningful overall conception (Kotler, 2000). Walgito (2010), states there are three component of perception namely: are three components of perception namely: first, cognitive component, it is related to knowledge, opinion and belief that are good things that relate how person's perception toward an object. Second, co native component, it is related to action toward an object. It indicates intensity of attitude that indicates big or small action tendency of someone toward an object. The last one is affective component is related to like and dislike toward an object. A person's positive perception arises because of individual's satisfaction towards the object perceived and the existence of an individuals' experiences towards the object perceived. Otherwise, a person's negative perception arises because of

individual's dissatisfaction towards the object perceived and the lack of an individuals' experiences towards the object perceived (Robbins, 2002).

This study used case study method to explore the students' perceptions toward the use of mobile application in learning English. Furthermore, three EFL students from one of vocational schools in Central Java, Indonesia are purposively selected as the research participants. The participants are considered to be available for this research since they arevery communicative and familiar with the use of technology in language so that the data they provide is sufficient for this study. Therefore, the investigation is targeted to X, Y, Z (false name), who can provide data to this study. The data are collected through semi-structured interview. Shafarudin, et al (2013) states that measuring perceptions can be carry out by giving questions to individuals through interview about and an object and the answers given can be used as indicators of those individuals' perceptions. In analyzing the data, this study adapts Braun and Clarke (2006) analytical procedures. The steps begin with transcribing the set of answers. After that, the transcripts are read and re-read many times to identify the required data. In the next step, the identified data are put into meaningful codes. Then, the codes are analyzed and combined to form categories. Next, the categorized data are reviewed to discover explicit mapping. The last, the clear mapping are analyzed in detail and reported into research finding.

A number of studies related to the use of mobile technology in teaching and learning have been conducted by some researchers. Kafyulilo (2014) investigated teachers' perception towards mobile phone as a tool for teaching and learning. The findings showed that teachers supported the use of mobile phones for teaching and learning in the classroom. Besides, Han and Keskin (2016) investigates the use of mobile application to reduce EFL speaking anxiety. The findings revealed that mobile application experiences significantly impacted the students' language acquisition by lowering EFL speaking anxiety. Moreover, Kusmaryaniet al (2019) investigated the influence of mobile applications on students' speaking skill and critical thinking in English language learning. The findings revealed that the use of technology in the form of mobile learning applications provides opportunities to both the teacher and the students in improving the quality of teaching and learning. It is also applicable for any subject by selecting appropriate mobile learning applications. Therefore, in order to fill the gap found in the prior studies related to the use of mobile technology in teaching and learning, one research question was formulated as follows: Firstly, what are the perceptions of EFL students about the use mobile applications English language learning? Secondly, what are the challenges that arise while using mobile applications in learning English?

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION
Perceptions
Narrative method is used to present the findings. Creswell (2008) states that narrative form can be used in a qualitative study to present a detailed summary of data analysis. In order to know the students' perception toward the used of mobile application in learning English, the interview conducted is based on three components of perception, they are cognitive, co native, and affective component (Walgito, 2010). From the interview, the data obtained are students' responses toward the use of mobile application in learning English. The students describe some activities they usually do with their mobile phone. Those activities can be

considered as using mobile applications to support their English learning outside of learning activities at school.

Cognitive Component

This component is related to knowledge, belief, or opinion of the students toward the use of mobile application in learning English. When asked about what mobile application is, the three participants have same responses that mobile application is a program in smartphone. Their responses are in line with Liu & He (2015) that say that mobile application is a computer program that is designed and intended to run on mobile phone, tablet and other mobile devices. Besides, the participants mention several mobile applications that they use to facilitate them in learning English

> *I use Youtube, Google translate, Google Chrome, Instagram and Facebook to help me in learning English. Sometimes I also use game, because the instruction in the game can help me to practice my English.* (Participant 1)

> *I use Google Translate and Youtube to practice English. I often watch channel Ted on Youtube. But I also use social media such as Instagram, Whatsapp, Facebook to practice my English by chatting with my native friends.* (Participant 2)

> *I use Instagram, Facebook, Youtube and Google translate to facilitate me in learning English. Instagram and Facebook facilitate me to communicate with native speaker. On Youtube I always watch English video.* (Participant 3)

From the responses above, it can be seen that there are a lot of mobile application that have great potential as language learning tools. The aforementioned mobile applications are used not only to entertain but also to support them in English language learning. Moreover, the students also believe that the use of mobile application can help them in learning English.

> *Yes, I believe mobile application can be used to help me in learning English. It help me to get more vocabularies, and if I don't know the meaning, I can check the dictionary application.* (Participant 1)

> *I believe it, because until now I still use Mobile applications to support me in learning English and it is very helpful.* (Participant 2)

> *Yes I really believe it. Without realizing it, my English language ability improved by the use of mobile application. As the example, when I watch video on Youtube, without realizing it, my vocabularies has been improved.* (Participant 3)

Co-native Component

This component is related to the action or the activity of the students have done toward the use of mobile application in learning English. They expound some of their activities with mobile application on their smartphone that is related to support them in learning English. Watching videos, playing games and chatting are their favorite things to do to practice their English outside of the classroom activities.

> *I watch a lot of videos, particularly English video on Youtube, such as on Ted channel, BBC for helping me to improve my speaking skills, pronunciation and vocabularies. I sometimes play some games such PUBG and Mobile Legend. Those games are not only entertain me but also help me to improve my English speaking skill. I also browse some tasks from my teacher through Google.* (Participant 1)

> *I like watching videos on Youtube, such as beauty vlogger, TED, music videos and so on. I learn how to do good pronunciation and to have good grammar from those videos. I also open my Instagram and Facebook not only to chat with my friend to see good English quotes and captions to increase my vocabularies.* (Participant 2)

> *I like opening my social media application on my smartphone. I often seeing my Instagram and Facebook, Whatsapp. I communicate with my English native friends through those social media and writing captions in English on my Instragram to practice my writing skill. I also like to read some English story on Wattpad, it really help me to practice my reading skill. Then, I can use an online dictionary when I do not know the meaning of certain vocabularies.* (Participant 3)

The responses above show how mobile application can help students improving their English particularly in grammar, speaking and writing skill when watching videos and chatting with friends. Moreover, mobile application is useful to enlarge their vocabularies. It is parallel with study Ekinci&Ekinci (2017) that mention that Mobile applications can help students to learn and to revise new vocabularies. Online dictionary that they have installed such on their phone makes them much easier to master vocabulary. Many times they find new words or they have come across the words, but just forget the meaning of those words.

Affective Component

This component is related to the feeling of the participants toward the use of mobile application in learning English. The three participants have same feelings that they are really excited and enjoy toward the use of mobile application to support them in learning English.

> *I like using mobile application to facilitate me in learning English. I can practice my English every time I want and everywhere I am.* (Participant 1)

> *I really enjoy using mobile application to help me in practicing my English. It is very practical. I don't need special time whether I'm in or outside of*

house, I can freely to study while eating and drinking and even before going to bed. (Participant 2)

I'm happy to use of mobile application in learning English. Learning by using mobile application I can practice my English skill anytime anywhere and it allows me to practice my English more. (Participant 3)

The responses above show how they enjoy to use mobile application to support them in learning. English. They perceive mobile application as a practical tool to facilitate them in improving their English outside the learning process at school. They also mention that how their learning becomes more flexible. It is comparable with Osipova,*et al* (2016) that convey that one of the advantages of mobile learning is improving of the access to learning resources regardless of time or location. Learning facilitated by mobile application can be done in everywhere at any time. It is so because their smartphone is always with them and they always bring their smartphone. Hence, they agree that mobile application is effectively to support their English learning.

Challenges

Despite of the students concur that mobile applications are good devices for supporting them to improve their English language skill, they also mention some challenges they often face in using mobile applications. The challenges include unstable internet connection and technical problem. The lagging problems of the unsupported smartphones and internet requirements are the most stated problems.

The use of mobile data that sometimes is over the limit. Sometimes I need to find a free Wi-Fi but not all places provide free Wi-Fi. (Participant 1)

Some applications don't work on my smartphone. It might be my smartphone cannot support those applications to be installed. It makes me frustrated sometimes. (Participant 2)

I often get signal interferences in several places so it is difficult to use online applications. (Participant 3)

CONCLUSION

This study shows students' positive perceptions toward the use of mobile application in language learning. As Robbins (2002) says that a person's positive perception arises because of individual's satisfaction towards the object perceived. The results in this study reveal that the students satisfy and believe that using mobile application bring many advantages to support their English learning not only in the classroom but also outside the classroom. The use of mobile application can help the students to improve their English language skills. Moreover, mobile applications can provide fun learning and greater learning opportunities for students. The findings also inform that the students like the idea of learning by making use of mobile applications. Hence, it is very good for teachers to use mobile application to support the language teaching and learning process. Besides helping teachers in creating interesting

and creative learning activities, the use of mobile applications can also provide more opportunities for students to learn English. Furthermore, the challenges emerged in this study such as unstable internet connection and technical problem, therefore, due to such conditions make the teachers more aware and find some strategies to overcome the challenges of the use mobile application. For the future research, it is suggested to find out teacher' perception toward the use of mobile application in their teaching because it worthwhile to see from both sides; students and teachers.

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