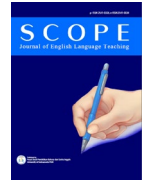




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Research Article

Students' Perceptions of Using Busuu App as an Autonomous English Learning Medium

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KEYWORDS

Autonomous learning;
 English learning medium;
 Busuu

ABSTRACT

This research aimed to investigate students' perceptions of using the Busuu application as an autonomous English learning medium. The research employed descriptive qualitative research to gain a deep understanding. Research results were collected through both online questionnaire and interview. The subjects were 22 undergraduate students of a private university in Lumajang. The participants reported that 82% of students strongly agreed that Busuu app is easy to use and can be accessed anywhere and anytime. There are also 91% of students agreed that Busuu app is very innovative and an effective medium. Moreover, 77% of students had experience that learning English outside the classroom autonomously and 82% they can use internet and smartphones. Based on the results of the questionnaire, it can be concluded that the students gave positive perceptions of using Busuu app as an autonomous English learning medium. The Busuu app is a useful and effective medium in learning English autonomously. They also felt that learning English autonomously using the Busuu application could improve their English skills because the students can determine their learning style so that learning becomes more interesting and meaningful. This can be a teacher's concern that in this digital era, language learning is not only in the classroom, but also outside the classroom by using technology. In addition, the research was conducted at a private Islamic high school with limited participants. Therefore, other researchers need to investigate in different high schools with a large population to gain wider and deeper perceptions of autonomous English language learning.

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INTRODUCTION

Today, education in Indonesia is in the era of 21st century education, marked by the era of industrial revolution 4.0, which requires students to have skills in critical thinking, problem solving, communication, creativity, innovation, and collaboration. This is consistent with the concept of

autonomous learning. Kenny (1999:431), as cited by Yan (2012), argues that autonomy is not only the freedom to learn, but also the opportunity to become human. These definitions of autonomy put learners more in charge of what they learn, how they learn, and when they learn. According to Littlewoods (1999:71), Yan (2012) recognizes that autonomy should include two characteristics: (1) students must take responsibility for

their own learning and (2) taking responsibility requires students to take responsibility (partially or fully) for many of the processes that have traditionally been the responsibility of the teacher, such as setting learning goals, choosing teaching methods and evaluating processes. Yan (2012) also argues that learner autonomy helps to achieve high levels of creativity and independence. In addition, Harmer (2007) argues that to increase the chances of success and development in language learning, the students should be motivated and develop their learning strategies so that they become independent learning opportunities.

There is no doubt that it is the duty of every teacher to develop the ability of students to learn autonomously. Technology and information that continues to develop rapidly as part of the challenges of teachers are important tools in implementing the learning process as Shi et al. (2016) showed that digital learning resources can increase learning effectiveness. Integrating language learning with technology to support learners learning a new language has been successful in learning the target language (Sylvén & Sunqvist, 2012). For successful self-directed learning, teachers need to know their students preferred learning styles.

Today, as technology advances, students can use technology as a medium to autonomous learning. Technology can change all areas of life, including language learning. According to Halverson & Smith (2009), technology has ushered in a new era of teaching and learning. It makes learning interesting, flexible, and heuristic, and technology increases productivity and efficiency. Today, students can use a computer, a mobile device, or other technology to learn. Most governments are implementing technology-based distance learning systems for their citizens. Students are learning remotely at home, which affects the choice of online educational resources planned for students and teachers (Reimers et al., 2020) in AlDakhil & AlFadda (2022). Therefore, the integration of technology in general and mobile application in particular in the learning process is crucial for both students and teachers. In addition, mobile learning is widely used by students all over the world. It can also help and facilitate students to access knowledge of language learning independently. Its portability enables new ways of learning: ubiquitous and autonomous learning.

According to Albantani and Madkur (2017) as cited in Khairunnisa et al. (2021) it goes without saying, that many applications today can support teaching and learning needs. Integrating mobile technology into language learning makes authentic learning materials readily available to teachers and allows students can interact with other language learners and native speakers. The enormous potential of mobile technology opens up the opportunity to translate the endless classroom learning outside the

classroom in more innovative ways (Álvarez Valencia, 2016; Ramsden & Ramsden, 2003; Richards, 2015; Yudhiantara & Saehu, 2017 in Khairunnisa et al., 2021).

Busuu is one of the most popular language learning apps that promote self-directed learning. It has more than 60 million registered users. It provides 12 different languages classified according by CEFR level for languages. The application can be installed on Android and iOS operating systems (Rizqiyyah, R., & Drajiati, N. A., 2020). Busuu application can be a very simple alternative for those who do not have a lot of free time to learn languages through direct learning (Albantani 2018:4). According to Jill Duffy (2017) in Khairunnisa et al. (2021), the Busuu app has a modest selection of language courses, but top-notch content. Busuu app is very well organized about these features. It has a dashboard where users can see exactly what the level is. Especially for beginners, it helps users know what they will learn today, what is expected of them, and what they will learn next (Khairunnisa et al., 2021). Learners can use the material free or upgrade to a paid subscription. In applied activities, reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills practiced, as well as vocabulary and grammar. Activity types include drag-and-drop, multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blanks, free writing can be shared with others for peer feedback and correction. By using this program, the students will be enthusiastic about learning English. They also more relaxed in learning since they can learn English at anytime and anywhere.

A previous study conducted by Rosell-Aguillar (2018) on the use of the Busuu application showed that the profile of the users of the Busuu application shows usage patterns and which features of the application the students consider most valuable from the point of view. Most users are at the beginner level and learn out of personal interest. They find that the app has helped them improve their knowledge of the language they are learning, and vocabulary is the most important area for improvement. According to Citrayasa (2019), Busuu can be useful in language learning so that learners can learn it anywhere and Busuu has improved their learning autonomy. Rizqiyyah & Drajiati (2020) also conducted a research about Busuu that reported the positive result, which surveyed 17 females and 3 males of an English center at a university in Indonesia. This study showed that students have a positive attitude towards the app because it helps them to improve their English skills, especially enriching their vocabulary.

Recently, AlDakil & AlFadda (2022) surveyed 58 middle school students at a private school in Saudi Arabia about their perception of applying the Busuu in language learning by applying Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). They provided positive insight into how mobile language learning apps can empower EFL learners and provide them with valuable resources to learn languages anytime and

anywhere. They also found that the Busuu was an easy and useful learning tool that they intended to use in their learning journey.

While these studies highlight the app's overall effectiveness and effects on vocabulary learning and learner autonomy, they have primarily targeted beginners or certain age groups. None of the studies looked in depth at how the Busuu app supports autonomous learning from the perspective of EFL students in a variety of learning environments, or at the specific experiences and challenges that learners face when using Busuu for English learning on their own. Furthermore, the current research does not provide a nuanced understanding of Busuu's broader role in enabling autonomous language learning beyond vocabulary acquisition.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to fill a gap by looking into not only students' perceptions of utilizing Busuu as an English learning medium, but also their experiences with autonomous language learning using the app. By concentrating on these factors, this study will provide a more comprehensive understanding of how Busuu helps to self-directed English learning, adding to the existing body of expertise in this field with the research questions are (1) What are the students' perceptions of using Busuu application as an English learning medium? (2) What are the students' experiences in autonomous English learning?

METHOD

This study used a qualitative research design because the purpose of the study is to explore the students' perceptions and experiences in using the Busuu application as an autonomous English learning medium. According to Bogdan & Biklen (1982), cited in Rahmania & Mandasari (2021), qualitative research is descriptive research in which data collected in the form of words or images rather than numbers. Thus, the researcher will use this type of method because the researcher focuses on analyzing the students' perception, so the data that the researcher used will be presented in a descriptive way.

This study took place at a private university in Lumajang, East Java. It is Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Tarbiyah Miftahul Midad. This campus was chosen because it is the only campus in Lumajang that has an English education department. The respondents of this research were all undergraduate students who were in English education department. Then, they made WhatsApp group and they were asked to use Busuu in their English learning beyond the classroom for minimum fourteen days. Then, the researcher distributed an online questionnaire to survey the students' perceptions and experiences when using this application as an autonomous English learning medium,

and interviewed three randomly selected students to support data collection.

The instruments that were used for gathering information are questionnaire and interview. The questionnaires were adapted from Astarilla (2018); Inayah, et al. (2020); Marsevani (2021); and Lestari (2022). Questions related 22 closed items to the issues. This type was a close-ended questionnaire in which the answer is limited to the choices given and the respondents not allowed to express their evaluation. There are several reasons why researcher used this type of questionnaire. It is quick, the preliminary analysis is easy to do, and the answer is specific.

The questionnaire used to gain the students' perceptions on using Busuu application as an autonomous English learning medium and the students' experiences in autonomous English learning. The researcher used a Likert Scale starting with *Strongly Agree*, *Agree*, *Neutral*, *Disagree*, and *Strongly Disagree*. The questionnaire consists of 22 questions in Bahasa Indonesia, and then they translated into English, 1-6 about the usefulness of the Busuu app as an autonomous language-learning medium, 7-12 about the effectiveness of using the Busuu app for autonomous learning, and 13-22 about the students' experiences in autonomous English learning. Questions 1-12 were to answer the first research question and questions 13-22 were to answer the second research question. The study used the Google Form distributed online and 22 students completed the form. The researcher also had a semi-structured interview as supporting data for further explain the data collection. Three students were randomly chosen. The semi-structured interview conducted in Bahasa Indonesia for a more fluent interview. The interview recorded by mobile phone to avoid errors in data collection and analysis. Then the recording was converted to text.

After collecting the data, it analyzed and converted into descriptive data. The questionnaire was analyzed using the technique proposed by Sugiyono (2008). In order to disclose the themes and primary ideas of qualitative, the data were assessed as a whole, then translated into numerical data to be thoroughly compared and reviewed. The data of the interview was analyzed by using the technique proposed by Miles, Huberman & Saldana (2018), namely data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. The researcher converted the audio recordings into dialog textual form, then examined and classified it. After that the data were reduced, summarized, and presented in narrative form. The last, the researcher displayed the data by drawing and verifying the data obtained, and then made conclusion based on the research question.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher used two instruments in collecting data. There are online questionnaires in the Google Form and semi-structured interview. This finding aims to answer the research problems of this study. The questionnaire consisted of three categories. The first and second categories aim to answer the first research question: what are the students' perceptions of using the Busuu application as an English learning medium and the third category aims to answer the second research question: what are the students' experiences in autonomous English learning. The questionnaire distributed to 22 respondents by WhatsApp group. The second data collection was done through interviews. Then, the researcher conducted separate interviews with three participants individually at different times. After the answers of questionnaires and interviews were collected, the researcher analyzed them in the form of percentage and transcripts, as described below.

Table 1 Usefulness of The Busuu App as An Autonomous Learning Medium

Statement	Agree	Disagree
Busuu is simple to use and easy access anywhere and anytime	82%	18%
Busuu can be used autonomously without other's help	73%	27%
Busuu is a helpful medium and can improve may English skill	77%	23%
Busuu is useful to practice my English skill	82%	18%
Busuu features are interesting, varis and communicative	91%	9%
Busuu makes English learning more enjoyable and fun	73%	27%

Based on the table above, the students agreed that the Busuu application is a useful medium in autonomous learning. As the result of the questionnaire showed that 82% of the students agreed with the first statement above that the Busuu is easy to use and can be accessed anywhere and anytime, while 18% students disagreed with that statement. In the second statement, 73% of students agreed that the Busuu can be used autonomously without others' help and there were 27% students who disagreed. The statement number 3, showed that 77% of students agreed and 23% disagreed. They agreed that the Busuu is a helpful medium and it can improve English skills. The fourth statement showed that 82% of students agreed that the Busuu is useful to practice English skills and 18% of students disagreed. Another statement was number 5, 91% of students agreed and 9% disagreed. They agreed that the Busuu features are interesting, varies, and communicative. The sixth statement showed that 73% of students agreed that the Busuu makes English learning more enjoyable and fun and there were 27% of students disagreed. It means that

students' perceptions were positive. The statements of the results of the interview below also supported the results of the questionnaire above:

P1: *Yes, it is a good and useful application because it has enjoyable and flexible features so I can understand the material easily.*

P2: *Yes, I think Busuu application is easy to use and the vocabulary is easy to understand so I can memorize it easily.*

P3: *Yes, I like using Busuu because it can be used wherever I am and whenever I have free time.*

*P= Participant

From the interview result above, the students said that the Busuu application is a useful medium in autonomous learning and from three out of three participants agreed that the Busuu is easy to use and flexible because it can be used anywhere and anytime.

Table 2 Effectiveness of Using Busuu App in Autonomous Learning

Statement	Agree	Disagree
Busuu is very innovative and effective medium	91%	9%
Busuu can be used by anyone from beginning to the advanced level	82%	18%
Busuu provides a feature to communicate with native autonomously	91%	9%
The activites in Busuu promote creative, original, and independent responses	86%	14%
Bussu gives the excellent automated feedback	82%	18%
Bussu makes me more motivated and excited to learn English	73%	27%

As can be seen above, the students agreed that the Busuu application is an effective medium in autonomous learning. As the result of the questionnaire showed that 91% of the students agreed with statement number 7 above that the Busuu is very innovative and an effective medium, but there were 9% of students disagreed with that statement. In statement number 8, 82% of students agreed and 18% disagreed. They agreed that the Busuu can be used by anyone from beginner to the advanced level. The statement number 9 showed that 91% of students agreed that the Busuu provides a feature to communicate with native autonomously, while 9% disagreed with that statement. The tenth statement showed that 86% of students agreed that the activities in Busuu promote creative, original, and independent responses and there were 14% disagreed with that statement. Another statement was number 11, 82% of students agreed and 18% disagreed. They agreed that the

Busuu gives the excellent automated feedback. The twelfth statement showed that 73% of students agreed that the Busuu makes them more motivated and excited to learn English, while there were 17% of students disagreed with the statement. It means that students' perceptions were positive. The results of the questionnaire above were confirmed by the arguments of the interviews as follows:

P1: *Yes, Busuu helps me to improve my English*

*vocabulary little by little and makes me
enjoy learning English at home.*

P2: *Yes, I like using Busuu because it gives me*

*new lessons in learning English
autonomously using technology.*

P3: *Yes, because Busuu app has interesting and*

*fun learning style so I can improve my
English meaningfully*

*P= Participant

According to the findings above, the students believe that using Busuu may help them become more motivated to learn English and three out of three participants agreed that the Busuu is an effective medium in autonomous learning.

Table 3 Students' Experiences in Autonomous English Learning

Statement	Agree	Disagree
I preview myself before to lesson such as see a summary	67%	36%
I learn English by internet and smartphone	82%	18%
I get opportunities to learn English outside the classroom	77%	23%
Taking notes of summaries and the lessons	73%	27%
I change my learning approach when I find it appropriate	73%	27%
I try to use the new knowledge when I practice English	77%	23%
I notice my mistake during learning process	73%	27%
I know the reasons why I make mistakes and take actions to correct them	82%	18%
I know my strengths and weaknesses and improve them	77%	23%
I evaluate my learning approaches	82%	18%

According to the Table 3 that can be seen above, 67% of students claimed that they preview themselves before the lesson such as seeing a summary, while 33% disagreed with the statement. 82% of students admitted that they learn English by internet and smartphone, and 18% of students learned English by others. Furthermore, 77% of

students admitted that they could get opportunities to learn English outside the classroom, while 23% of students could not. There were 73% of students took notes of summaries and the lessons and 27% of students did not do it. There were also 73% of students who changed their learning approach when they found it appropriate and 27% did not do it. Besides that, 77% of students tried to use the new knowledge when they practiced English. 73% of students noticed their mistakes during learning process and there were 82% knew the reasons of their mistakes and they took actions to correct them. Moreover, there were also 77% of students who were aware of their strengths and weaknesses and 82% of students evaluated their learning approaches. The results of the above questionnaire are also supported by the results of the interviews below:

P1: *I usually learn English by watch ing movies,*

*listening to music or playing games on my
smartphone in my free time because, when I
lean English autonomously, I become more
relaxed so that I can understand it easily
and deeply.*

P2: *Besides learning English at school, I also*

*like to learn English at home using my hand
phone through some applications because it
is more interesting with creative features.*

P3: *learning English autonomously is more*

*challenging. I can learn anytime and
anywhere, and I can determine my own
learning style so that learning is more
meaningful.*

*P= Participant

Based on the above interview results, it can be concluded that the students perceive that learning English autonomously is more interesting, challenging, and meaningful because they can do it wherever and whenever they have free time and they can determine their learning style so that they can understand the materials easily and deeply. It is in line with Rosell-Aguilar (2018) states that applications offer the opportunity to engage in meaningful, interactive, and engaging tasks, support collaborative, useful and challenging tasks, and provide the opportunity to target language access.

CONCLUSION

After an intensive records evaluation acquired from the questionnaires and interviews, it can be concluded that the

students gave positive perceptions on using Busuu app as an autonomous English learning medium. From the results of the questionnaires and interviews above, most students found that the Busuu is a useful and effective medium in learning English autonomously. They also felt that learning English autonomously using Busuu application could improve their English skill because the students can determine their learning style so that learning becomes more interesting and meaningful. This can be a teacher's concern that in this digital era, language learning is not only in the classroom, but also outside the classroom by using technology. The researcher recommends that teachers should consider integrating Busuu app as supplementary tool for language learning since it can foster independent learning, allowing students to explore their preferred learning styles, which may lead to greater engagement and skill improvement. Furthermore, to gain a broader perspective on the effectiveness of digital tools for autonomous language learning, future studies should explore their impact across different schools and with larger sample size. This expanded research could provide more generalized insights and highlight the specific ways digital tools can complement English language education across varied educational context.

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