Let’s Listen Through WhatsApp: An energizing listening exercise in EFL Class

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Abstract. This research is focused on analyzing the impact on the use of ‘WhatsApp’ as a media to develop listening skill for a group of 26 ten-grade senior high school students. Since the phenomenal booming about the tremendous use of smartphone in real-life among teenagers which might bring negative effects, it is urgent to empower the phenomenal behavior of teenagers toward their mobile phone in the context of language learning. The 26 ten grade senior high students were put in ‘WhatsApp’ group messenger. The learning activities were performed in ‘virtual’ ‘WhatsApp’ group class called ‘Fun In English’. The one-group pretest-posttest design was implemented in this study. The instruments used in this study were 1) learning activities 2) English comprehension tests (pretest and posttest) and 3) a questionnaire and interview of the students’ response. Regarding the data analysis, mean, percentage and t-test scores for the dependent sample were employed. The result indicated that 1) the students’ English listening comprehension ability increased significantly after learning with MP3 which uploaded in ‘WhatsApp’ group called ‘Fun In English’. 2) the questionnaires told that the students reflected a good response. The mean score of pre-test was 6.9 then mean score of post-test was 8.7 which means that there is a significant increasing score. The students’ score were increased after the treatment which is the students was given learning activities through ‘WhatsApp’ group exercises. Thus, the learning model is confirmed to be effective and powerful. The students gave their response through questionnaires that reflected their enthusiasm, intimate interaction, and enjoyable learning activities.

1. Introduction
The phenomenon of ‘Smartphone’ and ‘Android’ addiction in students’ daily routines has been the part of their lifestyle. It causes both positive and negative effects. As a sophisticated technology, Smartphone and Android might seize their time to have chat or use other applications the entire day without realizing that they may use the facilities and the applications as learning media. Due to the phenomenon, English teachers are absolutely possible to utilize the sophistication of Smartphone and Android as a pleasant learning media to their students. Nowadays, many of students can hardly let themselves go from the addiction of Smartphone. It must be changed by leading them to have a positive activity such as English learning activity both inside and outside class by using one of the most popular applications in Smartphone or Android.
WhatsApp’ is an application for Smartphone which is basically similar to BlackBerry Messenger (BBM). By using this application, the users are able to have chat with others, send pictures, files, videos, or recording without additional payment because this application uses internet data. From hundreds messenger applications, ‘WhatsApp’ reaches the top rank of users in the world. Indonesia is on the top rank. It reaches 250 million users and globally process 27 billion messages per day. 18% ‘WhatsApp’ users in Indonesia are teenagers which are still in productive age and at school age.

‘Not only sharing texts, pictures, or voice, but posting audio is also possible done in the ‘WhatsApp’ group. This feature will be much explored to gain as listening learning activities. By posting audio or MP3 in virtual class of ‘WhatsApp’ group means that giving listening exercise directly to the student. As soon as the student download the audio or MP3, the file will be in student’s phone and they can listen at anytime, anywhere they want to. ‘WhatsApp’ is chosen to be a media as learning strategy just because of its simplicity and its popularity.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Mobile Learning

In the recent years the English language learning mostly use video, tape recorder, and others. Then it is updated and shifted to digital one as the development of increasingly sophisticated communications technology. Thus English learning can be done using a booming trend among learners. Nowadays, the trend lately is the use Smartphone or Android. The concept of learning to use Smartphone or android is based on mobile learning. Mobile Learning is learning that uses Smartphone or other gadgets as a means of learning. Mobile Learning let the learners experience study at anytime and anywhere as they want to. It is more flexible as they can access learning materials, and have the learning activities at their convenience.

‘WhatsApp’ gives more space to participate and to explore ideas satisfactorily’. Thus, learning though ‘WhatsApp’ will relieve learning burden and stress can also be reduced because of using the media that they love, students will feel happy and enjoy learning activities. Besides ‘WhatsApps’ can also motivate students to finish their tasks happily. Users can create groups and select the desired members and this is the group that can be used for learning English. Learning English using ‘WhatsApp’ group provides English teachers opportunity without limits of time because both learners and teacher can access these items whenever and wherever they are. The use of WhatsApp in learning English should be able to encourage students to be more active in learning, especially in Listening skill. Teachers must play an active role to enable students to be more active and to interact in the learning process. The teacher's role in this is to choose a topic that is in accordance with the medium (WhatsApp) and help students to exploit the applications contained in the application WhatsApp for listening skills.

For starters, teachers must make WhatsApp group as a forum and a place of learning English. Furthermore, as that makes WhatsApp group of teachers is to control and regulate the course of the group. As a group administrator, she can insert and remove members as well as add or remove items that are not in accordance with the original purpose of the establishment of the group.

2.2. Listening Skill

Listening skill is chosen as the focus of this research for the main reasons, those are firstly it is noted that listening should be at the very beginning stage in learning language. It means that when someone learns a new language s/he must use their ear to listen the spoken utterance initially. Listening comes at the first phase for language learner who study a new language. In a fact that listening is a skill developed in the very beginning of ‘a child’s learning language. Thus it is suggested that foreign language learner should place listening skill at the initial phase of language learning just like the same process as a baby learns a mother language (Buck, 2001).

The second reason is listening improves speaking. One will speak better when s/he listen well. In other words that spoken words explores rich interaction between the speakers, both the hearer and the
speaker must understand each other. To have comprehensive understanding it is needed to listen each other. Once the interaction fails, one of the party get the wrong ideas or doesn’t listen correctly. It happens because the listening skill does not perform appropriately. Thus, it is proves that listening play a vital role in order to become great speaker. Finally, as Wootipong claimed that listening exercises help to draw a learner’s attention to new forms of language (2014). By supporting listening reinforcement it will give the learner discovers new vocabulary, grammar or even interaction patterns. In short listening comprehension not only supplies appropriate requirements to language learners but also to boost the development of other language skills.

2.3 Listen through “WhatsApp”

It is crucial to design effective and enjoyable listening exercises in order to enhance listening skills. As language learning shifted into digital era, it is an urgent to create trendy and handy media which make use of the booming gadget nowadays. Hopefully, listening exercises which done through ‘WhatsApp’ will draw big account of student’s interest and keep their motivation to stay tune in the exercise. Thus, the tasks provides practicable and joyful assignment which let the students feel much pleasure of the learning activities. In this way, the learners not only find a lot of fun in listening exercise and but also are more engaged to the task.

3. Methodology

This research employs Research and Development approach. This approach is explained “a process used to develop and validate educational products” (p. 782). The implementation class was conducted on January – May 2016. Twenty six of ten grade -Wijaya Putra senior high school were the subject of the research. It also involved English teacher who signed and instructed the students to participate actively the learning activities in WhatsApp group.

After four-month learning (using Whatsapp as media) activities were observed and undertaken every week. Each listening activity was posted in Whatsapp group called “Fun In English” and the students were signed and instructed by the teacher to participate and response toward the exercise posted in the group. The students’ participation and responses are analyzed and scored then it will be recorded. To figure out crucial impact of the used of Whatsapp, it is needed to take pre-test and post-test. The tests were applied to compare the use Whatsapp as teaching strategy for listening comprehension. Random sampling is applied to this research means that all the members in class (ten grade of Wijaya Putra Senior high school) are the subject and sample in the research.

The data were obtained through assessment, tests, observation notes, interview, questionnaire and screenshot. The data obtained was analyzed and interpreted through qualitative and quantitative analysis. Quantitative data includes the data from the pre-test, post-test and questionnaire while qualitative data taken from observation notes, interview and screenshot.

4. Findings and Discussion

It found out that the average mean scores of the pre-test and post-test are 69 and 86.96 in Listening Comprehension respectively. From the score it shows that there is a significant higher score between pre-test and post-test. It reveals that the use of “WhatsApp” to enhance listening comprehension of ten grade senior high school proved to be efficient and powerful as indicated by post-test score.

Moreover, students’ response taken from the questionnaire shows that the students are more enjoy and keen learning through ‘WhatsApp’. They simply states that learning activities in “WhatsApp” group give them a lot of fun and challenge. They writes that listening to audio that has been uploaded in group is something they need besides chatting activities. They can do the exercise at anytime and anywhere they want to access. Overall students totally agree that “learning through WhatsApp’ is so enjoyable and an excellent way to learn.
Besides, from the researchers’ observation it tells that students are more feel free to share their answers or ideas confidently. This also happen to the shy student, s/he give answers the problems optimistically. It seems that group chatting in ‘WhatsApp’ give them more space to explore and share their ideas enjoyably. In short,’WhatsApp’ provides the students much security in sharing and answering the problems given.

Furthermore, it is confirmed that bringing ‘WhatsApp’ into the class shares advantages over other technologies tools used in educational purposes namely for it’s cheap, easily operated, accessibility and efficiency. Training or supervision on its application are not required in this sophisticated technology. It seems that the students are very comfort use ‘WhatsApp’ as learning media.

In this research, ‘WhatsApp’ has demonstrated interactive and live discussion which allow not only teacher but also students discuss in depth and openly. This atmosphere may bring to positive and spontaneous space for both teacher and students. Thus, it might be possible to claim that ‘WhatsApp’ is foremost media to allow student to work together as a team which is not can be done totally in ‘conventional’ class. The chatting between teacher and students establish sense of cooperation, and feeling of togetherness to do the exercise given. In short, ‘WhatsApp’ is evidenced can promote language skill as well as soft skill.

The research also reveals that using ‘WhatsApp’ to develop listening comprehension may consists of some challenge, namely the teacher must be patient to remind the students to stay focus on the discussion. A few of students are not line with the topic given. They do not give the answer to the exercise but they tend to have their own discussion or expose their feeling toward a certain occasion. This can raise a problem if the teacher does not warn to them to stay on the discussion. Moreover, some students make improper comments toward their own friend’s answers. For this case, the teacher’s role is vital to lead and manage the group discussion. Once the teacher miss controlling unnecessary messages and contribution the main goal of the learning will not be achieved. The role of the teacher is indeed needed to manage the message or audio posted in the group.

Another challenge is that informal language used by the students. The group conversations display many less formal language used by the students. The students tend to use ‘slang and some ‘jargon’. This occurrence might bring failure due to the aims of the research is academic purposes. Frequently the students write ‘u’ rather than ‘you’, ‘Y’ rather than ‘yes’ or giving the ‘thumb emoticon’ which means okay. From the group chatting, it is displayed that some students use incorrect spelling, grammar and inappropriate phrase. Once again, role of the teacher in this context is urgent required to lead the students to use correct and proper language. It is a big teacher challenge to supervise their students’ manner of expression in the group.

5. Conclusion

This experiment raises a variety of educational and pedagogical issues and concludes some beneficial completions. The most crucial conclusion is that having listening activities in ‘WhatsApp’ chatting group is proved to be powerful and effective learning activities. The treatment that is posting audio then giving exercise in ‘WhatsApp’ group chatting effects significantly to the students’ listening comprehending skills as reflected in the post test’ score. The post-test’s score is higher than pre-test’s score evidenced the students obtained better results in the final test after implementing learning in the ‘virtual WhatsApp Class called “Fun in English”’.

Besides, it is found that in the interview and questionnaire states that learning through ‘WhatsApp’ drive them to more be engaged of the exercise given, and enhance their motivation to have listening task which has been uploaded in the ‘WhatsApp group’. It gives them more joyful and private access since the materials are in their personal gadget. Moreover, the students are more active and enthusiastic taking their student role leading to a successful learning.
Finally, it is recommended that for the next research will be conducted in the field of theoretical and practical concern. It is required to research ‘WhatsApp’ thoroughly as a common media in the classroom in order to find out the best way to integrate in educational and pedagogical aims. Such research will deal with other subjects such as university students or junior high school students.

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