STUDENTS' AUTONOMOUS ENGLISH LEARNING USING TECHNOLOGY-ENHANCED LANGUAGE LEARNING (TELL) TOOLS IN SEVEN-GRADE OF SMP TELKOM PURWOKERTO

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Article History: Submitted: 10 May 2025 Accepted: 20 June 2025 Published: 30 June 2025	This research aimed to describe how the 7th grade students of SMP Telkom Purwokerto used Technology Enhance Language Learning (TELL) tools in autonomous English learning and to explain the advantages as well as the challenges of using it. This study used a descriptive qualitative approach. The data collection techniques used were observation, interview, and documentation. The data analysis techniques incorporate organizing and preparing the data, reading and reviewing the data, coding the data, generating themes, and representing the description and themes (Cresswel, 2018). With the development of integration technology in education, TELL tools including online platforms, mobile applications, and digital resources, have changed the way students learn English autonomously. This research found that students use several TELL tools, namely Roblox, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Google, and Duolingo. The students used the tools to see and watch some English learning and random English videos. They also used it to help them practice their English by engaging in games or interacting with other people. It helps them gain new knowledge about English and how to use it in their daily lives. Using TELL tools in autonomous learning has several advantages, including affordability, convenience, flexibility, and the ability to offer more personalized learning. The findings also reveal that students face several challenges in the process. These challenges include difficulties in maintaining motivation, an overwhelming abundance of resources, a lack of feedback, and dealing with complex topics. Keywords: Autonomous English Learning, English Learning, Technology-Enanced Language Learning Tools

Introduction

English language education in Indonesian schools, from elementary to high school, is generally based on the national curriculum, which has evolved to reflect the country's changing economic, political, and social contexts (Sulistyaningrum & Sumarni, 2023). This curriculum emphasizes the development of four core language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. However, there are some challenges that both teachers and students encounter during the teaching and learning process, including limited teacher proficiency and frequent curriculum changes. Teachers often struggle with effective

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effective teaching methods due to inadequate training (Jon et al., 2021). Additionally, frequent curriculum changes, such as the shift to the 2022 *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum, can create confusion and disrupt the learning process (Sulistyaningrum & Sumarni, 2023). These changes require teachers to adapt quickly and adopt more creative teaching strategies to help their students master the English language. In this context, students also face challenges such as a standardized curriculum that may not always align with their individual learning needs and styles, making it difficult for them to fully engage in English Language Teaching (ELT) and improve their language skills.

Additionally, students often struggle to stay motivated in learning English due to its inherent challenges. This gap highlights the need for more flexible and personalized teaching approaches that can better support students' language development. However, there are various ways for students to enhance their English abilities outside the classroom. They can attend offline or online English courses, join English clubs, or learn autonomously at home or anywhere convenient. While courses may require financial resources and English clubs can be challenging to fit into busy schedules, autonomous learning stands out as the most accessible option. Being an autonomous learner can be an option for responding to challenges in the 21st century (Muhammada, 2024).

Autonomous learning is a self-driven approach where students take full responsibility for their learning journey. As stated by Benson (2013), this involves three levels of control: control over learning management, control over cognitive processes, and control over learning content. In practice, this means students can set their own goals, decide when and how to study, and select the resources that work best for them. While this approach can be demanding, it offers a deeper and more personalized learning experience, allowing students to utilize a wide range of tools, including technology, to enhance their language skills.

Technology has become an integral part of modern life, transforming every sector, including education, as part of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Khudlori, 2023). As the students also come from the native technology generation, teachers must provide them with media that can fulfill their needs. As stated by Panjaitan & Hasibuan (2022), teachers must understand each student's needs and learning style to create an effective and active classroom environment. However this, not all teachers can provide their students with suitable media. Relying solely on classroom learning can limit students' progress, particularly in speaking skills, making it essential for them to take charge of their learning outside the classroom to enhance their English skills.

According to Tuan (2021), students with higher autonomy tend to achieve better learning outcomes. However, many students are not eager to learn English autonomously, especially using Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL) tools. Interestingly, based on research results at SMP Telkom Purwokerto, it was found that many 7th-grade students are willing to use technology to enhance their English skills. Unlike others who primarily use technology for entertainment, these students recognize the need for autonomous

learning beyond the classroom, likely also influenced by their school's technology-focused environment.

Based on the preliminary research conducted on September 24, 2024, at SMP Telkom Purwokerto revealed that some 7th-grade students are autonomous learners, allowing them to be more active and engaged in the English learning process. Additionally, interviews and observations indicated that five of these students use Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL) tools to support their independent English learning. Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL) uses technology like computers, mobile devices, software, and the Internet to enhance language learning. Technology utilized in diverse forms across various applications in second language (L2) education is called TELL ((Chang & Hung, 2019). TELL helps language learners to have more interactive and accessible language learning without the help of a teacher. It allows for personalized and adaptive learning experiences, supporting independent study without direct teacher assistance (Zainuddin, 2023). TELL also provides flexibility by catering to diverse learning needs, making it a valuable supplement to traditional methods (Iberahim et al., 2023).

Based on previous research, little has been analyzed regarding technology-enhanced language learning tools as a means for students to learn autonomously outside the class, especially in junior high school. Therefore, autonomous English learning using Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL) tools among 7th-grade students of SMP Telkom Purwokerto is considered worthy of in-depth investigation to explore its application in autonomous English learning. This research aims to analyze how the students use the TELL tools to help them learn the English language autonomously, and the advantages as well as the challenges of using them as a medium in autonomous English learning.

Method

This study employs a qualitative research method focusing on understanding social phenomena and human experiences through observation, interviews, and documentation. According to Creswell, J. W. (2018) describe qualitative research as inductive, which means that the researcher begins with observation and allows patterns to emerge from data rather than testing predefined hypotheses. It aims to generate new theories and uncover relationships within specific contexts. Patton (2014) emphasizes the importance of selecting specific participants for deep insights instead of random sampling used in quantitative research. Data collection methods include observations, interviews, and document analysis, with a focus on rich, descriptive data. The data is typically presented in narrative form, highlighting real-life behaviors and experiences. In this approach, the researcher is an active instrument, engaging directly with the field to construct meaningful findings. This study specifically adopts a descriptive approach, aimed at understanding phenomena within a particular context without manipulating data.

Research Site and Participant

The research was conducted at SMP Telkom Purwokerto, specifically focusing on 7th-grade students who use Technology-Enhanced Language

Learning (TELL) tools for autonomous English learning. This site was chosen because it has a high number of motivated English learners, making it suitable for exploring the advantages and challenges of TELL tools. The data participants include one English teacher and five 7th-grade students who have prior experience with TELL tools, providing insights needed to address the research questions.

Research Subject and Object

The object of this research is five 7th-grade students from SMP Telkom Purwokerto who use Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL) tools for autonomous English learning. These students were selected based on their English teacher's recommendation and were confirmed as suitable research subjects after observation and interviews, demonstrating active use of TELL tools.

The research subjects in this study are the five 7th-grade students and their English teacher at SMP Telkom Purwokerto. The students were chosen for their use of Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL) tools for autonomous English learning, while the teacher provided insights into the advantages, challenges, and differences between students who use TELL tools and those who do not.

Data Collection Techniques

The data collection methods in this study included observation, interviews, and documentation:

1. Observation

    According to Patton (2014), the ideal observation captures context, the unfolding of events over time, and critical interaction, and it includes talking with those involved in the activities observed. Conducted in a 7th-grade English class at SMP Telkom Purwokerto on January 23, 2025, and in the library on February 4 and 14, 2025. It focused on how the five selected students use Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL) tools for autonomous English learning, including their learning channels and class participation.

2. Interviews

    The second step of data collection techniques was interview. Moleong (2007) states that an interview is a conversation with specific goals. It is also a central step of data collection in qualitative research. Semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face and online with the five students and their English teacher on September 24, 2024, January 23, 2025, and February 9, 2025. These interviews explored how students use TELL tools, the challenges they face, and the advantages they experience.

3. Documentation

    The last step in data collection techniques was documentation. According to Creswell, J. W. (2018)., repeating a case study's findings in a new setting requires thorough documentation, including a detailed problem description and a well-organized case study database. Included lesson plans, interview guidelines, class activity pictures, and images of

students using TELL tools, providing additional context and supporting evidence for the research findings.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis process in this study follows *Creswell, J. W. (2018)* qualitative framework, consisting of five key steps:

1. Organizing and Preparing the Data: This involves transcribing interviews, sorting field notes, and cataloging visual content to create organized, distinct data sets.
2. Reading and Reviewing the Data: The researcher thoroughly examines the data, noting initial thoughts, overarching themes, and emotional tones to form a preliminary understanding.
3. Coding the Data: The data is broken into smaller, meaningful segments, which are categorized and labeled, often using participants' language to capture their perspectives accurately.
4. Generating Themes: The coded data is grouped into broader themes, which may be linked to form a cohesive narrative or theoretical model, providing deeper insights into the findings.
5. Representing the Description and Themes: The final step involves presenting the findings through narrative text supported by visuals, figures, or tables to clearly communicate the study's results.

Result

This section provides the findings obtained through observations and interviews. According to the observations and interviews, five students were categorized as autonomous English learners because they met the control categories of autonomy in language learning. As stated by Benson (2013), there are three levels of control in autonomous language learning: control over learning management, control over cognitive processes, and control over learning content. The five students use Technology-Enhanced Language Learning Tools (TELL) to assist them in autonomous English learning. Technology-enhanced language learning is the use of technology such as computers, mobile devices, software, and the internet to learn a new language. As stated by Zainuddin (2023), TELL tools cover various types of resources, including language learning applications, online language courses, multimedia resources, virtual classrooms, and AI-driven platforms. These tools can help people learn a new language more conveniently. According to the interviews with the five SMP Telkom Purwokerto seventh-grade students, some TELL tools they use in autonomous English learning are as follows;

Table 1 TELL Tools Used by the Students

Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL) Tools	Student's name				
	Bilqis (S1)	Kenzo (S2)	Luis (S3)	Arya (S4)	Maitri (S5)
Roblox games	√	√	√	√	√
Instagram	√	-	-	-	-
TikTok	√	√	√	√	√

YouTube	√	√	-	√	√
Google	-	-	-	√	√
Duolingo	-	-	-	√	√

Discussion

The five students of the 7th-grade SMP Telkom Purwokerto were categorized as autonomous learners because they met the three levels of control outlined by Benson (. The first is control over learning management, which refers to how learners plan, organize, and evaluate their learning. Students first manage their learning by planning how much time they spend on autonomous English study using Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL) tools. On average, they spent around 4 to 5 hours each day using these tools, reflecting a high level of commitment to self-improvement. This approach to learning was closely linked to the concept of autonomy, which is grounded in the natural tendency for learners to take control over their education (Benson, 2013).

One of the key characteristics of autonomous learning is being self-directed, which involves making decisions about when, where, and how to study. For example, these students decide for themselves how many hours to dedicate to English practice each day, indicating a strong sense of responsibility for their learning outcomes. Additionally, classroom observations conducted on January 23, 2025, support this idea, as they revealed that five students continued their English learning independently after school using their phones. This is noteworthy, as they are generally not allowed to use their phones during class unless instructed to do so by the teacher. This behavior highlighted their commitment to autonomous learning, as they take the initiative to find additional study time outside of regular class hours, demonstrating their motivation to improve their English skills.

The second aspect is cognitive control, which relates to learning psychology and includes goal setting, attention, reflection, and metacognitive awareness. The students show both awareness and purpose in their autonomous English learning. They recognized that English was a vital international language, enabling them to communicate effectively with people worldwide. This awareness reflects control over cognitive processes, as described by Benson (2013), which includes skills like focusing, filtering distractions, and critical thinking. For instance, many students aim to improve their English to achieve high grades, motivating them to engage in regular autonomous practice. Observations on February 4 and 14, 2025, also found that five students consistently try to communicate in English in their daily lives, applying what they have learned through TELL tools. This effort shows their commitment to directing their thoughts and maintaining focus to reach their goals. Additionally, when using tools like English learning videos on YouTube, these students actively engage with the content, often mimicking the speech patterns and pronunciation of the speakers, which further enhances their language skills.

The third aspect is control over learning content, which focuses on what learners want and need to learn. Students often choose English material based on what they encounter naturally, such as videos or social media posts. This aligns with Benson's (2013)concept of control over learning content, which

emphasizes selecting what to learn and why, rather than just when or where to study. Students tend to focus on content that improves their speaking skills, such as vocabulary, pronunciation, and practical language use. For example, observations on February 4 and 14, 2025, showed that students frequently engage with English learning content shared by creators on social media, selecting materials that match their proficiency and learning goals. Additionally, students use apps like Duolingo to challenge themselves with unfamiliar topics, testing their abilities and identifying areas for improvement. This deliberate approach helps them refine their pronunciation and expand their vocabulary, reflecting their primary goal of achieving English fluency.

TELL Tools Used by the Students in Autonomous English Learning
Most students engage in autonomous English learning through social media and games, which serve as valuable TELL tools. These platforms not only provide access to English content but also create interactive environments for collaboration, conversation, and knowledge exchange (Purnama & Asdlori, 2023). For instance, observations on February 4 and 14, 2025, revealed that five students actively use TELL tools, such as social media and games like Instagram, TikTok, Duolingo, YouTube, Roblox, and Google, to access English materials and expand their language knowledge. TELL tools utilize technical processes to support language learning tasks and goals (Shadiev & Yang, 2020). This aligns with the students' use of platforms like Roblox, where they practice English by chatting with other players, applying their learning in real-time. They also use their laptops and phones for a more immersive experience, with laptops offering larger screens for watching educational videos and playing language-rich games. Additionally, being part of a native-technology generation, these students can navigate and utilize digital tools more effectively than previous generations. The integration of English into the dialogue, narrative, and interfaces of many modern games further enhances their language learning, making these tools a practical choice for autonomous practice.

How the Students Use TELL Tools in Autonomous English Learning
In implementing TELL tools for autonomous English learning, the five students use a range of applications, including Duolingo, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Google, and Roblox games. However, most of them prefer TikTok and Roblox, with only two using Duolingo. According to Syafiqah Yaccob & Md Yunus (2019), games like Roblox provide opportunities to practice grammar in context, boosting language skills and confidence. TikTok, on the other hand, helps improve speaking skills by exposing students to native speaker content and encouraging active participation (Nia, 2024)). Instagram offers another way to practice English by enabling students to chat with people globally and engage with English posts, while YouTube provides access to diverse real-life content, including podcasts, movies, and cartoons, which can enhance listening and comprehension skills. Duolingo stands out for its independent learning model, which supports vocabulary building by promoting self-reliance and responsibility in language practice (Abin & Andas, 2022). Students also sometimes combine these tools, like using Roblox for gaming and Google for

quick translations, creating a flexible and integrated approach to autonomous learning.

Below are the explanations of how these TELL tools are implemented to support and enhance students' autonomous English learning;

a. Roblox Games

Roblox games were one of the media that all five students utilized in autonomous English learning. This was because Roblox games allow the students to engage with other players from different countries, and they can learn English through the chat box that the games provide, so that they can learn English in a real-world context. Moreover, this game allows them to have fun while also learning English, making it more interesting for the students. The students used Roblox games to help them learn how to use some words in English when they need to chat with people in real life. It can also be proved by the result of the observation on 4 and 14 February 2025 shows that the five students used the Roblox games to play multiple games that the platforms provide. They play the games by joining and inviting other players online during the games. Most of the players are from other countries, so they need to use English to communicate.

b. Instagram

Instagram was one of the TELL tools used by the students to conduct autonomous English learning. This was because Instagram allowed them to connect with people worldwide who speak English. The students can also easily find English material content on Instagram posted by some accounts that focus on English learning. Instagram allows students to engage with English-based content since they can personalize the content displayed on Instagram. By utilizing Instagram, the students can gain new vocabulary and be better at speaking English. According to Wijaya & Kurniawan (2020), social media platforms such as Instagram can help students learn, especially learning English.

Students use Instagram as a valuable TELL tool for autonomous English learning, primarily to access videos, photos, and posts that provide English language material. For instance, they often search for content related to correct pronunciation, which helps them refine their speaking skills (Wijaya & Kurniawan, 2020). Observations on February 4 and 14, 2025, confirmed that students follow various English learning accounts, including *Englishnesia, jagobahasa.com, kelasbahasa.id, and blogicomics.* Each of these accounts serves a different purpose. For example, *blogicomics* shares short stories and point-of-view (POV) content, helping students learn how to use English in specific contexts. Meanwhile, *Englishnesia.id* focuses on teaching accurate pronunciation and providing alternative vocabulary, helping students sound more like native speakers. This approach is particularly useful, as the English taught in schools often relies on textbook conventions, which can sound outdated or unnatural in real conversations. Additionally, interacting in the comment sections of these accounts allows students to practice their English in real-time, further enhancing their fluency and confidence.

c. TikTok

Students use TikTok as a TELL tool for autonomous English learning, taking advantage of its engaging and interactive content (Hadijah et al., 2023). The platform provides a wide range of short, educational videos created by language instructors and native speakers, covering topics like pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and conversational skills. Based on the observations on February 4 and 14, 2025, it was shown that students often watch videos that explain common pronunciation mistakes and correct phrasing. They frequently follow accounts like jagobahasa.com and Englishnesia.id, which also have a presence on Instagram, to improve their speaking and listening skills. While using TikTok, students often mimic and imitate the way speakers talk, actively trying to understand the material and incorporate new words and phrases into their speech, making it a practical tool for language practice.

d. YouTube

YouTube was one of the Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL) tools students utilize for autonomous English learning. As a vast digital platform, YouTube provides a wide range of English-language content, including short films and instructional videos specifically designed to teach English. By engaging with these videos, students can expand their vocabulary and enhance their pronunciation skills. Moreover, beyond its role as a learning resource, YouTube offers an entertaining and engaging way to acquire language skills, reducing the risk of overwhelming and making the learning process more enjoyable and sustainable. By utilizing this tool in their learning process, students can enhance their motivation, which plays a crucial role in autonomous English learning. Students' motivation, the ability to project the material and resources, and learning goals are the factors that influence students' ability to carry out autonomous English learning (Muhammada, 2024). Motivation not only encourages sustained engagement but also fosters a more effective and self-directed language acquisition process.

e. Google

Students utilized Google for various purposes, such as translating words and playing quizzes. It can also be proved by the result of the observation on 4 and 14 February 2025, that when the students find a new vocabulary and they do not know the meaning, they translate it on Google Translate. As stated by Wei (2021), some students have a positive attitude toward using Google Translate in their language learning while remaining aware of its limitations in translating longer sentences, paragraphs, and texts. In the process of using Google to learn English, they also use it to look for the correct pronunciation and how to make a good sentence, which can help them to build their writing proficiency, although it does have some limitations. Moreover, Google helps them in solving their most common English learning problem, which is memorizing the meaning of vocabulary.

f. Duolingo

The students utilize the Duolingo application to help them learn English autonomously. It can also be proved by the result of the

observation that the students on 4 and 14 February 2025 they learn through the small lessons provided by the application, and over time, they can work on their overall English skills. For example, they want to learn "how to use indefinite pronouns," so they go to the sections provided by the application. Each lesson the students take focuses on vocabulary building, sentence structure, and pronunciation, ensuring a well-rounded learning experience. Duolingo makes English learning more enjoyable and interesting (Inayah et al., 2020). However, based on the observation, the students rarely use Duolingo to learn; they just use it to test their English level or when they get bored. Through interactive exercises like matching words, listening to native speakers, and speaking challenges, students can develop their skills in a fun and dynamic way.

The Advantages and Challenges of Autonomous English Learning

Autonomous English learning with TELL tools is a practical and affordable way for students to improve their language skills. It offers flexibility, personalized learning, and self-paced progress, requiring only basic technology like a phone or laptop, making it a valuable option for those with limited financial resources. These tools also boost engagement through gamification, enhance overall proficiency, and can lead to better classroom performance. Additionally, there are some challenges that the students may encounter in doing autonomous English learning. Autonomous English learning with TELL tools presents several challenges, including maintaining motivation, sustaining interest, and navigating an overwhelming number of resources. Learners may also struggle to create balanced study plans, receive immediate feedback, and obtain personalized corrections, which can hinder their progress.

Conclusions

The study on Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL) at SMP Telkom Purwokerto found that five 7th graders used digital tools like Roblox, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Google, and Duolingo for autonomous English learning, particularly to improve speaking skills. These students typically studied for 4 to 5 hours daily after school, driven by the goal of speaking fluently. They appreciated TELL tools for their flexibility, engagement, and ease of use, However facing challenges like staying motivated, managing excessive content, and lacking feedback. Nevertheless, they demonstrated strong self-regulation, highlighting the need for both effective technology-based resources and personal discipline to optimize their learning outcomes.

Acknowledgements

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