

## Students' Perceptions of Using WhatsApp to Foster Autonomous Listening Skills in English Language Learning

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### ABSTRACT

The optimization of WhatsApp as an alternative medium aimed to support learner autonomy and address time constraints in conventional learning, particularly in listening classes. Limited face-to-face meetings reduced students' opportunities to practice their listening skills. Therefore, WhatsApp was utilized to foster autonomous learning, enabling students to practice listening beyond the classroom. This study aimed to explore the use of WhatsApp as a teaching medium to promote learner autonomy and to investigate students' perceptions of conducting autonomous listening activities. A qualitative research design was employed, involving 10 students from the Basic Training Class at Happy English Course selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through observations and semi-structured interviews, then analyzed using data reduction, data display, and conclusion. The findings revealed that students exercised two forms of autonomy control: cognitive process control and learning management control. Students expressed positive perceptions of using WhatsApp for autonomous listening, including ease of access to materials and tasks, increased opportunities for practice, and enhanced motivation through interactive learning. In conclusion, WhatsApp serves as an effective tool to promote learner autonomy and improve students' listening proficiency.

**Keywords:** autonomous learning, cognitive control, listening skill, Mobile-assisted language learning, WhatsApp integration

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## INTRODUCTION

Listening is a fundamental language skill which should be given a major priority among four language skills. As a receptive skill that develops early in human life, listening forms the foundation for language acquisition and communication. It facilitates comprehension, enhances vocabulary, and supports the development of other language skills (Suri & Zulkarnain, 2022). In the context of English language learning, listening is essential for understanding spoken input, following instructions, and engaging meaningfully in learning activities. Moreover, it contributes to students' academic success by promoting effective learning, increasing engagement, and improving overall performance (Nabiyev & Idiyev, 2022). Therefore, Given its central role, developing autonomous listening skills is crucial for learners, particularly in technology-supported learning environments.

Listening vigorously enables learners to comprehend and retain information more effectively, participate actively in class discussions, enhance their language proficiency, and ultimately achieve deeper understanding. Providing ample listening comprehension practices further supports students in grasping classroom teachers with greater ease and confidence (Mahmud et al., 2022). The significance of listening has been long recognized within the history of EFL teaching (Alam, 2009). As a foreign language, it is not easy for Indonesian students to master this skill. In fact, teaching listening skills has not yet received

proper attention within the ELT process (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011). There is still a lack of attempt to explore the usage of social media to improve listening skills. Instead of doing listening activity in the classroom, the students should also practice their listening skills out of the classroom.

Meanwhile, learning listening skills in the classroom does not really foster learners' competence. As in traditional teaching, listening skills are often neglected (Ismail & Aziz, 2020). Moreover, based on pre-observation, the students of Happy English Course 2 had limited time to train their listening skills. They only got 2 meetings a month. In this case, the students had difficulty in improving their listening skills. Therefore, the demand of autonomous learning by learning outside the classroom was needed to give them more opportunity to practice their listening skill. The teachers should have the initiative to create autonomous learning to increase students' ability by managing their time to study out of the class by themselves. Autonomous learning is emphasized as a learning process path that is traversed by the learners, and it is not a product that can be produced, especially in a very short period of time (Thanasoulas, 2000). Since, language learning takes a long process and the target language must be practiced regularly, it is essential if students seek opportunities to learn English not only in the classroom, but also out of the classroom. The students were expected to create their learning objectives, strategies, and activities (Santihastuti & Oktavia, 2023). This kind of

learning requires students to make their own autonomous learning and take control of their responsibility to learn.

Furthermore, the students have to follow certain paths to attain their autonomous learning effectively. It means that there must be teachers on whom it is incumbent to guide them. In other words, autonomous learning does not mean “teacher-less in learning” (Thanasoulas, 2000). Teachers play a vital role in accelerating learners into self-access and in offering them a regular assist to stay afloat. Besides, learner autonomy can be fostered in learning language based on several things: assisting the students in the formation of learning association where they develop to be cohesive, socially unified, mutually encouraging groups questing self-awareness and self-improvements and serving occasion for them to rove the infinite possibilities proposed by online services and turning in to the class their own topics for discussions, and their own perception on those topics (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). It can be concluded that reaching learning objectives cannot be achieved by students working alone. They require the willingness of cooperation from others who directly or indirectly establish their educational agenda, particularly that of their teachers. Besides, learner autonomy is the process of embroiling learners in determining and evaluating what they learn (Borg & Alshumaimeri, 2019). In other words, learner autonomy is teachers’ ways which can directly involve learners in teaching

and learning and drive them conscious of everything in the classroom related to all processes and autonomous learning activities that learners undertake have to be conducted with full of responsibility.

In addition, there are three stages of controlling learner autonomy. First, learning management control is where learners apply several strategies such as metacognitive, cognitive, socio-affective to aid their learning activities. Second, cognitive process control which is influenced by three other factors, including reflection, attention, and metacognitive knowledge. This stage means that learners are able to manage their psychology in the learning process. Another stage is learning context control means learners have chances to decide learning goals and utilize the learning to the language of communication and interaction (Benson, 2013). Based on the stages of controlling learner autonomy above, it is extremely possible for students to have their own independent learning activities to solve constraint time in the classroom and improve their language proficiency. However, learner autonomy is an unfamiliar concept of teaching and learning system for teachers and students in Indonesia (Lengkanawati, 2017). Thus, implementing instructional media based on technology is needed to foster learner autonomy and renew the conventional teaching and learning.

Nowadays, the rapid development of technology has revolutionized education. The presence of technologies had a

significant effect on human life and affected the educational world. The role of new technologies in developing the learning and teaching process cannot be ignored. The utilization of internet and multimedia technology for online learning can replace the conservative method in teaching and be an alternative for the learning in traditional classrooms (Zhang et al., 2004). Today, some schools and institutes use various technologies to apply virtual and distance education. The integration of technology in language teaching, especially English, gave a positive impact on language experience for the learners. Learning and teaching by implementing technology offers flexibility since it can be done anywhere and it allows learning activity to be more student-centered rather than teacher-centered in learning. Besides, the majority of EFL students increased their English comprehension by discussing through WhatsApp group over time (Mujayanah et al., 2023). Therefore, WhatsApp yields as a new pedagogical novelty.

WhatsApp has become one of the most popular instant messaging applications on mobile devices. The use of WhatsApp gained popularity in 2016 and rapidly increased in 2021 (Syairofi et al., 2023). WhatsApp has been utilized widely as a learning tool. It gives opportunities to both teachers and learners for inventive instruction. WhatsApp assists teachers and learners in conducting learning activities outside the scope of class due to its flexibility (Baron, 2021). Additionally, WhatsApp positively influences learners'

capability to participate and connect with colleagues online at any time (Rambe & Bere, 2013). In other words, WhatsApp enables learners to discuss lessons extensively and access material handily, as well as the teacher can carry out learning outside class hours with the intention of motivating learners to have unbounded learning. Besides, WhatsApp contributed to students' autonomous motivation in learning (Alamer & Al Khateeb, 2023). Thus, integrating WhatsApp in language teaching leads students to practice their language beyond the classroom.

Furthermore, the implementation of WhatsApp in language learning appeals to students' perceptions on how they felt during learning through WhatsApp. Students' perceptions encompass a wide range of issues which can affect students' learning motivation, their expectations of language learning, their insight about easiness and difficulty in language learning, as well as learning strategies they prefer. Perception refers to the process of recognition (being aware of), organization (gathering and storing), and interpretation (binding to knowledge) of sensory information (Ward et al., 2010). Besides, Perception becomes one of the most fundamental things for effective teaching and learning (Jacobs et al., 2016). By knowing students' perception, the teacher could use a suitable strategy in teaching. WhatsApp is useful media for teaching English and it could suit students' preferences in learning such as group discussion or learning individually.

Moreover, students revealed their positive perceptions on using WhatsApp such as encouraging students to be collaborative and even more independent and increasing their interest in learning speaking English (Maulina et al., 2023). In contrast, students' perspective of the utilization of WhatsApp groups in enhancing speaking skill needs more interesting learning activity. They faced difficulty in understanding the material and felt bored (Tirtanawati & Salsabila, 2021). Thus, further study which examined students' perception on WhatsApp in English learning was necessary to be conducted to fill the gap of previous studies and find out the benefit of WhatsApp for different English skills.

Moreover, as far as the development of four English skills is concerned, there is undoubtedly ample opportunity for practicing them with the assistance of technological advancements. WhatsApp offers great chances for both teachers and learners to experience EFL teaching and learning beyond the traditional. The utilization of WhatsApp has attracted the attention of some researchers. WhatsApp has been utilized as a medium to teach and learn English and to promote better language skills. WhatsApp was effective to increase students' performance in English such as: learning motivation, self-confidence, and enriching vocabulary (Bahtiar, 2021). Through taking part in group discussions, and doing reading comprehension exercises with a focus on reading texts or materials, the students improved their reading comprehension

skills over time when using WhatsApp (Mujayanah et al., 2023). The use of WhatsApp can help to improve students' writing skill (Savitri, 2022). Besides, WhatsApp affected the development of students' speaking skill (Oksuz-Zerey, 2021). In addition, The utilization of WhatsApp in the classroom improved students' listening skills (Hoe et al., 2021). The results of the previous studies revealed that WhatsApp could be implemented as one of the beneficial media to assist learners in learning English.

Based on the description above, most of the previous empirical studies commonly examined WhatsApp as teaching and learning media on normal learning time in the classroom. However, WhatsApp is not only able to be used for teaching and learning in classroom time, but it is suitable to provide students with autonomous learning, so they have a great chance to practice their English with guidance from the teachers and without limited time and place. Thus, there are still gaps to conduct a study related to optimize WhatsApp as teaching and learning media. This study aims to investigate how the optimization of WhatsApp to support students' autonomous listening skill. Therefore, this study hopefully enlarges the literature of the study of media to create autonomous learning for students and contributes ideas on how to overcome the constraints on teaching time.

Besides, this study investigates the teacher's way to facilitate students' autonomous learning and explores



students' perception on optimizing WhatsApp to support their autonomous learning including the easiness of using WhatsApp, the effectiveness of WhatsApp, and attitudes of using WhatsApp. In this case, the students selected in this study are those taking Basic Training Class in Happy English Course 2. Some underlying reasons for choosing them as the participant of this study are their limited time to practice their listening skill in the classroom, their different listening ability, and their enthusiastic learning to improve their English proficiency.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

This study employed a qualitative descriptive case study approach to gain a deeper understanding of students' experiences in using WhatsApp to support autonomous learning and to examine its contribution to improving their listening skills. According to Creswell & Poth (2016), qualitative research seeks to understand specific events by investigating them in natural settings, while descriptive methods aim to portray the phenomenon as it occurs. Through this approach, the researchers aimed to interpret the learning process and obtain accurate insights into the students' autonomous listening practices.

### **Participants**

The study was conducted at Happy English Course 2, a language institution that offers structured English programs at three levels—beginner, intermediate, and

advanced—each delivered over a three-month period. The participants of this study were students enrolled in the Basic Training Class at the beginner level, which consisted of 25 learners. These students were selected as the research population due to their limited exposure to listening instruction in the classroom, receiving only three formal listening sessions during the entire course duration. All participants had previously engaged in listening activities through the use of the WhatsApp application as part of their Integrated Skills class in the basic training program. From this population, 10 students were chosen using a purposive sampling technique to serve as the research sample, representing learners with relevant learning experiences and accessibility for observation outside the classroom.

### **Instruments**

To collect the data, the researcher used field notes to investigate students' activities during the autonomous learning. The field notes consist of classification of the students' independent activities such as planning, monitoring, evaluating, and problem-solving, then the researcher could correlate them into the stage of controlling students' autonomy specifically in cognitive processes control and learning management control, which was adopted from (Benson, 2013). Besides, the researcher used interview sheet to get the data of students' perceptions. A semi-structured interview was used. A semi-structured interview guideline had six numbers of

questions involving three main indicators: the easiness of WhatsApp, the effectiveness of WhatsApp, and students' attitudes of using WhatsApp which had been validated by lecturer.

### **Data Collection Technique**

The researcher used several procedures to collect the data. The first procedure conducted in this study was observation. It was carried out over eight sessions. The initial observation took place in the classroom, focusing on how the teacher facilitated listening instruction. Subsequent observations were conducted both in the class's WhatsApp group and in the students' dormitories to explore their autonomous learning behaviors outside formal instruction. During these observations, the researcher documented the sequence of students' activities, which were then categorized into stages of autonomous learning, particularly those related to planning and practicing listening skills. The second is the interview procedure. The interview was conducted after the students did the autonomous learning on weekends for six weeks. The interview was carried out by inviting one student first, then continued with other students and using English. Next, the researcher gave the interview questions that are mentioned in semi-structured interview guidelines, then the researcher recorded and took note-taking of the ideas revealed by the interviewees.

### **Data Analysis Technique**

The researcher used three data analysis techniques: data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusion/verification which was adopted from (Miles et al., 1992). In data reduction, The researcher also re-read the field note of the observation and then the researcher classified students' activities into planning, monitoring, evaluating, and problem-solving, then the researcher correlated them into the stage of controlling students' autonomy specifically in cognitive processes control and learning management control and reduced the unnecessary data. Besides, the researcher also re-read and re-listened to the recorded interview. Then, the researcher highlighted the essential points of students' answers related to three main indicators: the easiness of WhatsApp, the effectiveness of WhatsApp, and students' attitudes of using WhatsApp and reduced unnecessary ones. After getting essential data, the researcher made a data display. In this study, the data was presented in the form of brief descriptions to make it easy to understand the phenomena that occurred. Finally, the researcher drew a conclusion. The researcher interpreted both data by connecting theoretical information.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This section presents the result of the field notes which focused on how the optimization of WhatsApp to support students' autonomous listening skills conducted and the interview discovered

students' experiences in learning. The result demonstrated that the teacher had an important role to promote students' autonomous learning and the students had positive perceptions on optimizing WhatsApp to support their autonomy. Further finding was described as follow:

### **The optimization of WhatsApp to support students' autonomous listening skills**

This section focused on how the teacher facilitated the students to optimize WhatsApp to support their autonomous listening skills. The activity in the first meeting, the teacher was explaining the importance of practicing listening skills regularly. Then, the teacher told us that the teaching and learning activities of listening skills would have been carried out by using WhatsApp. After that the teacher introduced listening materials. In this case, the teacher would have used the WhatsApp group as a media for students' learning activities in listening skills.

Based on the field notes of the second to the eighth meeting, the teaching and learning activities used WhatsApp to discuss, share listening tasks, and practice listening skills. It was the core activity of students' autonomous learning. The teacher emphasized the learning context control at the stage of students' autonomy when the teacher utilized a WhatsApp group to promote students' autonomy in listening skills by preparing the learning objectives, materials, and task. Besides, the teacher shared three listening tasks on Fridays, where students had to submit their

tasks on Mondays to get feedback from the teacher before they get three new listening tasks. Although most of them had been prepared by the teacher, he still invited students to be active by giving them freedom to explore their choice. For example, they could choose any topic they like, find information from any source, discuss with their friends, and develop their idea to answer the question. Moreover, despite sharing the listening tasks, the teacher always kept monitoring the students' work by allowing them to ask if they had difficulty, remind them of the deadlines, and motivate the students to practice their listening skill.

Moreover, the researcher classified students' activities based on the theory from (Benson, 2013) into planning, monitoring, evaluating, and problem-solving. In addition, the researcher correlated them into the stages of controlling learners' autonomy, specifically in cognitive processes control and learning management control (Benson, 2013). The cognitive process control happened when students controlled their psychology in the learning process. Meanwhile, the learning management control happened when students could apply some strategies to assist their learning process.

### **Planning**

Before doing the task, where the learners should submit the task, they could choose the topics based on the familiar topic and easy vocabulary to understand. If they got unfamiliar topics or difficult



vocabulary to understand, they would search supporting information related to the listening topics and use a dictionary to know the meaning of vocabulary then they could choose the topics and do the task. This strategy helped students to understand more about the listening topics and obtain new vocabulary. Besides, in planning, the researcher found students' autonomy in cognitive control, especially the attention factor in the language component. The students collected a lot of vocabulary to understand more about listening topics.

### *Monitoring*

Before doing the task, learners spent the time practicing first. They have their own ways. Most of the first way was listening to the topic repeatedly by paying attention to the topic. Besides, the strategy often applied was taking notes. They wrote the main points of the topic in order if they forgot, they were able to improve what was related to the topic. Finally, after getting the points of the topic, students did the task. They answer the questions given by the teacher related to the listening topic they choose. In monitoring, the researcher found students' autonomy in learning management control, especially the cognitive strategy of using the helping tool in listening. Students applied cognitive strategy by implementing small notes during listening to the topic and gain the points to answer the questions.

### *Evaluating*

Students' next activity was to evaluate the results of their answer by listening to the topic back while paying more attention to any mistakes. Besides, to evaluate their answer, the students discuss with their classmates who chose the same topic and ask the teacher for the difficult one. In this way, students understood what should be improved and fixed from this evaluation. In evaluating, the researcher found students autonomy in learning management control, especially social-affective strategy. In the social-affective strategy, the students discussed with their classmates and teacher to get better answers.

### *Problem-solving*

Students faced several difficulties while listening to the topic. The difficulties tend to the speaker's pronunciation such as similar sound for examples: air and ear; hair, hear and hire; eleven and elephant, and etc. In this case, students repeated the audio many times. After that, they would try to connect the vocabulary they hear to the listening topic. However, students stated that although the repetition process was tiring, they regarded that some of their language components, such as pronunciation, increased due to repetition. Then, after trying to understand the vocabulary and answer the questions, the students invite the classmates to discuss and give feedback to each other. Students were happy because of their friends' feedback and they understood the listening topic well. In problem-solving, the

researcher found students' autonomy in cognitive control, especially attention and reflection factors. The attention factor affected students' language competence again, not vocabulary as in planning activities, but speaker's pronunciation. In addition, reflection by asking and giving feedback to each other could help them to comprehend the topic and make their listening skill better.

Referring to the elaboration above, In promoting learner autonomy, the teacher became a guide to offer reasonable and feasible suggestions to aid learners discover suitable learning strategies and assist learners to find solutions for their difficulty. Teachers should facilitate learners with the necessary knowledge and information to support their autonomy development (Santihastuti & Oktavia, 2023). In this case, the teacher told the importance of listening skill, then motivated the students to practice their listening skill regularly and provided the strategy to improve students' ability, overcome limited time of practicing listening skill in the classroom, and guide them to carry out autonomous listening skill through WhatsApp. Motivation may bring a sense of learning autonomy (T. B. T. Tran & Vuong, 2023). Besides, teachers also had responsibilities for fostering learner autonomy by giving motivation, awakening learner's responsibility in learning, and increasing learner's awareness of their own learning so that they did not only rely on the teacher (Benson, 2013). Moreover, teachers' bolstering behaviors could encourage

learners' willingness to participate in autonomous learning outside of the classroom (Hagger & Chatzisarantis, 2012). It meant that the teacher's role to promote learner autonomy was necessary and could not be neglected.

Besides, in autonomous learning, the teacher became a monitor to keep track of learners' learning process like learning progress and attempt to obtain their strong and weak points through the task. In other words, the teacher's responsibility is to monitor the learners' progress to ensure they are in the right direction (Santihastuti & Oktavia, 2023). By giving listening assignments on Fridays and joining discussion with the students during the autonomous learning process, and through tasks submitted by the students on Mondays, the teacher could monitor students progress and evaluate the students' weakness in autonomous learning. Learning tasks are important for learner autonomy (Begum & Chowdhury, 2016). Besides, through feedback given, the teacher could help the students to increase their listening skill. In sum, teachers must be alert to the progress made or difficulties faced during the activities related to autonomy. Therefore, immediate and suitable feedback must be offered (Liu, 2015). It could be concluded that a teacher takes part in fostering learner autonomy in the language learning process through task and feedback.

Meanwhile, in the listening context, autonomy refers to a self-directed listening activity in which learners select what to

listen to, seek feedback on their understanding, reflect upon their choice, and monitor their own progress (Pemberton, 2004). In this case, the students were expected to be more independently working with their listening materials which eventually promoted students' listening fluency as well as their autonomy. As students work more independently, the teacher's role was no longer the directive one, but to assist students in staying on the right track (Melani, 2020). As the result of data analysis, there were several classifications of students' independent activities in conducting autonomous learning: planning, monitoring, evaluating, and problem-solving which were adopted from theory of (Benson, 2013). In the planning stage, the students did a cognitive control where they controlled their psychology by paying attention to the language component, especially vocabulary. Their lack of vocabulary caused difficulty in understanding listening topics. Understanding the speaker's intentions could only be obtained if the students had good vocabulary mastery, on the other hand, if the students had a poor vocabulary, of course, the meaning conveyed would not arrive or will not be understood by the listener because they did not know the meaning of the word spoken by the speaker (Windamayanti et al., 2022). In addition, the more awareness of language components and learning skills students have, the more autonomous they become (T. Q. Tran & Duong, 2020). Thus, the students accumulated a lot of

vocabulary as their cognitive process control to understand listening topics.

Furthermore, the students had learning management control, especially cognitive strategy in monitoring stage by implementing note-taking strategy to summarize the points of listening topics, then they could answer the questions. In sum, the students were successful to find their own learning strategy, namely note-taking strategy which had positive benefit to help them do listening task. Besides, the previous study asserted that note-taking as a strategy that really helped them in learning English, especially for learning listening (Siswahyuni et al., 2023). Another learning management control which students did in evaluating stage was social-affective strategy. The students carried out discussion with their classmate and they even asked the teacher to improve their understanding of listening topic. The discussion was effective for them to fix their answer and making them more understand listening topics. Besides, discussion strategy contributed to create an active learning environment within the classroom, to the development of the learner's ideas and to the development of the student's skills of analysis, interpretation, and improve students' listening skill (AlBdour, 2020). Both cognitive strategy and social-affective strategy were kinds of learning management control where students used an assistant tools and discussed with others in doing autonomous learning (Melania & Savitri, 2022). Finally, in problem-solving

stage, the students applied cognitive control which was caused by attention and reflection factor. The attention factor focused on speaker's pronunciation which made the students get trouble in listening. Beside, the reflection factor by giving feedback to one another helped the students to solve their problem. Reflection on the learning process and reflective behaviors are considered an integral part of autonomous learning (Benson, 2013). In brief, reflection was needed to overcome the problem in conducting autonomous learning.

### **Students' Perception of Optimizing WhatsApp to Support Their Autonomy**

This section explores students' perceptions regarding the use of WhatsApp as a tool to support their autonomous listening skills. Through semi-structured interviews, students shared their experiences, challenges, and the perceived benefits of using WhatsApp beyond classroom instruction. The findings provide insights into how students engaged with listening tasks independently and how the platform contributed to their motivation, accessibility to learning materials, and overall listening development.

The researcher found that All students' had a positive perception of the ease of using WhatsApp to support the listening skill. The quotations below were extracted from students' answers in the interview and they demonstrated they could do their autonomous listening skill easily through WhatsApp.

*"WhatsApp is easy application because we only join in the group, ask for help if I get difficult, play the listening audio easily and answer the question." (S1)*

*"WhatsApp is an easy platform for practicing my listening and I can access the material easily too." (S3)*

*"I think WhatsApp is simple platform because we only join in the group, discuss and practice our listening skill" (S5)*

*"I don't get an obstacle to using WhatsApp to practice my listening skill and the learning material can be accessed easily." (S6)*

*"It feels easy to practice my listening. I can repeat the audio many times. Moreover, I can ask the tutor and my friends if I don't understand the meaning of the vocabulary." (S9)*

In sum, the students got more opportunities to extend their listening ability outside the classroom through WhatsApp group discussion and they could access the materials easily to conduct autonomous learning.

The researcher found that the optimization of WhatsApp had positive effects on the students' listening skills. The result of the interview below indicated that the students could practice more and assume that WhatsApp is effective to improve their listening skills.

*"I get new words, I understand what the speakers say and I can answer the questions. Because I often practice*

*listening, I can improve my listening skill."* (S2)

*"Step by step I can improve my listening skill sir. I get a lot of opportunities to practice my listening skills and increase my ability."* (S4)

*"At first, I had two difficulties: pronunciation and the meaning of vocabulary. Through discussion in WhatsApp groups and other help, step by step I could face my difficulties and increase my listening skill sir."* (S5)

*"This practice improves my listening ability a lot sir. I have a strategy to solve my problem sir. Due to the long time I have to practice sir, If I hear new vocabulary that I don't know the meaning of, I write what I hear and then look for the meaning and suit the word with the sentence or the topic sir. Thus, I understand the listening topic sir."* (S7)

*"In my opinion, listening skill needs a lot of practice, and learning through WhatsApp had a good effect on my ability, sir. I got the opportunity to learn more and increase my English ability sir."* (S8)

In short, WhatsApp was effective learning media to support students' autonomous learning which serve opportunity to train listening skill and find their own ways to increase their listening skills.

The students had positive attitudes toward optimizing WhatsApp. Students' enthusiastic in optimizing WhatsApp to

support their autonomous learning could be understood from their answers of the interview below:

*"Listening is so challenging to understand what the speaker says, although it was difficult for the first time, finally I was able to improve my listening skill. I was motivated by the teacher's way of teaching."* (S1)

*"Of course sir. This is interesting. I have a lot of time to answer the question and also I can ask if I don't understand if I learn listening in the class. It feels difficult because I cannot ask the meaning of the vocabulary when I answer the question."* (S3)

*"This motivates me and I feel better when I practice my listening, sir."* (S4)

*"Yes sir. This learning through WhatsApp made me enthusiastic in practicing listening skills. This is simple learning because I only download the material, answer the question and I can ask my friend or the tutor if I don't understand."* (S7)

*"It gives me motivation to practice my listening skill in my free time."* (S10)

In brief, They approve that practicing listening skill is interesting since the use of technology has no limited time and place to learn. Furthermore, Using whatsapp in learning motivated students to be more independent or improved their autonomous learning.

The quotations presented above described how the students perceived the easiness and effectiveness of the



optimization of WhatsApp for language learning. Besides, students' positive attitudes in learning indicated that successful mobile technology used for educational purposes could be achieved.

Overall, the basic mark of mobile learning was mobility and the convenience of learning anywhere and anytime. Mobile learning served EFL learners with necessary contextual chances that extended out of the classroom (Kukulska-Hulme et al., 2013). It was proven by students' point of view toward their experiences in utilizing WhatsApp during their autonomous learning. The students asserted that WhatsApp had the ease to really assist them to do autonomous learning. As in the quotations of students' perception in the finding, there was no doubt of the easiness of the WhatsApp offered to contribute for learner autonomy. It was in line with (Kukulska-Hulme & Shield, 2008) who asserted that language students potentially optimized WhatsApp to autonomously enhance their language skill. The majority of the students mentioned that they did not have any obstacle in using WhatsApp as their learning medium. Besides, they revealed the simplicity in conducting autonomous learning such as joining WhatsApp groups, accessing the material, and playing the listening audio many times. They could discuss with classmates and teachers when they got trouble understanding the listening topic. Through those activities, the students increased their listening skill. Moreover, by taking part in group

discussions, and accomplishing exercises with concentration on materials, the students advanced their language skills over time by utilizing WhatsApp (Mujayanah et al., 2023). In brief, the ease of WhatsApp assisted the students to learn based on their own learning strategies and improve language proficiency.

## CONCLUSION

This study revealed that WhatsApp became a beneficial media for the teacher to support learners' autonomy. Besides, the teacher had a necessary role in assisting learners' autonomy through WhatsApp, where he had served learning material and tasks, assessed students' tasks, and provided feedback for students' assignments. Although the teacher had prepared several things for students' autonomous learning, he still gave freedom to the students to explore their choice such as taking a listening topic which suited their interest and ability and finding their learning strategy to enhance their listening skill. Moreover, through two stages of controlling learners' autonomy: cognitive process control and learning management control, the students could manage their independent activities such as planning, monitoring, evaluating, and problem solving in their learning process. From those activities, the students became active to gain knowledge independently. In other words, the students did not always rely on their teacher to advance their English proficiency.

Furthermore, the students declared positive perception of their experience in conducting autonomous learning. They asserted that they had no difficulty in accessing learning materials and tasks. They also demonstrated that WhatsApp had a positive impact on their listening skill. Through the opportunity to practice listening regularly, they could solve their problem in listening and enhance their ability. Moreover, the students were motivated to engage in the learning process by joining in group discussion, helping each other, and finding their own learning strategy. In sum, the optimization of WhatsApp was successful in fostering learners' autonomy and improving their listening skill. In addition, the rapid development of instructional media revolutionizes the learning process. It enables the teacher to create a new learning environment out of the classroom and guide the students to do autonomous learning. It is essential to apply platforms to promote learners' autonomy and give more opportunity to advance their four English skills. Therefore, it is suggested for the following researcher to examine WhatsApp or other applications to foster learners' autonomy in improving different English skills such as speaking, writing, and reading skills.

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#### **AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT**

IW contributed to the design of the research, to collect and analysis the data, and to write the manuscript. T contributed to give guidance, correction, and suggestion.

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