

## Ablo Application for Indonesian English as Foreign Language Learners

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**ABSTRACT:** *This research aims to describe the Ablo application which is a Social Network Site as the learning medium for Indonesian EFL learners. It used descriptive qualitative research to describe how the Ablo application and its features are to learn the four English skills, the feasibility of this application as a Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL), and the learners' interest in this application. This research used participatory observations on the features of the Ablo application and interviews with 30 users who had been using this application in Indonesia. The results of this research showed that Ablo as an application can be used to learn four language skills in English for EFL learners in Indonesia. As feasibility of MALL, it also fulfills the main characters such as portability, social interactivity, context sensitivity, connectivity, and individuality. While the interest of learning in Ablo is very positive.*

**KEYWORD:** Ablo application, EFL, mobile-assisted, learner's interest, online learning

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### INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic affects not only public health, but also the economy, education, and social life of the Indonesian people. Based on data from the National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB), the number of COVID-19 patients in Indonesia reached 6,575 per 19 April 2020. This pandemic had prompted several regional governments to implement the Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) policy which limits public activities, especially in education. (Smeru Research Institute, 2020). Facing the new situation, online learning becomes the alternative to the learning process that will be used as a learning medium and knowledge. *E-learning* is all learning activities that use the help of electronic technology. Through *e-learning*, understanding of a material does not depend on the instructor but can be obtained from electronic media. Electronic technologies that are widely used include the internet, intranet, video or audiotape, broadcast via satellite, interactive television (Rusman, 2012). It is all about learning activities that make use of electronic technology. Understanding of a material is not dependent on the instructor in e-learning, but rather on electronic media. The internet, intranet, video or audio cassette, satellite broadcasting, and interactive television are all examples of extensively utilized electronic technologies.

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Evidently, different from the traditional online learning elements, such as the Massive Open Online Courses and learning management systems (e.g., Moodle or Canvas), this ‘rush-to’ transfer has brought the new phenomenon called “emergency online learning”, which has created many confusions to instructors, students, and higher education administrators (Chung, Subramaniam, & Dass, 2020).

Relevant as above, the public record demonstrates that this online distribution system creates plenty of difficulties and issues. The phenomenon in which EFL learning, which requires extensive practice for application, encounters obstacles when the learning system is used (Ahmad, 2016). Online education, which involves the transition from physical to digital learning spaces, increases the risk of learners being exposed to cyber bullying, inappropriate information, frauds, grooming, and marketing. Everyone has fallen into a rabbit hole online, looking at more and more pages to answer questions and learn more about something. This can be one of the biggest distractions. A learner may keep several windows open so that he can check email and chat with friends while the class may be in session. It takes work and discipline to focus solely on schoolwork (ICON School, 2021). Crowded with too much information and entertainment, it often causes the learners to be hard focused. The learners frequently are distracted by advertisements, social media, news, and even different learning information.

While technology connects college students to friends, family, and other sources of entertainment, it can also serve as a distraction from coursework completion. As a result, learners must devise strategies for avoiding distractions and remaining focused. Fortunately, certain apps available for mobile devices and computers can assist the learners in focused, interested, entertained, and staying organized.

In this case, the writer proposes an alternative solution as the means of learning media using the Ablo application to EFL learners keep focused on their learning. Ablo application is a mobile application device that can be used in learning media because, in the use of the application, learners can visit randomly from various countries and can communicate with others using the features provided by Ablo mobile as for the features provided as a student learning space. There are chat, audio, and even video calls with various countries with English speakers. In addition, the application prepares a translation to make it easier to communicate using the English language properly.

Based on the background above, the writer formulates the problem of this research as follows: (1) How’s the Ablo application as a medium for learning EFL? (2) How’s the feasibility of the Ablo application as the MALL (Mobile-Assisted Language Learning)? (3) How’s the learning interest of the Ablo application for EFL learners? MALL deals with the use of cellular technology in language learning (Miangah & Nezarat, 2012). Learner do not always have to learn the English language in the classroom. They may have the opportunity to learn it using a mobile device whenever and

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wherever they are. The areas of mobile-based language learning are diverse among which the most common are vocabulary, listening, grammar, phonetics, reading comprehension, etc.

There are six ways mobile learning can be employed to enhance the learning experience: Mobile learning that focuses on knowing the capabilities of the technology, as opposed to other subject matter. This allows pupils to utilize technology for other purposes. Mini e-learning entails the use of mobile, wireless, and portable technologies for the re-implementation of "regular" e-learning solutions and methods. For example, utilizing VLE technology and mobile add-ons/apps. A blend of mobile and classroom learning using the same technology that facilitate collaborative learning in the classroom. Informal, personalized, situational mobile learning — This is when the student learns by mobile technology frequently "on the job." Mobile training or just-in-time solutions five. This is when people use mobile technology to learn a new skill or attribute while applying what they have learned. This can occur through movies, etc., or by live feedback from a teacher, biometric data, or other feedback systems designed to improve learning. Remote (rural) developmental mobile learning - These technologies are utilized to address environmental and infrastructure concerns and to promote education in areas where conventional electronic learning tools are ineffective. Typically, these are pre-installed on the device as an application or other software, which is handy in distant places with no cell connection (Wilkinson, 2022). Mobile-assisted language learning is the newest method of language learning, which involves the use of online websites or mobile applications to facilitate English education (Lu, 2022). Unlike CALL, MALL is significantly less expensive and more accessible, requiring only the purchase of a mobile phone with internet connectivity to provide users with access to a wealth of learning resources. Based on the above theories, *the writer* concludes that mobile learning is a teaching material used by technology to obtain information that can be accessed at any time and various visuals that attract interest.

EFL, English as studies by people who live in places where English is not the first language. The goal of EFL in the educational system is to pass English entrance exams to enter good high school and universities (Gebhard, 2006). For people who don't speak English as their first language, EFL stands for English as a Foreign Language. Getting into good high schools and universities requires passing English entrance exams, which EFL helps students prepare for. English as a Foreign Language (EFL) tests help students prepare for university entrance exams. For people who don't speak English as their first language, EFL helps them learn how to get into good schools and universities. English as a foreign language (EFL) is a term that refers to students who study general English in a school or university located in the target language country. Students studying English in their home country's schools and institutions are considered temporary residents in countries where English is the target language.

It is defined that EFL refers to those who learn English in non-English speaking countries (e.g.,

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Japanese people who learn English in their country are EFL learners) (Iwai, 2011). It refers to those who learn English in countries where English is not the native language. It also leads to those who learn English in countries where English is not the native language. Language educators have long used the concepts of four basic language skills: Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing. These four language skills are sometimes called the "macro-skills" (Aydogan, 2014). Two criteria connect the four fundamental skills: the mode of communication (oral or written) and the direction of communication (receiving or providing the message). In the oral modality, listening comprehension is the receptive skill. When we say we're listening, what we're really saying is that we're listening and comprehending what we're hearing. Speaking is the oral mode's productive skill. As with the other abilities, it is more sophisticated than it appears and entails more than simply speaking words. Speaking is frequently associated with listening.

Reading is the ability to receive information in a written format. It can develop independently of listening and speaking abilities, but frequently does so in conjunction with them, particularly in nations with a strong literary past. Reading can aid in the development of vocabulary, which is necessary for later levels of listening comprehension. In the written form, writing is the productive talent. It, too, is more involved than it appears at first glance, and frequently appears to be the most difficult of the talents, even for native speakers of the language, because it entails not only the graphic depiction of speech, but also the formulation and presentation of organized thinking.

Listening, speaking, reading, and writing are the four fundamental skills required for language learning. These four possibilities enable an individual to meaningfully consume, construct, and communicate in a social context. Competencies for Productivity (Active Skills). Writing, Speaking, and Receptive Skills (Passive Skills).

Ablo application is a social networking service for instant communications owned by Massive Media. Massive media is a Belgium-based company founded in 2011 acquired by *Meetic* (Wauters, 2012). Ablo enables users to connect and make friends with people from anywhere in the world by having live on-to-one text and video conversations, using an automated translation feature. The Ablo app launched in January 2019 simultaneously on *android*, IOS and web. It is available in more than 180 markets. It is especially popular with people aged 18-26 years old. In December 2019, it announced 6.5 million downloads globally and was selected as the best app of 2019 by CNET (Wikipedia, 2022). In other hand Ablo application main feature is the ability to connect live with another learner from anywhere in the world using automatically translated text and subtitled video calling.

Ablo application contains direct communication forum tools based on various regions using international language, namely English, in the chat feature a translation is provided to make it easier to understand English when there are some vocabulary words that are not understood so that the chat we do can communicate well. The direct communication forum in this application becomes a place to improve our ability to speak English to be more confident. A few studies might

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had been conducted for Ablo as the medium for educational purposes. To fill up the insufficiency of its theoretical framework, the writer provides the supported theory from *social network sites (SNS)* since it is similar to both. Social Network Sites (SNS), such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and MySpace, have attracted millions of users, many of whom have integrated these sites into their daily practices, and allowed users to connect based on shared interests, political views, or activities (Clarkson, 2013). Users of social networking sites (SNS) such as those operated by the likes of Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and MySpace number in the millions. These websites allow users to connect with one another based on common interests, political beliefs, or activities. A large number of people have incorporated these websites into their daily lives.

The term *interest* can describe two distinct (though often co-occurring) experiences: an individual's momentary experience of being captivated by an object as well as more lasting feelings that the object is enjoyable and worth further exploration. Interest is, therefore, both a psychological *state* characterized by increased attention, effort, and affect, experienced in a particular moment (*situational interest*), as well as an enduring *predisposition* to reengage with a particular object or topic over time (*individual interest*) (Hidi & Renniger, 2006). Some education experts believe that the most effective way to generate interest in a new subject is to use the interests of students who have been there, also teachers also seek to establish new interests on students (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To pique students' interest in a new subject, some education experts believe that it's best to exploit the interests of students who have already taken the course; teachers also work to cultivate new interests on the part of their pupils.

As for some essential requirements for the emergence of interest include: 1) The lessons will be of interest to students have to there is a connection between the lessons to real life. 2) Lessons are interesting to consider the students' personal interests. 3) The lesson will be more interesting for students if they are given the opportunity to be involved. Interest in students will increase if he can see and experience that with the help of learned that he can achieve certain goals. 4) The lessons stimulate the interest and attention of students should provide an opportunity for participation and student involvement (Dantes, 2012).

The previous study was conducted by Irza Yuzulia (2021) in *The Challenges of Online Learning During Pandemic: Students Voice*. This latest study concluded that online learning is proving helpful in safeguarding students' health, but it is not as effective as conventional learning in the practice. Teachers' and students' interaction and comfort during online classes determine the success or failure in the online mode of education. Teachers' creativity in designing interesting and engaging techniques in teaching is also powerful to make the students interested in online learning. In addition, the teachers should be able to create a learning atmosphere that is not boring and effective in terms of the knowledge transfer method used.

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Although online learning is beneficial to students' health, it is not as successful as traditional learning in practice. The success or failure of online education is determined by the interaction and comfort of teachers and students during online classes. The teacher's inventiveness in devising unique and engaging teaching strategies is also effective in piquing students' interest in online learning. Furthermore, teachers should be able to establish a learning environment that is both engaging and successful in terms of knowledge transmission. While this study tried on to explore the challenges of online learning in the pandemic, the present study proposes an alternative solution for effective and interesting learning based on mobile applications to learn English online.

The next study was the same social networking-based application and had been become the most popular social networking application in the world (Ang, 2021). It titles "The Use of Facebook for Educational Purposes in EFL Classrooms" (Espinosa, 2015). The purpose of this study was to examine the feasibility of combining traditional instruction with online instruction via the social networking application, Facebook, in EFL classrooms in order to motivate students and help them improve their English language learning. Based on this research, it was possible to conclude that Facebook could assist teachers in successfully integrating online instruction and traditional face-to-face instruction. Indeed, with proper planning, Facebook can even facilitate the establishment of an online community of English language learners where students can practice their language skills via videoconferences and chats with native English speakers. Regardless the similarity, Facebook and Ablo can be differed by features and general concept. Facebook usually used to connect with people we mostly know in the real world (offline), while Ablo brings us to meet new people all over the world. Related to the study, it focused on the implementation in the classroom, while the present study will focus on the online learning.

## **METHOD**

Since the research was categorized as informal, personalized, situational mobile learning (Wilkinson, 2022), it was conducted inside the Ablo application. The sample was taken using the purposive sampling for the users of Ablo application in Indonesia (users in the application). This research was conducted in Ablo Application. Not all from total 2 million users from Indonesia are learning English, so the writer selected the subject of the research which had been taken by purposive sampling and reach 30 Ablo users who learning English. This study was descriptive qualitative research aiming at describing the medium, feasibility, and interest of the Ablo application for EFL learners. The descriptive qualitative study design used in this present research was intended to seek a deep understanding of one group or single individuals to obtain data of certain phenomena (Creswell, 2004).

In this case, the writer used the participatory observation and became the participant (also use Ablo) and made the list form of unstructured observations in providing material instructions on how the Ablo application runs and its feasibility for EFL. The writer provided semi-structured interviews that required the mixed between open-ended questions and closed-ended questions to

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 users of the Ablo application to get precise answers and get broader answers altogether. The writer chatted the Ablo users and deliver the prepared questions.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study describe the features in Ablo, or it is as whole can be used to learn four language skills, especially in English. On listening skills, it shows to its users that Ablo enables them to accomplish a variety of listening learning goals as the theory of Wolvin and Cloaky which is its process consists of three steps: receiving, attending, and understanding in sequence. The step of understanding may be followed by the steps of responding and remembering, as listeners may respond immediately or remember the message to respond later. (Wolvin & Cloaky, 1985). It also shows that Ablo makes users to focus intently on the messages being conveyed, avoiding distractions and preconceived notions; to acquire a thorough and accurate understanding of the speaker's perspective and ideas; to evaluate what is said critically; to pay attention to the non-verbal signals that accompany what is said in order to improve comprehension; to demonstrate concern. Observations showed that all of this came from meeting English-speaking users, watching videos and participating in various live sessions of other users on Ablo's features such as Video chat, Live, Discover, and Profile. Of the 30 users interviewed, 28 users admitted that they have learned listening skills and are experiencing gradual development. While the remaining 2 admitted that they were not too sure to experience it.

Table 1. Ablo Feasibility

<b>Connection between the lesson to real life</b>	It was found that learning English at Ablo is related to real life because the writer meets native people who speak English.
<b>Useral Interest</b>	It was found that Ablo can be a learning medium that attracts Useral interest.
<b>Involvement</b>	It was found that Ablo is an application that requires involvement from its users. Users inevitably have to play a role so that learning becomes fun and active.

Following the speaking skill learning objectives, Ablo encourages its users to assist in bringing grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation knowledge to the forefront of mind, or from slow memory to quick memory; to acquire new vocabulary through phrases; to concentrate on pronunciation; and to ascertain how English flows or is typically spoken. It also strengthens confidence in speaking. It was as equal as Harmer saying that speaking skill is the ability of people in talking English fluently and good pronunciation about the information, knowledge, or features

Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development -UK of English and deliver by mouth. Speaking is a method of conveying ideas between people, including knowledge, information, ideas, opinions, and feelings, or it can be referred to as communication. It is accomplished through the use of the mouth, whether monologue, dialogue, or others (Harmer, 2007). Similar to listening skills, the results of observations reveal lessons and practices for speaking skills come from meeting users who speak English and participating in various live sessions of other users on Ablo's features such as Video chat, Live, and Discover. While the interview results said that all 30 users shared their experiences stating that they experienced the things mentioned and felt improved.

Table 2. The uses of Ablo

<b>Spontaneous</b>	: It is found that Ablo can occur at any time without prior preparation.
<b>Portable</b>	: It is found that Ablo can begin in one location and end in another
<b>Situated in real-world context</b>	: It is found in Ablo that learners can take mobile devices into authentic learning settings or 'context-aware' environments.
<b>Informal</b>	: It is found that Ablo may take place outside of the classroom.
<b>Bite-sized</b>	: It is found that in Ablo, the learners study or practice manageable information chunks at their own pace and location. Regarding the time and length of the study process, it focuses on shorter but more direct learning periods.
<b>Lightweight</b>	: It is found that in Ablo, all learning resources can be selected, inserted, and modified by the learner.

Likewise, in reading skills, reading skills involve identifying word meaning, drawing inferences, identifying writer's technique, recognizing mood of passage, finding answers to questions (Davies, 1968). A reading ability is a cognitive ability that a person possesses that enables him or her to interact with written text. Certain skills appear to be more inclusive than others in the following taxonomies. The ability to read is a cognitive ability that enables an individual to interact with written text. Reading skills entail determining the meaning of words, making inferences, and determining the author's technique. Certain skills, such as reading comprehension, vocabulary, and punctuation, appear to be more inclusive than others.

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In line with the theory, Ablo forces users to how well one can decipher what other people are saying or how well one can draw conclusions or identify emotions when conversing with them. The results of the observations showed that reading skills lessons and practices are obtained by reading chats by meeting English-speaking users, reading people's responses in the comments column in the live session and translating everything so that they can be understood and responded to. This was done in the Ablo features as follows Text Chat, Messages, Live, Discover, and Profile. While the interview results described that all users without exception admitted experiencing the development in reading skills.

Since it is related to reading skills, the same thing happens to the writing skills, Ablo encourages users to form their ideas and opinions into structured sentences so that the chat partner understands what he is trying to communicate. It is supported by Nunan who says writing is an extremely complex cognitive activity in which the writer is required to demonstrate control of variables simultaneously. At the sentence level, these include control of contents, format, sentence structure, vocabulary, spelling and letter formation. Beyond the sentence, the writer must be able to structure and integrate information into cohesive and coherent paragraph and text (Nunan, 1991). The results of the observations showed that the lessons and practice of writing skills gained by users often have to express their thoughts in writing in chats by meeting English-speaking users and commenting and responding to other users in live sessions. This can be done on the Ablo features as follows Text Chat, Messages, Live, Discover, and Profile. While the results of the interview said 29 users felt they had progressed in their writing skills and 1 user felt there was no progress.

As the feasibility of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL), the results of the observations described that Ablo fulfills several main characters such as portability, context sensitivity, social interactivity, connectivity, and individuality. Ablo can be accessed on devices such as smartphones that are easy to carry to various places due to its small size and weight. Information on lessons learned can be applied to current conditions and times. Exchanging and collaborating information between users is also very possible. It can also be connected to other smartphone devices and can even use a shared network to study together on the Live and Discover features. The activities platform can also be customized for individual learners.

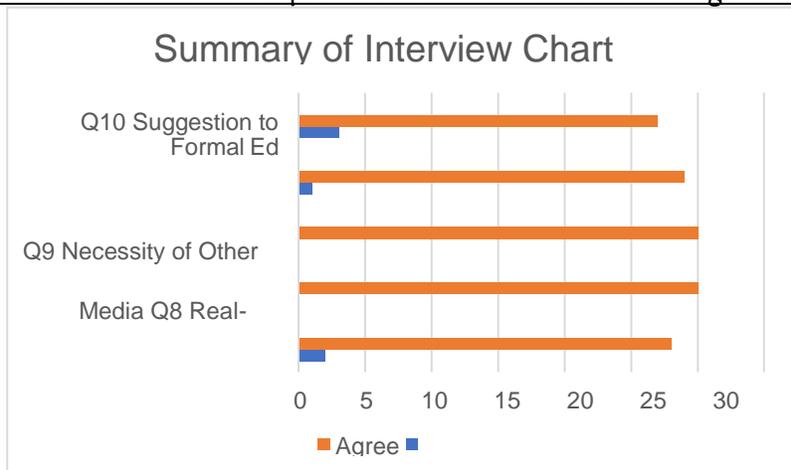


Figure 1. Responses of Ablo as MALL

It is appropriate to Tamimuddin theory of MALL which says MALL devices are the ability to connect to other equipment (especially computers), the ability to present learning information and the ability to realize bilateral communication between teachers and learners. MALL is unique learning because learners can access learning materials, directions and applications related to learning, anytime and anywhere. This will increase attention to learning material, make learning pervasive, and can encourage learners' motivation for lifelong learning (Tamimuddin, 2007). Connectivity, presentation of learning information, and bilateral communication between teachers and students are all capabilities of MALL devices. MALL is different from other forms of education because it allows students to have access to learning resources, directions, and applications at any time and from any location. This will help students pay more attention to schoolwork, make learning more pervasive, and boost their desire to continue learning throughout their lives.

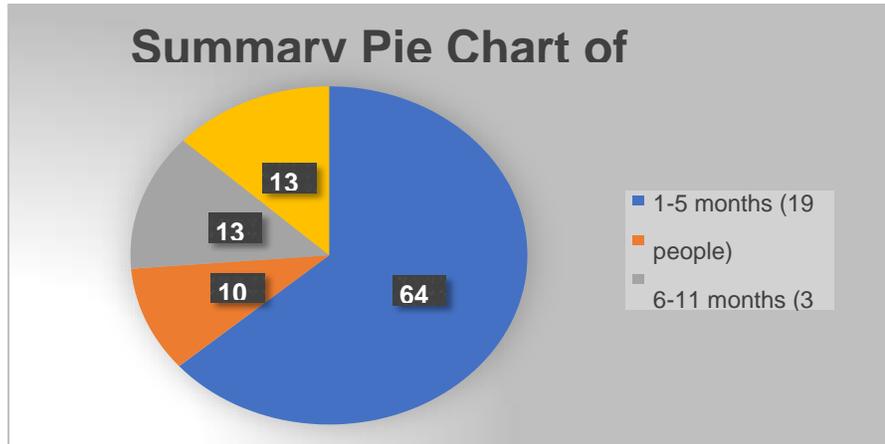


Figure 2. Respondents of interview

From the interviews, 29 users feel that learning English at Ablo can be adjusted to their needs gradually until they reach their learning goals, as is MALL's character in 'individuality', while 1 user thinks he was not too sure about this. Then all users (30 users) felt they can access Ablo anytime and anywhere as long as they are connected to the internet network and bring their smartphones as depicted in the 'portability' character. They also stated that what they learned in Ablo could be applied to real life according to the current conditions and times.

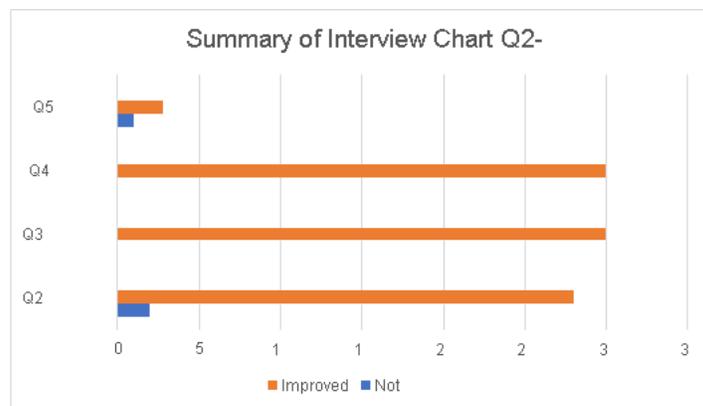


Figure 3. Results of interview

As for some essential requirements for the emergence of interest include: 1) The lessons will be of interest to students have to there is a connection between the lessons to real life. 2) Lessons are interesting to consider the students' personal interests. 3) The lesson will be more interesting for students if they are given the opportunity to be involved. Interest in students will increase if he can

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see and experience that with the help of learned that he can achieve certain goals. 4) The lessons stimulate the interest and attention of students should provide an opportunity for participation and student involvement (Dantes, 2012).

Speaking of learning interest of Ablo, the results of observation showed that learning interest indicators such as connection between the lesson to real life, personal interest and involvement was included in Ablo and it made the writer learning English away more fun. Meanwhile, the results of the interview describe that all users experience learning English as fun, interactive, impressive, and memorable. This is in accordance with the indications of interest which are defined as follows: both a momentary (situational) increase in attention, effort, and emotion, as well as a long-term (persistent) propensity returns to a particular object or topic over time (individual interest). 27 users even recommend Ablo in formal education so that it can be used as a medium/application in English subjects.

The result of this research also showed the same positive learning development with the previous research that is same social networking-based application which titles 'The Use of Facebook for Educational Purposes in EFL Classrooms' (Espinosa, 2015). The goal of this research project was to determine whether or not it would be possible to supplement English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom instruction with online instruction using the social networking application Facebook. This study provided sufficient evidence to suggest that Facebook could help educators bridge the gap between online and in-person learning. In fact, with some careful preparation, Facebook can serve as the backbone of an online community for ESL students to meet and interact with one another and with native English speakers in order to improve their communication skills.

Despite their similarities, Facebook and Ablo have distinct features and ideas. While Facebook is great for keeping up with friends and family back home, Ablo is a great way to meet people from all over the world. While that study concentrated on how the strategy would work in a traditional classroom setting, the current investigation will examine how it can be used most effectively in an online environment.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the result of the research, the writer can conclude that Ablo's features can be used to learn four language skills which are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. They are acquired by meeting English-speaking users, interacting with them, watching videos and participating in various live sessions. Its users (EFL learners) who had been using it for months felt progress and development. As the feasibility of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL), Ablo fulfills a number of essential characteristics, including portability, context sensitivity, social interactivity, connectivity, and individuality. Ablo also can be accessed on portable devices such as smartphones that are easy to transport to various locations. The inclusion of Ablo's learning interest indicators, such as relevance to the real world, personal interest, and involvement, made learning English much more enjoyable. Even 27 users recommended Ablo for use in formal education as a medium or application for English subjects.

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