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## STUDENTS' RESPONSES TOWARD THE USE OF WHATSAPP IN LEARNING

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### ABSTRACT

Lecturing along with the use of whiteboard combined with power point presentation has been traditional practice in classroom. The desired learning outcome has long been examined. Overviewing the postulation by Bransford, Browning, and Cocking (1999, p194) which premise that technology plays significant role for yielding learning environments that advance the possibilities of one-way communication media, such as movies, documentaries, television shows, and music into new areas that require interactive learning like visualizations and student-created content, lead me into an implementation of media development in teaching. This paper aims to see the students' responses toward the use of WhatsApp in English learning as this smart phone application has been used in some courses in some levels of students in Muhammadiyah University of Surabaya majoring English. Elaborated qualitatively, this paper shows you how much students get into the learning. It is shown that even though self-effort to internet access was the main obstacle in the learning, their reading and writing skills were found improved. This result in the future is expected to be able to make other faculties realize that smart phone application can enhance the learning environment and outcome.

### INTRODUCTION

The current teaching trend is what teacher can do in integrating the learning with ICT. Freiburger (2017) claims that teachers and school leaders are enforced to reevaluate the involvement of the new technologies onset. He continues that innovation of application is one of the emerging trends. E-learning is one of the kind, Comerchero (2006: 1) asserts, "e learning is a flexible term used to describing a means of teaching through technology." This kind of learning requires ICT, internet connection, and other technological device where teacher and pupils are separated by distance. Statistics shows the e-learning keeps growing fast (Pappas, 2015). In fact, an increasing number of individuals, corporations, and institutions are turning to eLearning as they recognize its effectiveness and its convenience.

One part of e-learning itself is the so-called mobile learning. This kind of learning utilizes portable computing devices like iPads, laptops, tablet PCs, PDAs, and smart phones with internet connectivity. Kukulska-Hulme (2010) claims, "this denotes not just physical mobility, but the opportunity to overcome physical constraints by having access to people and digital learning resources, regardless of place and time." Therefore, it shares chance for teacher and pupils experience new way of teaching and learning outside classroom.

There are numerous existing application used in the mobile learning. One particular app is WhatsApp. On its way connecting 1 billion people, WhatsApp, an application for smartphone that is suitable for almost all type of device (including notebook and tablet) and operating systems, was found by Jan Koum in 2009. Being its CEO, Koum states that the enormous users engagement and rapid growth were because the simple and instantaneous

messaging capabilities that they offer to the users. According to Cohavi (2013) in Bouhnik (2013), being marketed since 2010, this application offers the user many functional features, such as text messaging, group chat, WhatsApp on web and desktop, voice and video calls, photos and videos, document sharing, and links to web address. Not only free of charge, it also has simple operation scheme that makes the program accessible to a variety of people of different ages and backgrounds. It enables communication with anyone who possesses a smartphone, internet connection, and the application. In terms of education, they feel pleasant environment existed and in depth acquaintance with fellow students emerged (Bouhnik and Deshen 2014). Moreover, Etim, Udosen, Ema (2016) studied the significant effect of the use of WhatsApp on academic performance of Geography students in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. Amry (2014) also found high positive impact on students' performance after using this application.

This study presents students' responses after getting the learning using WhatsApp in English Department of Muhammadiyah University of Surabaya, 2016/2017 academic year. There were 100 students from four classes taking four different courses. They were 18 students from 2<sup>nd</sup> semester taking Listening for Daily Conversation course, 31 students from 6<sup>th</sup> semester taking Research on ELT course, 31 students from 4<sup>th</sup> semester taking Phonology course, and 20 students from 2<sup>nd</sup> semester taking Pre Writing course. These students experienced mobile learning using WhatsApp. In the effort of maximizing the use of WhatsApp, the lecturer conducted various models of learning process.

After applying the application in the courses, the students' responses is then questioned. Thus, this study formulates:

How is the students' response toward the use of WhatsApp mobile application in their learning?

The objective of this study is to describe the students' responses after learning using WhatsApp mobile application.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **E-learning and Mobile Learning**

E-learning is making use of electronic technologies to conduct the learning based on the educational curriculum outside of a traditional classroom. This kind of learning requires ICT, internet connection, and other technological device where teacher and pupils are separated by distance. Meanwhile mobile learning is learning technology that uses a variety of learning approaches and methods across multiple contexts and social interactions (Vytgotsky, 1978). Making use the mobile device enables the students to learn at any place and at any time (Crescente & Lee, 2011). The devices that can be utilized to enrich the learning experience are smartphone, tablets, and notebook.

### **WhatsApp**

The mobile learning must be accommodated by one particular application that is suitable with the device's operating system. One of the most popular is WhatsApp instant messaging. Based on WhatsApp (2010), this application is a cross-platform smartphone messenger that requires internet data. In terms of its use in educational field, WhatsApp enables students to send text messages, images, video, audio, documents, and even location. It provides students and instructors with the ability to create group that supports interactions of each members. Cheung et al (2008) in Amry (2014) state that students' engagement through mobile technologies influences their motivations for social interactions.

### **Procedure of Applying WhatsApp Application in Learning**

WhatsApp has been used in four courses during 2016/2017 academic year in English

Department of Muhammadiyah University of Surabaya. Utilizing this application shared experience to students and lecturer to engage and interact in different way outside or inside classroom. The courses that involved WhatsApp are Listening for Daily Conversation (2<sup>nd</sup> semester), Pre-writing (2<sup>nd</sup> Semester), Phonology (4<sup>th</sup> Semester), and Research on ELT (6<sup>th</sup> semester). In the beginning of the course, the lecturer discussed the course contract where WhatsApp was stated to be used. In the course contract the procedure of using the application in the learning was socialized after making sure the students possessed smartphone.

#### 1. Creating WhatsApp Group

In this step the course manager (Penanggung Jawab Mata Kuliah or PJMK) created WhatsApp group and set the role as group administrator. He/she got privilege to add and remove group member (the lecturer was in the group too), remind the lecturer about the lesson, as well as remind the group member about the task given.

#### 2. Setting the Lecturer's Role

The lecturer was also set as admin of the group. She posted articles, video, audio, documents, pictures, and links related to the lesson. She gave the instruction and announcement in the group, whereas the assessment was given in every student's private chat room.

#### 3. Setting the Students' Role

Every single student must be active member of the group (actively participating in discussion), punctually submit/send the given task to lecturer's private chat room. Use proper polite words and emoticons.

### Example of Activity

Various activities were accommodated by WhatsApp. The characteristics of the instruction were also different based on the courses taken.

#### a. Listening for Daily Conversation

In this course lecturer administered online Final Term Examination. After posting the rules, the students were getting ready with their device (smartphone or pc). The audio file was then posted along with the questions. The answer must be submitted in given time to the lecturer's private chat room.

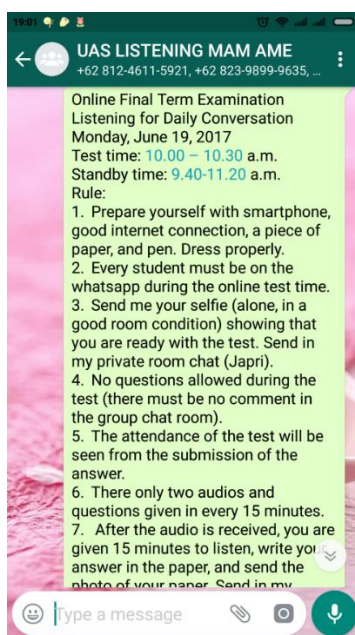


Figure 1: Final Term Examination on WhatsApp

## b. Pre-writing

In this occasion a flipped classroom was applied. Requiring homework before actual meeting, this kind of learning also involved WhatsApp as learning tool. As seen in figure 2, the students must report their self-practice. Lecturer's simple feedback was needed. Meanwhile in figure 3 the lecturer shares pdf files to be accessed by every student to do in-depth practice.



Figure 2. Lecturers Feedback and Assessment

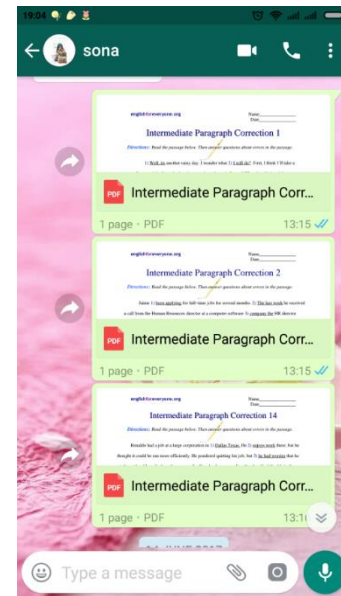


Figure 3. Document Sharing in at Home-Exercise

## c. Phonology

This course integrates the audio and visual learning as it requires direct example from native speaker. Thus in figure 4 the lecturer posted links to be accessed by the students to prepare themselves before actual meeting.

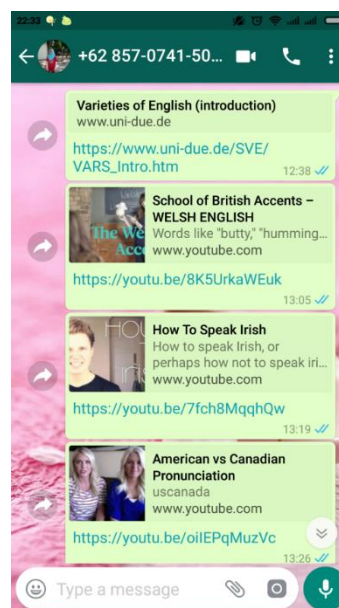


Figure 4: Exercise Submission

## d. Research on ELT

In this course the lecturer applied strategy like thesis advisory. Every student was given chance to consult their ideas for research and methods. The lecturer must always be ready 24 hours in 7 days to give feedback and open consultation. Students' fixed draft was submitted and assessed.

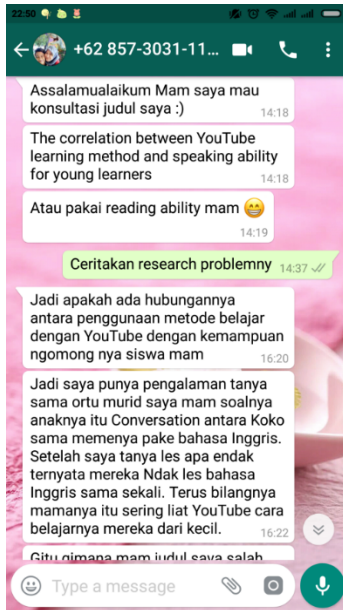


Figure 5. Consultation of ideas for research

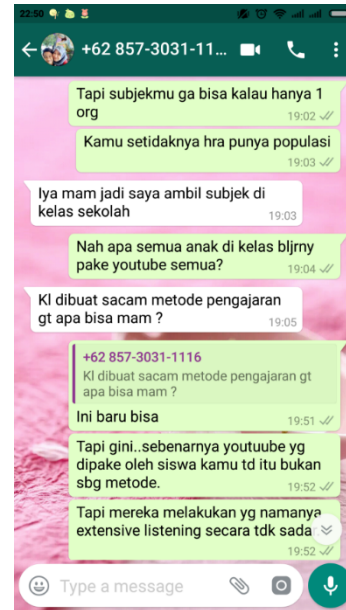


Figure 6. Lecturer gave feedback and shared idea



Figure 7. Student's acquaintance with the lecturer.

## METHODOLOGY

Survey method along with the use of questionnaire was used for data collection. Questionnaire was administered using WhatsApp too. The population was 100 students who were taught using WhatsApp. The sample was 50 students chosen by simple random sampling. Based on Cohen, et.al, (2007; 101) the bigger the sample out of the population, the better it is, and yet the minimum size must not be less than 30 sample. In harmony with that, Gay in Mahmud (2011; 159) declared that the minimum sample size for research is: a. Descriptive method, minimum 10% out of the population. For a relatively small population, 20% sample is the least; b. correlational descriptive method, minimum 30 subjects. c. *expost facto* method, minimum 15 subjects per group d. *experimental* method minimum 15 subjects per group. These students were then instructed to send the answer in lecturer's private chat room. To improve the reliability and validity of the research instrument, the questionnaire was pilot tested on similar but smaller sample group from English Department as many as 20 students. Errors and correction were found and corrected to be applied into the instrument. From the total sample of fifty students received the questionnaire, all of them send the answer representing 100% response rate.

## RESULTS

The results of the questionnaire administered are seen as follow:

### Frequency of using WhatsApp

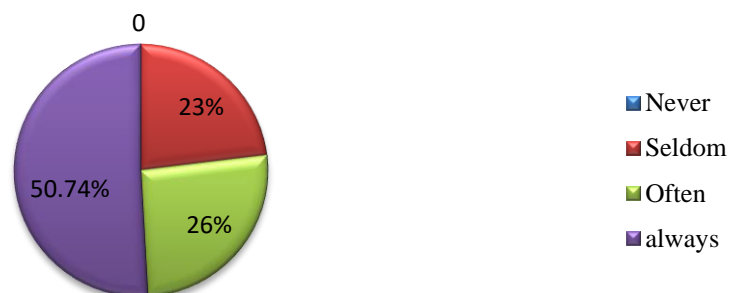


Figure 8. Frequency of using WhatsApp

From figure 8 out of total respondents of 50,74% students indicate their high frequency of using WhatsApp. The other 26% stated often using WhatsApp, while the rest 23% are seldom. The indication proves that this application is now always in hand.

### Preference on WhatsApp Use



Figure 9. WhatsApp Use

Figure 9 shows most students like using WhatsApp in learning as many as 86%. Meanwhile the 14% dislike its involvement in learning. These phenomena are in line with the problems they had during learning using WhatsApp.

### Problems Arose

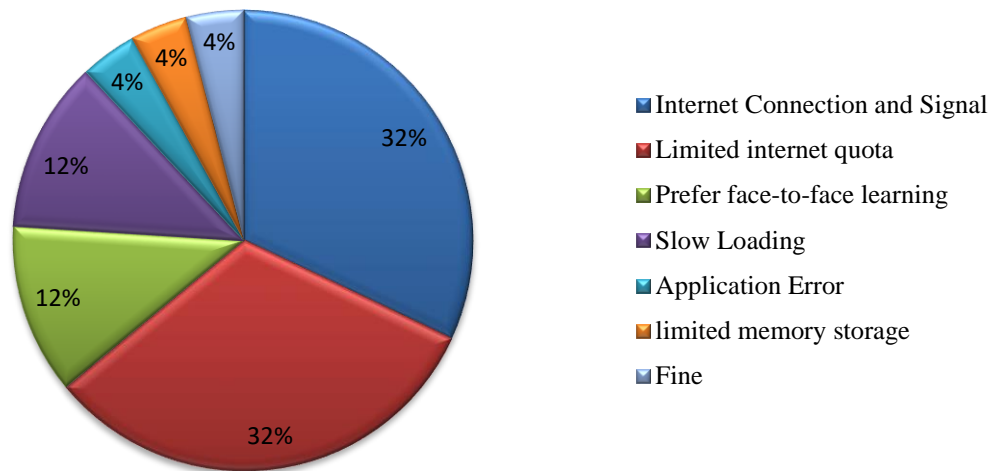


Figure 10. Problems Arose

Nearly most students (32%) declared that they had problem with internet connection and signal. The students must provide internet connection on their own effort. The 32% students also stated that limited internet quota was their big problem. Feeling unwilling to use their own internet quota has limited their learning. There are 12% students prefer having face to face to online learning. As many as 12% also claimed that slow response/loading was annoying. 4% was also the error of application itself. Problems with memory storage arose as many as 4%. Conversely, 4% students had no problem with the application. Yet, most students claim that they liked learning using WhatsApp eventhough they must face problems during the learning.

### Favorite Features

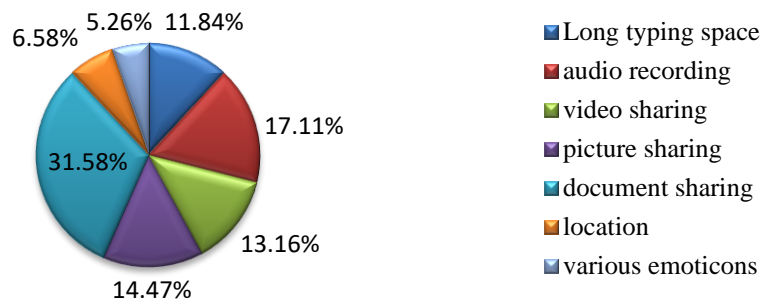


Figure 11. Favorite features in WhatsApp

In this figure most users like its brand new feature, document sharing, as many as 31, 58%. The use of audio recording feature (17.11%) was felt beneficial as they like it too. If 14.47% students liked the picture sharing, the other 13.16% liked picture sharing. Unlike other chatting application, this application enables its users to have long writing/passage. WhatsApp provides location sharing which enables students to know and share their current location (11.84%). Finally, various emoticons (5.26%) are available to be attached in the setting.

## How much WhatsApp support the students



Figure 12. How much WhatsApp support the students

After applying this application, the students of 66% felt that WhatsApp was good for supporting the learning. 26% respondents felt that this application is excellent.

## English Skills Improved

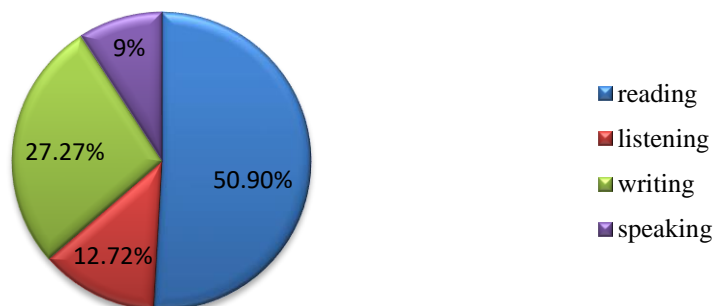


Figure 13. English Skill Improved

The learning using WhatsApp then contributed to improvement of English skills. Around 50.9% students stated that their reading skill was improved. Then their ability in writing, 27.27%, was also improved. As listening skill also felt improved, 12.72%, and speaking skill, 9%, received least improvement.

## DISCUSSION

This study investigates the leveraging on WhatsApp seen from students' responses after experiencing it in the learning. All information is gathered through questionnaire administered via WhatsApp too, sampling 50 students from various levels of English Department of Muhammadiyah University of Surabaya taking four different courses;



Listening for Daily Conversation (2<sup>nd</sup> semester), Pre-Writing (2<sup>nd</sup> semester), Phonology (4<sup>th</sup> semester), and Research on ELT (6<sup>th</sup> semester). The results show that from the frequent use of WhatsApp, students like to involve it in the learning affecting their reading and listening skills improved. They also felt that this application had supported them nonetheless some problems came being the obstacle of the learning.

The utilization of smartphone application like WhatsApp is not mainly for chatting and sharing information. Its function connecting people and features should be explored for education. The students' possession on smartphones and their frequent use of this application proves that this chance is now always in hand. People connects themselves one another mostly via this application. (Sushma, 2012) declares that WhatsApp Inc. has handled over 27 billion messages every 24 hours during 2013. It has moreover over 450 million monthly active users with 700 million photos are shared everyday, and 10 billion messages are too (Parny, 2013). As it shows that this application is the favorite ones people choose, its use in the learning must be observed too.

Thus, the students' preference using WhatsApp as they are online at most frequent time as well as considering the favorite features and its support, its leveraging into the learning must be taken into account. Amry (2014) declares "WhatsApp instant messaging is very easy to use. The majority of students use this mobile system for academic and other purposes. Students are quickly informed of every update and any message inserted by a member of a group." Moreover, the learning using WhatsApp then contributed to improvement of English skills. As by using WhatsApp learning has become more personal, with its features there is no need to enforce the students to enjoy the learning. They can repeatedly read the passage the lecturers sent. Supporting by group discussion, the students can be able to comprehend the text. The real-time system of this application enables students receive feedback from the lecturer correcting the error in typing and how the error must be repaired. It has relation with Amry (2014) who claims "learning is becoming ubiquitous, durable and increasingly at odds with formal education. Increasingly, different types of learning happen outside of the classroom through social cooperation and collaboration between students to improve construction and knowledge sharing." Notwithstanding, problems arise must also be anticipated.

Bouhnik and Deshen (2014) have found that WhatsApp has contributed academic advantages. The students can access the material at anytime. They are assisted as the teacher is available so that the learning can be continued outside class. Further advantages that have been found in this study, the improvement of students' reading and listening skill as well as its applicability on the content courses like Phonology and Research on ELT course, are in harmony with what Etim et. al. (2016) in their study also found that the utilization of whatsapp affect better academic performance of students in Geography.

From the advantages presented, this study is very limited in some areas. First, it only investigates the use of WhatsApp through students' responses after experiencing one particular course in one semester. The further study is challenged to examine broader area. The standardized format and rules in involving WhatsApp in the learning shall be further thought. Ultimately, the result of this study is expected to be able to make other faculties realize that smart phone application can enhance the learning environment and outcome.

## CONCLUSION

This study has shared lecturer's experience in utilizing WhatsApp, free instant messaging, in the students' learning. Since this application was widely used by students of English Department in Muhammadiyah University of Surabaya, it was then involved in learning. The implementation has shown that most students enjoy the learning eventhough some problems arose. The main disturbance was internet connection that must be provided by the students' own effort. Its various features has enables students to easily learn that English skills can be improved.

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