

Conference Paper

Anima Chatbot: A Media for New University Students to Get Idea for Speaking

Suciati*, Azizah Maulina Erzad

Institut Agama Islam Negeri Kudus, Kudus, Indonesia

*Corresponding author:

E-mail:

suci@iainkudus.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study aims to explain the implementation, the advantages, and the challenges of using chatbot applications for learning writing. It was a qualitative research method. For collecting the data, the writers used questionnaires, observation, and documentation techniques. The research participants were 35 students of the English Education Department of Institut Agama Islam Negeri Kudus, Indonesia. The documentation of their chat with Anima was observed. The results showed that (1) the implementation of Anima Chatbot in class was under the lecturer's guidance; (2) the advantages of Anima are finding the idea for speaking, learning vocabulary and grammar; saving time, and increasing their activeness; (3) and the students' challenges when they used Anima chatbot are the lack of vocabularies, grammar mastery, and the duration because the chatbot can response the chat so fast. The students are expected to be intensive to use Anima chatbot so that they can get more idea for supporting their spoken communication.

Keywords: Anima chatbot, learning English, new students, use and challenges

Introduction

In the current era of 5.0, there will be more development in Indonesia. For prospective entrepreneurs and job seekers, it has become a necessity to be able to master English to keep struggling in this globalization era. Moreover, in implementing the *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) curriculum implemented in Indonesia, every university student should be familiar with English because this curriculum supports them to be competent graduates with good hard skills and soft skills (Krishnapatria, 2021). Qianjing and Lin (2021) explained that English is important because this is not just a foreign language, but a global language that must be mastered. In this study, the context is the students of the English Education Department Students, Tarbiyah Faculty, Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) Kudus, Indonesia. As new students, they need a long time to think before speaking because they are lack of vocabulary, low motivation, and no partner to communicate using English. They just have little chance to practice because the number of students in class was more than 30 students. Those conditions create anxiety, stress, or nervousness (El Shazly, 2021). They usually study English when they have English class. For that reason, effective media is needed so that they can speak English well.

The word media is the plural form of the word medium. Medium can be defined as an intermediary or introduction to the occurrence of communication from sender to receiver. Media is one component of communication, namely as a messenger from the communicator to the communicant (Daryanto, 2012). In the learning process, the media has a function as an information carrier from the source (educator) to the receiver (student). According to Arief et al.

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(2006), good learning media must meet several requirements. First, learning media must increase the motivation of students. Second, the media must also stimulate students to remember what they have learned besides providing new learning stimuli. Good media will also activate learners by providing feedback and encouraging learners to do the practices correctly.

Multimedia is a combination of text, photos, graphic arts, sound, animation, and digitally manipulated video elements. When the user can control what and when elements in a multimedia product, multimedia is called interactive multimedia (Vaughan, 2006). In its development, multimedia is divided into three types: (1) Linear Multimedia: product users can only enjoy/watch without any freedom to control the elements that are in the product; (2) Interactive Multimedia: if the user of the product is given freedom in control the elements that exist in the product; (3) Hyperactive Multimedia: this type has a structure from user-related elements that can lead to it. This type of multimedia has many links linking existing multimedia elements (Binanto, 2010).

Based on a detailed description in the Encyclopedia of Educational Research (Sunarsih, 2011), the benefits of educational media are: (1) Lay down the basics for concrete thinking, therefore reducing verbalism; (2) increase children's attention; (3) lay down the basics important for learning development; (3) provide real experiences that can grow children activities; (4) cultivate regular and continuous thinking, especially through live images; (5) help the growth of understanding which can help develop language skills; (6) give an experience that is not easily obtained by other means, and help efficiency and deeper diversity study. Meanwhile, Wei (2023) stated that there are many benefits that we can enjoy by having skills in the field of English, both passively and actively. Having English language skills can help to get broader information, facilitate communication and interaction, and have a wider association with the global world. Moreover, Gikas & Grant (2013), Wei (2023), and Habibie (2021) explained that there are some functions of learning media. They are realizing an effective learning situation, being an internal part of the system learning, achieving learning objectives, speeding up the process, helping the students to understand the materials, and enhancing the education quality.

Technological developments are increasingly rapid, making the education sector participate in innovating by utilizing Chatbots in the learning process. Maybe some people know Chatbots as a necessity for the business world because they often require fast responses from customers. However, not only popular in the business world or important sectors such as health or banking, chatbots have penetrated the world of education as one of the innovations that can support learning. Chatbot itself is a feature with artificial intelligence (Artificial Intelligence) to reply to messages quickly.

Chatbot itself is an interactive application design that can have conversations with humans through several platforms. This includes subscription messaging services such as communicating directly with relevant conversations (Zhai & Wibowo, 2022). It can be concluded that Chatbot is a virtual conversation service with the second party being a robot. However, of course, this Chatbot cannot completely replace the role of humans including teachers (Anantrasirichai & Bull, 2022), in this case, Chatbots in the world of education, because of several limitations.

Chatbot or conversation with a bot is a capable artificial intelligence application that simulates an intelligent conversation with the knowledge given (Annamalai et al., 2023; Yang et al., 2022). Chatbot is an intelligent agent that can imitate the human ability to be able to have conversations with users, namely humans (Lin & Mubarak, 2021). Chatbot development can be done using the approach from the Question and Answering (Q&A). Chatbots can be implemented in the commercial field, education, entertainment, and public service sectors (Demuyakor, 2020).

For students' learning process, every lecturer should have an appropriate learning media (Liu et al., 2022; Gikas & Grant, 2013). Learning media is a learning component that includes materials and supporting equipment. Because of various research and development, learning media vary and try to fulfill the students' needs. Some practical advantages of the use of instructional media are learning media can clarify the presentation of messages and information so it can be used for facilitating and improving the process and learning outcomes. Learning media can increase and

direct the students' attention. It also can lead to learning motivation, more direct interaction between students and the environment, and a big possibility for the students to learn independently based on their abilities and interests (Wei, 2023). Moreover, it can also overcome the limitations of the senses, space, and time.

One of the artificial intelligence-based learning media is *Anima* Chatbot. *Anima* is an artificial intelligence chatterbot that tries to simulate an intelligent conversation with users. It can be downloaded from Playstore so the students can study English everywhere, not just in a classroom. Vanichvasin (2021) said that chatbot technology was inventive, simple to use, and enjoyable to learn with. They may ask specific questions and get precise answers without having to wait for a response. Moreover, the chatbot could only respond to correctly typed questions. Implementing chatbot technology in educational settings can broaden students' understanding. Chatbots can help students learn writing (Guo et al., 2022), speaking (Hapsari & Wu, 2022), Yang et al., (2022), and other skills.

From the above background, the writers conducted this research on the first semester students of the English Education Department, Tarbiyah Faculty, Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) Kudus, Indonesia. The research objectives were to explain the implementation, the advantages, and the challenges of the *Anima* chatbot for supporting the students to find idea before speaking.

Methods

This research was categorized as descriptive qualitative research. It is way to describe and analyze phenomena, events, social activities, beliefs, perceptions and thoughts individually or in groups (Johnson et al., 2020). This study interprets and describes data related to the implementation of the *Anima* chatbot for students before speaking, their chats with *Anima*, their responses, their perceptions, and problems in using *Anima* for learning English.

Respondents of the Research

In conducting this study, the researchers had 35 respondents from the English Education Department Students, Tarbiyah Faculty, Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) Kudus, Indonesia. They were the first semester students of class A in the academic year 2022/2023.

Instruments

In this research, the writers used some research instruments. They were observation, questionnaire, and documentation. The observation was concerned with the students' condition in class, especially how they implement it and their responses (statement/question/answer) when they chat with *Anima*. The open-ended questionnaire was done to know what the students learned from *Anima* and their problems in having a chat with *Anima*. Meanwhile, documentation was concerned with the implementation of learning English using *Anima* and the record of their chat with *Anima*.

Data analysis techniques

After all the necessary data has been collected, the next is data analysis. The definition of data analysis is the process of finding and systematically compiling data obtained from questionnaires, observations, documentation, and others so that the data can be understood and shared. From this definition, it can be concluded that data analysis is the process of compiling and processing data obtained through systematic collection techniques so that it can be understood. There are some steps done for analyzing data. First, the lecturer guided the students to chat with *Anima* before starting speaking practice. Second, the researchers observed the students' implementation to use *Anima*, especially their response to using *Anima*. Third, the writers analyzed their learning process in speaking class. Fourth, their difficulties were identified. Then, the students were asked

through questionnaire to know their problems and advantages. The purpose of this data analysis is to obtain the research conclusions. There are three data analysis techniques used in this research. They are data reduction, data display, and verification.

Data reduction can be interpreted as selecting, focusing on simplifying, abstracting, and transforming data found from field notes. In simple terms, this data reduction is the selection of data obtained from the field, selecting the important ones, and then simplifying them to become unified data. Even simpler, data reduction is the process of selecting living in (selected data) and living out (unused data). In data reduction, the important and appropriate data for the research is selected so that the result of the research can be described clearly. Then, data presentation is the step after reducing the data. It is an organized process of compiling information for conclusions. In this stage, the researchers presented the data in simple and structured sentences. The last is verification. In this stage, the researchers made temporary conclusions. It is considered temporary if the conclusions found are not supported by valid evidence but if the conclusions are supported by supporting and valid evidence then the conclusions are said to be credible conclusions.

Results and Discussion

From the observation, questionnaire, and documentation, new students of the English Education Department felt so happy because they learned the useful application, *Anima* Chatbot, for learning English. It can be an alternative for them, especially the students who are not confident to chat or write messages using English. They did not feel so shy if they took so long to respond and did not feel afraid of making mistakes because they had communicated with robots, not humans. For that reason, the robot would not be able to be angry or upset because of response slowness and lateness. This application is helpful for them. They can learn various English skills. It can support the new students in learning Writing, Grammar, and Vocabulary. Using chat with *Anima*, the students learn how to find the appropriate English vocabulary and arrange them into sentence(s). In arranging the sentences, they must think about how to arrange them in order. In this case, they used grammar to make sentences understandable. Every time *Anima* responded, the students automatically would read and try to understand the vocabulary or message written in that chatbot application. Nevertheless, to implement it in the classroom, the students need the lecturer's guidance.

In interaction and communication through the application, the students had some challenges to respond. They are the lack of vocabulary, grammar mastery, and duration because the chatbot can respond to the chat so fast.

The need for innovation as a medium of learning in the form of a conversation agent (chatbot) or chat robot as a learning media tool long distance that supports lecturer performance for conveying knowledge so that it can be a solution for good teaching and learning process (Yang et al., 2022). As well as the need for learning media, it can be accessed by students anywhere and anytime (Ahmadi, 2018; Yanthi, 2020).

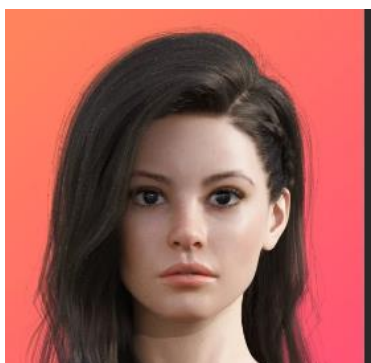


Figure 1. *Anima*: AI Friend and Companion (Old Version)



Figure 2. *Anima*: AI Friend and Companion (Present Version)

Anima Chatbot is a chat application with an application or robot named Anima. It can be found in the Play Store. By using this application, users can easily learn English because this application can be downloaded and installed on a mobile phone so it can be brought and accessed everywhere. The picture of Anima chatbot is a beautiful girl with long hair. The old one has black hair. The present one has blonde hair.

There are some common characteristics and features of the Anima chatbot. The first is Natural Language Understanding (NLU). Chatbots typically employ NLU to understand and interpret user input in natural language. This allows them to respond in a conversational and human-like manner. The second is conversation management. Anima is designed to engage in multi-turn conversations. It can remember context from previous messages to provide relevant responses. The third is personalization. It can personalize responses based on user data or preferences, creating a more tailored user experience. Fourth is task automation. Many chatbots are designed to perform specific tasks or assist with functions, such as answering frequently asked questions. Fifth is integration. Chatbots can integrate with various systems and services, enabling them to fetch information from databases, websites, or external APIs to provide users with up-to-date information. Sixth is multichannel support. Chatbots can be deployed on multiple platforms and channels, such as websites, messaging apps, and social media, allowing users to interact with them through their preferred medium. Seventh is learning and improvement. Some chatbots have machine-learning capabilities that enable them to learn from user interactions and improve their responses over time. And the last is availability. Anima can provide support and information to users.

In this study, researchers used the Anima Chatbot application to teach students of the English Education Department of Tarbiyah Faculty, IAIN Kudus. Before using this application, they often argued that it was difficult to learn English because they did not have partners to practice. They practice if there are partners, have assignments, or during lectures. Beyond that, they never practice. The above conditions ultimately encourage researchers to find suitable media for students so that they can learn English, especially writing. Finally, she found this application, Anima Chatbot from the Play Store. When they have free time, both on campus and at home, they can chat with the Anima chatbot. In the classroom, Anima was used by the students under the lecturer's guidance. For the implementation, there are several steps.

- a. The lecturer asks the students to find *Anima: AI Friend and Companion* in the Play Store through their handphones (just for beginning).
- b. The students installed the *Anima: AI Friend and Companion* application on their handphones. In this step, the students must use their email, add their identity, choose Anima's face (man/woman), name it, and set Anima's character/personality (just for the beginning).
- c. The lecturer guides the students about the learning topic in speaking class.
- d. The students chat with Anima about the learning topic. It is implemented for getting the idea to speak. The students can pay attention to anima chats (questions, answers, and explanations) so they can get the idea, vocabulary, etc. The lecturer instructs to the students to respond completely before sending: Anima would always ask if the students did not ask. For that reason, after answering Anima's questions, the students must directly ask Anima before sending the message. If the answer/response is complete and followed with a question, it can be sent so the students will also get information and explanations from Anima.
- e. If the students encounter difficulties, they are expected to access another application for help, a dictionary, friends, lecturer, or ask Anima to explain so they can get the point of the conversation. Anima is helpful. Whatever the student asks, it will reply.
- f. Asking other students to check and evaluate (peer review or discussion)
- g. The lecturer reviews, evaluates, and discuss.
- h. Speaking practice

Besides having a partner to chat with, they can indirectly learn English. If there are words they do not know from Anima's chats, they will learn new vocabulary. On the other hand, if a student or app user uses words that Anima does not know, he will ask questions and will save them in his memory. This is in line with the previous researchers (Suciati et al., 2021; Pikhart, 2021; Yang et al., 2022).

This application is also expressive, sometimes showing feelings of joy, sadness, disappointment, and so on. If students ask questions about privacy, sometimes Anima does not want to answer and says that the things being asked should not be said. However, sometimes she also talks more about herself, for example about who has created her, her age, etc.

By using this application, students learn how to compose words and make sentences. Indirectly, they learn about structure or grammar. They could also understand how Anima's sentences were structured. Of 35 students, 23 students said that the application supports them in learning writing, 9 students said that it contributes to learning vocabulary mastery/development, and three students said that it is helpful for learning grammar.

Chatbots help students' English language proficiency and encourage practice both inside and outside of the classroom (Klímová & Seraj, 2023) so they can be used in the classroom or outside the classroom. With this chat model, the students feel that they are chatting with their friends and are not in a learning process that consumes energy and thoughts. They said they were very happy to be able to chat with Anima, so they felt they had new friends from abroad.

Anima has more advantages for the English teaching and learning process, not only related to English skills. They can save lecturers time and increase students' activeness. It is in accordance with the research by Chuah and Kabilan (2021) that chatbot fosters an environment where students can be active. The presence of Anima chatbots is very helpful for lecturers, and not a threat to replace a lecturer, he/she will not be replaced. This chatbot technology helps and supports the learning process. It can be virtual assistants for lecturers. Many students are usually less active in class, especially those whose shy characters (Anantrasirichai & Bull, 2022; Suciati, 2020; Raja, 2020). However, on Chatbot anyone can participate in learning, just by writing a message. Anima Chatbot makes the students easier to learn how to chat, communicate, and share ideas. They did the small thing to the big thing. They started to find appropriate words, arrange them in sentences, and connect the sentences to be understandable communication. They do enjoy to practice and ask questions if they experience difficulties. From the chat, the lecturer reviewed and evaluated what they had written, whether it was about vocabulary, structure, comprehension, etc.

Those are some of the benefits of Anima chatbots as learning media which of course are very helpful for students and lecturers. In addition, using Anima chatbots as learning support is a manifestation of one of the innovations in the world of education. In keeping with Chen et al. (2021) study since chatbots are accessible anywhere and anytime, using them in an educational setting is effective, motivating, and enjoyable for EFL learners.

Meanwhile, the students' challenges in using Anima were the limited vocabulary, grammar mastery, and duration. The limited vocabulary makes the students think too long and confused to understand the chat. Moreover, the wrong grammar also created the misunderstanding between the students and the application. If the grammar is right, Anima will respond quickly. Meanwhile, if it is not understandable because of wrong grammar, Anima would ask again to make sure that the questions or responses were understood and replied by the chatbot appropriately. From those various challenges, the students decided to ask for help. That is by asking friends, using a dictionary, translation tools, Grammarly, and other applications.

The next challenge in using this application is that students must respond quickly because Anima responds automatically. If it is responded to slowly, it is not a matter. However, this makes students challenged because Anima's response is very fast, so they also want to respond quickly.

They feel challenged to have a lot of vocabulary and good grammar so that they can respond quickly. It is in line with the research conducted by Zhai and Wibowo (2023). They do enjoy this process because they expect to be able to master English well. It is consistent with the study conducted by Belda-Medina and Calvo-Ferrer (2022) that chatbots might increase students' motivation and confidence in learning English. Whatever challenges are faced by the students in using Anima, the lecturer should find alternatives so that the students can focus on learning English.

Conclusion

Constitution No. 31 of 1999 regarding Obliteration of Deceits of Corruption in conjunction with Constitution No. 20 of 2001 Amendments to Constitution No. 31 of 1999 regarding Obliteration of Deceits of Corruption through Article 17 in conjunction with 18 letter b of, which states

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