

Perceptions and Attitudes of the Use of Mobile Phones in English Language Learning

Persepsi dan Sikap Penggunaan Telefon Bimbit dalam Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris

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ABSTRAK

Mobile Learning promotes learning strategies for 21st century as it is a human-centered approach which is a critical facet in the learning process. It generates opportunities to make meaning, build collaborative teams in a learning environment in tune with the demands of the ICT era of today. As a result, there is keen and wide interest towards Mobile Learning in many fields particularly, in education. The theoretical support for the use of mobile in learning includes the constructivist approach to learning. This paper provides a critical discussion on the attitudes and perceptions of the use of Mobile phones in learning and suggestions for language learning improvements to meet needs of current and future students.

Keywords: mobile learning, language learning, efficiency, constructivist approach, effectiveness

ABSTRACT

Pembelajaran mudah alih menggalakkan strategi pembelajaran untuk abad ke-21 kerana ia adalah satu pendekatan yang berpusatkan manusia yang merupakan aspek penting dalam proses pembelajaran. Ia menjana peluang untuk membuat makna, membina pasukan kerjasama dalam persekitaran pembelajaran yang selaras dengan tuntutan era ICT masa kini. Hasilnya, terdapat minat yang mendalam dan luas ke arah pembelajaran mobile dalam pelbagai bidang terutamanya dalam bidang pendidikan. Sokongan teori bagi penggunaan mudah alih dalam pembelajaran termasuk pendekatan konstruktivisme kepada pembelajaran. Kertas ini menyediakan perbincangan kritikal pada sikap dan persepsi penggunaan telefon bimbit dalam pembelajaran dan cadangan untuk penambahbaikan bahasa pembelajaran dengan keperluan bertemu pelajar semasa dan akan datang.

Kata kunci: *pembelajaran mudah alih, pembelajaran bahasa, efisien, pendekatan konstruktif, keberkesanan*

1. Introduction

The Mobile phones serve a multitude of purposes inside and outside the classroom, particularly for students in higher education (Chen & Denoyelles, 2013). It is a crucial device as the typical student spends between eight and ten hours a day on his mobile phones (Roberts & Williams, 2016). The activities for university students involve texting, email, Facebook, web browsing, and listening to music and watching videos. The list increases as new apps provide a variety of services for students. Students' lives rely on mobile phones as there is inherent need for students to have leisure, to stay connected and always be updated

(Cohan, 2016). Therefore, it is important to analyse the users' attitudes or acceptance of mobile phones in learning and it is important to investigate the factors affecting the attitude towards mobile learning by students at higher education institutions. (Kulsku, 2007; Deniz Mertkan et al., 2018).

In this era, there has been increased interest in mobile devices and their use for instructional purposes in education due to the expansion of wireless networks, improved power and capacity of next generation mobile phones. The daily lives of people have changed in line with the need for communication devices for social and technical purposes. Mobile phones have come to the fore with studies underlining that mobile learning typically occurs inside and outside the classroom, particularly among students in higher education (Chen & Denoyelles, 2013). Consequently, advancement in information and communication technologies and beyond present unlimited opportunities for learning. Mobile technologies, broadens the boundaries of learning beyond the classroom through flexible, anywhere-anytime digital applications. mobile technologies have pushed mobile learning (m-learning) to the fore (Sharples, 2000), This allows students to access mobile technologies regardless of time, space and location. Generally, people access the Internet, play games, listen to music or watch videos in formal or informal circumstances.

It must be stressed that mobile devices are preferred for data storage or access to information through course materials in i-folios, e-books or Internet (Sarrab, 2015).

In short, Kukulska-Hulme (2007) states that successful development of mobile learning depends on human factors in the use of new mobile and wireless technologies. For instance, Communication is a vital aspect for social cohesion purposes as people communicate, share ideas and information in groups or learn from different peoples across cultures. Learning using M.L is crucial in learning in classrooms and beyond. Language learning, particularly, demands that learners be able to communicate and interact proficiently.

Mobile learning refers to the use of mobile devices for the purpose of learning. Ally (2009) describes m-learning as the process of using a mobile device to access and study learning materials to communicate with fellow students, instructors or institution (Ally, 2009; Ali & Irvine, 2009). Besides this, other definitions focused on mobility and nomadism of current students (O'Malley et al., 2003; Shon, 2008). According to Molenet, learning with mobile phones relates to the exploitation of ubiquitous handheld technologies, combined with wireless and mobile phone networks, to facilitate, support, and extend the reach of teaching and learning. It can be executed in any location, irrespective of time, in any learning environments such as classrooms at home and in community locations. They include mobile phones, smartphones, PDAs, MP3/ MP4 players (e.g. iPods), and specialist portable technologies used in science labs and other places of study.

It must be noted that there is no simplistic definition of mobile learning, partly due to the fact that the field is constantly in the process of evolution. Besides this, mobility needs to be not only spatial movement but also time-shifting and boundary-crossing elements (Traxler, 2009; Swan & Kratcoski, 2007). In spite of its wide spread use and being at most people's fingertips, impact on education needs to increase. Most learners have mobile phones, thus, we need technologies to be used to the maximum. However, when seen from a learners' perspective, a definition of mobile learning becomes clearer as people utilise a variety of words concerning the nature of mobile learning as it has been categorised as spontaneous, private, portable and situated. It is for this reason, educators are developing theoretical conceptions of the potential of mobile devices to bring about new methods of learning and creating team work and promoting engagement in learning.

The underlying theory for the use of mobile phones in learning is the Constructivist theory introduced by Vygotsky (1978) explains the way people acquire knowledge through experience. Vygotsky in his holistic and cognitive point of view describes knowledge

development by underlining that there are many mediums that are used to build understanding such as the four skills in English. Vygotsky's constructivist focuses on how the individual processes and relates new information to information that they already know. Constructive learning requires learners to be active and responsible for their learning. Self-regulatory strategies should be used in their learning; and the goals that they intend to achieve must be planned out by the learner. Besides this, learners have to make their own decisions and strategise the steps they have to undertake to achieve their goals. Third, constructivists believe that experience is the best teacher in the form of personal meaning. Thus, learners must indulge in reflective and critical thinking skills either individually or in learning teams. Social constructivists believe that learning occurs when there is brain-storming, having question and answer sessions and meaning negotiation in groups. The core of the philosophy of learning is when meaning is developed. Jonassen, Peck, and Wilson (1999) argue that the process of meaning making is also known as the period of constructing knowledge. They contend that technology is the necessary mindtool, with which to engage and facilitate learners' thinking and learners' knowledge construction. The learning environment must promote active, constructive, cooperative, real-life, and intentional learning. The characteristics of m-learning align with the tenets of constructivism. For example, the learner-centered approach and the skills required for knowledge construction enable demands autonomous learning. Technology can support the connection among learners, in a ubiquitous way as computing technology is an on-demand learning tool and provide when-needed assistance to learners.

In Constructivist learning, new ideas or concepts are built upon utilising previous and current knowledge (Bruner, 1966). Learners play an active role and are transformed from passive recipients of information given by their tutors to active constructors of knowledge. Instructors should instead encourage students to be part of collaborative entities, brainstorming and discussing while using technological tools to work with as they discover information and points for their tasks. Consequently, mobile phones allow learners to participate in a holistic system with their own mobile devices. To sum up, constructivist theory in M-Learning. The application of constructivist theory in the classroom stimulates students' interest in learning, making it possible to apply their knowledge to practice in their real life. Moreover, constructivist theory contributes to the great improvement of teachers' teaching methods and students' learning ability more effectively (Zhou & Wang, 2016).

The benefits of mobile phones comprise the availability of affordable, portable mobile phones and the increasing number of similarly portable, and widespread wireless devices. By using mobile technology, students can also easily and quickly access and utilise learning materials anytime, anywhere. Besides this, the use of mobile phones are aligned with strategic educational goals which are improving student retention and achievement, facilitating differences in learning needs, and reaching out to learners who would not otherwise have the opportunity to take part in learning due to disability or geographical location faraway from schools. (Kukulka-Hulme et al., 2005). Researchers also discovered that with mobile phones, students can have much interaction with instructors and their peers. This allows cooperation, sharing and engagement and it must be noted that these devices are part of the students' everyday life, besides this, language games are popular among youth such as *Explorezis* which is an augmented reality game which is popular among university students who can interact with peers while using their phones, utilising characters and physical items. Students also can go through different locations utilising their mobile phones at their university campus as they practise French language skills (Perry, 2015).

Some studies conducted in the past found that university students generally have a positive attitude towards the use of mobile devices in education and mobile learning (Al-Fahad, 2009; Ozdamli & Uzunboylu, 2015; Liaw & Huang, 2015; Elcicek & Bahceci, 2015).

Sarac's study (2014) also concludes highly positive attitudes by candidate of instructional technologists.

1.1 Research objective

- i. What are students' attitudes and perceptions towards the use of mobile phones in learning English language?

2. Method

This study focused on quantitative method in which questionnaires were conducted. Two aspects that were looked into; students' perception and attitude toward the use of mobile phone in learning English language among undergraduates from Faculty Social Science and Humanities (FSSK). The questionnaires were distributed through Google Form to FSSK students who were between 19 to 25 years old. Also, the students were from different courses and their first language was not English language. One hundred students' responses were used in the study. The quantitative data were analysed by using manual calculation to get the statistic based on the questions provided.

This study adopted a quantitative approach analyse students' attitude and perception toward mobile phones. A questionnaire was developed to measure students' perception and attitudes towards the use of mobile phones in learning English Language. A five points Likert Scale with strongly agree; agree; neutral; disagree; and strongly disagree, was used in the questionnaire to find out to what extent the students believed mobile phone could help them improve their English skills.

The questionnaire consisted three main parts which are Section A, Section B, and Section C. Section A is to collect demographic background about the students such as gender, age, year of study, and MUET band. Section B represented 10 questions about students' perception towards the use of mobile phone in learning English language. While Section C represented 12 questions about students' attitude towards the use of mobile phone in learning English language. This questionnaire was given to students to help getting better and deep understanding of their background, perceptions, and attitudes towards M-learning. The purpose of this questionnaire was to increase reliability and validity to this study.

A total of 10 questions were given to answer the perceptions section while 12 questions were given to answer the attitudes section. The data collected was done manually and calculated to get the percentage of each questions provided. The data collected was processed and counts manually. Microsoft Excel was used to get the accurate percentages and to insert table for each of the sections.

3. Results

3.1 Students' Perception towards the use of Mobile Phone in Learning English Language

3.1.1 Efficiency of M-Learning

From the table 1, a total of 35 students (35%) agreed that it is easier to access online lectures by using mobile phone. This is because regardless of place, students can still access online lectures anywhere even when they are outside of the classroom. Students can easily download slides, audio files, or anything pertaining their learning as long as they have internet connectivity. As agreed by 31% of the students, they believe that using mobile phone will

increase the flexibility to learn inside and outside of the classroom. However, there is just a slight difference with strongly agreed scale which is 30%. It can be seen that most of the students preferred to use their mobile phones inside and outside of the classroom as it can be done anytime, anywhere. This would make their learning process easier and flexible.

TABLE 1. Student's Perception Towards the Use of Mobile Phone in Learning English Language

Number of Questions	Likert-scale (%)				
	5	4	3	2	1
1. Implementing M-learning will enable me to have independent learning.	19	32	27	16	6
2. Using mobile phone has more positive effects than negative effects.	13	25	39	18	5
3. Mobile learning can be an effective method of learning as it can give immediate supports.	19	38	18	17	8
4. I think it is easier to access online lectures by using mobile phone.	25	35	15	16	9
5. I think that using mobile phone will help me to improve my English language.	27	35	17	10	11
6. I believe that using mobile phone will increase the flexibility to learn inside and outside of the classroom.	30	31	15	15	9
7. I think by implementing and using M-learning as a part of learning process will make the learning process easier and more enjoyable.	26	36	14	15	9
8. M-learning is more efficient than traditional learning.	19	22	34	17	8
9. Using mobile phone for learning English language will save my time.	22	35	17	17	9
10. It is more convenient to search information by using mobile phone.	42	24	8	14	12

Subsequently, 42% of students strongly agreed that it is more convenient to search information by using mobile phone compared to when using computer or laptop. For instance, when students immediately want to search for information, they can just do the searching right away by using mobile phone in one click. Students bring their mobile phone everywhere and everyday as their daily basis. In addition, using mobile will also help students to save their time as agreed by 35% of them. Hence, the mobile phones are convenient and accessible to be used to get information in no time.

3.1.2 Effectiveness of M-Learning

The results also indicated that 32% of the students believed that by implementing M-learning will enable them to undergo independent learning. Most of the students believe that the use of mobile phones in learning will help them improve their academic achievement. For instance, students can record themselves on their mobile phones when completing a speaking task to improve their speaking skills. Then, they can listen back and compare their performance with a model answer. Hence, students can reflect on which part should they improve better. Students can download online lecturers and do revision anywhere easily at their own pace. This could be an effective method to get the students engage with the learning even when they are outside of the classroom.

Moreover, 36% of the students agreed that by implementing and using M-learning using mobile phones will make the learning process easier and more enjoyable. This is

because mobile phones offer various applications that have potential for providing supplementary source that could enhance students' learning and knowledge. Also, some of the applications have online quizzes that provide an explanation for each of the answers given. Thus, students could have better understanding of their learning based on the explanations provided. Taking advantages of this mobile technology could help students to engage better in their learning and consequently help them to improve their English language as agreed by 35% of them.

However, despite of all the benefits of M-learning, results showed that students put down neutral regarding the effectiveness of the M-learning. 39% of the students felt put the neutral response when asked whether using mobile phone has more positive effects than negative effects while 34% of them responded 'neutral' that M-learning is more efficient than traditional learning. This is because, even though there are numerous benefits of M-learning, most of the students believed that traditional learning is still essential in order to get in-depth knowledge inside of the classroom.

Regarding the first objective of this study where it was aimed to find out students' perception towards the use of mobile phone in learning English language, most of the students have a positive perception towards M-learning. Students believe that the use of mobile phones could benefit their learning in many ways. For instance, they use mobile phones as a supplementary source, improve their academic achievement, and easy access to online lectures. Although few of the students still feel the need for traditional learning in the institutions, they also prefer the use of mobile phones as a new way of learning style which is more different and exciting.

3.2 Student's Attitude Towards the use of Mobile Phone in Learning English Language

As can be seen from Table 1, there are 12 statements given to examine the students' attitude towards M-learning. Students were required to answer each of the questions based on the scale.

TABLE 2. Students' Attitude towards Mobile Phone in Learning English Language

Number of Questions	Likert-scale (%)				
	5	4	3	2	1
1. Using mobile phone in learning English language makes me more productive.	25	33	17	18	7
2. I find the use of mobile phone enhances my learning process.	31	34	11	17	7
3. My vocabulary acquisition has increased because of text messages written in English.	27	37	17	11	8
4. My vocabulary acquisition has increased because of my mobile phone dictionary.	22	37	16	15	10
5. My motivation is enhanced by the use of mobile phone inside and outside of the classroom.	25	29	25	13	8
6. I believe the use of mobile phone in learning English language is very effective.	33	31	14	14	8
7. Mobile learning will improve the communication between students and teachers.	23	36	17	16	8
8. I find that it is easier writing and receiving messages in English language.	34	30	15	14	7
9. I plan better in my learning using mobile phone rather than not using it.	22	27	26	18	7
10. I become more enthusiastic when learning English language using mobile phone.	22	26	27	17	8

11. I spend more than 1 hour using mobile phone when learning English language.	18	25	28	22	7
12. I prefer using online dictionary over printed dictionary.	32	21	17	16	14

3.2.1 Effectiveness of M-Learning

From the table above, 33% percent of the students strongly agreed that using m-learning is very effective. This is because majority of the students (33%) found that using m-learning make them more productive in learning English. Most of the students felt that using mobile phone is suited for their everyday needs such as communication, reference, work, and including learning.

3.2.2 Vocabulary Acquisition through M-Learning

High percentages of students stated that they felt their vocabulary acquisition has increased after using the mobile phones to learn English language (37%). It seems that they prefer to type their messages in English language when communicating with their friends. Besides, students can also practice their writing skills in English when they get used of writing text in English language. Meanwhile, the mobile phones often contain auto correct applications which in turns can help them to learn the corrected form of English spellings and structures. The study also revealed that the students felt that it is easier to write and receive messages in English language (37%). One of the factors is that, the mobile phone language was set up in English language.

Furthermore, in mobile phones, they could install their own dictionary application that they can refer to often. This can be seen where 21% students agreed that they use the mobile phone dictionary to increase their vocabulary acquisition. The existence of dictionary application makes the searching for words a speedy process. They can check the spellings faster than using physical dictionary. One advantage of the mobile phone application is that, there are mobile dictionary applications that can be accessed online. This benefit student where even without internet connection, they still could learn new vocabularies.

The preferences on the usage of mobile dictionary is apparent when most of them strongly agreed (32%) that they very much prefer to use the mobile dictionary compared to printed dictionary. There are many inconveniences when using printed version of dictionary. The printed version is much heavier, larger and limited. It is hard for students to bring the printed dictionary everywhere. Moreover, the printed version is so expensive. Therefore, many students opted to use the mobile version as it is often free and even the premium version is not always as expensive as the printed version.

3.2.3 Motivation in Learning English Language through M-Learning

Most of them stated that their learning process is enhanced through the usage of mobile phones (34%). Their learning process is driven by their motivation to learn. This motivation helps them to engage in continuous learning process. One of the reasons that makes them motivated is that the convenience of the mobile phone. The students can use their personal mobile phones whether they are inside or outside the classroom. When learning is accessible everywhere, they feel more enthusiastic learning English language using mobile phone (26%).

However, the percentage of neutral is still one percent higher (27%) in question 10. This means that, for some of the students, such convenience still would not determine their

preferences to learn English language. The convenience could be used for non-learning purposes such as surfing the social media or playing online games. Certain students do not really use the mobile devices for learning purposes as they easily get distracted with the existing social media applications, for instance Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook.

It can be seen in statement 10 that, the percentages show both neutral and agreed statement are almost at the same level. However, viewing this positively, many of the students still agree that they felt motivated about M-learning. In contrast, although they felt motivated, the question 11 demonstrated the findings differently. 22% of the students disagree that they learn English language more than 1 hour using mobile phone. This is followed by 25% who agreed and 28% neutral. This distribution of data indicates that although students felt motivated learning English language using mobile phone, they still hesitate to learn English language for a long period of time because they spend a lot of time socialising through social media.

Looking at this matter positively, perhaps students used to learn English language when needed. For example, when they encounter new words, or they tried to spell check before they proceed with typing some sentences.

3.2.4 Communication between Teachers and Students through M-Learning

When communication is urgent, then messages can be sent quickly and instant responses can be obtained. in M-learning., Mobile phone tasks can be done quickly and with ease as can be seen from the question 7, students agreed that M-learning will improve the communication between teachers and students (36%). Teachers need to record absentees from information based on using text messages. The students can inform their attendance prior to the class and teachers can instruct students for further actions to be taken.

Another advantage is teachers can post any home-work, references, tasks and even make online discussion with their peers. Pertaining to using M-learning in learning English language, they can constantly interact with other students regardless of time and places.

Another matter to highlight is, while they gain many outcomes of the M-learning, the mobile phones help them in better planning in learning. 22% of them strongly agreed followed by 27% of agreed and 26% of neutral. It shows that although they could have proper planning using mobile phone, some of them still felt neutral. Positively, it keeps them on track with their time table, their submission of tasks, and further discussion with their teachers.

4. Conclusion

An effective m-learning using mobile phones can be achieved if the elements of constructivism are organised and conducted in a comprehensive and vigorous way ((Park, 2011; Ozdamli & Cavus, 2011). There must be the provision of user-friendly interface so students can navigate from one lesson to another (Alshalabi & Elleithy, 2012). Students should be given ample learning opportunities to support active learning practices in order for students' attitudes and perceptions towards mobile learning be positive (Sung & Mayer, 2013). Instructors, learners, content, and institutions must work together holistically so technology can be accepted. Attitudes and perceptions of instructors, learners must support an effective design, development, and management of language learning for the success of mobile phone usage.

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