DISTANCE LEARNING USING NEWS ITEMS-ANDROID APPLICATION TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' ENGLISH COMPETENCE INTEGRATED WITH COVID-19 PREVENTION

[1*]DIDIT KURNIADI, [2]SUPRAPTO
[1,2]UNIVERSITAS AKI
*didit.kurniadi@unaki.com

Abstract

Covid-19 is not over yet while the learning process in schools must continue for the sake of great future generations. There are many problems or obstacles in implementing distance learning to avoid Covid-19. This study aims to produce a product design in the form of media or teaching materials that can be used in the distance learning as a form of improving English competence and socializing Covid-19. The method used in this research is the research & development (R&D) method. The research was carried out in several stages such as preliminary, prototyping, expert validation, product trials taken from several samples, in order to design/application products that are ready to be used to help teachers and students in the distance learning. The design and materials of teaching materials are adjusted to the results of data collection at the preliminary stage. This android application was tested on students and teachers with satisfactory results above 70% because it is easy to use based on the results of the distributed questionnaire. The materials and exercises already represent the learning objectives in the curriculum regarding news items. The Covid-19 socialization integrated in the learning application is used as additional information for students to carry out strict health protocols. So that students know what actions need to be taken in their family, friendship, and social life to avoid Covid-19.

Keywords: News Item, Covid-19, Android

INTRODUCTION

As an effort to prevent the spreading of Covid-19, distance learning has been implemented in Indonesia for almost two years. Teachers can work from home well to face the new normal (Mungkasa, 2020). Several studies have shown that distance learning can reduce the spread rate of Covid-19 (Herliandry et al., 2020). Technological developments have helped teachers and students in the application of distance learning. They can use LMS-based learning or Video Conference. However, the facility is actually just a media. Teachers still have to make their own learning media and there are still many teachers who can't use technology well. Those problems need to be identified (SL, Sugiyarta., Prabowo, Ardhi., Ahmad, Tsabit A., Purwinarko, Aji., & Siroj, 2020). However, they must be able

to conduct the learning. This is one of the impact of covid-19 in the process of teaching learning nowadays (Purwanto et al., 2020). This is not comparable to the development of the younger generation who have a higher visual level in using technology. There are also other problems that arise in the distance learning, including reduced student supervision/control, unstable internet connections, and expensive internet packages. As a result, many learning processes are considered less than optimal. However, many other studies show that with the distance learning students become more motivated, dare to argue, and are more independent in learning.

The learning outcomes contained in the curriculum must still be met. The learning achievements are used to prepare the 2045 golden young generation who are tough in facing global competition. One of the efforts to facilitate global communication is to master English. In fact, many research findings state that students in Indonesia are still low in mastering English.

English learning in Indonesia is mostly based on genre texts if you look at the existing syllabus. One of the genre texts is News Items text. News Items are texts that contain actual and reliable information/ news which includes headlines, 5W+1H elements, and sources. In addition to improving students' competence in understanding English, the News Items text can be used as a means of socializing the prevention of Covid-19 transmission to students. That's way, this integration is considered very appropriate to be carried out, especially during a pandemic like this so that the alert attitude towards the transmission of Covid-19 does not loosen.

The current generation likes things that are instant and easy to use through their android phones. Android phones nowadays can be used in teaching with

higher order thinking skills (Fadjarwati, 2020) and the application of android can be developed well (Kodri, 2020). Android apps implementation as a flexible learning has been done also by other researcher (Martono & Nurhayati, 2014). This is considered good for researchers to create Android-based learning media/teaching materials that function to help improve their English skills with a more flexible time and can be used anywhere. They no longer need to spend a lot of internet data/ connection because the application that the researcher will construct is offline. For students, they can become more insightful because the English news offered will be very educational and interesting, complemented by attractive graphic.

This study aims to produce a product design in the form of media or teaching materials that can be used in the distance learning as a form of improving English competence and socializing Covid-19. The method used in this research is the research & development (R&D) method. The research was carried out in several stages such as preliminary, prototyping, expert validation, product trials taken from several samples, in order to design/application products that are ready to be used to help teachers and students in the distance learning. Together we stop the spread of corona virus in Indonesia (Syafrida & Hartati, 2020).

METHOD

The purpose of this research is to produce teaching materials that can be used in distance learning to improve students' English competence, especially in understanding the News Items text as well as socializing the prevention of Covid-19. This study uses research & development (R&D) methods to produce a product that has certain functions and effectiveness with the Joly and Bolitho development mo-

del because this model is specifically used in the development of language teaching materials, on a small scale, and simple steps because it only takes a few steps/stages in the test (Wahyuni, 2018). The steps to be implemented include needs analysis, pedagogical and contextual realization, product creation, product development, and evaluation.

The development research used is formative research because it is still at the stage of improvement and development (Sagala & Andriani, 2019). This R&D research is oriented to the Tesmer design which contains self-evaluation, prototyping, and field tests which consist of two stages, namely preliminary and formative evaluation.
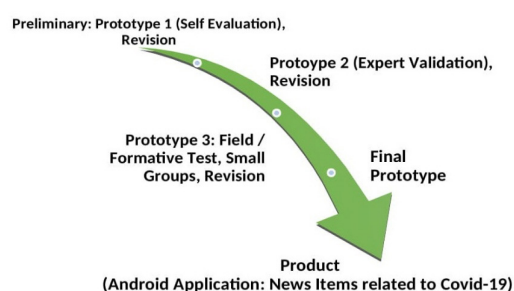

Figure 1. Research Flowcharts Oriented to Tesmers Formative Design Plots.
Information:
1. The preliminary stage is carried out by designing material containing news/News Items related to Covid-19 in English from various trusted sources, suitable for students' English learning, and collecting application design data from various sources. Researchers from the language field cross-check the material through a literature review whether the material is in accordance with the syllabus/curriculum or not, while researchers from the ICT field collect data in application design. Interviews with English teachers are needed to determine the suitability of the material. After that, revisions were made to form a second prototype.

2. After the second prototype was formed, the research team tested the feasibility of the application/prototype design through experts from both the ICT and language fields. Experts observe, analyze, and evaluate. Experts are asked to provide perceptions and suggestions for improving the design of the application. After the validation by the expert was completed, the researcher then changed the second prototype draft to make prototype 3.

3. At this stage, the researcher tested the 3rd prototype on the students. The researcher gave directions to several students who were sampled about understanding the material provided through the application. Then, the students were asked to answer several questions which were distributed via google form. The results of the evaluation and student input are reviewed to improve the application.

4. The results of the validity of the product are then re-tested to a larger number of students. Testing is done to see the optimization of the product. After completion, the final prototype becomes a valid application and is suitable for use as learning media/teaching materials.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Several research results found that students in general already have the basic facilities and media needed in distance learning. Distance learning has flexibility in the process and can encourage students to be more independent and active in learning. And more importantly (Firman & Rahayu, 2020), distance learning triggers social distancing behavior & reduces student crowds so that it helps in preventing the spread of Covid-19, especially in school clusters. Lack of supervision of students, limited signal, and internet data that are not cheap are problems that often arise in online dis-

tance learning. However, increased learning independence, interest, motivation, and courage to argue are the advantages of distance learning. According to Sadikin, the qualitative research he conducted stated that distance learning could help prevent the spread of Covid-19 (Sadikin & Hamidah, 2020). Even in a pandemic, learning outcomes must be in accordance with what has been set in the curriculum. This is done considering that technology has had an impact on various sectors, especially education. However, technology-based learning should indeed be applied considering the increasingly rapid development of technology. Apart from the field of technology, education does not only transfer knowledge but also must be integrated with character education for the sake of Indonesia's golden generation in 2045 who is strong, advanced, and has character in the face of increasingly fierce global competition (Abi, 2017). To face global competition, students' English competence needs to be improved. The role of English according to literature studies has been carried out by many previous researchers, especially in business and marketing (Sri Rahayu, 2018). In the literature study, the use of rigid English is not always used in global communication. Therefore, the government through the Ministry of Education and Culture has long established functional, textual, and interpersonal English learning.

Students now prefer something instant and easily accessible via their mobile phones. The operating system on mobile phones that is widely used is Android. With these android phones, they can explore the world. If they learn with pleasure, then the learning achievement will be achieved maximally. Books are no longer the primary sources because they can easily access information through their cell phones. Students can get this access through online and offline browsers and applications. With the help of android-based applications, users can easily access certain news or information. Search, navigation, and categorization menus can be arranged in the application (Yuwono et al., 2014). The advantage of using applications, especially those that are offline, will save user or student quota. The Android-based News Items text was compiled by researchers as an effort to increase English competence and participate in the socialization of Covid-19 prevention.

From several interesting topics to discuss and the stages of research methods mentioned in the method sub-chapter, there are interesting findings. From the stage of collecting data from interviews and FGDs, there were some significant inputs. The topic of the interviews and FGDs is that distance learning (online) has been going on long enough so that they are getting used to doing synchronous and asynchronous learning because the pandemic has not subsided and it has been a spike in covid-19 cases in mid-2021. This offline application is considered helpful as one of the media for teaching materials so that teachers and students have a variety of other materials. Also, News Item material was also found in the high school syllabus and is still relevant today. The news item material in the English subject was combined with the socialization of covid-19 to students. The trick is to sort the material that contains informative news about covid-19 from various trusted sources so that students can learn and understand more about covid-19 at the same time (Setiawan, 2020). It is good to use technology to socialize people about covid-19 (Latifah, Ayu., Waladiah, Seli., & Hidayatullah, 2020). With the initial process mentioned in the method sub-chapter, the researcher made a prototype of the Android application for teaching materials for News items that

was integrated with covid-19 prevention so that the application was truly effective and suitable for use as teaching materials. The application design and materials were prepared by the researcher and the research assistant team based on the results of the FGD and interviews. Here is the design/ appearance of the application.

Figure 2. Home Menu Display of News Items-Android Application.

In Figure 2, it can be seen that the research team is trying to socialize the dangers of Covid-19 and how to properly implement health protocols (Yulianti et al., 2021). It can be seen that the research team used the background of school students wearing masks to avoid contracting Covid-19 and looking at some pictures. There are several images inserted at the beginning of the application. The first is an image of a newspaper as a form of describing the topic being studied, namely News Item Text with the theme of Covid-19. Then the image of the dictionary and android phone as a representative of the Android-based English language. In addition, *Kemdikbud-Dikti* logo is also installed as the highest depatment that supports the education process in Indonesia. The last is the start symbol as a button to start this learning application.

Figure 3. Main Menu Display of News Items-Android Application.

In the third picture, there is a menu (navigation) that is able to direct students to the learning material. The first is the menu "*apa itu news item*?" which leads to the News Item theory. The display shown is the theory of news items, the purpose of news items, the characteristics of news items, the generic structure of news items, examples of news items and other structures. Displaying the main menu, there is also a background sound of nature that allows students to learn more relaxed. Users can also adjust the volume or mute the backsound. In the next navigation, "*contoh & latihan*" is the core of the material which is expected to be able to train students' English skills to achieve learning outcomes. The "*contoh & latihan*" menu consists of several examples of news item texts with the topic of Covid-19, practice questions (pronunciation, multiple choices, short & long answers), as well as instructions that allow students to work in groups despite remote conditions. The material is in accordance with the high school syllabus designed by the government because English education in senior high schools in Indonesia is based on the text genre. The genre texts referred to here are such as narrative, desc-

riptive, procedure, news items, recount, expository, and so on. The text-based English learning does not only observe the surface (language structure), but the context and integration of other learning can be widely applied in this genre-based learning. In the context of News Items, it is also arranged in one of the basic competencies of the curriculum or syllabus that students must learn. News items are a type of English text that contains news or daily events that have urgency, actual, and deserve to be made news. The communicative purpose of News Items text is to provide information to readers about a news item. There are three linguistic text structures of News Items, namely Newsworthy/Main Event, Background Event/Elaboration (background of events or events, who was involved, place of incident/5W+1H), and Sources, experts, comments, or opinions of experts, etc. The linguistic characteristics of the News Items text are that there are headlines in the form of brief information/titles, focus on events, use action verbs and material processes. In this case, the researcher focuses on News Items material which contains news about Covid-19 that is actual, educational, substantive, and informative to readers (students) as a form of learning that does not only focus on improving English language competence, but is integrated with socialization of Covid-19 prevention for students.

Figure 4. Some More Displays on the News Item-Android Application.

In the fourth picture, you can see several samples of menu pieces with theme colors that match the topic of news items in English learning that are integrated with Covid-19 socialization. The application is designed as efficiently as possible so that the memory used is not much for easy access. What's more, this application can be operated offline so it doesn't consume a lot of internet data. The application is checked first by language and IT experts before being tested on students. From the validation process, there were several corrections related to the design and some features that needed to be added, also in terms of language, some errors in writing (typo) were found. After revision and validation from IT and language experts, the application of this teaching material was tested on students and teachers with satisfactory results above 70%. Based on the results of the questionnaire, respondents also think that the application is easy to use. The materials and exercises already represent the learning objectives in the curriculum regarding news items. The Covid-19 socialization integrated in the learning application can be used as a reinforcement for students to carry out strict health protocols to face people behavior related to the spread of Covid-19's hoax (Juditha, 2020). So that students know what actions need to be taken in the realm of family, friendship, and social life to avoid Covid-19.

CONCLUSION

Understanding of the dangers of Covid-19 still needs to be improved because there are still many people who ignore the appeal from the government to follow health protocols. This is very worrying considering that the Covid-19 pandemic is still considered a world pandemic, which requires the creation of community synergy in dealing with the outbreak (Juditha, 2020). If not, the government's large budget in handling Covid-19 taken from various sectors could be in vain. More people are being infected and the economic recession is getting worse. This has an impact on various sectors including education.

The Covid-19 outbreak has forced educators in schools to conduct distance learning, either synchronously, asynchronously, or blended learning. Educators and students do not have to meet in the classroom as usual but use the LMS (Learning Management System) media. Video conferences are needed if theory learning is more critical and comprehensive. Educators can choose the platform according to school policy directions. So, educators and students only need a laptop/PC/mobile phone with an internet connection to conduct distance learning or online learning. Ready or not, educators must do this in order to comply with the physical and social distancing rules that have been set by the government so that the spread of Covid-19 can be controlled. However, the learning media facilities are only a bridge or virtual classroom. There are still many educators or teachers (especially those who are not young anymore) who cannot prepare their own learning materials because some of them are computer illiterate and some are slow in following technological developments where students now have a higher visual level. Only a handful of educators are able to compensate for this kind

of condition. With distance learning which is still relatively new to be implemented recently, the core and basic competencies that must be achieved by students seem to be very difficult to pursue. The reason is, not all teachers can provide maximum quality of learning. Moreover, with the effect of globalization because of technological developments, competition in the world of work and industry is considered to be more competitive for the younger generation of Indonesia in the future. In this case, English language competence is the main thing as one of their weapons to fight global competition. The students are expected to be able to speak English well, but the reality is different. Many studies state that Indonesian students are still below average in using English.

With the development of existing technology, the nation's millennial generation is expected to be able to become the golden generation of 2045 as designed by the government. The millennial generation has lived in the era of mobile phones that allow them to explore the world. With the average android mobile phone users increasing every year, these phones can be used as a tool to boost their competence in English and fulfil learning outcomes in accordance with the core and basic competencies listed in the school curriculum. Starting from these problems, the purpose of this research is to produce a product design in the form of media or teaching materials that can be used in distance learning as a form of improving English competence and socializing Covid-19. The method used is research and development (R&D) with several stages of research that results in the design of android-based news item teaching materials that can be used as additional media for teaching materials that are in accordance with current conditions. This application was tested with a percen-

tage rate above 70%. This Android-based News Item android application is one of the solutions for distance learning and Covid-19 prevention.

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