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RESEARCH ARTICLE

LANGUAGE LEARNING MEDIA THROUGH MOBILE APP: THE EFFECTS OF BUSUU ON VOCABULARY LEARNING AND LISTENING SKILLS

Laela Nada Nadya[1], Aswir[2]
English Education Department, Faculty of Science and Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Jakarta

lailnadanadya25@gmail.com[1]

Kata Kunci:
Aplikasi Seluler; Busuu; pembelajaran kosakata; keterampilan mendengarkan.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini menyelidiki pengaruh aplikasi seluler Busuu terhadap pembelajaran kosakata dan keterampilan mendengarkan. Untuk mencapai tujuan penelitian ini, para peneliti menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain pra-eksperimental. Peserta penelitian ini adalah siswa kelas 7.1 SMP Negeri 4 Tangerang Selatan yang berjumlah 38 orang dengan jumlah populasi 469 siswa. Data dikumpulkan melalui pre-test dan post-test untuk mengetahui skor pembelajaran kosakata dan keterampilan mendengarkan siswa. Skor tersebut kemudian dianalisis menggunakan Ukuran Efek Sampel Berpasangan untuk menentukan signifikansi efeknya. Ukuran pengaruh pembelajaran kosakata dan keterampilan mendengarkan siswa tergolong tinggi, dengan 4,404 untuk pembelajaran kosakata dan 4,670 untuk keterampilan mendengarkan (>1). Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa penggunaan Busuu pada pembelajaran kosakata dan keterampilan mendengarkan siswa mempunyai pengaruh yang tinggi. Oleh karena itu, aplikasi seluler Busuu disarankan untuk digunakan dalam pembelajaran kosakata dan keterampilan mendengarkan. Penelitian di masa mendatang untuk mengetahui persepsi siswa dalam menggunakan Busuu akan diperlukan untuk keefektifan penggunaan aplikasi seluler ini.

Key Word:
Mobile App; Busuu; vocabulary learning; listening skill.

Abstract

This study investigates the effects of the Busuu Mobile app on vocabulary learning and listening skills. In order to achieve the objective of this study, the researchers used a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental design. The participants of this study were 38 students of class 7.1 in SMP Negeri 4 Tangerang Selatan, with a total of 469 populations. The data were collected through pre-tests and post-tests to determine students' vocabulary learning and listening skills scores. The scores were then analyzed using Paired Sample Effect Size to determine the effects' significance. The effect size of students' vocabulary learning and listening skills was high, with 4.404 for vocabulary learning and 4.670 for listening skills (>1). This study concludes that using Busuu on students' vocabulary learning and listening skills had a high effect. Therefore, the Busuu mobile app is advised to be utilized in vocabulary learning and listening skills. The future study of finding out the students' perception of using Busuu will be necessary for the effectiveness of using this mobile application.

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INTRODUCTION

Technology usage is growing rapidly over time. This is due to the digital era, which demands almost everyone to embed technology usage in every activity, especially teaching and learning. The most favored kind of technology in teaching-learning activity is mobile apps. The Mobile app allows the students and teachers to access the apps, efficiently making the teaching and learning activity possible anytime and anywhere. Kim (2013) explained that, unlike the traditional way, mobile apps allow students to access the internet, software, and multimedia, which they can utilize to enhance their learning quality.

This application also affects students who study foreign languages. According to Gay et al. (2001), using mobile apps is not necessarily a substitute for traditional learning but an expansion of

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students' learning scope. Mobile applications also allow students to access learning materials and participate in teaching and learning activities and peer discussions without being hindered by space and time (Chinnery, 2006). Seeing that mobile apps are potentially valuable for learning foreign languages, the researchers focus on using the *Busuu* mobile application to learn English vocabulary and listening skills.

The underlying reason for using the *Busuu* mobile application in learning vocabulary and listening skills is that vocabulary mastery and listening skills still provide difficulties for students in mastering and learning. For this reason, an appropriate teaching-learning approach is needed. In this case, Arsyad (2003) offered learning media as a helping tool in learning a language. Media can facilitate the students to comprehend the learning materials better. In this case, the researcher offered *the Busuu* mobile app as a medium to be implemented in vocabulary learning and listening skills.

Busuu is a language learning course that aims to support users in improving their reading, listening, writing, and speaking skills in their target language and achieving fluency. The courses focus on developing four language skills and enhancing learners' vocabulary, pronunciation, and Grammar. There have been studies about using *the Busuu* app in teaching and learning English. A study by Khairunnisa et al. (2021a) mentioned that using *Busuu* can significantly increase students' vocabulary mastery. Using *Busuu* in learning Spanish also showed that it could increase students' language proficiency (Vesselinov & Grego, 2016). In response to the previous background, this study explores the effect of the mobile app *Busuu* on vocabulary learning and listening skills.

Before conducting the research, some theories should be elaborated in order to achieve a better understanding of this research. The related theories are described below:

Vocabulary Learning and Listening Skills

Schmitt & McCarthy (1997) defined vocabulary as a basis of language, which is important to achieve first. Indeed, we cannot speak fluently and understand written or spoken expression if we do not master it. Schmitt stated that no matter how successful the sound of the foreign language is, without words to express the wide range of meanings, communication in a foreign language could not happen in any range of meanings.

On the other hand, listening is an active and constructive process that involves a person's cognitive abilities. (Weger et al., 2014) stated that listening skills require a person's background knowledge in order to comprehend what is being heard. Additionally, Hutchins et al. (2013) identified listening as a phonoreception that involves a process of transferring auditory signals and language symbols to the brain to be analyzed and interpreted. This process certainly requires the mastery of vocabulary. In conclusion, learning vocabulary is highly required in mastering listening skills.

Practically, vocabulary learning and listening skills correlate with each other. This argument is supported by previous research by Teng (2016), which mentioned that both dimensions of vocabulary knowledge had a positive and significant correlation with students' listening comprehension. Multiple regression analysis showed that vocabulary knowledge provides a stronger prediction of listening comprehension success. This study confirms that the teaching-learning of listening skills and vocabulary will be beneficial if they are learned together, especially by using media.

Media in Language Learning

Media is commonly used in the English language teaching process. The use of media can link the knowledge transfer from the teacher to the students. Heinich (2002) states that media is a communication channel that carries information between sources and recipients, which means that teaching media is a tool for transferring learning materials from teachers and other learning sources and students as recipients. According to Gagne and Briggs (1975) (Arsyad, 2003), media in the learning process are all forms of physical tools in conveying messages from teachers to stimulate students, which can eliminate the information gap between teachers and students. According to Leive and Lentz (1982) (Arsyad, 2003), media in the learning process are all forms of physical tools in conveying messages from teachers to stimulate students, which can eliminate the information gap between teachers and students. According to Leive and Lentz (1982) (Arsyad, 2003), media has four main functions, which are described as follows:

a. Media can be used to attract students' attention (Attentive).
b. Media can arouse students' emotions and attitudes (Affective).

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c. Media can make it easier for students to understand and remember information (Cognitive).
d. Media is used to help students organize new information, especially those with below-average abilities (Compensatory).

From the explanation above, learning media are tools that facilitate the teaching and learning process in conveying information from teachers to students. Media is used to clarify learning material, overcome limitations in the learning process, focus student attention, and equalize student learning outcomes.

Busuu Mobile App in Language Learning

Busuu is a mobile app that provides language learning courses for several skills in various languages, especially English. There are twelve language learning courses, including English, Spanish, French, and German. Busuu was founded by Bernhard Niesner and Adrian in 2008. This mobile app enables users to improve their reading, listening, writing, and speaking skills in their target language and achieve fluency. Rosell-Aguilar (2018) stated that the Busuu app is part of the Busuu network for learning languages and comprises a website. Busuu apps are available on Android and iOS operating systems. *Busuu* offers some features to improve those skills to enhance learners' vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar.

The features offered are independent courses, in which the lessons can be downloaded, quizzes, and interactive features, such as getting feedback from native speakers. *Busuu* uses CEFR, a widely used standard for globally evaluating language proficiency. It has two versions, namely a free version and a premium membership. The free version includes flashcards, writing exercises, and feedback from native speakers. The premium membership includes all from the free version with additional features such as travel courses, mobile apps that can be used offline, quizzes, official certificates, grammar exercises, vocabulary training, and more lesson exposure.

METHOD

This study used a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental design to determine the effects of *Busuu* on vocabulary learning and listening skills. Creswell (2012) stated that experimental designs, also known as intervention or group comparison studies, are quantitative research procedures determining whether an activity or materials differ in participant results. Creswell (2012) also noted that a pre-experimental design is done with a single group to facilitate the ease of implementation or an intervention of short duration. In this case, the participants of this study only involved class 7.1, consisting of 38 students of in SMP Negeri 4 Tangerang Selatan, with a total of 469 populations. The instruments used to collect the data were pre-test and post-test for both dependent variables: vocabulary learning and listening skills. The pre-test was administered before the treatment using *Busuu* in listening and vocabulary learning activities.

The listening and vocabulary learning material was a descriptive text, “About Me.” This material means that the vocabulary taught was related to the listening material. After conducting the treatment for six meetings, the post-test was administered to determine the effects of *the Busuu* mobile app on the student’s vocabulary learning and listening skills. The data were analyzed quantitatively using Social Science Statistics Package (SPSS) software. The results’ significance was found using Cohen’s D Paired Sample Effect Size. The effect size with a score of > 0.00 - 0.20 represents a weak effect (very low), > 0.21-0.50 represents a low effect, > 0.51-1 represents a moderate effect, and > 1 represents a high effect.

This study used a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental design to determine the effects of *Busuu* on vocabulary learning and listening skills (Creswell, 2012).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In achieving the objective of this research, the researchers administered the pre-test of listening skills and vocabulary learning. Then, listening skills and vocabulary learning were treated by implementing *the Busuu* mobile app. After having six meetings, the researchers administered the post-test of listening skills and vocabulary learning. After gathering the data, the researchers analyzed them using *SPSS*, and it was found that the mean of the post-test was higher than that of the pre-test for both variables. This study confirmed that *Busuu* has affected students’ listening skills and vocabulary learning. The results of the listening skill can be seen in the Table. 1.

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Table 1. Results of listening skill tests

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre_test	38	33	63	52.87	7.747
Post_test	38	72	100	82.32	6.564
Valid N (listwise)	38				

It can be seen in the table above that the mean of the pre-test was 52.87, while the mean of the post-test was 82.32. This mean score means that the post-test result was higher than the pre-test. In order to find out the significance of the effect of *Busuu* on students' listening skills, the researchers conducted a Paired Sample Effect Size, as seen in Table. 2 below.

Table 2. Results of listening's paired samples effect sizes

Paired Samples Effect Sizes						
			Standardizer[a]	Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower	Upper
Pair 1	Pre_test - Post_test	Cohen's d	6,30614	-4,670	-5,772	-3,560
		Hedges' correction	6,43767	-4,574	-5,654	-3,487

a. The denominator used in estimating the effect sizes.
Cohen's d uses the sample standard deviation of the mean difference.
Hedges' correction uses the sample standard deviation of the mean difference, plus a correction factor.

It can be seen in Table 2 the effect size of students' listening skills by using Cohen's D. The effect size was 4.670, which was higher than 1 (>1). This data means that the effect size was considered high based on the criteria of Cohen's D. The results of students' vocabulary tests can be seen in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Results of vocabulary tests

Paired Samples Statistics					
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre_test	55.16	38	8.185	1.328
	Post_test	82.53	38	6.534	1.060

It was found that the mean of the post-test of vocabulary was higher than the mean of the pre-test, where the post-test result was 82.53 and the pre-test was 55.16. In order to find out the significance of the effect of *Busuu* on students' vocabulary learning, the researchers conducted a Paired Sample Effect Size, as seen in Table. 4 below.

Table 4. Results of vocabulary's paired sample effect sizes

Paired Samples Effect Sizes						
			Standardizer[a]	Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower	Upper
Pair 1	Pre_test - Post_test	Cohen's d	6.214	-4.404	-5.449	-3.352
		Hedges' correction	6.344	-4.314	-5.338	-3.283

a. The denominator used in estimating the effect sizes.
Cohen's d uses the sample standard deviation of the mean difference.
Hedges' correction uses the sample standard deviation of the mean difference, plus a correction factor.

It can be seen that there was a significant effect on students' listening skills, with an effect size of 4.404, which is higher than 1 (>1). This data means that the effect size was considered high.

The result of the students' listening and vocabulary achievement were in line with a study by (Meniwati et al., 2022), which revealed that Busuu widens vocabulary range, provides listening practices, has attractive and interactive features, and fosters learning autonomy so that it is promising to be used in listening classroom. Moreover, Khairunnisa et al. (2021b) conducted quantitative research to determine the improvement of students' vocabulary learning. The research showed that the results of the t-test calculation concluded that using the Busuu app significantly affects students' vocabulary skills. This research supported the present study.

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In addition, Syafrizal & Septiawati (2022) research showed that using *Busuu* can significantly enhance students' listening skills. This study also showed that the students were excited and experienced a fun learning experience during the listening learning activity. On the other hand, a study by (AlDakhil & AlFadda, 2021) showed otherwise. It revealed that using *Busuu* might have a negative effect by distracting learners from doing their other tasks. Besides, using Busuu might harm their eyes due to the continuous exposure to the cellphone screen. According to Shibata (2020), using *Busuu* still raises issues in language learning activities and its usefulness in assessment. These issues include repetitive mechanical drilling activities, low inter-rater and intra-rater reliability, and lack of authenticity and interactivity. Further research is recommended to discover students' perceptions in an in-depth interview.

CONCLUSION

This study explores the effects of *the Busuu* app on the quality of students' vocabulary learning and the achievement of students' listening skills. The pre-test and post-test results significantly affected students' vocabulary learning and listening skills. This study implies that *Busuu* is advised to be used in students' vocabulary learning and listening skills. Further research is recommended to discover students' perceptions in an in-depth interview.

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