THE USE OF SMARTPHONE TO DEVELOP ENGLISH SKILLS

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Abstract: Smartphone users in Indonesia are increasing in recent years, and many of them are college students. Smartphone is a handheld computer, as it is powerful enough to deliver various functionalities comparable to a computer (Osman, 2011). Several smartphone apps such as dictionary and note taking apps can be used by the students to learn and develop their English skills. This study wants to reveal whether the English skills of polytechnics students will be developed after using smartphone. This study uses the students of Business English Politeknik Ubaya as a tool in finding the relationship between their habit in using smartphone and their academic English tests. The tests are evaluating reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills of students. Questionnaire is given to reveal student habits in using smartphone and its apps. The findings of this study can help Politeknik Ubaya to concern with the impact of smartphone to develop English skills.

Keywords: English skills, Smartphones, Smartphones apps, Business English

Smartphones are becoming major trends right now in the Indonesia. According to the Euromonitor, most new product launches with significant impact in 2012 have been smartphones. However, it is noteworthy that Indonesian consumers place more emphasis on the operating system (OS) of the smartphone when making a purchase rather than focusing on the brand (Euromonitor, 2014). Blackberry used to be the first place that people will buy before 2013, but in the 2013 another OS such as Android and Apple iOS devices were become trends as well since they also offer Blackberry Messanger. This phenomenon makes users have variety of smartphone choices. Smartphone itself is a mobile telephone with computer functionality that allows users to run software applications and connect to the Internet or other data networks. This technology provides users with the ability to engage in some activities on their phone much in the same manner that they could with a traditional personal computer except with the advantage and convenience of compact size and mobility. (Luxton, et al., 2011). In the current situation smartphone can be Android, Apple iOS, Windows Phone, and Blackberry OS. The mobile operating systems found on smartphones allow user to run software, commonly known as apps usually in English that deliver highly usable and tightly focused functionality. In some cases apps comes pre-installed on smartphones, though many others are freely and cheaply available: over 425,000 different apps are available for the iPhone alone in 2011. This means devices become highly customised personalised platforms for communication, organisation, information production and content management (Woodcock, et al, 2011). In certain cases, smartphone can also become a tool for mobile learning. There is evidence of growing interest from teenager to young adult to use smartphone in English for many different reasons from only for chatting, for playing games, for watching movies, until for learning. It is interesting to discover whether using smartphone can contribute to English skills development or not. That is why, the writer conduct the research.

Method
This research focuses on the students of Business English study program Politeknik Ubaya as a target respondent. The result of this research cannot be generalized with the other population. Questionnaire is used as a tool for this study and distributed to 30 active students of Business English study program Politeknik Ubaya, and it is discovered that 28 out of 30 students have and use smartphone. The questionnaire are divided into 3 sections; section 1 about habits in using smartphone, section 2 about the impact of using smartphone to develop English skills, and section 3 about the impact of using smartphone on academic achievement. There are 15 multiple choice questions and 3 open ended questions asking about the respondents’ statements on their habits and impact of using smartphone on their English skills. The respondents’ statements will be compared with their achievement on 5 (five) English courses of Business English study program. Five English courses that the participant have already taken were Intensive English Course (IEC), English Communication Skills I and II (ECS I & II), and English for Business I and II (EFB I & II). The writer will reveal whether the student habits in using smartphone are useful to develop their English skills or not by comparing the result of the questionnaire with the result of the study.

Findings
The findings shows the Business English students’ habits in using smartphone, the impact of using smartphone to develop English skills, and the impact of using smartphone on the academic achievement. These
findings also reveal the result of five English courses that the students take at the Business English study program Politeknik Ubaya.

**Smartphone Usage**

The result of the questionnaire shows that 28 out of 30 students or 93% of the total students from semester 2 and 4 which are the active students of Business English study program have smartphones. The writer will consistently refer to these 28 students as the total number of the students for the questionnaire analysis. Among 28 students, 15 students or 54% use smartphone based on Android software, 11 students or 39% use Blackberry software and only 2 students or 7% use Apple Ios software. It is indicating that Android software becomes the most popular smartphone software and follows by Blackberry. 93% or 26 students use English as their default language. It seems Business English students prefer to use English in accessing their smartphone rather than to use Bahasa Indonesia.

**Habits in Using Smartphone**

The writer asked to the students in the questionnaire about how long students use their smartphone daily. It is discovered that 7% of the students use their smartphone less than 1 hour, 43% of the students use their smartphone for 1–8 hours, while 32% of the students access their smartphone for 1-16 hours. And 18 % students use smartphone for more than 16 hours. It is reveal than almost all of the students use their smartphone from 1 until 8 hours as well as from 1 until 16 hours.

The questionnaire reveals that almost all of the students use all the smartphones’ apps, social networking, games, video, and music in English. Only 7% of the students never use apps in English and 4% of them are never play games and do social networking in English. More than half of the students or 68 % students always use apps in English. 71% of them always play games in English and 50% of the students always do social networking and watch video in English, while 43% of the students always listen to English songs. Some of the English apps that students use are Google Maps, YouTube, Twitter, BBM, Line, Scrabble, Path, Sims 3, Dictionary, WhatsApp, Facebook, Google Translate, and English Grammar Tenses. It is indicating that students prefer to use English to use their apps, games, social networking, and enjoy the entertainment in English.

**Impact of Using Smartphone to Develop English skills**

When the students were being asked about the impact of using smartphones for their English skills development, 64% of them agree that smartphone can develop their English skills and 32% of them strongly agree of this statement. According to the students, smartphone also can give significant impacts to the development of four English skills; reading, listening, speaking, and writing skills. 61% of the students agree that their reading skill is developing since they use smartphone and 21% of the students are strongly agree about this statement. 43% of the students agree that their listening skill is developing since they use smartphone and 32% of them are strongly agree about it. Regarding the speaking skill, 47% of the students are agree and 28% are strongly agree that their speaking skill is developing since they use smartphone. For the writing skill, 57% of the students agree and 11% are strongly agree that their writing skill is improving since they use smartphone. The findings of the smartphone impacts on their English skills development prove that majority of the students believe smartphone can give significance impact on their English skills development.

**Impact of Using Smartphone on Academic Achievement**

Considering the impact of using smartphone in English to the better result in their academic achievement, 57% agree and 18% of the students strongly agree with it. But when the writer asked deeper to five English courses that they took, the writer gets variety of answers. For the Intensive English Course (IEC) subject, 38% students agree that their IEC result is represented by their smartphone habits while 11% strongly agree about this statement. 43% students agree and 14% strongly agree that their English Communication Skills I & II results are represented by their smartphone habits. But only 28% students agree and 18% strongly agree that their English for Business I & II results are represented by their smartphone habits. The questionnaire results are indicating that some students see small correlation between their academic achievement and their smartphone habits.

**The Relationship of the Academic Achievement with the Smartphone Habits**

The writer compares the duration of smartphone uses per day with the students’ academic achievement in five courses which are Intensive English Course (IEC), English Communication Skills (ECS) I & II, and English for Business (EFB) I & II. For the final score of every course, Business English study program uses alphabet grading system. For A=81-100, AB=73-80, B=66-72, BC=61-65, C=56-60, D=40-55, and E=0-39. It is indicated from the grading system that E score consider as fail, D score consider as poor achievement, and C as an average score. While BC, B, AB, and A can be categorized as quite good, good, very good, and excellent.
There are 2 students out of 28 students who use their smartphone less than one hour. One student always got A in every course, but the other student got AB, B, and even C in a variety of courses. 12 students stated that they use their smartphone for about 1-8 hours and almost all of them got A & AB in 5 courses, but only one person got C in ECS I course. There are 9 students mention that they need 1-16 hours to use their smartphone and it is reveal that all of the students got A, AB, and B in 5 different courses. Only 5 students stated that they use their smartphone more than 16 hours, and all of them got A, AB or B in five different courses. The writer finds the correlation between duration of smartphone uses per day with their academic achievement, that students who have better scores are those who use their smartphone longer.

Discussion of the Findings

Through the findings it is revealed that 28 out of 30 students have smartphone. It is indicating that the majority of the students have the technology awareness. They have the needs to use smartphone as their personal assistant as well as the media of entertainment. From the 28 students, 93% of them are using English as a default language and it can be that the students feel easier to access their smartphone using English rather than Bahasa Indonesia. It also can be they are from Business English study program and want to learn English more. The writer also found that 50% of the students took 1 until 16 hours and more to use their smartphone, whether 43% of the students took 1 until 8 hours to use it. The result presents a significance habits of the students as a youngster that they tend to use their smartphone in a long or very long time and becomes a part of their life. The majority of the students are found always use apps, play games, do the social networking, and enjoy the entertainment in English. Their favorite English apps like Dictionary, English Grammar and Tenses and Scrabble represent that English has become one close aspect in their life. Through the comparison between their scores and smartphone habits, the writer reveals that students who use their smartphone from 1 until 16 hours or more had a good until excellent grade. It can be assumed that using smartphone in English for hours per day can develop students’ English skills which are represented by their score.

Conclusions and Suggestions

This research finds that using smartphone for several hours per day leads to the development of English skills. Based on the research result, there is a correlation between habits in using smartphone for several hours per day and the English skills development. Students will increasingly with their smartphones enhance their experience of English learning from time to time. Although, it cannot be concluded only through this research that using smartphone can leads to better English skills. Since there are factors that need to be considered in the further studies, such as other informal and formal English learning. However the results of this research are still only preliminary, since lack of several contributing factors as well as depth statistical analysis. More research is still needed to find the real factors between using smartphone and English skill development. Future studies has to be in experimental research to let the respondents to use smartphone apps and there should be pre and post test in between. It is suggested that academics such as Politeknik Ubaya continue to develop their understanding of personal technologies like smartphones and tablet PCs and, with that understanding, reflect on the differences between these emerging technologies and established learning environments and technologies. In doing so, educators need to also reflect on their assumptions about the design and delivery of the curriculum and the formal and informal engagement students can have with it (Woodcock, et al., 2012). Smartphone has become trends in Indonesia right now and it can be a useful tool to learn a language also; in very specific case, English.

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