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Development of MUET Tidbits: A Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) application for Foundation-Level Students

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ABSTRACT

The Malaysian University English Test (MUET) is a high-stakes national examination required for entry into Malaysian higher education institutions, highlighting the need for effective and integrated preparation tools. This study develops and evaluates MUET Tidbits, a Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) application designed as a comprehensive platform to support students in mastering the four core MUET components: reading, listening, speaking, and writing. Guided by the ADDIE instructional design model, the application was developed and field-tested with 63 foundation students. The findings indicate that MUET Tidbits provides a structured and accessible learning experience through the integration of authentic materials, including past-year questions and MUET-based audio, thereby enhancing test familiarity and learner engagement. Additionally, its minimalist user interface facilitates ease of navigation and usability. Conclusively MUET Tidbits demonstrates considerable potential as an effective digital learning tool for MUET preparation. Further empirical research is recommended to assess its impact on students' performance, while its scalability and accessibility suggest strong commercial potential as a marketable educational resource.

Keywords: Mobile-Assisted Language Learning, mobile application, MUET, language learning, foundation students

1. INTRODUCTION

The Malaysian University English Test (MUET) is a national-level English proficiency examination administered by the Majlis Peperiksaan Malaysia. The test comprises four components, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It primarily serves as an entry requirement for students intending to pursue undergraduate studies in Malaysian universities. Consequently, MUET is regarded as a high-stakes examination for many students seeking admission into higher education institutions in Malaysia (Ali & Hamid, 2021; Othman et al., 2020).

In response to this need, various learning aids have been developed to assist students in preparing for MUET. In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL). MALL refers to the use of mobile technologies, such as smartphones and tablets, to facilitate language learning in a flexible and accessible manner (Kukulska-Hulme & Shield, 2008). Typically, MALL applications are developed by educators or researchers to support learners in mastering the four core language skills while preparing for MUET.

Empirical evidence suggests that students generally demonstrate positive perceptions towards MALL, highlighting its convenience, accessibility, and ability to support learning anytime and anywhere (Rahim et al., 2019; Chen et al., 2019; Md Yunus et al., 2023). Furthermore, research indicates that MALL can be beneficial in improving students' performance in MUET related tasks, particularly in enhancing language proficiency and learner autonomy (Yusof, 2018; Hashim et al., 2016).

Given the positive reception of MALL and its demonstrated benefits in supporting MUET preparation, a new MALL application has been developed to integrate all four MUET skills into a single platform. This application is designed as a comprehensive, one-stop learning centre to assist students in preparing for MUET in a more structured and efficient manner.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study developed a mobile application designed to assist students in preparing for the Malaysian University English Test (MUET). The ADDIE (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation) instructional design model served as the primary framework. This model was selected over alternative paradigms due to its established prominence in educational research and its capacity to provide a systematic blueprint for creating effective learning experiences (Smith & Ragan, 2020).



Figure 1. ADDIE Model

The development process commenced with the analysis stage, where researchers conducted a preliminary study and literature review to establish the necessity of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) for MUET. Subsequently, the design phase prioritised MALL for its adaptability and high student receptivity. During this stage, researchers collaborated with experts to build the application. Experts' views help researchers to make informed decisions in designing the MALL. Microsoft PowerPoint was utilised for the initial prototype, leveraging its versatility and the students' existing familiarity with the interface. Later, in the development stage, suitable contents were selected to be included in the MALL. The contents included notes and practices for students.

In the implementation stage, the MALL was field-tested in a classroom setting to elicit authentic feedback from the primary target users. Two groups of foundation students were given the chance to utilise the application. The students were given a briefing before trying out the

application to complete practice tasks. Later, the students were asked to provide feedback based on their experience using the application. Finally, data gathered during implementation informed the evaluation stage, allowing for the iterative refinement of the MALL application to ensure its pedagogical effectiveness.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

MUET Tidbits is a mobile application developed to assist students in preparing for the Malaysian University English Test (MUET). Overall, the application comprises four primary components: reading, listening, speaking, and writing, which correspond to the core sections of the MUET examination. Each component is further divided into several sub-sections, including notes, sample materials, and practice exercises.

The content of the application is developed with reference to authentic materials to provide students with a realistic preparation experience for the MUET examination. For instance, the sample questions incorporated into MUET Tidbits are drawn from past MUET examination sessions. Similarly, the listening component exposes students to authentic MUET audio materials. This approach enhances the relevance of the learning experience and provides students with valuable exposure to the actual test format.

In terms of user interface, MUET Tidbits adopts a minimalist design. The primary objective is to facilitate ease of navigation and enhance user accessibility. Buttons are clearly labelled to minimise confusion and ensure a seamless user experience.

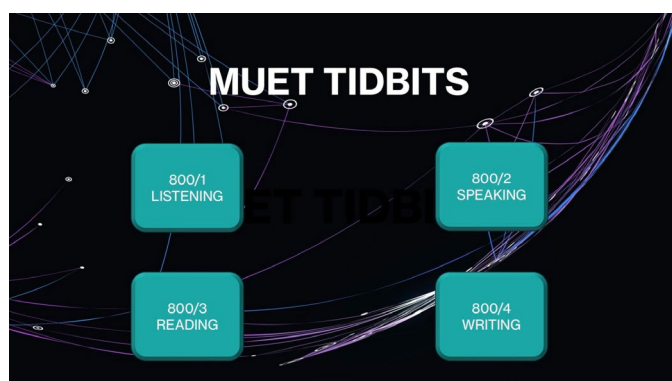


Figure 2. MUET Tidbits components

4. CONCLUSION

MUET Tidbits application represents a research-informed innovation designed to support more effective preparation for MUET. It serves as a learning tool aimed at assisting students to prepare for MUET especially in the mastery across the four core components of the examination through structured content and exposure to authentic materials. Considering its potential, further empirical research is recommended to evaluate the effectiveness of the mobile application in improving students' performance. Should the findings indicate positive outcomes, MUET Tidbits holds significant potential for further refinement and wider implementation as an accessible digital learning resource for MUET candidates.

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