Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) in Indonesia: Case on English Language Learning for Higher Students during COVID-19

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ARTICLE INFO
e-ISSN: 2502-6909
p-ISSN: 2502-9207
Vol. 6, No. 1, June 2021
URL: http://doi.org/10.31327/jee.v6i1.1619

Suggestion for the Citation and Bibliography

Citation in text:
Ibrahim (2021) or (Ibrahim, 2021)

Bibliography:

Abstract

The present paper, therefore, aims to develop deeper students’ understanding and perception regarding the use of mobile assisted language learning in the learning process. All schools and universities should eliminate offline learning and switch to online education. When this is enforced, not a few students find it difficult to access online learning. Some students may have privileges in the form of computers and internet access. This one can easily follow the learning delivered through online media used by the school/Learning management system. This study adopted qualitative research design where case study was used. In this study, the research participants were three university students taken from the same university who are currently taking English education. The finding of this research were firstly Mobile assisted language learning boost students’ learning flexibility. Secondly, MALL was part of students’ option or alternative to get simple information easily as well as the backup devices. However, there are many distractions occur when accessing the learning material through mobile devices. To hinder the ethical issues during the data collection and also the research process, the anonymity of the participants was implemented. The research participants also filled out the informed research consent form in order to share the agreement to be part of this study. There are some benefits gaining from implementing MALL such as learning flexibility and easiness. Students are not limited by the place and time to start studying and access some English sources. However, the comprehension supports for students from surrounding in mastering the technology use will enhance the learning process

Keywords: Mobile assisted language learning, English language teaching, Technology
A. Introduction

In 3 March 2020, the first Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) confirmed in Indonesia. Several months later, due to the increasing number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 infection in various provinces in Indonesia, the government imposed stricter regulations in all sectors. One sector that is significantly affected is the education sector. The impact is experienced from basic education to higher education throughout Indonesia. A government regulation that is arguably very appropriate to enforce Work from Home (WFH) and also School From Home (SFH) in order to minimize the transmission of virus transfer from one person to another. However, this is not balanced with the readiness of adequate educational facilities, especially technological devices that can be used to ensure School from Home runs smoothly.

All schools and universities should eliminate offline learning and switch to online education. When this is enforced, not a few students find it difficult to access online learning. Some students may have privileges in the form of computers and internet access. This one can easily follow the learning delivered through online media used by the school/Learning management system. However, there is something to note, that in general, students can only access via mobile devices in the form of cell phones that they have. They switch to online learning and learn through mobile phones wherever they are. The availability of mobile facilities and supported by good access to the internet can be used as an alternative for students to be able to take part in learning well, due to the limitations of other devices. The use of mobile in language learning also happens to students who learn English. Mobile-assisted language learning has developed over the past decade with increasing numbers of researches which examine on how the mobile devices may be used in the formal and informal education condition. Several studies have been introduced and overviewed on how the use of mobile technology and its implication on language education (Chinnery, 2006; Godwin-Jones, 2011; Kukulska-Hulme & Shield, 2007)

The purpose of this research is to figure the students experiences and perception toward the utilizing mobile device in English language learning in Indonesia. This paper begins by investigating the students’ perception to the use of mobile to learn language during the pandemic situation. It then considers the existence of the technology for language learning in higher education. It will also examine the benefits and drawbacks may occur during MALL implementation. At the final, it also tries to figure out the pedagogical aspects and issue.

B. Literature Review

1. Technology in Language learning

Language and technology become a unit that goes hand in hand since technology is used as a means of learning a language. According to Mishra & Kohler (2006) professional competency of the teacher can be seen on the teacher technology knowledge as the crucial component.

There is a long history of the use of technology to improve language learning (Salaberry, 2001). Apart from its time and labour–saving function, technology can also give the idea of variety and bring new opportunities to people; connecting them to new thoughts and to people they otherwise might not have met. This increase in the availability of technology has led to an explosion of interest in its use in the language classroom (Kazemi & Narafshan, 2014). At this time, it is undeniable that language learning cannot be separated from the massive use of technology. As Selwyn (2016) stated, digital technology is now an integral part of education which cannot be separated to develop education.

2. Mobile Assisted Language Learning

Mobile technology has developed well in the past ten years which can increase its feature and can access some file and form such as what computer has. Mobile assisted language learning (MALL) is defined as burgeoning subdivision of computer assisted language learning in general (Johnson, Adams, & Cummins, 2012). According to Abdelraheem and Ahmed (2015) stated that Mobile Assisted Language Learning is a language learning technique that utilizes cell phone applications, for example, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and other online media that upholds language students to gain proficiency with their objective language. There are some characteristics of the use mobile learning, such as situating of instructional activities, accessibility, immediately, interactively and permanency (Ogata and Yano, 2005). Furthermore, Prensky (2005) stated that mobiles are not only just communicative devices, they are computer which fits with students’ pocket, and almost always on and can be used anytime and anywhere to learn.
Furthermore, there are numbers of benefit gained by the language learners when implementing MALL in their learning process. First, the flexibility of using smartphone is experienced by the EFL language learners which learning can be done anytime and anywhere (Chiu et al. 2015). Secondly, according to Yudhiantara and Saehu (2017) that technological devices and applications supported classroom language learning such as eBook, playing audio and video files, phonology subject and some supporting system for students to learn though MALL. It indicates that the implementation of MALL in language learning has benefits for students as well as the learners.

3. Challenges in Mobile Assisted Language Learning

Currently, it is undeniable that the use of mobile assisted language learning is very wide which students can use anywhere and anytime. In spite of the fact that there have been many examinations where Portable helped language learning can be valuable for the learning system, there are likewise concentrates on that have observed that the execution of MALL has no impact on underestudies’ scholastic accomplishments (Yıldırım, 2017; Korkmaz, 2019). Learning through MALL is already commonly accepted and used by both teachers and students in their language learning. Similarly, Walsh (2019) stated that the function of mobile devices in language learning not only through dedicated app, but also as a learning potential to whom action and wish to learn the language. Most students also agree that the use of MALL in the classroom is fun and engaging which can develop students’ motivation.

According to Miangah & Nezarat (2012) learning through the PC or e-learning empowers the students to learn in a non-homeroom climate when they are at home before their PCs on the web or disconnected. Nonetheless, learning through the cell phone or m-learning gives the students the freedom to realize when they are in the transport, outside or at work taking care of their low maintenance responsibilities. In reality, they can get familiar with without fail and wherever they are.

However, several studies have found that both teachers and students have lack of skills and knowledge in operating MALL and applications on mobile (Tutal, 2016). Furthermore, according to Thedpitak & Somphong (2021) there is a financial aspect which students need to be considered. Students may need to spend more to get the adequate internet access fortnightly or monthly for the internet provider.

4. MALL in English Language Learning

With the increasing and widespread use of mobile devices in the world of learning, especially language learning, it needs to be balanced with knowledge related to the development of MALL in the world of education. Several studies have been conducted and the results can be used as a reference for the application of Mobile in learning a language. Research conducted by Bosoglu & Akdemir (2010) found that application in Mobile enhances students’ English vocabulary learning by expanding their vocabulary and enjoying the learning process with Mobile application.

The role of MALL in developing student interest in learning is also influenced by how a teacher understands implements and adapts to various mobile devices tools and applications. Kukulska-Hulme, Lee & Norris (2017) emphasizes the role of a teacher in MALL is crucial, especially in the selection of mobile application features that can be useful in learning, particularly those facilitating, language rehearsal, communication and collaboration.

Furthermore, Technology enhanced language learning has been implemented widely throughout the education in all over the world in terms of several disciplines: Education, teaching, socio linguistics, psycholinguistics etc (Abdu, 2018). Besides, technology also connects the learners, teachers, and researchers with the electronic language.

C. Methodology

1. Research Design

This study adopted qualitative research design where case study is used. Qualitative research is related to the words which represent position of ontological due to the result of human interaction individually or group (Brayman, 2016). In this study, the research participants were three university students taken from the same university who are currently taking English education. To hinder the ethical issues during the data collection and also the research process, the anonymity of the participants is implemented.
2. Participants/Respondents/Population and Sample

In this study, the numbers of participants involved were three people, one male and two females. Participants were selected randomly, with the criteria being students of the English language education study program at least in the fifth semester.

3. Technique of Data Collection

To hinder the ethical issues during the data collection and also the research process, the anonymity of the participants was implemented. The research participants also filled out the informed research consent form in order to share the agreement to be part of this study using google form. The form consisted of the research information and area and asked the participants willingness in sharing the information.

4. Instruments

A range data was generated: semi structured interview recordings instrument of this study in semi-structure research interview was implemented to gather the data about students’ experiences and perception of MALL in their learning process. According to Creswell (2002) qualitative interview occurs when researcher asks one or more participants general, open ended question and record their answer. The interview conducted through online application (zoom meet) due to minimizing the human contact in the pandemic situation.

5. Technique of Data Analysis

After all the data was collected, through the Interview. The data was then made into a transcription. After that, using the Thematic analysis process, the data were analyzed according to the problems. The steps were analyzing the data taken from the interview, coding the data based on the different theme occurred, searching out the patterns, reviewing them, defining the themes and finally producing the final reports. so that it can be concluded several themes that came out of this study.

D. Findings and Discussion

1. Finding

The use of MALL in the English language learning process for students has indeed become a common habit at this time, especially mobile phones. There are several immerged themes that can be concluded from the results of unstructured interviews with students:

1.1 MALL boosting learning flexibility

The response from students regarding the reasons for using mobile devices in learning English both formally and informally is that student’s experience flexibility in accessing material. They can easily access materials and information through their mobile phones that they carry everywhere.

Researcher: “What are the advantages of using cell phones in learning languages?”
Student: “It is more flexible which can be carried wherever we are. Even though I have used other devices such as laptops or PCs, I prefer HP. sometimes Laptops have many additional programs that have been opened.”

Even though students already use other devices, such as PCs and laptops, the flexibility and ease of using cell phones is more comfortable for students in learning languages or other subjects. From the interview results, it was also found that students use mobile devices only to access additional and lightweight materials. If you read important information and lessons, a PC or laptop is still the main choice.
Student: “I only use my cell phone to figure additional information, which is more practical and simpler, but if the material is heavy, then I use a laptop. When learning online, I use my cell phone only as a backup.”

1.2 MALL as a backup to access lessons and information using other devices.

There are findings if students do prefer to learn to use devices and access using the internet rather than learn formally at school. This is because they can more freely learn what interests them. Without having to follow everything that has been scheduled in formal education.

Student: "I think I get more enjoyment out of learning to use the internet, because we enjoy and learn what we like, there is freedom to choose the material we like."

On the other hand, the use of MALL in learning languages, whether through frequently used applications such as YouTube, web browsers and also digital dictionaries, gets a lot of distractions. Among them are the numbers of notifications in the form of appearances and sounds that distract students from being able to focus on learning.

Student: “Sometimes using cell phones is a lot of distraction, especially social media notifications. Like Instagram notifications.”

In addition, in using MALL, students must prepare additional devices such as power bank preparations when the batteries run out and are not close to the availability of electricity, especially when outside the home.

And lastly, the final immerged theme is related to digital literacy. Understanding of mobile phone usage, not only being able to read information but also how to access the application/learning management system used is crucial.

In addition, students’ digital literacy is also very important, not all students / assistants can use the media or not. They are not literate about programs and applications about technology. This is also an obstacle to the ineffectiveness of MALL in helping student learning.

2. Discussion

The result and finding section show that the use of MALL in the students’ language learning may result in different experiences.

First, the use of MALL in English language learning makes learning become easier and flexible by accessing the information and lesson whenever and wherever the students are in. The concept of learning flexibility was experienced by student and it indicated that student felt more flexible in learning process. It is in line with the characteristic of mobile learning in language use. Ogata and Yano, 2005 stated that there are some characteristics of the use mobile learning, such as situating of instructional activities, accessibility, immediately, interactively and permanency.

Furthermore, students explained that there is a need for students’ teachers and parents to comprehensively understand and competence in operating the digital devices and app for learning. There are some cases which students explained that students may have access the devices as well as the internet connection, but not to mention that some of them do not competence properly how to operate some app or system. It is similar with the research done by Tutal (2016) which stated that teachers and students have lack of skills and knowledge in operating MALL and applications on mobile.

An important thing that must be considered is flexibility. Mobile assisted language learning provides convenience and flexibility for students and students to be able to access information anywhere and anytime. This makes it easier for students to study at the right time and place. As in line with Miangah& Nezarat (2012) stated that learning through the PC or e-learning empowers the students to learn in a non-homeroom climate when they are at home before their PCs on the web or disconnected. Nonetheless, learning through the cell phone or m-learning gives the students the freedom to realize when they are in the transport, outside or at work taking care of their low maintenance responsibilities. In reality, they can get familiar with without fail and wherever they are.
E. Conclusion

After a thorough analysis of the data gathered, as a discussion in previous part, the researcher can conclude that there are some experiences and insights on using the MALL learning. There are some benefits gaining from implementing MALL such as learning flexibility and easiness. Students are not limited by the place and time to start studying and access some English sources. This makes it easier for students who are constrained in learning due to Covid-19.

However, the comprehension supports for students from surrounding in mastering the technology use will enhance the learning process. In addition, there is sufficient financial support so that all students can experience the ease of learning equally.

Reference


