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WhatsApp Enables Learning of Arabic Language

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Abstract

Arabic language has not been mastered by most of Indonesian people, even though Islamic teaching urged Moslems to learn it. On the other hand, smartphone communication technology, WhatsApp (WA), has potential to be used to learn Arabic. This is due to WA's functionality to be used by multiusers, or to discuss in the same time. Besides, WA has several supporting features to be used as means of learning, i.e. transferring voices or pictures. WA is a quite economical media for communication, and this feature made WA is commonly used by Indonesian peoples. With these special characteristics, it is expected that Indonesian Moslem community, who largely own this application, may increase the number of people learning Arabic.

Keywords: ICT, Education, WhatsApp, religion

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1. Background

Arabic is a language of Moslems. Many Islamic prominent figures have obliged Moslems to master the language. But in Indonesia, the number of people who can speak in the language is not significant. Not everyone knows that the Arabic language is compulsory to be mastered, or they follow the opinion that it is not compulsory. Several factors hamper Moslems from learning Arabic, for instance, old age, it's not important, have no time, have no money, there's no teacher available, and so on.

Arabic is the language that is compulsory to be mastered by Islamic followers according to many Islamic scholars. In Indonesia, most of its followers are still unable to master the Arabic language due to variety of reasons. A solution is needed that in Indonesia Arabic language may be commonly used. Now in the field of communication technology, there is a communication application that can be used on smartphones, called WhatsApp (WA). This application is a favorite and the majority of the population in Indonesia has it. No exception to Islam adherents due to the application is easily found and used and very useful for communication as well. In accordance with 7 conceptions proposed by Russel Neuman, one of them is to add volume of communication and affordable.

To address this practical issue, a new method in learning Arabic is made by using social media, WhatsApp, in teaching the language. WA is a program for smartphones for real-time communication. The objective is like a common cellular phone, i.e. to call or sending SMS, or basically to communicate and share messages, but the difference is WA is using internet data and telephone or SMS using credit. WA can also have used by multi users in the same time and share messages with many people. Besides, WA has feature that can be used to send pictures or voices, of course with all things that WA has, it became a favorite of communication application of Indonesian people. Then, learning Arabic through WA is viable as this research aims to show. This kind of research has been done by Binullal ([5], 26) who found that learning through WA is more effective in delivering the content than learning in the classroom.

2. WhatsApp

The characteristics of the new media environment is described by Mc Mannus in Severin ([2], 4) as shifting from scarcity of media into an abundant media, leading to collective audience satisfactory into group satisfactory or individual and shifting from one way media into interactive media. New media technology has reached its peak in enabling positive change as described by Russel Neuman ([6]: 118) due to the following factors:

1. New media should be less expensive and affordable for everyone.

2. New technology has changed people's perspective on geographic distance, increased velocity of communication, and increased the volume of communication.

3. There are more communication channels available, and more control for its users.

4. There are increases in interaction of communication forms which previously separated.

WhatsApp, which meet the above factors, is highly popular in Indonesia compared with Line or BBM due to its economical characteristics to conduct real time communication via voice, text and images. In addition, the communication via the WA can involve more than one person at the same time so that the persons that involved in the communication may know every word sent through WA.

Just like mobile phones, we can communicate with anyone anywhere and anytime through WA. The difference is that WA is cheaper so it became a favorite due to larger communication intensity and can be regarded as unlimited. In Indonesia WA is used to communicate privately. It could also be used for businesses and others. It can also be used to communicate in groups. In WA to be able to communicate in groups, WA

group is made. This group can hold a maximum of 100 users. The groups can be created by everyone and the group maker can put anyone into the group. The group is made in order that one message may reach many persons so that the communication will be more effective, for example, a high school alumnus group. If they plan to hold a reunion, then the WA group is made in line with this purpose. So, the information related to its plan may reach or accepted by other alumnus of the high school. The advances in technology also can be used by religious leaders in the world. Now it is easier to surf the internet to find many sites on religion, not only Islam religion but also other religions.

3. Method

This qualitative research aims to explain and analyze situation of using WA to learn Arabic language. This research uses observation and documentation. Object or sample of this research is class learning Arabic via WA in a program *Belajar Islam dan Bahasa Arab* (BISA). It was chosen because only BISA uses WA for teaching and learning Arabic language in Indonesia. The documentation involves collecting any document relevant to the study, like screen shots of WA's access to the BISA materials.

4. Findings and Discussion

In a conventional class of 10 students and one teacher, the method of teaching mainly uses text. The teacher tells and the student reads, learns and responds. It is a punishment and reward system. Learning through WhatsApp, however, gives students the channel to interact online with their peers, hence creating a new dimension in the learning and comprehension level. WA can store any form of written words delivered. This allows WA to be used for studying or learning process such as in schools.

The other supporting feature of WA in learning process is the presence of group features. This feature can create a group in WA. The group may be entered by a maximum of 100 WA users. Where all users can communicate with each other at the same time and reciprocal interactions may occur and the messages that are stored can be read at any time. It is different with lessons delivered directly by a teacher or other students, which sometimes result in distortion.

WA also reaches the wider community and thus creating a relationship or long distance learning. Almost everyone has the WA, so it does not require a lot of costs to learn. It can be interspersed and conducted anywhere, such as at home and there is no excess pressure because the learners do not see each other. People who are ashamed to learn or have no studying friend can learn to be able to speak Arabic through WA.

5. Conclusion

Learning Arabic is one of the new promising solutions to be tried for Indonesians to become literate in Arabic. This is because the benefits of WA and are potentially used for learning. One of them is due to WA owned almost by the majority of Indonesia as well as inexpensive. In addition, the use WA for learning Arabic could overcome the problems that existing in Islamic adherents in Indonesia in learning Arabic such as costs incurred, teacher unavailability, no friends learning it, ashamed to learn due to old ages and others. It is proven with programs like BISA.

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