The Effectiveness of Mobile Application in Learning Malay Foreign Language

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Abstract. The use of new technologies has impacted effectiveness in learning which contributes to the smoothness of language performance. The language implication involves all subjects, including Malay foreign language. For instance, the use of mobile learning has been shown a considerable and dynamic potential in learning Malay foreign language. Mobile application usage enables a variety of teaching innovations that assist educators and students in pursuing knowledge and language skills. Thus, this concept paper aimed to identify the Learning Theory which related to mobile application. Apart from that, it is also to explore the importance and effectiveness of mobile application usage in Malay foreign language instruction. The literature review is based on publications from 2015 to the present. It is hoped this study can be used to benefit the foreign students while integrating the mobile application in their learning, and to improve the language performance in line with current developments.

Keywords: Mobile Application, Teaching and Learning, Malay Foreign Language and Theories.

1. Introduction

Progress in this field of technology has revolutionised the way humans acquire (Naismith et al., 2004). The method of learning has gone beyond the physical space of the classroom (Kukulska-Hulme & Traxler, 2005), globalisation and lifelong learning (Sharples, 2006). Besides, the technology worked as a bridge between students’ experiences and existing knowledge with new and learned knowledge that is also an essential part of the theory of constructivism (Jonassen, 2000; Grabe & Grabe, 2004). Currently, virtual classroom and online chat sessions and the adoption of this technology as a mode of self-studying are examples of synchronous communication technology (Azadeh Rezaei et al., 2014).

In the process of learning a second or a foreign language, it is not a simple task to teach non-native speakers. The fashion the first and second languages are mastered differently. The first language mastery is through acquisition, which is the natural process by which the mental state is in an unintended and unplanned state. While the second language is acquired in the form of a new language learning, it is designed with a purposeful process of its nature. Teachers will utilise a variety of methods and techniques appropriate to the student’s position to support their learning. By being technology-oriented and applying
the freshest information technology infrastructure, there are many sorts of mobile applications that students can access to study a foreign language. In regards to the current Malaysian education scenario, foreign language learning has started at the secondary level by offering foreign language courses to students, such as German, Spanish, French, and others. Similarly, learning the Malay language for foreign students commences at the university level by extending the course as a core course to be considered as early as the first semester.

This Malay language learning highlights the features of communication and simple language usage. The purpose is not only to help international students in practising the Malay language in everyday life activities but also to facilitate them in referencing academic discourses in Malay. To assure this is fulfilled, the lecturers perform a vital position in developing relevant learning plans. Today, with the sophistication of technology, language learning techniques are growing more sophisticated and designing a sufficient learning atmosphere. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of foreign language learning for international students utilising mobile technology applications is however in the implementation state, and concepts and learning issues employing this mobile technology still necessitate further research (Kukulska-Hulme, 2007). Additionally, this research is to examine the effectiveness of mobile technology applications in learning Malay based on the findings and data from prior studies.

2. Literature Review

Mobile applications or multimedia platforms are teaching aids based on computer technologies employing sight or sound to manifest information. Such as films, videos, motion pictures, slide projectors, language tapes, multimedia games, and others. It is also believed, that the efficiency of an instructional message does not depend on the medium but the method used within it. Based on this theory, multimedia learning occurs when a learner constitutes a representation of words and pictures that have been presented (Mayer, 1997). Mayer and Anderson (1992) have suggested that the instructional design principle called the contiguity principle, which states the effectiveness of multimedia instruction’s increase when words and pictures are presented together in the equivalent time or space (Mayer and Anderson, 1992).

Mobile applications maintain the capacity to promote the learning process without being bound to the physical location of the learning process (Kukulska-Hulme & Traxler, 2005). Besides, Quinn (2002) illustrates mobile applications as learning through mobile devices such as Palms, PDAs and even mobile phones. Mobile communication technology has contributed a variety of alternatives and connectivity.

Additionally, according to Azadeh Rezaei (2014), mobile application aids are advantageous in different angles of education, particularly language acquisition. It lowers student’s level of stress and anxiety, uniquely students who cannot engage in classroom activities due to shyness or lack of confidence, in fact, it motivates and inspires students by furnishing an enjoyable platform through which the content is delivered as well as building communicative competence. This certainly proves that there are numerous means to intensify the effectiveness of learning, such as utilising applications through mobile technology to engage students in acquiring a foreign language based on the theory of constructivism, one that grows on itself or develops the skills that need to be mastered. Also, with the implementation of these multiple applications in learning a language, it is another innovation in acquiring or communicating knowledge. As a result, the current advancement of technology has directed to the use of mobile applications in language teaching and innovation. This can be confirmed by studies (Basoz & Cubukcu, 2014; Beechler & Williams, 2012; Biener & Ramazan, 2007; De Witte, Haelermans, & Rogge, 2014; Jarvis & Achilleos, 2013; Sekiguchi, 2011; Sowunmi & Aladejana, 2013) who conclude that the influence of mobile applications on language learning is promising. Consequently, they encourage added researches to study a variety of mobile application-based approaches in the language field.

Further, studies have been carried out covering multiple languages of the world, including English (Almekhlafi & Almeqadi, 2010); (Basoz & Cubukcu, 2014); (Fang, 2010); Arabic (Whiteman, 2012);
Chinese (Tabatabaei & Gui, 2011); and Malay (Othman and Balaki’s 2004) review of teachers’ standpoint on the usage of mobile technology applications in language teaching implies that the exercise of applications has a real effect among students, especially the intelligent ones.

Moreover, a study from Abdallah (2012) attended at the consequence of applying technology in teaching English grammar as a foreign language among Jordanian students. The conclusions of this study found that there is a notable distinction between the achievement of pupils using Language Teaching using mobile applications with traditional methods of grammar learning. Nasser Saleh and Ra’ed Abdulgader (2012) too achieved alike results in their study of Arab students at King Saud University. Based on the verdicts of Nasser Saleh Al-Mansour & AlShorman (2012) it is assumed that teaching English with mobile applications in addition to traditional methods has a positive effect on student achievement in the experimental group. Further, Beechler & Williams (2012) in their study of sight words explained that there was an improvement in word recognition skills when teaching using mobile applications was administered for ten minutes daily for two weeks in primary school students.

Furthermore, a study handled by Tabatabaei and Gui (2011) in their article on the use of technology in second language learning in the United States, namely Chinese, has illustrated how language teaching using mobile applications is very helpful in learning Chinese. The completion of their analysis suggest that more technology-based methods will be used in the future as the use of technology is very beneficial in language learning. In learning a foreign language, mainly Malay, the limitations of pronunciation will affect many aspects, such as communicative, writing, and so on. Though, this disadvantage not only refers to international students but also native speakers themselves. The study of Mohd Fadlee Sulaiman and Noor Azean Atan (2014) using the ‘Let’s Read’ application found that there was an essential change in the pronunciation of the Malay language by all respondents, namely special education students with learning disabilities ranging in age from 13 to 17 years of secondary school.

Moreover, according to Wood (2003) the use of wireless technology in education can contribute towards unlocking the digital divide in developing countries, as technology tools such as cell phones and PDAs are usually more economical than desktop computers. Through the utilisation of mobile technology, it can support to intensify student motivation, better organisational skills, encourage responsible behaviour, foster collaborative learning, and ease monitor student progress more quickly and efficiently (Savill-Smith & Kent, 2003).

The positive approach towards the usage of this technology is presumed to be further enhanced as new trends in mobile technology include mobile learning in formal education. This is supported by the conclusions of several researchers who have given a positive feedback of the potential of mobile applications that can be used in education (Stockwell & Hubbard, 2013). The analysis of Hamdan & Rosseni Din (2013) in their study reveals that mobile applications can be implemented in the education system in Malaysia as it is inexpensive, does not need high cost and some educational applications are provided free of charge. Furthermore, mobile applications also permit students to access information anytime and anywhere (Sajat Siraj, 2004).

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 Mobile Application in Foreign Language Learning

Language teaching is a multifaceted and ‘multidisciplinary’ field of study, intended at teaching students language so that they can comprehend the language and also empower them to communicate with others. For international students, the capability to master the Malay language is seen as one of the ways they can recognise and communicate with the Malaysian society and culture. Research on the effectiveness of mobile technology in learning Malay for foreigners have not been widely studied. However, there is an inclination for teachers and lecturers to employ mobile applications. Additionally, it has been found that
mobile applications are widely used in schools and higher education in specific fields. In the context of Malay as a foreign language, applications like Whatsapp, Telegram, and Kahoot are efficient to implement in learning. Students will have more joy and ‘relate’ with the language through the quizzes and exercises provided. The communication and connectivity perspectives between students and lecturers can also be heightened from time to time. As Nelson (1976) states, “The unique property of technology as a medium for education is its ability to interact with the student. Books can tell students what the rules are and what the right solutions are, but they cannot examine the specific mistakes the student has made and react in a manner which leads not only to correct his mistake but also to understand the principles behind the correct solution” (Kenning and Kenning, 1984). For international students, they will practice whatever language they hear through their surroundings without knowing the right and wrong language rules. Thus, with the guidance of mobile applications, they can connect to and ask more experts.

3.2 Effectiveness of Mobile Applications in Language Learning
The purpose of using multimedia aids in foreign language teaching and learning was introduced when technology and computers commenced affecting all aspects of human life. In history, only specialists could manage computers and technology, but today it is accessible to everyone, and it is applied in language instructions more than any time before. With the application of multimedia, students are in charge of their learning environment, and they can choose when to access their learning materials, and review the context as often as they want and need to. Therefore, many teachers around the world had to change their methods of teaching into the new ways of foreign language instruction with the assistance of multimedia aids and computers since they seem to be more effective than the ordinary textbooks in learning (Azadeh Rezaei, Neo Mai & Ahmad Pesaranghader, 2014).

In the context of the Malay language as a foreign language itself, technology can be applied as a prominent asset to facilitate vocabulary development. As it renders features which are not accessible by any other conventional instructional tools, such as offering a variety of example, i.e. videos, sound, pictures, animation, and accessibility more, researchers have analysed the effectiveness of these features that can enhance incidental vocabulary learning through the use of multimedia (Al-Seghayer, 2005).

Furthermore, the effectiveness of mobile applications has been attested to affect the language learning aspect of either Malay or foreign languages. Nevertheless, its effectiveness depends on diverse factors as described by Baker (1995), studies on computer-assisted methods of teaching prove them to be more attractive to learners for three main reasons. First, these sorts of interventions need less direct teacher participation than teacher-led instructions. Next, it is the capacity to customise the instructions and execute the techniques and vocabulary goals simply, and finally, the potential it systematically corrects essential instructional design features within the changed framework which covers instructional scaffolding and integration across academic divisions (Magogwe and Oliver, 2007).

4. Conclusion
In this writing, we illustrate the effectiveness of mobile technology applications in foreign language learning. Nevertheless, the critical aspect that commits to the success of language learning is motivation. With the accelerated expansion of technology, educators should be more proactive in deciding effective strategies to prompt students to realise appropriate methods. Traditional methods such as memorisation, repetition, and homework can all be supportive elements of technology, but they should be more innovative and engaging for students. The most compelling point is that the app can encourage students to identify the phonetic aspects of a foreign language, word, meaning, sentence structure, and can then correctly pronounce a word.

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