

Mobile learning in teaching writing: Are Malaysian pre-service teachers ready?

Arlina Ahmad Zaki
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

Dr. Melor Md Yunus
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

Abstract

This study discusses the mobile learning readiness among Malaysian pre-service teachers to teach writing. It is a mixed-method study where a questionnaire and group interview was conducted to a total of 28 ESL pre-service teachers from the same institution. This paper focuses on basic readiness, skills readiness, psychological readiness, budget readiness and teaching readiness to find out if pre-service teachers are ready to use mobile learning to teach writing skill. The findings revealed that the pre-service teachers are ready to use mobile learning in every aspect but are not keen to use it to teach writing. It was also found out that mobile learning is more preferred to be integrated with other skills like listening, speaking and reading as compared to writing skill. This study implicates that mobile learning in teaching writing is not being explored enough because even at the early stage of pre-service, teachers are more interested to use mobile learning for other skills and not writing.

Keywords: mobile learning, writing skill, readiness, pre-service teachers

1. Introduction

Despite learning English for 11 years at school, Malaysian students' English language is still low and it is hindering them to be truly successful in tertiary level and from various job opportunities. Hamidah, Fisher and Rich (2014) agree with this statement where they mentioned that there are many qualified Malaysian fresh graduates who are not proficient in English. The deteriorating standards of English among Malaysian students can be a big problem as it prohibits the nation's vision of 2020. Out of the four skills students have to acquire when learning English, writing proves to be the most challenging for most.

Even teachers find that teaching writing is more challenging compared to the other skills like speaking, listening and reading (Sarala, et al., 2015; Nooreiny and Mazlin, 2013). Rashidah (2005) concurs saying that despite learning English for many years, Malaysian students remain weak in English, especially when it comes to their writing skills. Even though writing can be a great challenge in both mother tongue and second language, Nooreiny and Mazlin (2013) says that Malaysian students have trouble with writing skill the most as many are not able to accomplish mediocre written tasks in satisfactory ways. Ghabool, et al., (2012) added that Malaysian teachers confirm the many problems present in writing development, especially in conventions and punctuations. Noriah et al. (2012) also reveals that students' attitude towards their writing task also plays a role to be successful in writing. This is why teachers are urged to come up with innovative and interesting ways to encourage students to participate in their writing tasks in hopes for improvement.

Due to this, the government developed a new National Education Blueprint (2013-2025) which offers a vision to transform the education system. One of the shifts is on the usage of Information

and Communication Technology (ICT) where the ministry has invested approximately six billion for education initiatives. However, according to the National Education Blueprint (2013-2025), 80% of teachers use ICT for less than an hour in a week. ICT in education normally comprises the usage of mobile technologies like mobile phones, PDAs, laptops, tablets, and other different kinds of mobile devices (Tetard, Patokorpi and Carlsson, 2008). However with today's gen-Y, Colley and Stead (2004) indicated that mobile phones are a common communication tool for young adults aged 16-24. This is true for Malaysian students of all levels seem to own a mobile device. It could be because mobile phones are usually less expensive compared to laptops. Thus, it is possible to use mobile phones as a part of students' learning as the technology is familiar, personal, and used at every waking moment for other activities and social settings (Traxler, 2009).

Since mobile phones are considered suitable for education (Valk et al., 2010) it would make sense for teachers to turn to mobile learning and use it as an alternative to teach writing. This is supported by Norazah et al (2010) who said that the change cannot be avoided as mobile technologies have its own advantages. Yet, Litchfield et al (2007) have identified gaps within the mobile learning literature and proposed that further mobile learning research is much needed especially in writing. This gap is evident when Burston (2013) did a bibliography of 345 publications pertaining mobile learning from 1994 to 2012. Out of all the publications, less than 5% were about mobile learning used for writing skill.

Thus, this study identified a gap in the area of mobile learning in teaching writing. This study attempts to address this gap by exploring whether pre-service teachers are ready to use mobile learning to teach writing.

2. Methods

2.1 Design

The aim of this research is to explore the research problem as writing skills are not normally used as a teaching and learning tool in mobile learning. This aim is achieved by finding out pre-service teachers' readiness to use mobile learning in general and to know what are their personal opinions on integrating mobile learning to teach writing. In order to do so, a mixed methodology is used to triangulate the data. According to Ponce and Pagán-Maldonado (2015), a mixed method study is when the researcher intentionally combines both quantitative and qualitative approaches as components of the research. The researcher begins with quantitative approach to collect data and find out pre-service teachers' readiness to use mobile learning. Then, from this survey, the data is used to conduct the semi-structured interview which is considered as a qualitative approach. The researcher is able to triangulate both kinds of data as they point to the same direction of the research problem (Ponce and Pagán-Maldonado, 2015).

2.2 Participants

The population chosen for this study are 28 undergraduate ESL pre-service teachers from the same local institution of higher learning. There are 27 female students and only 1 male student.

ESL pre-service teachers were chosen for this study because mobile learning can only be implemented effectively in writing classes if the teachers themselves believe that it can be of positive influence towards students' language learning. Thus, it is important to ensure teachers know how to integrate mobile learning in their writing classes successfully. It makes common sense to instil the importance of this issue at the pre-service teachers level for they will bring in the positive attitude of using mobile learning in the future with students in their respective schools.

This statement is agreed by Teo (2008) who says that the importance of technology integration in classrooms should be done during the pre-service teacher's level or otherwise, we will produce

future teachers with underdeveloped skills to integrate and embrace technology in schools. Peacock (2001) concurs as well saying that it is important to work on pre-service teachers' mistaken beliefs as it could influence their teaching style as well as their future students' willingness to embrace different kinds of teaching methodology in language learning.

2.3 Procedure

This study took approximately three weeks to complete. The researcher meets the pre-service teachers at their institution and a room was used to collect data. First, the pre-service teachers were instructed on how to fill out the questionnaire. Every item in the survey was explained and participants were able to clarify any kind of confusion regarding the questionnaire. No personal information was needed in this survey to keep anonymity. This survey covers both mobile learning readiness in general and the readiness to use mobile learning to teach where writing skill is being focused. Once the data is collected, descriptive statistic was used to determine pre-service teachers' readiness to integrate mobile learning with teaching writing. After analyzing the questionnaire's data, 10 of the pre-service teachers were called again where a semi-structured interview was held to get more information.

The questionnaire was used to identify pre-service teachers' readiness towards mobile learning in general and their acceptance to integrate mobile learning into teaching writing. The semi-structured interview is based on the questionnaire's outcome where respondents' provide more detailed information in relation to integrating mobile learning and teaching writing. The respondents are also to give their personal opinions on this subject.

2.4 The questionnaire

This inventory survey was developed by Supyan, et al. (2012) where in their study, they wanted to know if it was possible to integrate Mobile Learning at Institutions of Higher Learning in Malaysia as there was an increasing number of mobile phone owners. In order to do so, they wanted to learn students' readiness on Mobile Learning from two different Universities. This survey focuses on four aspects:

- Basic Readiness
- Skills Readiness
- Psychological Readiness
- Budget Readiness.

The survey uses a five-point Likert Scale with Strongly Agree, Agree, Strongly Disagree, Disagree and not applicable.

For the purpose of this research, the questionnaire was adapted to include pre-service teachers' readiness on using Mobile Learning for Teaching where the focus is more on teaching writing to answer the research question. Prior to the actual survey, the instrument was checked for face and content validity by an expert who is a senior lecturer in a local institution of higher learning.

2.5 The Semi-Structured Interview

As part of the data triangulation, a semi-structured group interview was held a week after the questionnaire. Ten respondents were chosen randomly and their answers were transcribed. Their names were changed and replaced with pseudonyms to avoid any kind of conflict. The questions from interview serves like a continuation of the questionnaire. Based on the data collected, questions are formed to know more in depth of the respondent's personal opinion on the subject. The researcher also poses questions based on the participants' reply and further similar questions based on their opinions of using mobile learning to teach writing and their perceptions towards

mobile learning. The interview also helped to get further information on respondents' exposure towards mobile learning in teaching writing.

3. Results

The participants for this study answered a questionnaire to analyse their readiness in using mobile learning. This questionnaire has five objectives: 1) Basic Readiness; 2) Skills Readiness; 3) Psychological Readiness; 4) Budget Readiness; and 5) Mobile Learning for Teaching Readiness. Below are the findings and discussions based on the questionnaire.

3.1 Questionnaire for Mobile Learning Readiness

3.1.1 Basic Readiness

(Table 1 Mobile Learning Readiness Survey for Basic Readiness)

Question	Yes	No
	<i>N (%)</i>	<i>N (%)</i>
1. Do you have a mobile phone?	28 (100)	0 (0)
2. Does your mobile phone have 3G service?	28 (100)	0 (0)
3. Does your mobile have WiFi?	28(100)	0 (0)
4. Does your mobile phone have MMS service?	24 (85.7)	4 (14.3)
5. Does your mobile phone have a video call service?	25 (89.3)	3 (10.7)
6. Have you ever used a video call?	12 (42.9)	16 (57.1)
7. Does your mobile phone have a memory card that can store digital files?	28 (100)	0 (0)

The most essential and basic part of mobile learning is to ensure all of the participants have smartphones with internet data or able to access internet via WiFi. These two requirements are essential as mobile learning cannot take place without them and the participant would be left behind. This is supported by Mehdipour and Zerehkafi (2013) who says that even though mobile learning has a few different definitions like u-learning, ubiquitous learning, and personalized learning to name a few; the one definition that is accepted by all is when a learner creates learning opportunities by using mobile devices. The data collection shows that all 28 participants have mobile phones with 3G services and WiFi; which means that all of the participants have the basic readiness to start mobile learning.

Majority of the participants have also used other features of the smartphone like Multimedia Messaging Service (MMS) and video calls where each has a majority percentage of 85.7% and 89.3% accordingly. This shows that the participants have these features in their phones and actively use it for sending pictures and videos which can be used as a part of mobile learning. All 100% of the participants also have memory cards in their phones for information or media storage. These phone features may be trivial to some but according to Veerabhadram and Lombard (2015), the overall design of a mobile phone is important because when the learner faces constraints like limited memory space or processing power, it affects the functionality and the user interface.

3.1.2 Skills Readiness

(Table 2 Mobile Learning Readiness Survey for Skills Readiness I)

Have you used your mobile phone to read / open up the following files?	Yes	No
	N (%)	N (%)
1. Word document	25 (89.3)	3 (10.7)
2. PDF document	28 (100)	0 (0)
3. Excel Document	13 (46.4)	15 (53.6)
4. PowerPoint Document	25 (89.3)	3 (10.7)
5. Video files	28 (100)	0 (0)
6. Audio files	28 (100)	0 (0)
7. Photos and graphics	28 (100)	0 (0)

This part of the questionnaire is to ensure participants' smartphone is able to open up certain files which can be used in mobile learning and also the skills they have in using their smartphones for other than the basic utilities. All 28 of them or 100% are able to open PDF documents, videos, audios, photos and graphics. As for the other files, majority of the participants are able to open Word document (89.3%) and PowerPoint document (89.3%). However, only 46.4% are able to access Excel Documents in their smartphones. The data also shows that majority of the pre-service teachers use their phones for other than entertainment purposes by opening files like the Word Document, Excel Document and PowerPoint Document. This finding is similar to Park and Slater's study in 2014 where they found that students use various smartphone functions to read and write.

It is no surprise that that most of the pre-service teachers have the skills to utilize the different software and files in their phone. This is proven by Duncan-Howell and Lee (2007) who says that in today's generation, students are considered as digital natives because they have unlimited access to technology causing them to be familiar with even new technologies as they possess digital fluency.

(Table 3 MALL Readiness Survey for Skills Readiness II)

Can your phone...	Yes	No
	N (%)	N (%)
1. Send and receive emails via your mobile phone?	28 (100)	0 (0)
2. Download files from the internet using your mobile phone	28 (100)	0 (0)
3. Send and receive 3G files to other people	28 (100)	0 (0)
4. Access social network applications like:		
Facebook	28 (100)	0 (0)
Twitter	20 (71.4)	8 (28.6)
Instagram,	27 (96.4)	1 (3.6)
WhatsApp	28 (100)	0 (0)

Table 4.3 shows that 100% of the participants are able to utilize their emails, download files like pictures or videos from the internet, and send, receive, and open up different kinds of 3G files. This shows that all of the pre-service teachers are digitally literate as they have the skills to use their phones for other than basic purposes (Dalal and Bassam, 2012).

All of the participants also use at least two social network applications. It has been known that even social media plays a part in mobile learning and has benefits of establishing relationships, creating and sharing information, and providing support in an educational context (Chen, 2015; Hysten, 2015; Dalal & Bassam, 2012).

3.1.3 Psychological Readiness

(Table 4 Mobile Learning Readiness Survey for Psychological Readiness I)

Statement	SD	D	A	SA	NA
	<i>N (%)</i>	<i>N (%)</i>	<i>N (%)</i>	<i>N (%)</i>	<i>N (%)</i>
1. I know what MALL is all about	0 (0)	6 (21.4)	17 (60.7)	5 (17.9)	0 (0)
2. I want to know more about MALL	0 (0)	0 (0)	15 (53.6)	13 (46.4)	0 (0)
3. I am looking forward to engage in MALL	0 (0)	5 (17.9)	13 (46.4)	9 (32.1)	1 (3.6)

Table 4 shows participants' psychological readiness on mobile learning. Majority of the participants know what mobile learning is about where 78.6% gives positive responses. It is not surprising that more than half of the participants know about mobile learning because according to Hsu (2015) there is a significant increase in mobile learning research as well as the use of mobile devices in educational context over these recent years.

All of the participants agree that they would like to know more about mobile learning. This psychological readiness to know more about mobile learning is important as it shows the pre-service teachers are more open towards integrating mobile learning rather than dismiss the idea totally. It is important for teachers to have the right mind set when adopting mobile learning so that they can encourage students to use their mobile for educational purposes rather than using it passively (Humes et al, 2010).

This can be seen clearly when 78.1% are eager to be engaged in mobile learning. This finding concurs with Supyan, et al. (2012) study where it was found that students are willingly ready to integrate mobile learning.

(Table 5 Mobile Learning Readiness Survey for Psychological Readiness II)

Statement	SD	D	A	SA	NA
	<i>N (%)</i>	<i>N (%)</i>	<i>N (%)</i>	<i>N (%)</i>	<i>N (%)</i>
4. MALL is an alternative to web based learning	0 (0)	1 (3.6)	19 (67.9)	8 (28.6)	0 (0)
5. MALL is an alternative to conventional learning	0 (0)	1 (3.6)	17 (60.7)	7 (25)	3 (10.7)

6. I prefer conventional learning than MALL	0 (0)	6 (21.4)	18 (64.3)	4 (14.3)	0 (0)
7. I think MALL is good for working adults who are pursuing their higher education	0 (0)	3 (10.7)	14 (50)	11 (39.3)	0 (0)

When asked if mobile learning is an alternative to web-based learning and conventional learning, majority of them gave positive responses at 96.5% and 85.7% respectively. This shows that pre-service teachers agree that mobile learning can help to enhance students' learning. One of the reasons why mobile learning is being used in education is because it promotes ubiquitous learning (Samsiah, et al., 2013; Valarmathi, 2011). In fact, with search engines such as Google available as a phone application, the accessibility makes it clear why the majority feels that mobile learning can be an alternative to web-based and conventional learning.

Yet, despite the positive turnout for those who think that mobile learning can be an alternative, majority of the participants prefer conventional learning than mobile learning where 78.6% agrees. Even though this sounds more like a negative setback, mobile learning was never meant to replace conventional learning. It is merely used as a tool to further enhance teaching and learning experiences (Samsiah, et al., 2013)

Another reason why some of the pre-service teachers are not so keen to engage in mobile learning is because 89.3% of them agree that mobile learning is good for working adults who are pursuing their higher education. This shows that the pre-service teachers feel that mobile learning is unsuitable to be used by students in schools; which could cause them to explore mobile learning less in the future. This could be true because although there have been a lot of studies on mobile learning, the pedagogical advantage that comes with mobile learning is more suitable for higher education. For example blended learning, flipped classroom, interactive learning and many more are usually described for tertiary level (Bishop & Verleger, 2013; Supyan, et al., 2012). However, to achieve the National Education Blueprint's (2013-2025) aim of increasing the use of ICT, educators in schools can always adapt mobile learning to suit their needs because students cannot fulfill their language learning needs from being in the classroom alone (Ehsan et al, 2014).

(Table 6 Mobile Learning Readiness Survey for Psychological Readiness III)

Statement	SD	D	A	SA	NA
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
8. I would like my lecturer to integrate MALL in my class in addition to face-to-face meetings in the class	0 (0)	6 (21.4)	12 (42.9)	10 (35.7)	0 (0)

9. Some of my lecturers are already integrating MALL in their teaching	1 (3.6)	10 (35.7)	13 (46.4)	4 (14.3)	0 (0)
10. I am ready for MALL if the university implements it now	0 (0)	2 (7.1)	16 (57.1)	10 (35.7)	0 (0)

The next question is to know how many of the participants are truly interested in engaging themselves in mobile learning. A majority of 22 participants gave positive responses for their lecturer to integrate mobile learning in their class in addition to face-to-face meetings.

Question number 11 intends to find out if the participants have already been exposed to or use mobile learning before. 35.7% disagree while 3.6% strongly disagree that their lecturers have already integrate mobile learning in their teaching. This shows that almost half of the pre-service teachers have not experienced mobile learning first hand. When pre-service teachers have been exposed to mobile learning before, their chances of using it in the future are more because according to Ehsan et al. (2014), there is evidence showing that Malaysian tertiary students have a positive perception on mobile learning.

The last question would like to know if the participants are truly ready for mobile learning if it is being implemented in their university. A majority of 26 participants or 92.8% gave positive responses while the other 7.1% disagree.

3.1.4 Budget Readiness

(Table 7 Mobile Learning Readiness Survey for Budget Readiness)

Statement	SD	D	A	SA	NA
	<i>N (%)</i>	<i>N (%)</i>	<i>N (%)</i>	<i>N (%)</i>	<i>N (%)</i>
1. I do not mind paying extra money for MALL	0 (0)	18 (64.3)	5 (17.9)	5 (17.9)	0 (0)
2. I am afraid I will spend more money on my smartphone bill because of MALL	0 (0)	10 (35.7)	14 (50)	4 (14.3)	0 (0)
3. I will upgrade my smartphone if MALL is going to be implemented in my course	1 (3.6)	14 (50)	10 (35.7)	3 (10.7)	0 (0)

In order to know how far participants are willing to go when engaged with mobile learning, they are asked if they would mind paying extra money for mobile learning. Almost half of the participants at 46.4% disagree; while others agree. Although it may be more beneficial to pay extra money for

software meant for mobile learning (Kukulka-Hulme, et al., 2009), it can still be done without as there are many free phone applications available.

Besides paying extra money, some people might also have to upgrade their phones if mobile learning is implemented due to the phone's lack of interface and functionality (Veerabhadram and Lombard, 2015). A whopping 50% disagree. The rest at 46.4% either agree or strongly agree. As pre-service teachers, if they are not willing to upgrade their phones, they may not be able to use mobile learning at its full potential. This is important because when technology is used ineffectively, students will not learn from their experience (Humes et al., 2010). Implementing mobile learning can also lead to the increase of phone bill especially if the user or learner wants internet data instead of just relying on WiFi. The participants were asked if they are afraid to spend more money on their phone bill due to mobile learning. Majority agrees at 64.3% which means that the majority are scared their phone bills will increase which could cause them to use mobile learning less or avoid it totally. As said before, mobile learning can be implemented without jeopardizing a lot of money as there are many free phone services such as the public WiFi. A lot of social media or applications that can be used in mobile learning are also free such as Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp. The findings from the budget readiness is similar to Supyan, et al. (2012) where it was found in their study that both teachers and students are not too sure on the budget readiness to implement mobile learning but would like it to be as cheap as possible.

3.1.5 Teaching Readiness

(Table 8 Mobile Learning Readiness Survey for MALL for Teaching Readiness I)

Statement	SD	D	A	SA	NA
	<i>N (%)</i>	<i>N (%)</i>	<i>N (%)</i>	<i>N (%)</i>	<i>N (%)</i>
1. Have you ever used your mobile to learn or improve your English?	0 (0)	5 (17.9)	21 (75)	2 (7.1)	0 (0)
2. Do you think MALL can help to enhance your teaching?	0 (0)	12 (42.9)	14 (50)	2 (7.1)	0 (0)
3. Do you think MALL can help students in schools to improve their English?	6 (21.4)	13 (46.4)	8 (28.6)	1 (3.6)	0 (0)
4. Are you interested to incorporate MALL when you teach in the future?	0 (0)	7 (25)	19 (67.9)	2 (7.1)	0 (0)

Table 5 shows us data to determine participants' readiness to use mobile learning as a teaching and learning tool. For the first question, participants are asked if they have ever used mobile to learn or improve their English. The majority agrees and only 17.9% disagree with this question. This means that most of the participants have either directly or indirectly applied mobile learning to improve their English or language learning. This finding is not surprising as Park & Slater (2014) had similar findings as well in their study.

However, majority of the participants do not feel that mobile learning can be used to enhance their teaching or help students to improve their language learning. This can be seen when 42.9% says that mobile learning does not help with teaching and 67.8% says mobile learning cannot help students in schools with English. This data shows that almost half of the participant does not favour mobile learning as a teaching and learning tool even though it is used by many educators especially for tertiary level. This is surprising considering Ehsan et al., (2014) said that mobile learning is positively received by tertiary students. Maybe it is because the tertiary students prefer to use mobile learning as their own learning tool rather than as a teaching tool.

Even though question two and three mostly obtained negative answers to mobile learning, many of the pre-service teachers are still interested to incorporate mobile learning when they teach in the future as 75% of them are positive about it.

(Table 9 Mobile Learning Readiness Survey for MALL for Teaching Readiness II)

Statement	SD	D	A	SA	NA
	<i>N (%)</i>	<i>N (%)</i>	<i>N (%)</i>	<i>N (%)</i>	<i>N (%)</i>
5. Do you use your mobile in any way to improve your writing skills?	2 (7.1)	22 (78.6)	3 (10.7)	1 (3.6)	0 (0)
6. Have you ever typed more than one paragraph (comment, status, article, blog, reviews, etc.) using your mobile?	0 (0)	2 (7.1)	24 (85.7)	2 (7.1)	0 (0)
7. Do you think MALL is suitable to teach writing skills?	2 (7.1)	18 (64.3)	5 (17.9)	3 (10.7)	0 (0)
8. Can you come up with writing skills activities using MALL?	4 (14.3)	20 (71.4)	2 (7.1)	2 (7.1)	0 (0)
9. Would you try to integrate MALL when you teach writing?	2 (7.1)	11 (39.3)	12 (42.9)	3 (10.7)	0 (0)

This study wants to know if pre-service teachers are interested to use mobile learning to teach writing. Thus, it is important to know if the participants have ever used their mobile to improve their writing skills. Most of them do not think so as 85.7% gave negative responses. This finding is similar to Park & Salter (2014) where both teacher and students use their mobiles to practice writing the least. However, 92.8% of them have used their phones before to write more than one paragraph. This data is important because it shows that even though most participants disagree on using their mobile to improve their writing skills, majority of them in fact use their mobile to write a lot. In the end, many feel that mobile learning is not suitable to teach writing skills as 7.1% strongly disagree and 64.3% disagree. Which is why it is not surprising when majority of the pre-service teachers are not able to come up with mobile based writing activities. More than half says that they are not able to come up with writing activities via mobile as 14.3% strongly disagree and 71.4% disagree. This negative misconception of teaching writing was mentioned by Sarala, et al. (2015) and it is apparent that even when using technology, teaching writing is still considered as difficult. Despite this, the participants are divided when asked if they would try to integrate mobile learning when they teach writing. A total of 13 participants gave negative feedbacks to try while the other 15 are willing to try and integrate mobile learning when they teach writing.

(Table 10 MALL Readiness Survey for MALL for Teaching Readiness III)

Statement	SD	D	A	SA	NA
	<i>N (%)</i>	<i>N (%)</i>	<i>N (%)</i>	<i>N (%)</i>	<i>N (%)</i>
10. Can MALL be used to teach reading skills?	0 (0)	0 (0)	25 (89.3)	3 (10.7)	0 (0)
11. Is it easier to teach reading skills using mobile compared to writing skills?	0 (0)	0 (0)	18 (64.3)	10 (35.7)	0 (0)
12. Can you come up with reading skills activities using MALL?	0 (0)	1 (3.6)	25 (89.3)	2 (7.1)	0 (0)
13. Can MALL be used to teach speaking and listening skills?	0 (0)	0 (0)	19 (67.9)	9 (32.1)	0 (0)
14. Is it easier to teach speaking and listening skills using mobile compared to writing skills?	0 (0)	0 (0)	19 (67.9)	9 (32.1)	0 (0)

15. Can you come up with speaking and listening skills activities using MALL?	0 (0)	0 (0)	21 (75)	7 (25)	0 (0)
---	-------	-------	---------	--------	-------

For the next six questions, the focus is more on mobile learning for other skills like reading, speaking and listening. As can be seen in the questionnaire, speaking and listening is combined as they always complement each other. From the data collected, it can be seen that all 100% of the participants either agree or strongly agree that mobile learning can be used to teach reading, speaking and listening skills. None of them feel that mobile learning cannot be used to teach these three skills which is a contrast to writing skills.

When asked if these three skills are easier to teach using mobile learning compared to writing skill, again all 100% agreed. This shows that the participants feel that teaching writing skills using mobile learning is much harder compared to the other skills like reading, speaking and listening.

The researcher would like to know if the pre-service teachers are able to come up with reading, speaking and listening skills activities using mobile learning. Data shows only one participant feels that they cannot come up with reading skills activities using mobile learning. The rest at 96.4% gave positive responses. As for speaking and listening, a whopping 100% gave positive responses that they are able to come up with activities using these two skills in mobile learning.

From the data collected, pre-service teachers have a negative mind-set when it comes to using mobile learning to teach writing or to even use it as a learning tool for writing. This can cause them to be less motivated to use mobile learning when they teach in the future which is why it is important for the pre-service teachers to know what are the roles of technology to support formal and informal learning (Sharples, 2006).

3.2 Semi-Structured Interview

Based on the questionnaire, respondents are ready to use mobile learning and are keen to use it to teach. However, majority of them do not prefer to use mobile learning to teach writing skills. An interview is held to understand better why the respondents feel so.

3.2.1 Question 1: According to the survey, most of you are not interested to integrate mobile learning in teaching writing. Why is this so?

After asking this question, all of the respondents reply that they are not interested to teach writing using mobile learning because they are not able to come up with an interesting activity as said by Hidayah, “*For me, I don’t like it because I cannot think of any activities to do. I only know for writing, you must write essay; and writing an essay on your phone is not easy.*” Fadhlil also feels the same way, “*I think it’s very difficult to come up with activities for writing. Listening and speaking is the easiest. Even reading is easy because there are many sites which support phones.*”

Based on this reply, the researcher then asked the respondents if they feel that mobile learning can only be done through certain applications or software to which Elaine replied, “*I thought it’s like that? Must go through at least a special site right to use mobile learning to teach?*” This perception is untrue and may be one of the many reasons why mobile learning is not being explored enough in teaching writing. According to Chen (2015), mobile learning in education doesn’t necessarily need its own application as there are many other platforms that can be used for free.

Rosa added that even though she is interested to try mobile learning, she feels that it is not suitable for school students as they are not supposed to bring phones to school. Farah agrees, *“Yes. Even if students can bring phones to school, I don’t think I want students to use them in my classroom.”* It may seem like a disadvantage but the biggest strength mobile learning can offer is ubiquity. Teachers and students are not constrained to learn only during school time. It can be done anytime and anywhere (Azad Ali, 2014; Valarmathi, 2011).

As for Lisa, she had a different thought as to why she’s not interested to use mobile learning to teach writing, *“For me, when I write, I always like to change my mind so I have to change my sentences a lot. It’s always easier to edit on a computer or write on paper rather than a phone.”* Hidayah concurs by saying, *“True. For writing you have to write a lot so using a phone will be hard. Especially if you have a phone with small screen. You need to scroll up and down and cannot see the essay as a whole”.*

This is also another perception which is untrue. Although writing generally requires students to write an essay, according to Gardner (2008), teaching writing can be done through writing activities that are short and specific. This means that writing activities are short but enable students to practice basic writing skills; and focuses on specific skills so that students can practice and develop mastery through all of the writing skills components.

When mentioned that mobile learning can be used to teach a specific writing skill, Lisa changed her mind, *“If that’s the case, then maybe yes. But I still cannot imagine what writing skill to teach through the phone.”* Elaine then chips in and said, *“A specific writing skill... like punctuation? Or topic sentence is it? If that’s the case, I think it is possible but I won’t do it all the time though.”* Mobile learning is meant to use as an extension tool to teach and not replace the whole teaching experience (Sharples, 2005), thus teachers do not have to use it all the time.

3.2.2 Question 2: Do you think it’s possible to integrate mobile learning to make short writing activities?

For this question, the respondents were given a few minutes to think of any possible writing activities that they can come up with that does not involve any essay writing. At first, none of the respondents said anything until Jamal said, *“Maybe I write like a short paragraph with no punctuation. Or a few sentences with no punctuation and students have to add in the punctuation? Maybe I can do this on WhatsApp group?”* Based on this reply, it is evident that the pre-service teachers only need extra time to think of an activity via mobile learning for writing skill. Based on the questionnaire earlier, many of the teachers are not exposed yet to mobile learning and all of them are not familiar using mobile phones to teach writing. Thus, it only makes sense that more awareness and exposure is needed in mobile learning to teach writing.

When asked if anyone can come up with any more mobile-based writing activities, Rosa asked if she can use Twitter because she wants to teach students how to summarize a paragraph within the 280 word limit. As for the respondents, they said that they cannot think of any because they have never thought of it and they are not sure what are the specific writing skills that can be used to make a short writing activity.

3.2.3 Question 3: Would you be interested to do a series of mobile-based writing activities to learn more about integrating mobile learning to teach writing? Why?

All of the respondents answered yes and Alisa added, *“Definitely. Even though I think it’s hard to implement, but I want to know how it can be done. Because if it is interesting, I definitely want to try it when I teach.”* Fadhlín agrees and said, *“Yes. I want to see what kind of writing activities we can do and how. Because in my mind I can only think of using social media like Facebook or Twitter.”*

These positive responses are a good sign because even though in the questionnaire almost half of them do not agree to use mobile learning to teach writing, but through the interview the pre-service teachers are more receptive towards the idea.

As for Nazirah, she asked if there is such course where pre-service teachers get to learn how to use mobile learning and other computer software or application that can be used to teach all of the skills in English. Upon hearing this, all of the respondents wondered the same and shows a lot of enthusiasm. Jamal then added, *“That would be very useful. I think it’s also important for us to know which writing convention can be made into an activity that is effective for students. Because for me everything is important but I’m not sure how to turn them into activities for mobile learning.”* Many agreed to this statement. Although there are many applications and software for English education, teachers can also opt to use other alternatives that are readily available and free as most applications and software are not cheap and takes up a lot of phone storage (Hashemi, et al., 2011).

3.2.4 Question 4: Have you ever used your mobile phone to improve your writing skill?

After hearing this question, everyone took a moment to think and Hidayah was the first to answer, *“I write a lot on my phone but not to improve writing. I use a lot of wrong grammar, and sometimes I don’t even put punctuations. And a lot of short forms especially when I text which I do a lot.”* Many agreed and feel the same way. The researcher then asked if anyone has a blog or a writing platform where they let out their opinions or do some creative writing. Lisa said that she does do some creative writing in her Facebook page but most of the time; she outlines what she wants to write on paper first.

The researcher then asked if they have used their phones to find out any information pertaining writing conventions. Immediately, Elaine jumped in, *“Of course. All the time. Especially to find out the correct spelling.”* Farah then added, *“Maybe I do too. Like I don’t know how to use a grammar item. So I Google it. Does that count?”* Based from this feedback, many people might not realise that people do use their phones to write a lot. By forwarding the idea of using mobile learning to teach writing, phone users would be more aware of their writing conventions when typing out a text or comments on the phone. This in turn will create a lot of opportunity for writing practice as most people tend to be on their phones a lot. In fact, searching for information about writing on the phone also counts as it helps to build their own knowledge and promotes seamless learning which is one of the advantages in mobile learning (Sharples, 2005).

4. Summary and Implications

Based on the first instrument used, the data collected is of quantitative nature which focuses on five aspects to find out pre-service teachers’ mobile learning readiness. Below is a table which summarizes the results for each aspect:

(Table 11 Summary of results from the questionnaire)

Aspects from the Questionnaire	Summary
Basic Readiness	All participants have the basic readiness which is a smartphone with internet connections.
Skills Readiness	All of the participants have the necessary skills to use their mobile phones and apply MALL.

Psychological Readiness	All of the participants are interested to know more about MALL and would like to try it themselves.
Budget Readiness	Most of the participants are not willing to spend too much on MALL and are afraid that their phone bill might increase after applying MALL.
MALL for Teaching Readiness	All of the participants feel that MALL cannot be used to teach writing but is more open to use it to teach reading, speaking and listening skills.

As for the second instrument, the researcher found out that the pre-service teachers are not aware that their everyday actions on the phone can help to promote better writing skills. These actions can be turned as a teaching tool and also a way to get students' interest instead of using the usual paper and pen when teaching writing. Besides that, this study also found out that the pre-service teachers may not know how to incorporate mobile learning into teaching writing because they are not exposed to enough materials or experiences pertaining mobile-based writing activities. This hindsight also causes the pre-service teachers to feel that mobile learning is not suitable to be used with teaching writing as they feel it is difficult to come up with mobile-based writing activities. The pre-service teachers also feel that mobile learning is not suitable for teaching writing because of the constraints caused by the phone when writing as well as being unsuitable for school students.

To summarize, pre-service teachers are ready to implement mobile learning and are keen to integrate it in the future. However, pre-service teachers are not ready to integrate mobile learning with teaching writing as they are not familiar with any mobile-based writing activities and are unsure how to implement mobile learning to teach writing effectively. More research in this area with a larger sample can greatly help with the issue of readiness of mobile learning in teaching writing.

This study implicates that mobile learning for writing skills should be promoted more to educators as many are not ready to implement it in the classroom. More studies should be done under mobile learning for writing skill especially as a teaching tool and not just a learning tool.

Reference

- Azad Ali, M. (2014). The Impact of Mobiles on Language Learning on the Part of English Foreign Language (EFL) University Students. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 136: 104-108.
- Burston, J. (2013). Mobile-assisted language learning: A selected annotated bibliography of implementation studies 1994-2012. *Language, Learning & Technology* 17(3): 157-225.

- Chen, Y. C. (2015). Linking learning styles and learning on mobile Facebook. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 16(2). Retrieved from <http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/2038/3271>
- Colley, J. & Stead, G. (2004). Take a bite: producing accessible learning materials for mobile devices. *Learning with mobile devices. Research and development*: 43-46.
- Dalal, A. H. & Bassam, H. (2012). The role of mobile technology and social media in mobile learning: a literature review. In *Proceedings of The 11th International Conference on e-Learning, e-Business, Enterprise Information Systems, and e-Government, EEE'12* (pp. 204-211).
- Duncan-Howell, J. & Lee, K.T. (2007). M-learning: Finding a place for mobile technologies within tertiary educational settings. In *Ascilite Singapore*, 223–232.
- Ehsan, S. Ismail, K., & Mustaffa, R. (2014). The Acceptance of Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) among Post Graduate ESL Students in UKM. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*. 118, 457-462.
- Gardner, T. (2008). *Designing writing assignments*. National Council of Teachers.
- Ghabool, N. & Kashef, S.H. (2012). Investigating Malaysian ESL students' writing problems on conventions, punctuation, and language use at secondary school level. *Journal of Studies in Education*, 2(3), 130-143.
- Hamidah, Y., Fisher, R., & Rich, S. (2014). Revisiting English language learning among Malaysian children. *Asian Social Science* 10(3): 174.
- Hashemi, M., Azizinezhad, M., Najafi, V. & Nesari, A.J. (2011). What is mobile learning? Challenges and capabilities. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 30, 2477-2481.
- Hsu, Y. C. (2015). A review of models and frameworks for designing mobile learning experiences and environments. *Canadian Journal of Learning and Technology*.

- Humes, J., & Raisner, J. (2010). Constructivism in Educational Technology. Retrieved from http://scholar.google.com.my/scholar?q=Constructivism+in+Educational+Technology&btnG=&hl=en&as_sdt=0%2C5&sciodt=0%2C5&cites=280279604757190633&scipsc=
- Litchfield, A.J., Lawrence, E.M., Raban, R. and Leijdekkers, P. (2007). Advancing the m-learning research agenda for active, experiential learning: Four case studies. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*.
- Mehdipour, Y. & Zerehkafi, H. (2013). Mobile learning for education: Benefits and challenges. *International Journal of Computational Engineering Research*, 3(6), 93-101.
- Ministry of Education Malaysia. (2012). National Education Blueprint 2013-2025.
- Nooreiny, M. & Mazlin, M. (2013). Writing strategies used by ESL upper secondary school students. *International Education Studies* 6(4): 47.
- Norazah, M.N., Hamzah, M. I., Melor, M.Y., & Embi, M. A. (2010). The mobile learning environment for the in-service school administrators. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 7, 671-679.
- Noriah, I., Saadiah, D., & Supyan, H. (2012). ESL tertiary students' writing needs: a framework for a supplementary online writing program. *Asean Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (AJTLHE)* 4(2): 61-78.
- Park, M. & Slater, T. (2015). A typology of tasks for mobile-assisted language learning: Recommendations from a small-scale needs analysis. *TESL Canada Journal*, 31, 93.
- Peacock, M. (2001). Pre-service ESL teachers' beliefs about second language learning: A longitudinal study. *System* 29(2): 177-195.
- Ponce, O. A., & Pagán-Maldonado, N. (2015). Mixed methods research in education: capturing the complexity of the profession. *International Journal of Educational Excellence*, 1(1), 111-135.

- Sarala, T., Ismail, F. B. & Salam, A. R. B. (2015). Role of model essays in developing students writing skills in Malaysian schools: A review of literature. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 6(2): 56.
- Sharples, M. (2006). Big Issues in Mobile Learning. Report of a workshop by the Kaleidoscope Network of Excellence Mobile Learning Initiative. Retrieved from <https://telearn.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-00190254>
- Supyan Hussin, S., Manap, M. R., Amir, Z., & Krish, P. (2012). MALL readiness among Malaysian students at higher learning institutes. *Asian Social Science* 8(12): 276.
- Teo, T. (2008). Pre-service teachers' attitudes towards computer use: A Singapore survey. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology* 24(4).
- Tétard, F., Patokorpi, E. & Carlsson, J. (2008). *A conceptual framework for mobile learning*. 464.
- Traxler, J. (2009). Learning in a mobile age. *International Journal of Mobile and Blended Learning (IJMBL)* 1(1): 1-12.
- Valarmathi, K. E. (2011). Mobile assisted language learning. *Journal of Technology for ELT* 2(2): 1-8.
- Valk, J. H., Rashid, A. T., & Elder, L. (2010). Using mobile phones to improve educational outcomes: an analysis of evidence from Asia. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning* 11(1): 117-140.
- Veerabhadram, P. & Lombard, A. (2015). A Theoretical Framework for Design Theories in Mobile Learning: A Higher Education Perspective. *Dubai UAE*, 17 (6).