Identifying the Potential of Mobile Application for e-MUET: A Case Study

**Mashanum Osman*, Sazalinsyah Razali,
Norhafizah Zaki, Nursyafizila Azizan**

Faculty of Information and Communication Technologies,
Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka,
*Corresponding Author: mashanum@utem.edu.my

ABSTRACT

This paper describes a study that has been carried out to examine the effect and use of the mobile application for Malaysian University English Test (MUET). The application is designed for mobile devices that include and mimics the real MUET with the aim to awaken interest and flexibility for the candidates to learn.Two of the main objectives of this study are to develop a mobile application (eMUET) for candidates to facilitate learning and to provide flexibility to learn. The second objective is to evaluate the effects of using eMuet in the learning process. The study uses the quasi experimental approach in order to gather data and obtain feedback from a sample of several groups of undergraduate students in a public Malaysian university. The instruments covered in this paper are disseminating pre and post questionnaires and using the application (eMuet). The study concludes that the use of mobile phones with suitable learning activities is favoured, and it helps improve the participants' learning experience.

Keyword: mobile application, language learning, mobile phones

INTRODUCTION

e-Muet is a mobile application for Malaysian University English Test (MUET). MUET is carried out to assess the English language proficiency of pre-university students for admission into universities and colleges. There are four components in the MUET exam: Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. Each component is assessed separately. E-Muet will cover two components: Reading and Listening. The purpose of e-Muet is to enhance the learning experience utilizing mobile technologies. The use of mobile device can help to reinforce the learning process, where it deliver learning in chunks or nugget sizes, on the move, at anytime and anywhere

Technology in education has a very long history that allows the user to change from time being. The beginning of the new era of technology even started from the early sixties century where people start to develop something new and useful for the community. From computer assisted learning, to open learning environments, technology advances have been used to reduce classrooms constraints during learning and somehow to adapt a new learning materials to increase the knowledge of the students. Mobile phone nowadays becomes more functional beyond phoning and text messaging. Using a mobile device in learning context allows the user to learn anywhere, and anytime.

The continuous development of mobile technologies has created a new platform for supporting communication in learning. There are five properties of mobile devices that produce unique educational affordances: portability, social interactivity, context sensitivity, connectivity and individuality (Naismith, Lonsdale, Vavoula & Sharples, 2004).

A study done by a Malaysian government agency, the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (2014) found out that in Quarter 4 of 2012, the penetration rate for mobile phone in Malaysia is 141.6 which is over 100%. The figure can be translated as 47% Malaysian own more than one mobile phone.

However, mobile learning in Malaysia is still in its infancy. In this respect, the study was designed to evaluate the feasibility of the application for MUET candidates. The objectives of the development of this MUET

application are to reduce cost and time to find any materials needed for MUET learning, and to provide extra learning content that can help to improve the student's skill in English especially for MUET. The main advantage is that they are not limited to in-class activities.

METHOD

The study was conducted with five groups with a total of 99 students from 4 different faculties in a public technical university in Malaysia where English is their second language. The population of this study consists of students from engineering and computer science faculties. This group of students are candidates for MUET, and they are required to sit for MUET examination prior to graduation. This sample is used to determine the feasibility of using a mobile application for MUET and to learn lessons for improving the design for the later stage. The students were asked to answer a set of questionnaire and download the application and use the application for a particular period.

RESULT AND ANALYSIS: PRE QUESTIONNAIRE

The questions asked about student's opinions and perception towards the mobile phone and learning. From the feedback given, the majority of the students feel that the mobile phone is a necessary item.

We also ask several questions regarding the MUET application. First we ask whether the use of the application enhanced or hindered their study experience. 80% of them agree that the use of this application can help to enhance their learning experience. Some of them said that the use of mobile phone is easy, faster to access and create more fun. While 10% of the students said, the learning experience is hindered because lots of entertainment applications are available and can easily distract the students' focus while using the MUET application.

Regarding the application itself, 80% of them believe the MUET application can be further improved by adding more functions and exercises. Another 10% would prefer to go the traditional method to learn. Followed

is a part of the question asked to the students. Refer to the following Figure 1A, 1B, 1C, 1D and 1E: The question asked is: Do you feel your mobile phone is necessary item? (e.g can't leave home without it). A majority of the students do agree mobile phone is necessary for their daily life.

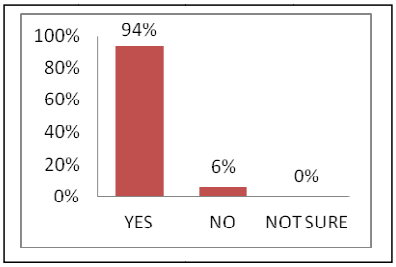


Figure 1A: Group 1

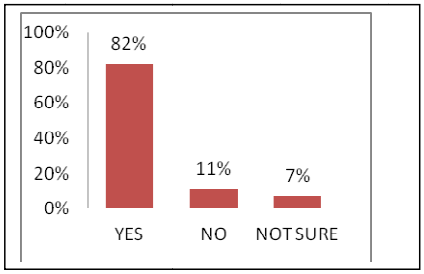


Figure 1B : Group 2

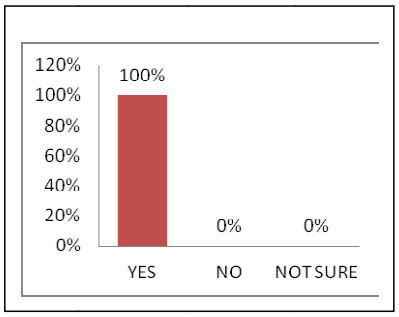


Figure 1C : Group 3

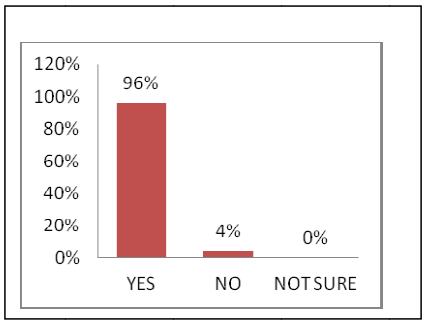


Figure 1D : Group 4

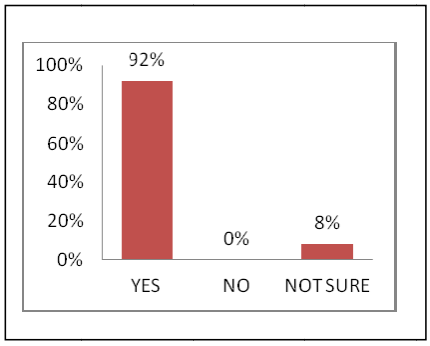
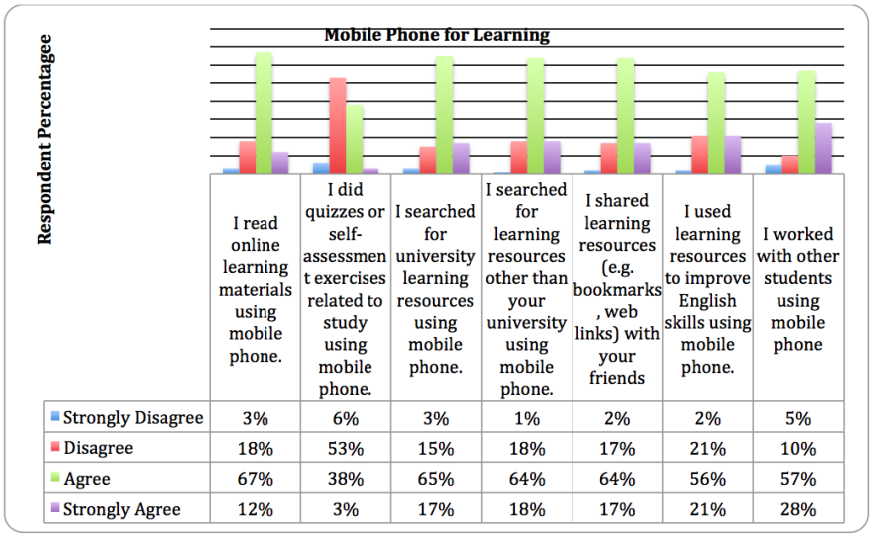


Figure 1E: Group 5



	I read online learning materials using mobile phone.	I did quizzes or self-assessment exercises related to study using mobile phone.	I searched for university learning resources using mobile phone.	I searched for learning resources other than your university using mobile phone.	I shared learning resources (e.g. bookmarks, web links) with your friends	I used learning resources to improve English skills using mobile phone.	I worked with other students using mobile phone
Strongly Disagree	3%	6%	3%	1%	2%	2%	5%
Disagree	18%	53%	15%	18%	17%	21%	10%
Agree	67%	38%	65%	64%	64%	56%	57%
Strongly Agree	12%	3%	17%	18%	17%	21%	28%

Figure 2: Mobile Phone for Learning

We also want to know student's perception and how they use mobile phone for learning. Several questions were asked as depicted on the figures above (refer Figure 2). 67% students agree that they read learning materials using a mobile phone. A majority of them also use the mobile phone to search for learning resources and share resources among their friends. Quite a number of students use the mobile phone to improve English skills.

After answering the pre questionnaire, students are encouraged to download e-MUET from a given URL. They need to install the apps on their mobile phone and use the apps for several weeks. The statistics show that around 83 users has access and download the apps.

Several weeks after the experiment, similar questionnaires were handed out to the same students. For questions: Do you feel your mobile phone is necessary item? (e.g can't leave home without it) refer results in Figure 3a and Figure 3b.

Compared to similar questions before and after the experiment, we identify an increasing number of agreement that the mobile phone is a necessary item for the students.

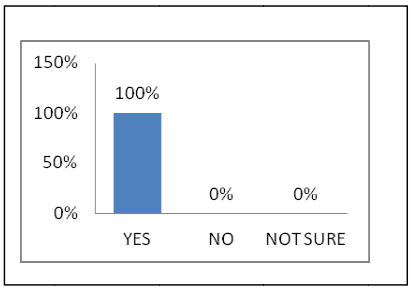


Figure 3a: Group 1, 3, 4 and 5

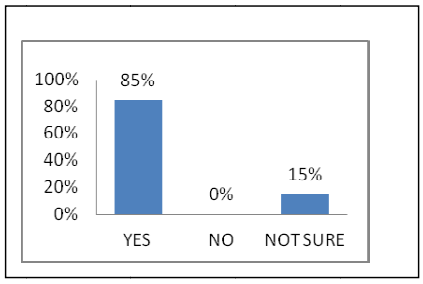
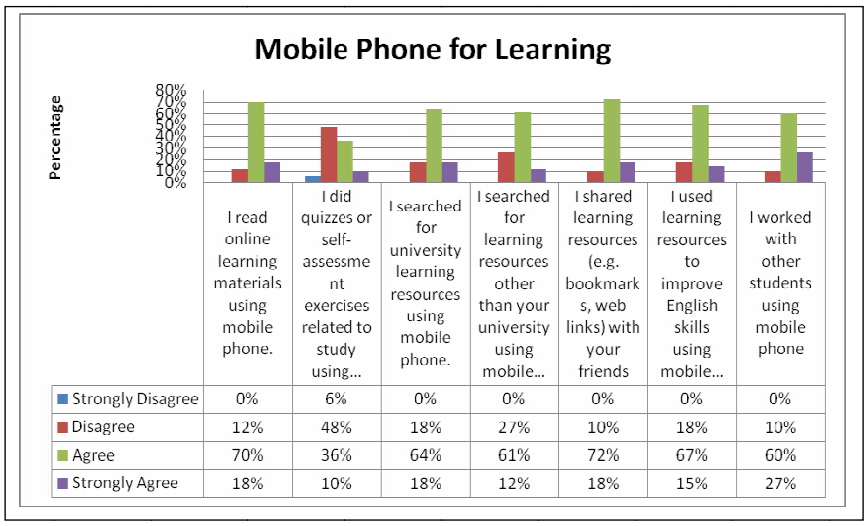


Figure 3b: Group 2

Whereby for perception and usage of the mobile phone for learning. Some of the questions improved positively (refer Figure 4). Percentage developed for share learning resources, use the mobile device to learn and worked with other students using the mobile phone.

This study has several findings. Firstly, the use of mobile phone among the university students is very handy since they use the device to communicate with others. Secondly, the development of e-Muet application interestingly manage to spark the interest for students to use and learn. The overall findings from the study suggested that students have a positive view of using the mobile application to learn MUET.



	I read online learning materials using mobile phone.	I did quizzes or self-assessment exercises related to study using...	I searched for university learning resources using mobile phone.	I searched for learning resources other than your university using mobile...	I shared learning resources (e.g. bookmarks, web links) with your friends	I used learning resources to improve English skills using mobile...	I worked with other students using mobile phone
Strongly Disagree	0%	6%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Disagree	12%	48%	18%	27%	10%	18%	10%
Agree	70%	36%	64%	61%	72%	67%	60%
Strongly Agree	18%	10%	18%	12%	18%	15%	27%

Figure 4: Mobile Phone for Learning

CONCLUSION AND LIMITATION

The findings of this study could have important implications for MUET application. The range of research and projects in the use of mobile phones for language learning has been positive in European countries (Malliou, Miliarakis, Stavros, Sotiriou, Startakis & Tsolakidis, 2002; Kadyte, 2003; Tan & Liu, 2004; Pincas, 2005; Zurita & Nussbaum, 2004).

There are several limitations identified. Firstly, we do not know precisely whether the student has any experience in using mobile phone for learning language learning especially. This could be asked in depth in the questionnaires and interviews. The pre and post questionnaire should be better matched them to measure more accurate findings. The study can be further expanded implemented with bigger samples for the whole semester to get better results and in-depth pattern or analysis.

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