

Conference Paper

Using the Hello English Application in the EFL Classroom: Its Efficacy in Helping Students to Master Vocabulary

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Abstract

Integrating technology as a teaching media in language learning has been widely promoted by teaching practitioners. Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) is among the most popular approaches used in EFL classrooms and has been reported in some studies to be beneficial in supporting students' language learning process. This study aimed to determine whether employing MALL through the Hello English (HE) application as a teaching media could significantly affect the mastery of vocabulary of eighth grade students in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Junior High School (JHS) classroom. Using a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design, this study presented the numerical data collected through a multiple-choice test. In analyzing the data, t-tests were employed with a 5% (0.05) significance level using the SPSS statistical test tools v.20. According to the results, the HE application had a significant effect on the students' mastery of the vocabulary, and so it is recommended that the HE application be used as a tool in the English language teaching and learning process.

Keywords: Hello English appl MALL, vocabulary mastery, junior high school, EFL

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1. Introduction

Having a great amount of vocabulary is necessary for the students who learn foreign language. Krashen in Lewis (1993) stated that the most important element in learning a foreign language, is vocabulary. It is because there is a complementary relationship between vocabulary knowledge and language use in which the understanding of vocabulary enables to use language and the use of language guides to an increase of vocabulary understanding. It is even more impactful if the students can mastery vocabulary, which means the students have comprehensive understanding about the vocabulary such as the meaning, the written and the spoken form (Thornbury, 2002).

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Therefore, it is basis to know that learning vocabulary in learning a foreign language is the first step that the students must do.

One of foreign languages that is learned the most by students around the world including those in Indonesia is English. In this country, English becomes the only foreign language that is mandatorily taught to students in all educational levels from JHS up to higher education (Fithriani, 2020). Furthermore, the Indonesian government sets the goal of EFL teaching in Indonesia which is to equip the students the ability to develop oral and written communicative competence in the language on four areas namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Fithriani, 2020). Meanwhile, vocabulary mastery is integrated in those four skills. Putra (2014) emphasized the importance of vocabulary mastery as he argued that English vocabulary mastery is the integrated components consisted in basic competence that should be attained by every student before they can use the four English skills. In JHS level, particularly at the 8th grade, it is arranged in the English syllabus of 2013 Curriculum (K13) that the students in this grade are expected to be able to master mainly three kinds of vocabulary, namely: adjectives, nouns and verbs (Document Review of the English Teacher's Syllabus, 2019). Therefore, vocabulary learning becomes a necessary basic element in ELT.

However, contrast to what is expected above, the students' vocabulary mastery performance is not as sufficient as the expectancy given. One of the most visible problem is misspelling (Fithriani 2013). Furthermore, Aisyah (2017) in her research also found that the students have lack vocabularies in English particularly in noun. It was proved when the researcher requested the students to comprehend some texts but they are unable to do it. Moreover, it is possibly related to the unawareness of the teacher to integrate vocabulary mastery in the teaching process and the learning strategies of vocabulary are not integrated in the English curriculum (Aisyah, 2017). It validates what Cahyono (2008) found that the majority of English teachers neglect the vocabulary teaching because they focus on the four language skills of English. Moreover, the limited time and practice to mastery vocabulary seems also often to be the final reason why students cannot master their vocabulary.

In this 21st century, integrating technology in language learning has been widely promoted as a media to solve language barriers as above. In EFL classroom, sundry skills of language have been taught by using technology integration (Fithriani, 2018). Among all kinds of technologies integrate in ELT, Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) is the current most popular used in the classroom which offers virtual learning environment (Fithriani, 2019) and reported in some studies as the effective media to

assist students' language learning process (Hulme, Noris and Jim, 2015; Khubyari and Narafshan, 2016s; Taj, et.al., 2017; Fithriani, 2019).

Utilizing mobile devices features as an assistant to help both of the teachers and the students in language teaching and learning (LTL) process, is the concept of MALL. Its handheld model makes it easier for the teachers to do the ELT activities either beyond or outside the classroom. They also can create and share the simple content of teaching material by utilizing some features such as photos, videos, text or recordings (Hulme, Noris and Jim, 2015). Moreover, according to Fithriani (2019), using MALL can contribute to a solution in solving the constraint of time and place to join the teaching and learning activities. Furthermore, mobile device is the inseparable tool for human beings to assist their activities every day.

Particularly in solving vocabulary mastery problems, one of the applications that currently researched is HE application. Rahmawati, Hasanah and Puspitaloka, (2017) found that HE application contributes positively to the students' vocabulary mastery competence. Their scores are greatly improved after HE application is implemented. Furthermore, the students' participation in the classroom seems to be active because each of them are involved in the learning process. Therefore, the researcher considered that HE application offers joyful alternatives teaching to support teachers create creative learning method. At the same time, Vasselinov and Grego (2017) found that Hello English is effective to also students' oral proficiency. They studied the 8 to 12 grade students and found substantial progress between students who used the application and the students who did not. The interval progress of confidence was between 60% and 83%.

Therefore, the researcher intends to conduct further research in finding evidences about whether or not the vocabulary mastery of the eighth grade's students at JHS level can be affected significantly by applying Hello English (HE) application as a teaching media in the classroom. This study expectedly can give significances for the students in mastering some vocabularies they should know in this grade. Reciprocally, it can be a reference and alternative way for English teachers to improve students' vocabulary mastery in order to attain their ability and understanding in using the four English skills

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Importance of Vocabulary Mastery in Language Learning

According to Thornbury (2002), students who have comprehensive knowledge about vocabulary, such as understand the meanings, the spoken and written form, the word

derivation, the grammatical behavior, the connotation or associations of the word, the collocations of the words, and word frequency is called that the students have mastered the vocabulary. In order to know whether a student has vocabulary mastery competence or not, it can be assessed by measuring the students' receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge (Schmitt & McCharty in Setiawan, 2010). However, it is believed that assessing students' receptive vocabulary is more important because language will be firstly accepted receptively. Furthermore, vocabulary mastery is important to express ideas and receive information of what other people's saying. It is supported by Watkins (2007) who believed that we can convey very little without grammar, but we cannot convey anything without vocabulary in language learning.

2.2. Hello English (HE) as an Online Game Mobile Application

Playing via mobile phone, HE can be simply defined as an interactive, personalized, and contextual mobile English learning application designed specifically for English as a second (ESL) or foreign language (EFL) learners. Its purpose is to make users able to master English through their own native language.



Figure 1: Hello English Logo

There are four aspects of language skills covered by Hello English, namely: writing, reading, listening and speaking. However, to be able to master those skills, this application offers a lot of vocabulary exercises, technology of advanced voice recognition for the users to speak into the app and feel the real-life, texts, and writing tasks. Furthermore, it combines those interactive lessons with fun games, unique and contextual engaged learning tools that leverage news, sports and entertainment to help learners build their English vocabulary. Fortunately, this application also can save the data expenses for users who work offline and make the learning seamless (Patni, 2017).

As an online game and type of MALL, this application has ever been researched its effectiveness to the young learners in the last few years (Rahmawati, Hasanah and Puspitaloka 2017; Vasselinov and Grego, 2017). According to Rahmawati, Hasanah and

Puspitaloka (2017), utilizing HE application in the elementary classroom made significant effect on the students' vocabulary mastery performance. She also found that this application supported the students to be actively participated in the classroom. It also brought the joyful learning for the students and creative features for the teachers to be created. Furthermore, Vasselinov and Grego (2017) also found that there is effectiveness of using HE application not focus in vocabulary but oral proficiency. They reveal that students at the 8 to 12 grades of JHS show significant speaking difference between controlled and experimental class. Therefore, they concluded that HE application is effective on the students' language learning.

3. Research Method

This study applied a quantitative research with quasi experimental design. The sample of the research is the 64 students of two classes at the eighth grades in one of JHS in Medan in which every class consisted of 32 students. Furthermore, in collecting the data, instruments and vocabulary tests were conducted to both of the classes. Pre-test was distributed beforehand to see students' initial vocabulary knowledge. Afterwards, treatment was implemented to both of the experiment and controlled class. However, the treatment in experiment class is conducted by using HE application as a media of teaching while in the controlled class HE application was not used. Afterall, post-test was distributed to find the difference between pre-test and post-test score. Both of the pre-test and post-test were in the multiple choices form with 4 possible answers but the content of the test was different one to another. However, the composition and characteristic were still the same. Furthermore, the content of the test followed the concept of vocabulary mastery by Thornbury (2002). The total questions for every test was 20 items and the students were instructed to do the tests in 45 minutes. At the end, the results of the tests were scored by using scoring rubric below:

$$\frac{\text{Score}}{\text{Highest Score}} \times 100 = \text{Final Score}$$

After the numerical data were obtained, preliminary analysis, t-test and hypothesis test were conducted to analyze the data and draw the final conclusion of the study. To do so, Microsoft Excel 2010 and SPSS version 20 is used as an assistant in calculating the preliminary analysis and t-test with the significance level of 0.05. In preliminary analysis, the normality and homogeneity tests were conducted to measure whether the data obtained were qualified for the next calculation. Moreover, the criteria of Sig. Displayed to know the data is normally distributed and homogeneous is higher than 0.05. After the data counted is normal and homogeneous, t-test calculation was carried

out to find out the significance differences of the data. Finally, hypothesis test was done to draw the conclusion of the study. The hypothesis criteria were as follow:

1. H_0 is accepted if $t_0 < t_{table}$ with the Sig. (2-tailed) $5% > (00.5)$
2. H_a is accepted if $t_0 > t_{table}$ with the Sig. (2-tailed) $5% < (0.05)$

4. Result and Discussion

To answer the research questions of this study, the preliminary analysis, t-test and hypothesis test are presented and discussed one by one in this session. The results of preliminary analysis reveal that the data obtained from pre-test and post-test are normal and homogeneous. Afterwards, the mean score of each datum was calculated to find out the range score between pre-test and post-test from both of the classes. The finding found that the gained of mean score in experimental class was 37.97 while in controlled class was 24.84. Based on the gained score obtained, the t-test was calculated with the significance level is 5% (0.05). Furthermore, the result of the t-test is presented in Table 1.

As seen in the table, it is shown that there is a significant different between experimental class and controlled class. The t-test result presents that $t_{observe} = 8.986$ is higher than $t_{table} = 1.669$ and the Sig. (2-tailed) is $0.000 < 0.05$. In other word, it can be said that $t_{observe} > t_{table}$ and the Sig. (2-tailed) < 0.05 . Therefore, the hypothesis test result can be concluded that H_a is accepted and H_0 is rejected. This final result means that it is evidently proved that using HE application in the ELT gives significant effect on the students' vocabulary mastery at the eighth grade of EFL JHS. Furthermore, the students' score difference is quite significant in which between the $t_{observe}$ and the t_{table} , the ratio of both scores is 1: 8. This data shows that although the students have equivalent and normal score before the treatment was conducted, their score can be changed depend on how the treatment was conducted by the teacher in the classroom.

These findings validate what Rahmawati Rahmawati, Hasanah and Puspitaloka (2017) and friends found that Hello English application improved the young learners' competence in mastering vocabulary. In her research, the mean score difference found between experiment and controlled class was 2,28. Similar to this, Vasselinov and Gergo (2017) also found the efficacy of using HE application in the classroom. However, their finding is about the students' oral proficiency at the 9 to 12 grades. The percentage of confidence interval between controlled and experimental class is around 23%. The findings of this study also support those of other related studies who found MALL

TABLE 1: T-test result

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	.172	.680	8.984	62	.000	13.12500	1.46091	10.20468	16.04532
Equal variances not assumed			8.984	61.986	.000	13.12500	1.46091	10.20467	16.04533

is effective on ELT (Hulme, Noris and Jim, 2015), such as vocabulary acquisition of EFL learners (Taj, Ali, Sipra & Ahmad (2017), EFL learners' reading comprehension (Khubyari and Narafshan, 2016), and EFL writing class (Fithriani, 2019). Therefore, as a final conclusion, HE application as on type of MALL gives significant effect on the improvement of students' vocabulary mastery at the eighth grade of JHS level.

5. Conclusion

Integrating current innovation media for EFL teaching has been importantly applied in the classroom to compete technology development era. HE application is merely one of many other applications that can be used in the classroom. The results of this study proved that HE application gives effect on the students' vocabulary mastery at the eighth grade of JHS level in Indonesia EFL context. The data shows that the t_0 was higher than the t_{table} in the significance level of 5% ($8.984 > 1.669$). Therefore, it is recommended for English teachers to try to use this application in the ELT to improve students' vocabulary mastery. Similarly, for further researchers, it is also expected they can conduct further research at the same or different elements or skills of English.

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