STUDENTS AND TEACHERS’ PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING SMARTPHONE USAGE IN EFL LEARNING

by

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Abstract:
The infancy of research on junior high school students and English teachers in the border areas concerning the implementation of smartphones in English learning triggered the researchers to conduct a study to deal with the phenomenon. Hence, a recent study was undertaken to acquire the following goals. 1) to identify the level of smartphone utilization as a medium of learning English at SMP Satap Sono and SMPN Napan. 2) to know the perception of the students and English teachers of SMP Satap Sono and SMPN Napan towards using smartphones as a medium for learning English. This study embraced 60 participants comprising 30 students from SMPN Napan and 30 from SMPN Sono, as well as 3 English teachers from the two schools. The research design applied was qualitative descriptive. To procure data, the researchers applied three instruments: questionnaires, interviews, and class observation. The researchers observed the learning process in which English teachers and students incorporated smartphones, distributed questionnaires to the students and the English teachers, and interviewed the students and the English teachers concerning the implementation of smartphones as a medium in English learning. Further, the data were scrutinized by a descriptive method. Research results signified that the level of using the smartphone in learning English for the students and English teachers in SMP Satap Sono and SMPN Napan was categorized as low. On the contrary, the English teachers and the students had positive perceptions of the application of smartphones to support English learning. Then, the current study could inform the English teachers at the two schools on how their students perceive the integration of smartphones. Henceforth, it is expected that the subsequent researchers could explore a variety of English learning applications to be applied by the students and teachers at the border area.

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INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, it can be seen that the use of smartphones has affected people's lives, entailing students. It contributes to the student's higher-order thinking skills (Putranta et al., 2021), enhances students' engagement in the learning process, and surmounts the issue of student's English speaking skills (Machmud & Abdulah, 2017). Furthermore, myriad studies have been carried out by several researchers to pinpoint the use of technology among students, subsuming the use of a smartphone (Alkhudair, 2020; Nizamuddin et al., 2019; Muntaha, 2017; Nalliveettil & Alenazi, 2016). The study of Alkhudair (Alkhudair, 2020) focused on the efficacy of mobile learning in learning English and how the approach related to the participants' academic achievement. It also scrutinized how the students perceived and behaved toward implementing such a tool to assist them in learning English as a foreign language. The result then found a positive correlation between the student's academic achievement and the time they worked on mobile phones for learning. Lizamuddin, Asib, and Ngadiso (Lizamuddin et al., 2019) investigated the perception of university students' perception of implementing mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) for English learning. The result of the research affirmed that the students had a positive perception of how MALL.
supports EFL learning. A study on how smartphones affected the Process of English learning was carried out by Muntaha (Muntaha, 2017). The finding contended that the students used their smartphones to assist them in learning English, specifically to enrich their lexical knowledge. A later study was carried out by Nalliveettil and Alenazi (Nalliveettil & Alenazi, 2016), in which they examined smartphones in terms of how they brought educational significance to teaching and learning English as a foreign language. The result recommended an inventive approach to materials in an EFL class. Metruk (Metruk, 2021b) investigated the attitudes and perceptions of Slovak EFL learners in learning English. The result of the study uncovered that the student's perceptions and attitudes shifted between neutral and positive.

On the other hand, those researchers focused mainly on the students at the tertiary level, which were college students. In the interim, the center of the present study dealt with the students at the secondary level, ages 12 and 13, as well as English teachers in the border areas. In addition, there is an infancy of study to smartphone utilization for English learning for junior high school students and English teachers in border areas, especially the border between Indonesia and Timor Leste. Hence, the present study was organized to determine the perception of the students and the teachers of SMPN Napan and SMP Satap Sono, located at the border area of Indonesia and RDTL (Republic Democrat Timor Leste). This study intends to determine the extent of the use of smartphones as a medium for learning English at SMP Satap Sono and SMPN Napan, as well as investigate the perceptions of the students and the teachers regarding the deployment of smartphones as a medium of English learning. It is also expected to educate students in both schools about the application of smartphones as a medium of learning English.

Several previous studies have been conducted regarding the use of smartphones in EFL Learning. The first study investigated the perception and attitudes of Slovak students toward the use of smartphones in English learning (Metruk, 2021a). The research deployed a 5-point Likert Scale questionnaire consisting of general and out-of-the-classroom statements with 29 items. The result of the study pinpointed that the students demonstrated moderately positive attitudes toward smartphones in the context of EFL learning. The result uncovered several problems related to perception and smartphone potential use.
Moreover, the results further suggest an urgency to improve the awareness of smartphones and their potential in EFL learning so that it can be a considerable opportunity these intelligent devices offer to English learners. The following study scrutinized university students' perceptions of using mobile applications for learning English (Darsih & Asikin, 2020). Questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were the instruments used for data procuring. The finding indicated that the students considered smartphone applications to be fruitful in assisting them in learning English. The limitation of their study suggests more research on a variety of participants. The third study was conducted by Nami (Nami, 2020). Naomi worked on the kinds of language learning applications used chiefly by university students of the Amirkabir University of Technology as well as their perception towards the efficacy of those applications to upgrade skills in learning language. This conducted research applied a descriptive survey study to seek necessary data. The finding shows that the most common application kinds used by the students were dictionary and lexical applications. ANOVA also denoted that gender did not affect the participants' perception. The limitation of the study dealt with the dependence on self-reported data gained from a perception survey. Roland (Roland, 2022) researched the perception of smartphone use to help students learn English and how they use it to upgrade the skill of linguistic. The method applied was basic descriptive statistics. The result showed that the participants had a positive perception of the involvement of smartphones in EFL learning.

Further, the finding also dealt more with receptive skills, which assist in obtaining more practice than productive skills. The last study discussed the complexity, conflict, and uncertainty of smartphone use and the effectiveness of EFL learning (Chang, 2021). The procured data were analyzed using mixed methods, i.e., qualitative and quantitative. The result of the study found that the participants had a combination of feelings concerning using smartphones during class. This study, furthermore, suggested a large number of participants for future studies.

The present study scrutinizes the level of smartphone utilization as a medium of learning English by students and English teachers in border areas and their perception of using smartphones as a medium for learning. The involved research questions are:

1. What is the level of smartphone utilization as a medium of learning English by junior high school students and English teachers in the border area?
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2. What is the perception of the students and English teachers in junior high schools in the border area toward using smartphones as a medium for learning English?

METHOD

Design

The research design of this research is descriptive qualitative research under phenomenology. This design is suitable for the present research since it scrutinizes and studies the social phenomena with which this study is concerned. The social phenomenon of the present study was to figure out the perception of the teachers and students at the frontier area viz-a-viz the implementation of smartphones in English learning. As stated by Leavy (Leavy, 2017). Thus, the descriptive qualitative research assisted the researchers to carry out and analyze the current research properly.

Participant

The researchers executed snowball or chain sampling since the researchers required information from participants selected earlier to suggest more participants who could provide the necessary data. As mentioned by Leavy (Leavy, 2017), participants might recommend more participants that could give more information concerning the date needed. First, the researchers handpicked ten students: 15 females and five males. Then, the researchers asked the 20 students to recommend 40 more to participate in the study. Thus, the total number of participants was 60 students: 48 females and 12 males as the research sample. Since the researchers needed more knowledge about the study participants, this sort of sampling assisted the researchers in gaining the necessary data for the intended study. In addition, The conducted research also deploys all English teachers in the two schools: 2 females and one male.

Instrument

The instruments of this research were questionnaires, interviews, and class observation. The questionnaire comprised two parts mentioned as questionnaires for the students and the teachers. The questionnaire for the students and the teachers consisted of five respectively. The scope of the questionnaire was to use several features and applications provided by smartphones to support English learning, i.e., recording features, an English
online dictionary, and Youtube. Further, an open-ended interview was undertaken to ask for confirmation. Each of the participants was asked to clarify the answer they provided previously in the questionnaire and obtain additional information pertinent to the study. To enrich the necessary data, the researchers carried out a non-participant or complete observation, in which the researchers observed without participating (Creswell, 2014). The observation was executed during the Process of English learning three times.

**Data collection technique**

A questionnaire, interview, and non-participant observation employed the data collection technique. The researchers distributed questionnaires with a Likert scale to the students and teachers of SMPN Napan and Sono; in the meantime, an open-ended interview was carried out to find out how students and teachers perceive the employment of smartphones as a medium for learning English.

Non-participant observation was undertaken to see and understand the extent to which the use of smartphones as an English learning medium was carried out by junior high school students and English teachers in border areas. This process of observation was conducted three times throughout the English lesson. In this process, the researchers observe the class during teaching to learn how they use smartphones. While observing the learning process, the researchers also recorded and noted essential things about the student's opinions and knowledge concerning smartphone features that assist them in English learning.

**Data analysis technique**

In the data analysis technique, the researchers went through some steps to pinpoint primary themes, administer code to the central themes, group responses under the main themes, and incorporate themes and responses into the text of the report (Leavy, 2017). The analysis was commenced by having a closer look at the result of the questionnaire, interview, and observation. The responses procured from those instruments were put into a broad theme that the researchers worked on. Administering code to primary themes was the next step to be carried out. The third step was to group all responses under the central theme, and the last step was to communicate the research outcome to readers, in which the researchers used tables and narrative text.
RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The conducted research scrutinized how frequently the English teachers and the students at the border area use smartphones and how they perceive smartphone utilization in the English learning process. The finding is demonstrated descriptively to deal with the research questions. The first subject of the research, i.e., the students, responded to the questions concerning the frequent use of smartphones, as displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. Frequent use of smartphones by students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Perpetually</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Infrequently</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I use an online English dictionary to upgrade my vocabulary</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I use an English learning application on my smartphone</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I use YouTube videos to improve my English listening skill</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I use the recording feature on my smartphone to learn English</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I use a variety of English learning applications to learn English</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. indicates that concerning the use of an online English dictionary, 46 students affirm they use such type of application to upgrade their vocabulary, eight students sometimes answer, four students and two students never work with an online dictionary. Most students occasionally access English learning applications on their smartphones for English learning. Only four students stated that English learning applications were rarely accessed, and eight never accessed them on their smartphones. Most students never search on YouTube to learn English, only three students answer sometimes, and 7 seven infrequently use YouTube to learn. In addition, many students never work with the recording feature on their smartphone, i.e., 52 students, only eight students use it. Lastly, 58 students only employ a few English learning applications.

The second subject of the research mentioned the 3 English teachers at both schools who responded to the questions regarding the intensity of using smartphones, as illustrated in...
Table 2 signifies that the English teachers in both schools sometimes use English learning applications on their smartphones. Further, 2 English teachers seldom suggested their students use English learning applications, and one teacher never recommended her students to use English learning applications. All teachers often use online English dictionaries to support English learning in the classroom and to find English teaching references. Regarding access to English videos as teaching references, all English teachers sometimes do it. The current study demonstrates several important points, as stated below.

**The extent to which the utilization of smartphones in English learning**

The use of smartphones in learning English among the junior high school students at the border area, SMPN Napan and SMP Satap Sono, was categorized as a minimum. English teachers typically recommend that their students deploy smartphones to complete English homework. However, teachers need to incorporate smartphones in English learning in the classroom. Under the administered questionnaire, the researcher procures the quantity of smartphone employment as English learning media.

Referring to Table 1 previously demonstrated, it is clear that the students...
predominantly use the smartphone to access online English dictionaries, that is 46 students (77%). This finding is in line with the study of Dashtestani (Dashtestani, 2013), in which teachers have a good perception regarding the use of online dictionaries in English learning. Furthermore, 52 students (87%) use English learning applications on their smartphones. On the contrary, the number of students who accessed Youtube videos to improve their English listening skills was minimal, with only ten students (17%). These students claimed that Youtube helped them to observe more about how a native speaker of English explains a topic. Along the same line, secondary school students could gain an advantage in learning English by accessing Youtube (Gracella & Rahman Nur, 2020). However, the current study is different since the subject is between the ages of 12 to 13. Youtube becomes a good source of learning if it is accessed by older learners, as evidenced by Sakkir, Dollah, Ahmad (Sakkir et al., 2020) and Kabooha and Elyas (Kabooha & Elyas, 2018). However, if learners are younger than they are, they would depend on their teachers or instructor as their listening skill is still at the beginner level. In addition, only eight students (13%) applied smartphone recording features to learn English. Many students contended that they seldom applied various English learning applications to assist them in learning English, that is, 58 students (97%). This critical finding pinpoints that younger EFL learners needed to fully understand the use of English learning applications compared to older learners.

Additionally, data from the three English teachers in the two schools implied that they seldom incorporate smartphones in the English learning process. One English teacher mentioned he needed more time to prepare material using a smartphone since he had many other tasks. Other teachers stated that lack of instruction on how to deploy smartphones in English learning caused her only to facilitate her students to operate smartphones during English class. The present study’s finding agrees with previous studies in which English teachers have insufficient skills to deal with smartphones in teaching English (Khan et al., 2018).

Perception of the teachers and the students concerning smartphone utilization in English learning

The researchers referred to the questionnaire that has been administered to address research question number two about the teachers' and students' perceptions of using smartphones in English learning. The answer can be summarized as follow: The learning process of English was run with the assistance of a smartphone as one of the learning media.
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The English teachers preponderantly ask the students to access Google Translate and digital online dictionaries. The students who had yet to learn the meaning of English sentences were directed to use google translate. Referring to the outcome of observation during English learning, the English teachers mentioned a simple present tense sentence and asked about the meaning of the sentence to the students. Since the students needed clarification, they were asked to use google translate. After searching for the meaning of sentences in google translate, the students feel motivated to answer their teachers’ questions. Hence, the class atmosphere was getting alive since the students competed to answer questions from their teachers. This point demonstrated the favorable sway of smartphones on the student’s motivation to learn English. To further ascertain the positive upshot of smartphone deployment in English learning, a vocabulary test was handed out to the students, and they were directed again to access the English online dictionary to find the meaning of certain words. With the assistance of smartphones, the students vocalized that they gained more confidence to complete the task their English teachers gave. They further demystified that fully grasping an idea to be stated will improve their assurance to learn more. In the bargain, the teachers often give homework to the students, and they were strongly recommended to use the two English learning applications.

Further, most students (77%) agree that the assistance of smartphones (especially in providing digital English dictionaries) can support them in upgrading their vocabulary. Based on the observation during the English lesson, the students who could not figure out the meaning of English words looked up in the digital English dictionary. This encouraged them to complete the task their English teachers gave in the classroom. This finding concurs with other researchers (Ambarwati & Mandasari, 2020; Fageeh, 2014; Rezaei & Davoudi, 2016; Tananuraksakul, 2015) who come out with the efficacy of online dictionaries to support English learning, reinforce vocabulary, provide easy access and assist students in uplifting writing skill. The English teachers also mentioned that they consult online English dictionaries to prepare teaching material for students.

Among the standard features used by the students while using smartphones, google translate and Digital English Dictionary were on top. Furthermore, two students verbalized duo lingo and cake applications. This finding was also in conformity with Gangaiamaran & Pasupathi’s (Gangaiamaran & Pasupathi, 2017) research, in which they pointed out Duolingo
as one of the suitable English applications for young learners aged 12 to 17. Moreover, this is becoming a salient point for the English teachers at the two schools to be more creative in preparing English lessons with the assistance of smartphones, as there are a lot of English applications that can support the learners in learning English. It is a duty for English teachers since most students have only minor access to smartphones outside the classroom. However, the class observation signaled that the English teachers still needed to aggrandize English learning applications in learning courses thoroughly.

Moreover, a very minimum number of students, ten students (17%), contended that they browse YouTube to listen to videos. They listen to their favorite song. They seldom look for other English videos. They concentrate on their songs. It is also becoming an eminent finding to be used as a reference for English teachers. English teachers should explore more on the usage of English videos to upgrade the students’ ability in English, especially listening skills. It is implied that the students need more motivation to access YouTube for English learning due to a lack of guidance. Providing adequate service or guidance could make learning more exciting and enjoyable for the students.

Further, the employment of YouTube as a medium to upgrade students’ listening skills has been examined by researchers (Damronglaohapan & Stevenson, 2013; Pratama et al., 2020; Sakkir et al., 2020). These scholars’ fruits shed light on how YouTube implementations work well to cope with the listening skill of English learners and their English proficiency level. On the contrary, those three prior studies work for college students, who have more prolonged exposure to English compared to the current study in which the participants have been learning English only about 2 to 3 years.

A small number of students, eight (13%), use the recording feature to learn English. The students uttered that their speaking confidence increased after using the recording feature. The outcome of the prevailing study was also in conformity with other researchers (Gromik, 2013; Saputri et al., 2022; Shakarami et al., 2014), which resulted in a good impact of the recording feature to deal with the student's English-speaking ability.

It was also clear from the previous points that the students and the English teachers in the border area preponderantly implemented google translate and an online English dictionary to support them during English teaching and learning in the classroom. This finding was supported by the work of Mospan (Mospan, 2018), in which novice learners of English
mostly use google translate.

Further, the observation, interview, and distributed questionnaire clearly show that integrating smartphones into learning improved the student's English ability. The video taken during observation in the classroom discloses that the students find it easier to complete tasks given by their English teachers.

Being presented with positive impacts on the usage of smartphones throughout English learning, it is evident that the students and the English teachers in SMPN Napan and SMPN Sono at the border area have a good perception of smartphones that support them in learning English. This finding concurred with the study of Alkhudair (Alkhudair, 2020) and Namaziandost (Namaziandost et al., 2019), which asserts that smartphones provide high-quality lessons and a wide variety of original materials as well as stand for students to learn anywhere and anytime. Even so, the present study is a dissent from the work of Widadi & Pramudita (Widadi & Pramudita, 2018), in which the students needed more motivation to study if they had plenty of smartphone exposure.

CONCLUSION, LIMITATION, AND IMPLICATION

Conclusion

The current work denotes how the students and teachers close to the border area perceive the integration of smartphones into English learning. Thus, the extent to which the utilization of smartphones throughout English learning at the border area is categorized as a minimum. In addition, the students' and teachers' perception vis-a-vis smartphone usage in learning was positive. They have an excellent standpoint on the employment of smartphones in learning English. Furthermore, it is advanced for other researchers to acquaint and examine various uses of English learning applications to be applied entirely in the classroom context, especially for those in border areas. Hence, it is envisaged that the quality of English learning in the border area would be better.

Limitation

The current study worked only on students at the secondary level at the border area in specific grades. Thus, it is expected that the research to follow will embrace more participants, including all grades in a school and higher-level students at the border area. Furthermore, the techniques to obtain data should be enriched. The interview in this
conducted research was undertaken only once. Thus, it is envisaged to interview the students more than once to ensure truthfulness.

Moreover, while the present study applied qualitative research design, the subsequent research could also elaborate more on quantitative research design. In addition, even though each question in the questionnaire was adapted from prior research, all possible alternatives were not considered. It is also important to undertake more research on how to train English teachers and EFL students to integrate various English learning applications in the classroom.

Implication

The result of the study could give information regarding how English learning at the border area integrated technology, i.e., smartphones as a medium of learning English. Specifically, the English teachers at both schools could also gain fruitful information on how their students perceived using smartphones in English learning. The teachers then could design appropriate media to assist their students in learning English. Other educational practitioners also benefit from the result of this research in which they gain information to design certain activities to train the English teachers pertinent to the implementation of technology, i.e., smartphones in the Process of English learning.

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