

I-ROLE 2023
International Conference on Research of Language Education

**MOBILE LEARNING MODULE FOR ENGLISH LITERACY
SKILL: MALAYSIAN PRIMARY ESL TEACHERS'
PERCEPTIONS**

Umi Zafirah Othman (a), Noraini Said (b)

*Corresponding author

(a) Universiti Malaysia Sabah, Malaysia, umizafirah@gmail.com
(b) Universiti Malaysia Sabah, Malaysia, noraini.said@ums.edu.my

Abstract

As technology progresses, the concept of mobile learning has changed the teaching and learning process where we can conduct and participate from any locations by using our mobile phone. For the past few years, Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) prompted all educational institutions to substitute from formal learning methods to home-based teaching and online learning due to the restriction caused by the spreading of Covid-19. Even though there are no more restriction for educational institutions operated as usual, some of the schools have also conducted online teaching due to natural disaster such as flood. Therefore, the objectives of the study are to identify the needs of English language m-learning module for lower primary school teaching and learning process also to view the beliefs about m-learning module among lower primary English teachers. Using open-ended questionnaire through google form platform, nine lower primary school English teachers from rural and urban areas around Sabah were chosen as respondents for this study. The results show positive feedback to the needs of developing m-learning module for English language among lower primary school pupils by providing the learners with interactive activity alongside with teachers' guidance. This study suggests the type of evaluation method to evaluate pupils' proficiency level using mobile devices platform.

2672-815X © 2023 Published by European Publisher.

Keywords: Lower primary school, mobile learning module, teachers' perceptions

1. Introduction

English literacy skill is the ability of an individual to speak or perform in a language. According to Ekola (2016) English literacy skill is the ability of students to use the English language to make and communicate meaning in spoken and written contexts. Literacy can be defined as the ability to read, view, write, design, speak and listen in a way that allows you to communicate effectively using the language. Therefore, in the changes of English language evolution over the years, the power of literacy lies not just in the ability to read and write. It includes as an individual's capacity to apply these skills to effectively connect with others.

As a Malaysian child, the exposure to English language usually started as early as pre-school or kindergarten education. Roughly, most of the children in Malaysia usually started their early education around five to six years old. By considering the compulsory formal education duration until the students are seventeen, most of the Malaysian child must at least have learn English language for twelve years of schooling. In sum, by the end of twelve years schooling experience our students must have at least have the basic knowledge to use English language (Azman, 2016). Additional context from her research also mentioned that LINUS assessment implemented to screen all enrolled students twice a year from the beginning of Year One up to Year Three in terms of literacy skills. The students who did not achieve the target passing mark will be given remedial coaching by the subject teacher. Even though the implementation of LINUS has stopped, but the statistic emphasizes that the lower primary education for English language needed to be guided from early year of schooling phase.

The changes of our education system by Ministry of Education Malaysia is a fact of life and we cannot run from it. The current changes that occur in our education system especially on the changes of syllabus and framework for lower primary pupils around the country. We have seen more changes occurred in terms of textbook used for year one and year two pupils recently. From the usual textbook produced by our Ministry of Education (MOE) it is then changed to another new textbook that has been produced through collaboration with Cambridge University. According to Deputy Education Minister, Kamalanathan (2017) mentioned that only imported textbook will has been used since 2018. Undoubtedly, this change is currently causing some confusion among the teachers since this whole new framework is new for them. A lot of courses have been conducted by educational administrators so that teachers will know how to implement the lesson. However, there are none of the course implemented using Supermind textbook or lower primary education using mobile phone as a medium of learning session to learn English language in our country.

Prior to the research conducted by Al-Emran et al. (2019) conclude that the findings provided empirical evidence that the developed m-learning application has raised the students' acceptance towards the application and enhanced their intent to use such applications in the future. They create m-learning applications due to the respondents are universities students from Universiti Malaysia Pahang (UMP) in Malaysia and Al Buraimi University College (BUC) in Oman. Their perceptions of m-learning applications as knowledge management are analyzed through questionnaire.

For instance, the research conducted by Kamrozzaman et al. (2019) on the study of the effectiveness of M-learning for a lifelong learning learner which is based on the Heutagogy Approach for the usage of academic writing. This research shows that M-learning increase the heutagogy approach

particularly in sharing and connectivity elements. On top of that, this research will be beneficial to the public due to the fact that, nowadays, lifelong learning may no longer be conducted via face-to-face approach, but it can be applied anywhere and anytime via online. This research indicates that technology and approach should move along, hand in hand, in building a continuous education in Malaysia.

In highlighting the study conducted using the implementation of mobile based learning, Majid et al. (2018) focused on the children and teachers' interaction for English pre-literacy using mobile augmented reality (AR). The researchers developed an AR mobile application by focusing on letter recognition and observing how the preschool children react while learning using the mobile applications during teaching and learning process. The result shows that there is positive reaction and effectiveness of the AR mobile applications developed by the end of the research. The study suggests the addition of multi modal such as speech recognition to provide more active feedback.

In another research, Chang and Lin (2020) studied the effects of a mobile-based peer-assessment approach on enhancing language-learners' oral proficiency focusing on English language has demonstrated to develop learners' oral proficiency level and promote active participants in the learning process. They emphasized the role of language educator to focus on the learning goals behind the application of technology employed. In other words, the language educator remains as the most important role as knowledge distributor regards of teaching technology used for teaching and learning process. The guidance should be conducted by the teacher to help the students gain better English literacy skill for better understanding so that they will have real life experience of using the language during two ways of interaction.

Additionally, a lack of adequate time to support the teaching and learning process with implementation of mobile learning model, have resulted in the effectiveness and efficiency of mobile learning. Hence, in order to ensure the learning quality of mobile learning, the support from various stakeholders such as learning institutions, organization and supervisor are important.

By referring to Industrial Revolution (IR) 4.0 the new model for education is controlled by digital tools and focuses on smarter, more integrated, and comprehensive education and skills development using mobile devices and online training. Ebrahim (2019) stated that education 4.0 is characterized by responding to the needs of IR 4.0, with man and machine alignment; harnessing the potential of digital technology; open educational resources, globally connected education, and lifelong learning. Our education system will always undergoing constant changes and we need to be ready with equip skills so that we will not going to be left behind.

2. Problem Statement

Covid-19 spread for the past two years poses a threat to humanity, the pandemic has affected our daily routine. Many global activities are forcefully closed in order to win the battle against the enemy that we could not see physically. Educational institutions were also closed and the pupils are needed to learn, e-learning using available educational platforms, despite the challenges facing this sudden transformation. This unexpected step taken by our government prompted all educational institutions to substitute from formal learning methods to home-based teaching and online learning.

National Parents-Teacher Associations Consultative Council (PIBGN) president Associate Prof Datuk Dr Mohd Ali Hassan cited in Harakahdaily by Awang (2021) said that the relevant and suitable techniques should be introduced to existing teachers to help them for better online learning preparations in terms of process and methods. Not all teachers are adequately prepared for online learning hence it affected the the quality of the learning process. National Union of the Teaching Profession (NUTP) president Aminuddin Awang (2021) also cited from the same news said that the MOE needs to improve and strengthen skills improvement courses for teachers, especially once the school environment returns to normal.

Another measure that has been taken into consideration, Professor Dr M.Niaz Asadullah from the Universiti Malaya said as cited in by The Star Press (Rebecca, 2021) statistics show that 73% for those with enough facilitates at home used either computer, tablet or laptop as their learning devices and majority all the student with the percentage 95% used mobile phone for educational purposes. We can conclude that most of the learning occurred by using mobile phone as the medium of teaching and learning process.

Even though we do not have the restriction of going to school like we have experienced during the pandemic era, somehow there are certain schools that are needed to conduct online learning due to natural disasters occur. For instance, there are some schools around Sabah located in certain districts such as Penampang and Beaufort often experienced online learning for more than twice a year because the schools are affected by flood. State Education Department director Datuk Dr Mistrine Radin today said 2,425 students and 204 teachers were affected when eight school in three different districts in Sabah were closed due to flood (Ersie, 2022). Among those eight schools only one secondary school was closed while the other seven are primary schools. She urged that the students will have home-based teaching and learning (PdPR) until the situation is safe for them to return to school.

The online learning for secondary schools might be easier to conduct since the pupils are able to use computers or laptops at home if the facilities are available. But it will be tougher to teach primary schools pupils because most of them usually have less experience in using laptops or computers. Their parents might have difficulty to let the primary schools' pupils to use the computer independently in terms of their practicality it. Most of the parents would rather use mobile phone for the primary schools pupils' learning process at home.

According to the research by Ngadiran et al. (2021) on M-Learning Module for Self-Directed Language Learning in terms of needs analysis shows that there is a critical need for analysis in the development of the mobile learning module. The researcher suggested future studies to use methods such as surveys and interview to gather the respondents' perspectives which can deepen our understanding of students' needs in creating more comprehensive content for mobile learning.

3. Research Questions

- i. What are the needs of English language m-learning module for lower primary school teaching and learning process?
- ii. What beliefs about m-learning module do lower primary English teachers hold and how do they view those beliefs within the context of English language literacy skills?

4. Research Methods

The aim of the study is to explore lower primary school teachers' perceptions on mobile learning module for English language and to get the insights on what are the language skills that are crucial to focus on. The respondents are nine lower primary schools' teachers across Sabah state chosen based on purposive sampling. All the respondents are from different types of schools, some are teaching in urban areas and some are from rural areas. The selection criteria for the sample on their education qualification, all of the respondents are Teaching English as a second language (TESL) graduates. They are all currently teaching in different locations, some are from rural area schools and some are from urban area schools. Novice and senior teachers were chosen as the respondents for this research as the researcher need to gather different opinions and perceptions on m-learning module with the implementation of technology since those two types of teachers may have different skills to adapt with digital era changes.

This qualitative study employed open-ended questionnaire. The data were collected online using Google Form designed by the researcher due to constraints such as time. The lists of the questions were adopted from the research conducted based on the development of m-learning module for technology education in teachers' training institute (Nidzam, 2016). The list of the questions were asked in the Google Form are as below:

- i. What is your opinion on the needs to develop m-learning module for Malaysians lower primary school students in teaching and learning English?
- ii. What are the types of gadgets that suitable in developing English language m-learning module in school?
- iii. Based on your opinion, what are the suitable activities in the developing m-learning module for lower primary ESL students?
- iv. What are the most important skills (language) that should be taken into consideration to develop m-learning module for lower primary ESL students?
- v. What are the suitable teaching strategies in developing m-learning module?
- vi. What are the suitable evaluation methods in developing m-learning module?
- vii. Based on your opinion, do you think that English language m-learning module can be conducted for lower primary ESL students?

5. Findings

The needs analysis in this research were conducted through open-ended questionnaire using Google Forms, nine lower primary English teachers are chosen as the respondents. The respondents' demography is as Table 1.

Table 1. Respondents' Demography

Respondents	Gender	Race	Age	School areas
T1	Male	Bisaya	28	Rural
T2	Female	Bajau	29	Rural
T3	Female	Bajau	39	Rural
T4	Male	Chinese	30	Urban

T5	Female	Chinese	29	Urban
T6	Female	Dusun	30	Rural
T7	Female	Bajau	29	Rural
T8	Female	Dusun	40	Rural
T9	Female	Bugis	29	Urban

Qualitative analysis was used to answer research questions. Respondents were voluntarily giving their own opinions to the open-ended questions asked by the researcher for all the questions.

5.1. Respondents' view on the needs to develop m-learning module

In order to identify opinion on the needs to develop m-learning module for lower primary school students in teaching and learning English, respondents were asked to give the opinion. The analysis of the data shows that 8 out of 9 respondents agree on the needs to develop m-learning module. The responses from them for this question as depicted in Table 2.

Table 2. Needs to Develop M-learning Module

No.	Theme: Needs to develop m-learning module	Respondents
1.	Indispensable	3
2.	M-learning module is very prevalent as it makes education more accessible	5
3.	M-learning module should be developed in order to provide teachers with more options to deliver their lesson.	7
4.	Gadgets are more popular than the traditional ways of teaching and learning. It would be more engaging and interesting to learn with it.	9

5.2. Respondent list on types of gadgets that suitable in developing English language m-learning module

In this modernization era, most of the respondents list the types of suitable gadgets for m-learning are mobile phones, tablets and laptop. To aid students with better learning experience compared to traditional way of teaching and long-distance learning, it is important for the gadgets available to them. Even though that not all households are able to provide the students with laptops, but most of the parents are trying their best to provide for their children' education. The parents out there are very handful by lending their mobile phones in order to help their children to complete the task given by the teachers (Othman et al., 2022).

According to Mukhtar et al. (2020), small mobile phone screens also present a barrier for students as the items displayed by lecturers during online classes via Zoom or Google Meet cannot be properly viewed. This can have an effect on students' performance and motivation to engage in online learning (Mukhtar et al., 2020). The frequency of the gadgets is being listed by the respondents is as Table 3.

Table 3. List of Gadgets

No.	Theme: List of Gadgets	Frequency
1.	Mobile phones	5
2.	Tablet	8
3.	Laptops	3

5.3. Respondents' list of activities in the developing m-learning module

Choosing the suitable activities for m-learning module can be challenging as there are lots of activities aspects that we should take into consideration. Some of the aspects might be the level of the activities whether it will be too easy or too difficult for lower primary school students. Therefore, it is important to develop suitable activities to aid students learning process by considering that English language might be foreign for some circle of students. Based on the Table 4, among the activities suggested are online quiz, game-based activity, project-based learning and variety of interactive activities.

Table 4. M-learning Module Activities

No.	Theme: M-learning module activities	Respondents
1.	Phonic awareness	1
2.	Online reading, surfing the internet, online quiz	3
3.	Any audio-visual activities; online reading or quizzes. Lower primary ESL pupils are more attracted to music and pictures	5
4.	I would say develop game-based module for lower primary students	7
5.	Online quiz, more Project based learning which requires students to research online, emails, online or digital journal, for speaking they can do some interactive activities online	9

5.4. Respondents' important language skills to develop m-learning module

The researcher also identified on the important language skills that should be emphasized to teach lower primary school students. By referring to Table 5, most of the respondents suggested that reading skills is the most crucial skills that should be included in the m-learning module. This might be due to the influential of Malaysian Curriculum Standard that mainly focus on 3M skills which are reading, writing and counting skills. Meanwhile, the research conducted by Subramaniam (2019) shows that speaking skills are the basic skills to be mastered every student to learn foreign language. The respondents suggested that reading skill is the most important language skill for lower primary school students and followed by speaking skill.

Table 5. English Language Skills

No.	Theme: English language skills	Frequency
1.	Reading	8
2.	Speaking	4
3.	All four skills	2
4.	Dual language	1

5.5. Respondents' teaching strategies of m-learning module

Language teaching strategies can be defined as techniques used in the classroom settings in order to enhance students' ability to learn foreign language (Tavoosy & Jelveh, 2019). The responsibility of the language teacher should include choosing the suitable teaching strategies and implement the strategies successfully. Table 6, shows there are four types of teaching strategies suggested by the respondents such as projects-based learning, student centred, interactive teaching and flipped classroom.

Table 6. Teaching Strategies

No.	Theme: Teaching strategies	Respondents
1.	Projects based learning	1
2.	Student centred	2,3 and 9
3.	Interactive teaching	3,5 and 6
4.	Flipped classroom	7 and 9

5.6. Respondents’ evaluation methods of m-learning module

In general, education system in Malaysia is getting used with the changes made for evaluation methods used for students’ assessment. Before the implementation of PBD (Classroom Based Assessment), lower primary school pupils would sit for summative examination by the end of schools’ semesters. Based on Table 7, there are four types of evaluation methods suggested by the respondents which include project based learning, quiz, assessment and PBD. Some may have thoughts that lower primary school assessment was not that important compared to upper primary school assessment as it will be needed for qualification to enter boarding school for their secondary schools.

Table 7. Evaluation Methods

No.	Theme: Evaluation methods	Respondents
1.	Project based learning	1
2.	Quiz and online assessment	3
3.	Summative and Formative assessment	5
4.	PBD	8

5.7. Respondents’ view on possibility to conduct m-learning module

Most of the respondents give positive feedback as depicted in Table 8, when they were asked regarding the possibility to conduct m-learning module in the future. They agreed that it is something that can be turn into a reality to enhance teaching and learning session. Among the reasons include the exposure of the pupils on how to use the gadget existed which enable them to do self-paced learning by their own. As an additional. The guidance from the teacher is needed to help the pupils so that they will stay focus on the lesson.

Table 8. Possibility to Conduct M-learning

No.	Theme: Possibility to conduct m-learning	Respondents
1.	Yes because most of them know how to use gadgets	3
2.	Yes, because m-learning is self-paced. The pupils can move through the content at their own speed as long as the content is suitable to their age	5
3.	Yes but guidance are needed	8
4.	Yes with the correct resources and syllabus	9

Ishikawa et al. (2018) indicated that their innovation of developing reading app to improve reading skill among non-native undergraduate learners showed positive improvement of the reading pace and did not negatively affect their understanding of the text. The findings showed that rather than using hardcopy materials they are preferred to use mobile reading apps. While based on research conducted by Bikowski

and Casal (2018), who also run the experiment using m-learning module indicate that the engagement of the students with the digital text is lower compared to manual textbook. The screen size of the mobile phone which is smaller than the textbook lowers the engagement of the students to read the text provided.

Therefore, this study conducted to explore different views and perspectives among lower primary school teachers for English language literacy skills. It is important to gain feedback on how the m-learning module should be developed to suit the needs for the pupils by looking into teachers' preferences by start asking the basic needs of the module. The previous research conducted will be used as a guidance to consider both previous findings and teachers' perception in order to lower the gap of the aspects suggested for further research suggestion.

6. Conclusions

The result of the study showed positive outcome on the needs of English language m-learning module for lower primary school teaching and learning process based on teachers' perspectives. Most of them agree to the effort of developing m-learning module for more interactive learning process between teacher and primary school pupils. They also believed that mobile phones, tablets and laptops are suitable gadgets used to deliver m-learning modules for the pupils. Other than that, they suggested few activities to enhance interactive language skills for the pupils so the implementation of long distance and virtual learning will result for better learning outcomes. The respondents also voiced out the crucial skill that should be emphasize on developing the module which is reading skill instead of the other skill for lower primary school pupils.

Therefore, to gain in depth perceptions and views to develop mobile learning module for English language literacy skill, experts' beliefs and opinion should be required. Thus, this will help to confirm if their opinions are significantly different in certain aspects and examine thoroughly for the betterment of the pupils' learning benefits. Another further research suggestion should also include the pupils' opinion on the module by using suitable research methods to help the development of m-learning module meet the practicality and usability among young learners.

References

- Al-Emran, M., Mezhujev, V., & Kamaludin, A. (2019). Is M-learning acceptance influenced by knowledge acquisition and knowledge sharing in developing countries? *Education and Information Technologies*, 26(3), 2585-2606.
- Awang, A. (2021). PdPR is new to everyone, give teachers time to adapt. *Harakah Daily*. <https://harakahdaily.net/index.php/2021/01/26/pdpr-is-new-to-everyone-give-teachers-time-to-adapt/>
- Azman, H. (2016). Implementation and challenges of English language education reform in Malaysian primary schools. *3L, Language, Linguistics, Literature*, 22(3).
- Bikowski, D., & Casal, J. E. (2018). Interactive digital textbooks and engagement: A learning strategies framework. *Lang. Learn. Technol.* 22, 119–136.
- Chang, C., & Lin, H. C. K. (2020). Effects of a mobile-based peer-assessment approach on enhancing language-learners' oral proficiency. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 57(6), 668-679.
- Ebrahim, P. (2019). *IR 4.0 and the 4 Cs of Education 4.0*. <https://www.ucyp.edu.my/2019/09/05/ir-4-0-and-the-4-cs-of-education-4-0/>

- Ekola, T. (2016). *English Language Needs and Language Proficiency*. University of Jyväskylä.
- Ersie, R. (2022). *Eight schools in Sabah closed due to floods*. New Straits Times.
- Ishikawa, Y., Smith, C., Kondo, M., Akano, I., Maher, K., & Wada, N. (2018). Development and Use of an EFL Reading Practice Application for an Android Tablet Computer. *International Journal of Mobile and Blended Learning (IJMBL)*, 6(3), 35-51. <http://doi.org/10.4018/ijmb.2014070103>
- Kamalanathan, D. P. (2017). *Only imported English textbooks from next year*. The Star Online.
- Kamrozzaman, N. A., Badusah, J., & Mohammad, W. M. R. W. (2019). Pendekatan heutagogi: Keberkesanan M-pembelajaran untuk pendidikan sepanjang hayat [Heutagogy approach: Effectiveness of M-learning for lifelong learning education]. *Sains Humanika*, 11(3).
- Majid, N. A. A., Arshad, H., & Yunus, F. (2018). Children and Teacher's Interaction for English Pre-Literacy Using Mobile Augmented Reality. *International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counseling*, 3(15), 71-78.
- Mukhtar, K., Javed, J., Arooj, M., & Sethi, A. (2020). Advantages, limitation and recommendations for online learning during COVID-19 Pandemic Era. *Pakistan Journal of Medical Sciences*, 36.
- Ngadiran, N. M., Alias, N. A., & Anuar, N. (2021). M-Learning Module for Self-Directed Language Learning; a Study of Students' Needs Analysis. *Development in Language Studies*, 1(1), 1-11.
- Nidzam, M. (2016). *Pembangunan Model Kurikulum M-Pembelajaran Teknologi dalam Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran di IPG [Design and development of M-learning curriculum model in teacher training institute for teaching and learning]*. Universiti Utara Malaysia.
- Othman, I. W., Mokhtar, S., & Esa, M. S. (2022). The Stages of National Education System Operation: Issues, Rationale, and Challenges for the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) in Facing Post Pandemic Norms of Covid-19. *International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counseling*, 7(47), 616-638.
- Rebecca, R. (2021). *PDPR: How effective is it?* The Star Press.
- Subramaniam, S. R. (2019). Concept and Characteristics of Flipped Classroom. *International journal of Emerging Trends in Science and Technology*. <https://doi.org/10.18535/ijetst/v3i10.01>
- Tavoosy, Y., & Jelveh, R. (2019). Language teaching strategies and techniques used to support students learning in a language other than their mother tongue. *International Journal Learning and Teaching*, 11(2), 77-88. <https://doi.org/10.18844/ijlt.v11i2.3831>