

Stimulating English learning in global K-pop community on Twitter

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the phenomenon of K-pop on Twitter that can be the platform of English learning. The data gathered included writing documents like K-pop tweets, unstructured interviews and survey results. The researcher focused more on taking data from K-poper who use English as EFL (English as a foreign language). Data collection was taken by interview & poll to K-poper, observations and examination of K-pop tweets, included interactions among K-pop community on Twitter. K-pop Tweets was taken randomly with various topics by taking screenshots. The interview conducted by direct messages to some K-popers who gave consents to do the interview. The survey was executed by using Twitter's poll feature. Data analysis is carried out with a descriptive qualitative method, focused on finding the nature of the particular event on study. The finding of the study revealed that the interest of K-pop stimulates English learning for K-poper. English helps them to support and connect to their interest. The curiosity of K-pop eagers them to learn and improve English skill. It demands their self-learning in the process of improving English skill. English is a bridge to connect them with their K-pop idols. K-pop is boasting their interest to English than studying English in a classroom with a book.

Keywords: English learning, learning media, K-pop, social media, Twitter

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INTRODUCTION

Korean wave—usually called hallyu—is South Korean pop culture that has grown to become a major global culture. It has been dominating the industry, not only entertainment but also life style, fashion and even culinary. The heart of Hallyu is K-pop or Korean pop music. K-pop is spreading rapidly and people turn to be instant K-pop fanatics. The significant aspects of K-pop

like addictive melodies, distinctive style of music, slick choreography, attractive performers, are the significant aspects that get K-pop instantly taking over the world. K-pop is like an infectious virus that rapidly spreads to the whole point of the industry. One of K-poper, fans of K-pop, said, “K-pop song churns out very simple 3 minute songs that get stuck in your head. They all have simple choreographies so everyone can

dance to them.” The domination of K-pop can be vividly seen in social media platform like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and even Whatsapp. Social media is a main platform where K-pop spreads over the world. It has big role to make K-pop phenomenon globally happened.

Among other social media, Twitter has received a good deal of attention from K-poppers. Twitter has over 300 million users where they can meet and talk to new people or friends, promote products, share information and so much more. Twitter is the best place to find out what’s happening and trending with K-pop and to talk with other K-pop fans around the world. New global record has been written by Twitter by having 5.3 billion K-pop Tweets last year. Twitter has strengthened its position as the top conversation platform for the global K-pop community. More than 5.2 billion tweets about K-pop had been shared last year. Those billion K-pop tweets shared mostly by English language because the users not only come from Asia (Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, etc) but also many countries from North America (US, Canada), Latin America (Argentina, Brazil, Peru, Mexico) and Europe (France, UK, Turkey). Global communication happened massively through

Twitter to share K-pop things they addict to. Based on the phenomenon, English language plays an important role to communicate among K-pop community. English is highly needed as K-pop rapidly grows. K-poppers who are mostly young generation are demanded to learn English in order to blend with their K-pop community. The urge of English learning grows rapidly to catch up the addiction of K-pop.

English learning in K-pop tweet which happened in Twitter has become a language teaching and learning tool in the digital era. Teaching and learning of English nowadays is not mere about study in the classroom. The use of social media in English learning helps learners to develop their language skills, mainly for young generation who has been technology addict like K-pop community. K-pop tweets become an effective learning tool to improve English skill of K-pop community. Tweeting fun stuffs in English about their idol, favorite music and show are more boasting their interest to English than studying English in a classroom with a book. By tweeting K-pop stuffs in English, K-popper (unconsciously or not) is learning and improving their English skill. They improve reading skill by reading K-pop news, they enrich English vocabularies by watching K-pop, dramas or

shows with English subtitle, they learn English grammar & writing by tweeting their thoughts or comments about their K-pop idol. Therefore this study aims at disclosing English learning in K-pop tweets undergone by global K-pop community on Twitter. It is intended to analyze and disclose the effect of K-pop phenomena in English learning that is represented by K-poppers as young generation on Twitter.

Social media

Social Media consists of the word "social" which has a social meaning or an interaction and "Media" is a container or social place itself. Social media is a medium for socializing with each other in online that allows humans to interact with each other without being limited by space and time. Social media is an online media where users can easily participate, share and create content including blogs, social networks, wikis, forums and the virtual world. According to Andreas Kaplan and Michael Haenlein (2010), defining social media as "an internet-based application group that builds on the ideology and technology of Web 2.0, and which allows the creation and exchange of" user-generated content ".Social media for the current generation has become a contemporary thing and it can be said as a popular culture. Social media is a

form of community lifestyle, especially for the productive age community as the future generation. Social media also has the big role as a bridge of interaction for people in a community.

In digital era, social media has become English teaching and learning tool. Social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Whatsapp, Line, Blog and many more have been the most effective tools for communication because they provide many user-friendly features and easy to access. The development of digital media has an important influence on human life, included education. English learners nowadays get many helps from social media. Social media becomes useful in communication and sharing knowledge because it reaches frequency usability and facilitate the users as compare to other sources (Pavlik, 2015).

Social media plays a dominant role in English language learning because it provides opportunities to the English language learners to improve their writing, reading, and similarly, to read new text and phrases to improve their vocabulary. Social media brings learning outside the classroom autonomous, independent, motivational and fun. In 2007, the British Council has researched how the internet affects the learning style of English from young people

around the world. 69% of people feel effective learning when interacting informally. Something learned from a loved one will be more memorable in life than something learned while in class (Dalton, 2009).

Twitter

Among other social media, Twitter has become one of the biggest platforms used by internet users. Twitter is a social networking site which is used to communicate with other registered member through a short post of 140 characters called tweets. It is fastest, easy and a concise way to connect with others through a tweets of 140 words and can be easily read, followed, re-tweet, and clicked. It is known as real time multi-blogging platform where news crack first and it plays a vital role to make a new viral. It is trendy platform used by almost all famous personalities no matter in which field they are working, they are just tweeting about various topics and provide the best platform to interact with their followers and fans. Twitter gives a place where one can easily connect with favorite figures, brands and marketers. It is also provides safest environment. A verified twitter account should be used in order to prove you as trust worthy. Verified account makes sure about true identity and builds a trust relationship

with site and with other members. Unlike other social media platforms, Twitter also doesn't charge you for exclusivity which means you can follow every person whether it is your friend or Bill Gates. Twitter's search algorithm is also better than other social media platform which helps you to connect with relevant people easily.

K-pop

K-pop is short for Korean pop or Korean popular music, hence originating in Korea or South Korea to be specific. K-pop is basically a musical genre that consists of other genres such as electronic, hip-hop, rock and R&B music. The history of K-pop is vast, decades-old and an idea that has found inspiration from the leading names in the global music industry, especially American Pop culture.

K-pop has grown as a popular subculture on a global level. Credit should be given to the internet for making the K-pop culture a universal phenomenon. Internet, especially social media is the main platform of rapid growing K-pop popularity. K-pop has become a truly global phenomenon because it has distinctive blend of addictive melodies, slick choreography and production values, and an endless parade of attractive South Korean performers who spend years in grueling

studio systems learning to sing and dance in synchronized perfection (Romano, 2018).

K-pop has a perfect formula for visible and unique of pop music. K-pop has exceptionally high-quality performance mainly like perfectly synced danced, an extremely polished aesthetic, an creative method of studio production that churns out musical hits and multilingual songs to acquire a wider coverage for their art and performance (Ramon, 2018). For instance, high concept groups such as EXO promote music in Korean, and the same song is translated into other languages such as English and Mandarin.

All those perfect formulas in K-pop are not gained in just one night. It demands long time practice for idols to be a K-pop performer. Through highly competitive auditions, starting around ages 10 to 12, K-pop agency trains talented children into the K-pop regimen (Ramon, 2018). The children attend special schools where they take singing and dancing lessons; they learn how to moderate their public behavior and prepare for life as a pop star; they spend hours in daily rehearsals and perform in weekend music shows as well as special group performances. Through these performances, lucky kids can gain fan followings before they even officially

“debut.” Once an idol group has been trained to perfection, the studios generate pop songs for them, market them, put them on TV, send them on tour, and determine when they’ll next make their “comeback” — a term that usually signals a band’s latest album release, generally accompanied by huge fanfare, special TV appearances, and a totally new concept.

METHOD

This study uses descriptive qualitative method to analyze. According to Bogdan and Taylor (in Moleong, 2006:4), qualitative method is a research procedure that results descriptive data both written and spoken from someone or the attitude which can be examined. This theory is a foundation in identifying the problem and analyzing K-poppers’s attitude through K-pop tweets and the conducted interview

This case of study also used the term of research 2.0. The research 2.0 is becoming trend due to the use of technology and social media in teaching and learning process is needed to be studied. Ratri and Given (2010) viewed the concept of Research 2.0 is a focus to demystify this domain in Web 2.0 environment. It means that the researcher of Research 2.0 describe phenomenon of using Web 2.0 platform.

The subject of study is K-poppers which use Twitter as platform to express and explore their interest. The total number of K-pop tweets were taken from 20 K-poppers accounts but only about 10 K-poppers conducted the interview. They are 20s-30s K-poppers and come from some countries which use English as EFL. Most of participants are Indonesian Kpoppers and some are from Philippine, Vietnams and also Singapore.

In this study, data collection was taken by interview & poll to K-poper accounts. Observations and examination of K-pop tweet was conducted from K-pop news, comments, and interactions among K-pop community on Twitter. After the data collection procedures had been completed, the data were analyzed in order to answer the research. For analyzing data, the researcher had several data analysis technique such as reading all responses, sorting the data, organizing and analyzing the data and elaborating the analysis of the data to get the findings

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study resulted in two predominant themes. The first one is how K-pop stuffs stimulate English learning on Twitter and the second one is K-poppers's perspective toward English learning in K-

pop. Each of these findings is presented to K-poper's activity and behavior in their community by using English as a tool to communicate and their perception about English learning in their activity.

K-pop stuffs to stimulate English learning on Twitter:

Follow K-pop accounts

Most of K-pop accounts on Twitter use English to deliver their tweets. The first thing to do when K-poppers join Twitter is to follow account they are interested in. There are many K-pop accounts that post information, news, daily updates, discussion about K-pop which encourage K-poppers to practice English right there on Twitter. This is a great way to try out new words, because it's quick and they can get direct feedback.

There are some official K-pop artists, fanpage or fanbase accounts which are used to interact with their fans directly. Most of them use English in their tweets to communicate globally. Those accounts share interesting posts and something new for the fans so they will eager to get the meaning. It will make them opening the dictionary to find vocabularies they still do not know, reading the tweets in repeat to get the meaning and even replying or commenting to respond their favorite artists.



Figure 1. Popular and official K-pop accounts

Enter casual conversations & interact with idols

One of the best things about Twitter is that people can jump into any conversation. On Twitter, K-poppers can enter conversations that their friends are having, talks to other K-poper to discuss or get some information, or even ask for English advice from K-poppers who are native speakers. K-poppers usually encourage their

self to mention or tweet their favorite artists to get notice. They try hard to be able to communicate with their idols by tweeting some interesting stuffs, showing their loves, supports or asking question what they wonder. In these activities, there is writing process, grammar learning and enriching vocabularies they have done. Casual conversations or fun tweeting naturally stimulate their English skill.



Figure 2. Conversation and interaction of fans with their idols

Join a group of K-pop global community

Twitter is not just a good place for casual conversations. It's also a great place to connect to and learn from other people who have same interest with us. Even though people often use casual language online, you can learn some professional English on Twitter just by following news, finding blog posts and articles, and joining conversations in the field or industry in which you work or interest. If you're interested in K-pop, you can find some interesting articles by searching through hash tag or K-pop accounts. Through them, K-popers can get the link and connection to others, make a friend and create a group to share and discuss with them. They can communicate with their foreign friends, share info, and discuss daily update about their idols and more.

Most K-popers or fandom is noticeably ready to help each other out when it comes to comprehension. They help their fellow K-popers to understand a news article discussing their bias or if their idol posts something in their social media. Many Korean-American fans become fan translators to be a bridge of communication. International fans who don't know Korean rely on them for information. A fan translator should be very careful about the sources and the accuracy of translations. International fans that do not have English as their basic language get stimulated to understand about those translations. English is easier and faster to learn than Korea language because Korea has their own alphabet and more complicated language structure.



Figure 3. Accounts of K-pop community and K-pop translator

Expressing opinion in K-pop discussion

For enjoying K-pop, language is not a barrier. It is like another layer of cultural significance. English has always played a part in K-pop for those of us who want to join discussion or express their opinion about their idols. K-pop stimulates to think

and expression opinion in English when K-poper has a discussion forum. The desire to talk about their feeling stimulates them to get correct words or proper grammar. They do not want to shame their self in front of their fellow K-poper.



Figure 4.K-pop discussion on Twitter's comment section

Ask questions to native speakers and experts

Being a K-poper is required to master English because English is very important aspect to join their community. Twitter is all about conversations and Twitter also provides easy access to learn English. There are some English experts would be happy to help with English learning on Twitter. For example, Benny Lewis is the founder of the website Fluent. Twitter users can ask him for study tips, recommendations and other questions about English learning resources. Terry

Fredrickson is a former ESL teacher who now adapts news articles for English learners on Bangkok Post. He welcomes discussions about the articles he posts, so read an article and share your opinion or question. They can help you find learning resources or answer grammar questions.

Some useful hash tags to know for entering casual conversations also help to make English conversations and easily practice English. If they have some difficulties in grammar, they even can use hastag like #grammarhelp to ask for help in correcting your grammar. K-popers can also

tweet at (or mention) an English educational accounts to help English learners such as @LearnEnglish, @FluentUEnglish, @WoodwardEnglish, @EspressoEnglish

and more. Finding something you're interested in and find other people talking about it then join the conversation is natural way to improve and enrich English skill.



Figure 5. Twitter accounts of English education

K-poppers's perspective toward English learning in K-pop

This part presents K-poper's perspective about English learning through K-pop. The researcher posted the simple

poll on Twitter to know their general perspective whether K-pop stimulates them to learn English or not. And the poll result can be seen as follows:



Figure 6. The poll result on Twitter

There is 70% voters agree if K-pop stimulates them to learn English and 30% voters said no about this. It shows most of K-poppers feel that their interest of K-pop give a stimulation to learn or get know English more. Beside the poll, the researcher also asked them to give opinion in the comment section. There are some discussions and comments about their perspectives in stimulating English learning through their K-pop hobby. Their perspectives were written in the data as follows:

Excerpt 1: *Since I am a fangirl I have met international fans who like K-pop and I observe them. My communication skill improved and it gave me confidence to express more in English. I improve the most in my vocabulary.*

Excerpt 2: *For me it did. Akusuka Korea dari 2009.Ngikutinbanyakbanget program tv Korea yang ada bias ku, danwaktuitu sub indo nyarisnggaada. Mau nggamauakuharusngerti English danemangbelajarnyaadainonton variety show sama drama doang. Awalnya masih belajar karena lingkunganku bukan yang familiar atau casciscus bahasa inggris, dan pada akhirnya aku sampe benar-benar ngerasa ngga perlu sub indo asal ada english sub.*

Intinya sih ketika kita menikmati sesuatu kita pengen ngerti apapun tentang itu dan dalam kasus Korean Lovers ini, bahasa adalah hal yang paling esensial dan English benar-benar kaya jembatan penghubung antara Indonesia dan Korea.

Excerpt 3: *Aku kebetulan jurusan Bahasa Inggris jadi bisalah sebagai belajar. Kebetulan join twitter yang pada pakai bahasa inggris. So it helps a lot sih, dari vocab dan writing terutama. Cuma harus selective aja di twitter, karena banyak K-poper account yang bahasa inggrisnya ngasal. Untungnya aku ngefollow akun yang cukup oke, jadi yes, it helps me in some ways. Jadi lebih berani express myself in the form of writing.*

Excerpt 4: *Aku ngaruh sih, apalagi kalau baca artikel tentang bias sekarang sudah ngga keteteran cari kamus/buka google. Paling membantu banget ketika mau UN (ujian nasional) SMA dulu jadi ngga telmi. Ngefek banget, sekarang sudah terbiasa ngga kayak dulu. Apalagi di Twitter banyak banget cuwitan pake bahasa inggris jadi semakin membantu.”*

Excerpt 5: *Merasa agak improve karena mencoba writing pakai bahasa inggris di twitter. Yang improve banget malah di bagian slang words. Dan*

reading skill juga lumayan improve karena terbiasa baca artike lK-pop.”

Excerpt 6: *Efeknya lebih ke Reading skill, karena sering baca artikel-artikel berbahasa inggris tentang K-pop seperti Soompi atau All kpop. Juga akun-akun Twitter lain yang menyediakan banyak info Korea dalam bahasa inggris. Dan juga dari lirik lagu terjemahan bahasa inggris karena ingin tahu. Tapi karena saya lebih suka ke K-drama, lebih banyak dapat dari situ. Lewat subtitle bahasa inggris di K-drama.*

Excerpt 7: *Karena suka BTS jadi mengikuti banyak lagu dan shownya. Dan dari subtitle lagu atau show mereka jadi kosa kata baru cukup bertambah.*

Excerpt 8: *.....K-pop has not improved my English significantly but I guess it helped in thinking and expressing in English in discussion.”*

Excerpts 1-8 were the samples of K-poper’s perspective toward how K-pop stimulates them to learn English and improve their English skill, mainly in vocabulary and reading. It means that they had positive effects in English learning through K-pop. They also provided reasons why they agreed on those positive effects in

their English skill. Regarding to the data above, it could be inferred that K-popers took advantages of following K-pop by reading K-pop tweets or articles, tweeting K-pop stuffs in English, communicating with their favorite K-pop artists or finding out English subtitle in K-show or K-drama and many others.

Kikuchi and Otsuka in Alnujaidi (2017) stated “Social Network Sites facilitated dynamic communication, inside and outside the classroom, created sense of community and belonging, provided authentic exposure to English, and stimulated motivation to learn English in authentic fashion.” It was notable happened in K-pop community on Twitter. There is learning process happened in global K-pop community, subconsciously or not. The interest of K-pop stimulates K-popers to learn English more because English is the bridge of their favorite idol’s language and theirs. It is the way they communicate and get know more about their idols.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion the researcher can conclude that K-pop stimulates K-poper in learning English by tweeting & following K-pop stuffs on Twitter. The main factors that eagers them to learn English are an interest and curiosity to get information as

much as possible about their K-pop idols and stuffs. The implications that can be elaborated are the need of English skill to support their interest on K-pop. It demands self-learning in the process of improving their English skill because English is the bridge to connect them with their favorite idols.

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