

**PENGGUNAAN TELEPON SELULER UNTUK MENINGKATKAN
KEMAHIRAN BERBICARA BAHASA INGGRIS DAN MEMBENTUK
PEMELAJAR MANDIRI**

***THE USE OF SMART PHONES TO IMPROVE SPEAKING SKILLS AND TO
DEVELOP INDEPENDENT LEARNERS***

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ABSTRACT

Speaking is one of the four language skills that is often considered the most difficult to master properly because it includes various components, namely accuracy, fluency, comprehensiveness and content. Nevertheless, the time allocated for speaking skills in English Study Programs is very limited, in addition the classes are usually large. Therefore, it was necessary to find a language teaching method that could overcome this condition. This research has implemented language learning with the help of cellphones or MALL (Mobile Assisted Language Learning). The research also introduced the concept of independent learning to the students to train them to be come independent learners. This would enable them to continue to improve their speaking English and other language skills after completing their university education. Independent learning would also help them keep up with the times and become life-long learners so that they are always able to keep up with the rapid development in this era. This research is a quasi experimental research in which the subjects were the students of two second semester classes of the English Study Program. The experimental class was introduced to independent learning and both classes used MALL for the class sessions. A pre-test and post test were used to measure the improvement of students' speaking proficiency. In addition, a questionnaire on their perceptions of using MALL in distance learning and independent learning. This was supported by qualitative data obtained through, student journals, observations and interviews. The results showed that the students doing extra activities using MALL did not show significant increase in the post test results, nevertheless good improvement was made in pronunciation and intonation.

Keywords: distance learning, independent learning, mobile assisted language learning, speaking skills.

ABSTRAK

Kemahiran berbicara merupakan salah satu di antara ke empat kemahiran bahasa yang dianggap paling sulit dikuasai dengan baik karena mencakup berbagai komponen yaitu akurasi, kefasihan, komprehensibilitas dan konten. Namun dalam kenyataan, waktu yang tersedia untuk mengembangkan kemahiran ini dalam kelas pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris di Prodi Bahasa Inggris sangat terbatas. Kelas dengan jumlah mahasiswa yang tidak ideal untuk pembelajaran bahasa juga tidak mempermudah keadaan. Oleh karena itu perlu dicari suatu metode pengajaran bahasa yang dapat mengatasi kondisi tersebut. Penelitian ini mencoba menerapkan pembelajaran bahasa dengan bantuan perangkat telepon seluler atau yang lebih dikenal dengan singkatan MALL atau Mobile Assisted Language Learning. Penggunaan MALL ini diharapkan akan memberi kesempatan lebih banyak dan leluasa pada mahasiswa untuk berlatih berbicara dalam bahasa Inggris menggunakan telepon seluler pintar yang telah mereka miliki. Selain itu juga diharapkan bahwa penggunaan MALL ini akan dapat melatih mereka menjadi pemelajar yang mandiri. Ini akan memungkinkan mereka terus meningkatkan kemahiran berbicara bahasa Inggris maupun kemahiran berbahasa lain setelah mereka menyelesaikan pendidikan di universitas. Dengan kemajuan pesat di bidang teknologi dan perkembangan zaman, kemandirian dalam pembelajaran ini akan dapat membantu mereka mengikuti perkembangan zaman dan mendorong mereka menjadi life-long learners atau pemelajar seumur hidup agar mereka selalu mampu mengikuti perkembangan zaman yang sangat pesat ini. Penelitian yang bersifat quasi eksperimental ini akan menggunakan metode kuantitatif maupun kualitatif. Subyek dari penelitian ini adalah mahasiswa Program Studi Inggris semester 2 yang sedang mengambil mata kuliah Speaking. Dua kelas akan dilibatkan dalam penelitian ini. Satu sebagai kelas eksperimen yang akan menggunakan Mobile Assisted Language Learning dan yang lainnya berperan sebagai kelas pembandingan yang tidak diberi perlakuan khusus. Pre test dan Post test akan digunakan untuk mengukur peningkatan kemahiran berbicara

mahasiswa. Selain itu akan digunakan kuesioner untuk mengetahui latar belakang dan persepsi mahasiswa terhadap penggunaan dan pengalaman mereka menggunakan MALL. Ini akan ditunjang dengan data kualitatif yang diperoleh melalui catatan mahasiswa, observasi dan wawancara yang sangat penting untuk meninjau pelaksanaan proses pembelajaran bahasa menggunakan bantuan perangkat telepon genggam pintar. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tidak ada perbedaan signifikan antara mahasiswa yang melakukan latihan tambahan menggunakan MALL dengan mahasiswa kelas pembandingan. Namun terlihat ada peningkatan dalam pelafalan dan intonasi.

Kata Kunci : Kemahiran berbicara, Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL), Pemelajaran Mandiri

Introduction

Speaking proficiency is one of the four skills that a person learning a language must master to interact effectively with others to convey ideas, thoughts, feelings, opinions or to negotiate. In general, the time allocated to speaking skills per semester in English Study Programs is limited to 90 minutes a week over a period of 16 weeks amounting to a total of 21 hours. Because of the limited time available and the wide range of sub-skills to be covered in speaking, teachers should conduct the speaking class in such a way that students can take a more active role in their learning process.

One of the most important elements for oral communication is pronunciation and intonation to convey a message successfully to an interlocutor (Brown, 2001, Harmer, 2003). In order to master these two elements, students can use electronic multimedia which enables them to watch videos of conversations or speeches, lectures or presentations. They can practice by imitating the oral texts, studying the vocabulary, grammar and using the language to converse with others.

The sudden Covid-19 pandemic, forced the Minister of Education and Culture to issue a decision to stop all direct contact in educational institutions, schools and universities. All activities related to education had to be replaced by virtual activities. Teachers had to instantly change their face-to-face classes into online classes using platforms such as Google Classrooms, Google Meet or Zoom.

This led to various problems due to the inavailability of facilities, workspace platforms and stable internet networks. This situation was exacerbated by the fact that most teachers had no experience teaching online and had limited knowledge of using communication technology for their virtual classes. This also posed a problem for the learners with no experience of distance learning.

English Study Program students usually take 4 semesters of Speaking courses with 90 minute weekly meetings amounting to approximately 21 hours practice per semester. The average class of 27 students is far from ideal since speaking needs to be

mastered through individual practice. Therefore, strategies were used to help learners maximize their time to study and practice speaking skills independently and take a more active role and responsibility in their learning.

The ubiquitous use of mobile phones in contemporary lifestyle made it a potential choice for distance learning. The use of MALL (Mobile Assisted Language Learning) enabled learners to access internet material to practice independently. The sudden switch to online-distance learning changed matters significantly. Smartphones originally planned to support the regular face-to-face classes, had to be relied on completely for the virtual classes using zoom.

Based on the discussion above, the research questions are:

1. How can teachers guide students to access material on the internet using their smartphones enabling them to practice their speaking skills independently?
2. What are the students' perceptions of using MALL in Distance Learning to improve their speaking skills?
3. To what extent did this strategy improve their speaking skills?

Thus, the objectives of this research were to identify the students' perceptions of the use of MALL and online distance learning and problems arising from its application. Another goal was to find out to what extent MALL helped students to become independent learning and improve their speaking skills in English.

This research is expected to provide both theoretical and practical benefits. The results of this study are expected to add to the research in MALL. Many studies have examined the use of multimedia in the classroom, but few have examined the use of such materials to develop independent learning. This is essential as the rapid advancement of technology demands people to continue updating their knowledge and skills independently to keep abreast of the rapid changes. For learners this research is expected to inspire them to use their smartphones to improve their proficiency in spoken English. The development of independent learning will also affect their learning in other subjects and hopefully turn them into life-long learners.

Literature Review

This section will discuss the theories related to language learning and MALL in a distance learning context as background of this research, namely speaking skills, the use of internet-connected multimedia in language learning classes and MALL using a mobile device now commonly known as a smart phone.

The two main approaches proposed by Richard (1990: 77-76) for teaching conversation are the indirect and the direct approach. The first approach allows learners to interact in conversations without being given any limitations or restrictions. Students learn to converse in spoken English by engaging in meaningful tasks. The second approach, the direct approach, gives learners the task of composing a conversation by paying attention to certain language elements determined by the teacher. In practice, these two approaches are often used together as they complement each other and allow students to practice different sub-skills.

Speaking proficiency is often considered one of the most difficult aspects of language for language learners as it requires not only knowledge of various language aspects but also the ability to manage information and language in an instant (Harmer 2001). It is important for teachers to create a conducive learning atmosphere free from pressure and set clear, achievable learning targets.

An effective speaking class gives every learner the opportunity to participate in speaking activities and generates motivation to learn. When the topic and task is interesting and challenging, learners will participate in the activity. Of course, students should have sufficient vocabulary and grammar (Harmer, 2001).

Exposure to conversations and monologues is very helpful for language learners to improve their speaking proficiency. Authentic conversations among native speakers can be used as models of the English of native speakers (Brown, 2001: 275).

Independent learning has 5 characteristics (Benson & Voller 1997). First, the responsibility for language learning is mainly in the hands of the learners. Second, learners should acquire learning skills. Third, learners should be given opportunities allowing them to learn independently. Fourth, the learners should determine the development of learning themselves; and lastly, learners basically want to organize their education themselves, but this is often prevented by strict rules and regulations that often do not take individual learners into consideration.

Distance learning is an educational method without face-to-face interaction between learners and teachers making it the only learning method feasible for schools and universities or others forms of education during the Covid 19 pandemic.

The Ministry of Education and Culture (2020) has classified distance learning into three methods, namely (1) Offline Distance Learning without direct contact between teachers and learners and without the use of internet. Students get lessons through TVRI or other television educational channels, radio broadcasts, self-study modules, worksheets and

other printed or pre-recorded materials. (2) Online Distance Learning, an internet-based teaching and learning process in which the entire educational process is carried out online using platforms or apps. All teaching and learning is web-based. (3) Semi-online Distance Learning combines learning methods via the internet with face-to-face conventional or offline methods making use of the benefits of both. The proportion of teaching and learning via the internet is determined according to needs and conditions. This combination can be done with a proportion of 40% online and 60% offline or face-to-face, or the reverse. In fact, any ratio can be used in this system to suit the context and the needs of learners.

Mobile assisted language learning (MALL), is a language learning method that is growing rapidly along with the increasing popularity of the use of smartphones to meet various personal, communication and work needs. In this research MALL is part and parcel of online distance learning. Mobile technology influences communication and have opened up new contexts for learning (Pachler et al., 2010). The integration of technology in education is being carried out gradually, because educators still need to understand how it can be used effectively to support various types of learning (Kukulskahulme & Shield, 2008). Effective methods and materials for language learning still need to be developed for MALL. Nevertheless, this technology has its drawbacks. These among others are the small screen size of devices, limited graphic presentation, limited data storage and dependence on internet networks which are often not stable and causes various disturbances.

The term MALL was coined by Chickering and Ehrmann in 1996 and first used in language learning by Chinnery, G. M. (2006). Actually, the findings regarding CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) appearing long before before MALL can be used to carry out learning activities via smart phones. This is because smart phones are actually pocket-sized mini computers. The main difference between the two is the freedom to learn anytime and anywhere given by MALL.

Research conducted in MALL shows that both teachers and students like its mobility and accessibility. For teachers it provides many options for delivering learning material in an attractive way. For learners it is the ease with which it can be used as well as the possibility of working peers. Researchers found that MALL assignments should take socio-cultural settings into account, be interesting and short and easy to do. MALL has been most successfully applied in vocabulary development (Joshi & Shah, 2015).

This is supported by Darmawati's research (2018) to improve speaking proficiency of IT UNPAM students.

Video recordings are proposed by many language teaching experts. With the use of vivid images and sound, these provide lessons that are easier to learn and remember. Images also provide learners with important cultural background knowledge and the use of body language. Voice provides a model that helps learners acquire essential pronunciation skills for effective communication. Jansen et al. (2011) revealed that using video recordings in language learning provides opportunities to communicate interactively. This can foster self-confidence, independent learning and makes language learning interesting and fun.

YouTube, a social media resource, has experienced rapid development in the last decade, including its use as an educational tool (Fleck et al., 2013). In terms of ELT (English Language Teaching), videos depicting people conversing in English abound on YouTube. However, some researchers have underlined the importance of using multimedia coupled with active learning techniques. Without active learning, this is of little use. Another important factor when using YouTube is careful selection to ensure that the content is relevant and suitable for learners (Al-Jarf, 2012).

RESEARCH METHOD

Based on the objectives and subjects of this study, a quasi-experimental methodology was used. The nonequivalent control group design was chosen because the researchers made use of existing classes. Two out of the five parallel speaking classes were selected. One class received treatment using MALL outside class hours while the other class underwent distance learning only. After 7 weeks all students were given a questionnaire to identify their perspectives of distance learning, MALL and independent learning.

Data were collected through pre and post test scores to see effects of the treatment, students weekly language learning journals reporting their independent learning activities and a questionnaire about the students' experience of distance learning and MALL. The unstructured interviews and field notes made during the research period of 7 weeks provided more qualitative data. Because of the nature of the data collected, the analysis of the data was done quantitatively and qualitatively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The questionnaires produced interesting data regarding the experiences of the subjects in online distance learning and MALL. The analysis of the first part of the questionnaire showed that all but one student had individual smart phones with internet connection and 24% also had computers or laptops. However, they preferred to use their cellphones to participate in online classes or study independently. The average time they spent a day on independent English language activities using an internet-connected device was between 30 minutes and 1 hour. There were 4 students who spent more than 2 hours to improve their English. 90% of the students watched movies or other programs in English. Other most common activities were reading English texts, using online dictionaries, doing online English exercises and language puzzles or games. Three students used songs to improve their pronunciation in English. The students felt that they made most improvement in pronunciation and intonation; secondly, vocabulary and lastly fluency. This is supported by the evaluation of their speaking practice in the virtual classes and the pre test post test results.

The analysis of the second part of the questionnaire shows that after experiencing 7 weeks of online distance learning, the students were generally satisfied with the learning process because more students answered 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree' to statements about the positive aspects of distance learning than 'Disagree' and 'Strongly Disagree'. However, the percentage of students who chose 'Neutral' tended to be quite significant overall. The choice 'Neutral' for each statement ranged from 5.2% (or 1 respondent) for statement No.12 on university support in Distance Learning to 42% for statement No.9 on material variation. This shows that on average 25% were still unsure about the effect of online distance learning. The table below shows a recapitulation of Part 2 of the questionnaire:

No.	Statement	Percentage (%)				
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	The main problem with online learning is having good internet connection			15.8%	44.7%	39%
2.	Students need to get training to participate effectively in online learning		7.8%	34%	31.6%	23.6%
3.	Online language learning is more effective than face-to-face learning	18%	44.7%	13.1%	18%	10.5%
4.	Online learning must be combined with face-to-face learning		5.2%	29%	50%	15.8

5.	The teachers are able to conduct online classes effectively	7.8%	5.2%	39.45 %	44.7%	2.6%
6.	Students get enough individual attention and feedback during online learning		23.6%	21%	47%	7.8%
7.	The material used in the online classes is effective to learn speaking skills	7.8%	10.5%	23.6%	55%	2.6%
8.	There is enough variety in the online activities	7.8%	10.5%	42%	31.6%	10.5%
9.	Assessment (UTS & UAS) of speaking is effective		10.5%	31.6%	50%	7.8%
10.	It is easy for students to interact with each other to support their learning online.	23.6%	23.6%	31.6%	18.4%	
11.	Online learning makes students become more independent learners	7.8%	13.1%	15.8%	57.9%	5.2%
12.	It is necessary for the university to provide students and teachers with adequate facilities to engage in online learning	2.6%	2.6%	5.2%	57.9%	31.6%
13.	Other comments about your online learning experience and/or suggestions to improve your online learning					

Tabel 4.2 Recapitulation of Responses related to Distance Learning

The responses to statements 5 - 11 indicate that the students believed their instructors had successfully implementing online distance learning. The materials used in the online distance learning class were the materials originally designed for face-to-face classes. This indicates that a lot of improvement in the material could still be made by adding variety to the virtual classroom activities. This issue was also raised by the student in their comments on question no.13, about learners' boredom, it was necessary to include activities such as games or puzzles. Comments regarding students' boredom were not solely due to the implementation of distance learning but also because of the enactment of the Large-Scale Social Distancing and New Norms. One significant obstacle for students was the difficulty of working with peers. The results of statement No. 10 showed only 18.4% agreed that it was easy to work with peers. This means communication between students should be facilitated. 63.1% responded 'agree' and 'strongly agree' to statement No. 11 indicating that online learning made the majority of students become more independent learners and take responsibility for their own learning. 89.5% felt the university was responsible to facilitate online Distance Learning (statement No 12) and provide training. One main problem was the financial burden of internet.

Although the response to the teachers' ability to handle Distance Learning was generally positive, a majority still tended to think that face-to-face learning was more effective and enjoyable (62.7%).

The most crucial problem faced by students was having good and stable internet connection. This was stated by 83.7% of students. Some students said the internet signal where they live was always weak and unstable. Several students had to search for a stronger signal outside their homes. For other students, the internet connection issue was related to their economic situation. As all courses were conducted online, students were forced to have an extra budget to buy internet credits. There was one student who could not attend the virtual classes at least 3 times because of that. In the comments given to question no 13, at least 25% of the students suggested student tuition fees be reduced to buy data packages.

A comparison of the results of the post test and pre-test showed that several students experienced increased scores, but statistically this increase was not significant. The mean increase that occurred in the post test was 1.7 points. The highest increase was 4 points. A few experienced a decline, even though this too was insignificant. When questioned about the decline, some stated that they were not with online oral exams. Others stated that the internet signal during the exam was unstable making it difficult to concentrate on the oral test. An assessment system that is more learner friendly and an alternative plan if the internet is disconnected is required.

The questionnaires showed that both classes spent equal amounts of time on their smartphones doing language activities outside the virtual class i.e. 60% of both classes used their phones 45 minutes 2-3 times a week. In fact, the experimental class did not spend more hours on learning. Thus, it can be concluded that online distance learning naturally encourages students to be more independent learners.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This quasi experimental research supplemented by a survey shows that students tend to consider the speaking classes delivered through distance learning effective even though they had no access to any university facilities.

The results from the class discussions and observations show that the most effective online distance learning media is a platform like Zoom which allows virtual face-to-face communication. Besides the virtual whiteboard, there is a share function

allowing the teacher and participants to share documents, pictures or videos with the class. However, the latter has to be done with caution as it can drain the students' internet data credits. Likewise, the use of the video camera in the virtual classroom can be burdensome. The class can also break out in groups for group work or discussions. When students need to discuss a class assignment, the teacher could leave the class, allowing them to have their own space. Chat groups could also be used to give the students time to socialize and collaborate with each other.

Due to limited time and experience, the learning materials used were not designed for distance learning. Therefore, the teacher had to adapt them to distance learning. However, a plus point of distance learning is that photocopies of the study materials are not necessary which helps to preserve the environment as well as expenses.

In interviews and comments, some students said that in other classes they would be given a pile of material without much explanation making students lose their enthusiasm. Teachers must also be wise when giving assignments because other teachers do this too and so students having to get extra internet data credits.

The research results show that online distance learning encourages to become independent learners. This is a good indication and needs to be followed up so that it can be further developed. Teachers can provide input on what can be done to become independent learners and also suggest strategies. Creating independent learners should be one of the goals of distance learning so that students can become more active and take more responsibility for their learning. In addition, it is also necessary to think about providing training in distance learning for both students and educators. Distance learning has just started to develop and therefore still a lot of effort needs to be done to make it develop in the right direction.

This is only a preliminary research on online distance learning. Many aspects need further investigation such as the development of special materials. Researching the combination of offline and online distance learning will also be beneficial because despite the fact that students will return to campus after the pandemic, distance learning will always be part of the education system, perhaps not as intensive and comprehensive as it is now but in combination with face-to-face or offline methods.

Therefore, it is necessary to conduct research on the impact of Distance Learning which is very widespread and identify problems that may occur so that they can be overcome before they produce bad effects.

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