

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MALL IN READING COMPREHENSION: STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract: The ubiquity of the mobile phone nowadays cannot be resisted. People's lifestyle depending on their gadget is undeniably these days. Apparently, this phenomenon changes the way students learn English unconsciously. Therefore, this research aims to investigate the students' perspective on the use of Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) in reading comprehension class. The students' perspective includes the advantages of MALL and the challenges they encountered. In order to obtain the data, an interview with 3 students was conducted in an Online English Course in Surakarta, Indonesia. This study was descriptive in nature with a qualitative approach. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling. Qualitative analysis was conducted inductively on students' responses. The results discovered that MALL encouraged the students to be autonomous learners. Moreover, students experienced some technical problems in operating MALL.

Keywords: mobile language learning, MALL, reading comprehension, students' perspective on MALL

INTRODUCTION

Many information in this era is provided using multimedia including written text. This pushes everyone including learners indirectly to read the content of information comprehensively to understand the message intended by the informant because according to Nunan (2003), reading is to build meaning from a process of combining information from a text with their own background knowledge. Commonly, teachers give a certain text for students to read as the main activity in a reading classroom. However, the lack of English vocabulary may negatively affect students' comprehension on the text, which leads to their conclusion that reading is complex and problematic (Lin, 2002; Segler, Pain, & Sorace, 2002). It is in accordance with the previous researches that lack of vocabulary is the most common problems for students in reading comprehension (Kheirzadeh & Tavakoli, 2012; Al Seyabi & Tuzlukova, 2015). Therefore, many teachers and researchers try to formulate several solutions dealing with the problems faced by students in reading comprehension. These days, mobile phones offer such a multiservice including as learning media (Pernjek & Habjanec, 2015).

People daily stuff nowadays are mostly assisted by gadget especially smartphone. Many things can be done only by operating a certain application in the smartphone such as calling, texting, transferring money, and even selling and buying things through an online store. Lately, teachers start to adopt technology in conducting learning activities like mobile phones, portable computer, or tablet (Hwang & Chang, 2011; Rogers & Price, 2009). Generally, they use technology as supporting media in the classroom because of their belief that it helps their teaching (Shyamlee & Phil, 2012). The type of technology used in the classroom is varied nowadays e.g. the internet,

projector, video, recorder, computer, tablet, and smartphone (Shyamlee & Phil, 2012). However, some obstacles like application mastery and teachers' management of their student may arise as a result of technology implementation in the classroom (Boukadi, 2014). The human nature always finds the easiest way to fulfill their needs in life including in learning and according to Wagner (2005), the smartphone as the most mobile and the handiest device represents the ease to be chosen as a learning tool. Sharples, Taylor, and Vavoula (2005) suggest that three criteria to consider learning as mobile learning: in terms of time (during weekends, weekdays, night, and the day), in terms of space (at home, the workplace, at places of leisure), and in terms of space different areas of life (leisure, work demands, or self-improvement). This phenomenon encourages researchers to investigate how to enhance reading comprehension by creating an effective learning environment with the support of advanced technology (Chen, Chen, & Sun, 2010; Hsu, Hwang, & Chang, 2010). Consequently, the benefits and challenges of mobile devices integration as learning tools in classroom activities should be recognized by all educators (Gromik, 2012) in order to reach the goals of teaching and learning activities.

The use of MALL to aid teaching and learning activities was found numerously. Davie and Hilber (2015) conducted research on using mobile devices to learn English vocabulary. The results revealed that mobile learning was very convenient, efficient, and enjoyable. Besides, the use of smartphone was beneficial in terms of students' motivation. Meanwhile, Kim (2014) examined the effects of using mobile devices in blended learning for English reading comprehension. The findings discovered that mobile devices helped the learning activity to become convenient and encouraged students to learn. Furthermore, Baliu and Machmud (2017) investigated the use of the smartphone in developing students' reading comprehension from perspectives of gender differences. The results exposed that students' reading comprehension which taught by using a smartphone was better than students' reading comprehension which taught without using a smartphone. Besides, there was an interaction between using smartphone toward students' reading comprehension. Furthermore, both male and female students' reading comprehension who used a smartphone was better than that who did not use.

Hence, this research purposes to investigate students' perspectives on the implementation of the MALL in reading comprehension. The first, the perspectives deal with the advantages of MALL implementation in reading comprehension. Then, the perspectives regarding the challenges encountered by the students in the use of MALL in reading comprehension are also discussed.

METHOD

This research was descriptive qualitative with the interview as a data collection method. The data were taken from 3 students, who were taught by the teacher through mobile phone application, using purposive sampling. The criteria for participant selection were that students finished their course and had taken the official test. Then, the data were analyzed using transcription, member checking, coding, and classification to take a conclusion.

The setting of the research was in an Online English Course in Surakarta, Indonesia where specifically taught International English Language Test System (IELTS) materials. The teaching instruction was through WhatsApp phone call while assignments were stored in Google Drive that could be accessed by both student and teacher. Subsequently, the feedback given by the teacher was either delivered verbally or written. In addition, the teaching materials were taken from the module provided by the institution.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the research exposed the demographic data of respondents. The respondents aged between 21 until 27. Besides, their sex was 1 male and 2 females. In addition, they all were employee either in a company or government department. Their purposes to join the course were to continue their study by getting a scholarship. Furthermore, they lived in the variable region that was Sulawesi, Java, and Borneo.

The results of the research revealed the students' perceptions of MALL implementation in reading comprehension. Students experienced benefits in using a mobile phone for learning reading comprehension. However, they encountered several technical problems in using MALL for reading comprehension. The further explanations are below.

In terms of the advantages of MALL implementation in reading comprehension, students' perspectives were varied in one side and different in others. They agreed that MALL in reading comprehension was unique and it helped them in the flexibility of either time or place.

R1: This program helped me a lot because I can do the assignment everywhere when I am free. It is much recommended for a very busy person like me.

R2: I can read the passage in my favorite place easily because it is in my smartphone... Moreover, I can do my assignment anytime."

R3: This program is very suitable for a worker like me. I can open the application to read the reading passage between my job in my workplace. Sometimes, the workload is very high so I need to find a flexible course.

Their opinions about flexibility are in line with Gheytsi, Azizifar, and Gowhary's opinion (2015) who stated that learning using mobile device allows students to learn anytime, anywhere. In addition, students argued that learning using a smartphone was interesting and unique. It is in agreement with Norbrook and Scott (2003) who stated that learning through smartphone was interesting for students for its uniqueness.

R1: It's an interesting way to learn from smartphone...it's different from other courses.

R2: I'm happy to join this course because this program offered something new and unique which is different from other institution.

R3: This course is very unique. I never find the same program at another place. I will promote to my friends because it's very interesting.

The responses above support a previous study from Davie and Hilber (2015) who found that learning English using mobile devices was very convenient, efficient, and enjoyable. Besides, this was also in line with Kim (2014) who revealed that mobile devices helped the learning activity to become convenient and encouraged students to learn. On the other hands, two of the respondents argued that the mobile phone was easy for them to understand the meaning because they can use a dictionary on their phone.

R2: I think reading comprehension from a smartphone is good because it is very simple. It is like you have a class but on your mobile phone. All materials, exercises, assignments, and feedbacks. Even I can open the dictionary on my mobile phone

R3: Reading comprehension from a mobile phone is very easy because whenever I didn't know the meaning of a particular vocabulary, I can open dictionary application on my phone. So, I can directly know the meaning in a short time. It is different when I should open a traditional dictionary. I need more time to find the meaning of the word.

The opinions from both respondents are in accordance to Kim, Rueckert, Kim, and Seo (2013) who stated that an individual who is eager to use smartphones as a learning tool beyond their primary function is because they are simple and entertaining.

However, some challenges arose when implementing MALL in reading comprehension such technical problem. The most common problem for online devices especially in Indonesia is an internet connection.

R1: I hate it when the signal is not stable so that I can't access the text smoothly. It is very annoying. Maybe it will be faster if this course is not in Indonesia.

R2: I need to learn first how to use this program. Sometimes, I didn't really understand the feature in this program and it disturbs my learning by wasting my time only to understand how a particular feature works.

R3: The internet connection sometimes is not stable. So, I cannot open the program and it's very wasting time for me because I have so many jobs to do in my workplace.

Those arguments correspond with Kim, Rueckert, Kim, and Seo (2013) who found that slower internet connection became students' core challenges when they are involved in online learning. Since the use of smartphones these days depends on the internet connection to maximize all applications and features within them, this research supports their opinion about the internet connection. In addition, the students stated that the size mobile phone screen impeded them to access the content thoroughly.

R1: My smartphone is not really big. So, it is difficult for me to access the text fully. I need to swipe up and down continuously. Maybe I need a larger gadget like a tablet.

R2: I feel frustrated when the size of the font is not big. I need to zoom it whenever I want to read it even though I already wear my glasses. I still cannot see the text without zooming it. I hope they also develop the program for the computer because it is very helpful for people like me who have a minus in their eyes.

R3: I'm not convenient when doing the assignment because I need to zoom in and zoom out the text. It makes me stressed because I have to finish it in a certain time and this (zoom in and zoom out) just wasting my time.

These relate to Carlson (2002) who said that the small size of the mobile screen could be frustrating for students. The response also showed a preference for bigger screen devices such as laptops, tablets, or computer. This matches with Stockwell (2010) who argued that students tend to use a bigger display in digital learning. The tendency is because small screen such smartphone

often have technical limitations in comparison to the tablet, laptop, and computer (Kim & Kim, 2010).

In the end, the overall results revealed that the implementation of MALL in reading comprehension tended to be positive. Students' perspective confirmed that the advantages of mobile learning in reading comprehension were more than its challenges. This supports Chen and Hsu (2008) opinion that mobile-based learning is effective in enhancing reading comprehension and reading abilities. However, the challenges in using a smartphone for reading comprehension need to be highlighted by teachers.

CONCLUSIONS

In the end, this research concludes that, in overall, the students' perspective on the implementation of MALL in reading comprehension is positive. In spite of several challenges appeared, students' still see that MALL is positive to be implemented in reading comprehension. Flexibility and uniqueness became the main advantages of the use of mobile phone in reading comprehension. Besides, students experienced that reading comprehension from a mobile phone was simple. This can be a foundation for encouraging teachers to implement MALL in reading comprehension in their classroom. However, some challenges encountered by the students' in using MALL in reading comprehension should be considered by teachers. Despite the problems, in general, were technical, teachers should find the solution in order to reach the goals of teaching and learning of reading comprehension. Moreover, the problems may hamper and impede the teaching and learning process which resulting failure in achieving the goals of students learning reading comprehension. Therefore, solving the challenges in using a mobile phone for reading comprehension should be taken into account by teachers.

Based on the findings of this research, some suggestions can be made. First, a larger scope of research is needed since this research covers only three respondents in one institution. The result can be deeper and more accurate when more respondent from the various institution is engaged. Afterward, another variable might be explored such teaching materials, teaching technique, classroom management, assessments, etc. In the end, it is suggested that teachers' perspective is also investigated since teachers have a role in the implementation of MALL in reading comprehension.

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