

HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS' PERCEPTION TOWARD THE USAGE OF MOBILE LEARNING IN FOSTERING THEIR LEARNING ACTIVITY

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ABSTRACT

The sophistication of technology has already entered the whole world among the earthlings. It has changed the way people live, the way people communicate, and the way people learn. Moreover, the current technology that was arisen in education is Mobile Learning (M-learning). It means learning through wireless technological gadgets that can be pocketed and operated wherever the learner's device is able to receive continuous transmission signals. Furthermore, this paper tried to find out the perception of higher education students toward the usage of M-learning in fostering their learning activity. The qualitative data was obtained from 5 post-graduate students which randomly chosen as the sample of this research, then the researchers also reviewed some theories regarding the usage of M-learning in higher education. Additionally, it found that M-learning gives abundant benefits in fostering higher students' learning activity. At last, the researcher suggested to engage M-learning in higher education.

Keywords: higher education, M-learning, mobile learning, technology

1 INTRODUCTION

The sophistication of technology has already entered the whole world among the earthlings. It happened in all aspect of life then has changed the way people live, the way people communicate, and also the way people learn. Moreover, in this 21st century there is a new technology that is used in education namely mobile learning (M-learning). It defines as wireless technological devices that can be pocketed and utilized wherever the learner's device is able to receive unbroken transmission signals (Attewell & Savill-Smith, 2005). The use of M-learning in education must bring positive and negative impacts to the learners. Additionally, the positive sides should be increased to complement the learning habit of students while the negative impacts should be minimized. Thus, as the first generation of M-learning users, it is important to hold a lot of researches in the field of M-learning in order to prepare ourselves to be more intelligible about it.

In other side, Post-graduate student of English Education Department of Sebelas Maret University are prospective English teachers. There will be a big probability that their future students are purely native digitals who learning through electronic devices. Furthermore the digital advancements happens continuously, so they should familiarize their self to be open minded for every single new technology.

All of the post-graduate students of English Education Department of Sebelas Maret University has at least one handheld device. By using it, they already implemented M-learning through creating two learning medias, that are group discussion and mobile cloud learning. The group discussion is made in WhatsApp and the mobile cloud learning is made in Google Drive. At last, the main purpose of this paper is to know how are the perceptions of higher education students about M-learning? What kind of application that they use? And how are the impacts of those applications to their learning activity?

M-learning

Mobile learning refers to the capabilities of mobile technology devices, especially wireless and portable devices that well known as “smart” cellular telephones, which are brought to a physical classroom context as well as to the activities of students as they participate in learning institutions (Attewell & Savill-Smith, 2005; Bedall-Hill, Jabbar, & Al Sheri, 2011; Dixit, Ojampera, Nee, & Prasad, 2011; El-Hussein & Cronje, 2010; Osman, El-Hussein, & Cronje, 2010). Thus, M-learning facilitates ‘on the move’ learning and not tied in a particular place. In addition, as long as the handheld device is on and able to receive the signal, the learning process will run well.

M-learning is the advancement of E-learning that was introduced few years ago. One of the biggest failings of E-learning was the assumption that it could become a solution to all learning problems, which in fact, was not true. Moreover, “the good news about M-learning is that it possible to avoid in making the same mistakes of E-learning because the devices are much powerful than PCs in E-learning” (Stead, 2006). Another reason is it provides a cheap alternative that can be effortlessly taken out to the workplace or wherever the learner needs to be (Whitsed, 2004).

Not only that, Dieterle (2005) also stated some positive points of M-learning, such as: 1) Connect ability – they connect to the Internet wirelessly, 2) Wear ability – they are wearable and always at the fingertips of the user, 3) Instant Accessibility – they turn instantly on and off, 4) Flexibility – they can collect data by accommodating a wide variety of peripheral extensions, and 5) Economic Viability – they have much of the

computing capability and expandable storage capacity of laptops at a fraction of the cost

Since it brings abundant usefulness, Riva and Villani (2005) also found that by using M-learning students can interact each other, then it is easier to accommodate several mobile devices in a classroom than several desktops because they are lighter to carry anytime, anywhere. Therefore, the concept of mobility (anytime, anywhere - capabilities) of M-learning encourages learning experiences outside classroom-based environment as well as inside it. Inside the classroom, mobile devices provide students with the capabilities to link to activities that do not correspond with either the teacher's agenda or the curriculum. Apart from that, lifelong learner also need effective tools to record, organize, and reflect just like in their M-learning experiences (Amin, Mahmood, Abidin, & Rahman, 2006). Finally, many educators consider the core advantage of mobile phones as the high availability and practicality of such devices (Holzinger, Nischelwitzer, & Meisenberger, 2007).

On the other hand, the disadvantages of M-learning should be considered as well. One major disadvantages of M-Learning is its small screen that limits the amount and type of information displayed. Other disadvantage are that: the storage capacities are smaller in comparison with PC's, some applications do not compatible to all types of gadgets. Moreover, the batteries used with these devices require regular charging, and a common platform is lacking (Riva

& Villani, 2005). Many of these have no keyboards, connection speeds are slow, and the processing power of such devices is generally weaker than desktop devices (Stead, 2006).

M-learning in Higher Education

Mobile technologies are playing an important role in higher education students' academic lives. Traxler (2013) states that M-learning means learning via mobile technologies that offer unparalleled access in communication and information which useful for higher education students to transform them in learning, as well as influence their learning preferences both inside and outside the classroom. Besides, "M-learning is purported to educate the higher education learner to identify how and where they learn best, hence increasing the autonomy of the learner" (Wilkinson & Barter, 2010). Personalization of learning is highlighted as an important factor in engagement and mobile technologies claim to allow the higher education student to contextualize and take ownership of their own learning (Clarke & Svanaes, 2014). It also bridge the gap between formal and informal learning environments and transcend environmental limitations (Wilkinson & Barter, 2010)

MATERIALS AND METHOD

The small investigation took place in Post-graduate of English Education Department of Sebelas Maret University. The sample were 5 first semester students who randomly chosen because they were considered as higher education students who were able to learn through M- learning. The researchers chose to name the respondent use alphabet sign, A, B, C, D, and E, so that the samples did not have to worry about losing face when they were answering these questions because it would be in private.

This research was using qualitative descriptive approach to obtain rich information for the purpose of saturating the data (Vickie & Clinton, 2012). Based on Cohen at al. (2011) this method was considered appropriate since this research attempted to find out the perception. The researchers obtained the data through interview of essay questions. According to Flick (2009) the original aim of the interview was to provide a basis for interpreting statistically significant findings (from a parallel or later quantified study) on the impact of media in mass communication. The main questions were around respondents' comments about M-learning, what kind of applications that they usually used, how were the impact of these application through their learning activity, and at last some of follow up questions. In the interview, the researchers used the native language of the respondent, Bahasa Indonesia, to avoid the misunderstanding, then recorded it. It took various time among one to other students, approximately it takes 5 minutes. .

To analyze the data, the researchers did transcription and coding. After that, the researchers divided respondents answer into some sub answers. Additionally, the result was be reported in a simple table then continued by a description, so that the readers understand it easily.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The first information is respondents' opinion about M-learning. It shows that although they are higher students who have used M-learning since under-graduate degree, all of them were not really familiar with the term of 'M-learning'. In their earlier understanding, M-learning was only defined as learning by moving which means learners could move everywhere to get the best atmosphere of learning. Additionally, the researcher triggered them to understand the concept of M-learning from the researcher point of view to avoid the further misunderstanding. Afterward, all respondents' opinion based on the interview confirmed that M-learning is useful for them especially in fostering their learning activity.

After ensured that all the respondents have an adequate understanding deals with the concept of M-learning, the researcher confirmed the device that used by them. All of them used mobile phone as their primary device, four out of five respondents used android while the rest used windows. Actually, there was no

significant differences between android and windows because the applications they used are similar. To make it easier to be understood, look at this table:

Table 1. The Applications That Are Used by Respondents

Apps Student	G-Drive	WA	Email	FB	You tube	Online Diction ary
A						
B						
C						
D						
E						

From the table above, it was concluded that the most used application was WhatsApp. It happened because the respondents' class has a learning forum in WhatsApp, followed by G-drive because the respondents' class has a mobile cloud learning in this application. The third was online dictionary and email that were used by three respondents. Then, the last are Facebook and YouTube. From the interview, student A said that except WhatsApp and G-Drive, she also used online dictionary. Online dictionary was very helpful for student A to find out the meaning of new vocabularies and sometimes to guide student A in pronouncing a word.

Similar to student A, student B also used WhatsApp and G-drive. Furthermore, student B also used email and Facebook as the complement learning media. Student B was familiar to use email since senior high school. However, she found that it was challenging to use Facebook for learning activity because her focus was disturbed by other things in FB such as intentions to check friends' timeline or to open online game linked to FB. Student C used WhatsApp, email and YouTube. Student C needed YouTube to enrich her material when she did not really understand what her lecturers explained in classroom. She could watch it online, or sometimes downloaded it to be watched offline. However, she rarely used WhatsApp application, because she thought that it was not suitable with her learning style. In her opinion, WhatsApp was a chatting room that was not appropriate to exchange the information about learning material through this application. Different with the previous respondents, student D tended to use online dictionary, do YouTube streaming or follow English community in FB, and she did not really focus on her G-drive and WhatsApp. The last one is student E, she uses WhatsApp, G-Drive, email, and online dictionary.

The next interview question explored their time management in accessing those applications. All of the respondents admitted that they access M-learning every day, especially to check the chatting room of WhatsApp to catch up the information flow in their class. In a day, they could check their chatting room more than five times. They also stated that the continuous communication about the material in chatting room with their friends trigger them to learn. Mobile technologies can be exploited as collaborative devices that help learners in informal and formal environment to manage activities and complete results by increasing the sense on motivation (Barati & Zolhavarieh, 2012). Furthermore, for YouTube, FB, or email would be accessed when they really needed it. For example, students C would access YouTube when she needed more information about her materials.

Talk about M-learning, like in the literature review has been explained, it brought some advantages and disadvantages for the users. Furthermore, this paper also explored the advantages and the disadvantages of M-learning from the respondents' point of view. All respondents said that M-learning brings abundance advantages in their learning process, especially in getting information and enriching their knowledge.

The most advantage of M-learning was practical, because it was handheld device which could be brought everywhere. Like what Whitsed (2004) said that another reason for using M-learning is that the handheld devices provide a cheap alternative that can easily be taken out into the workplace or wherever the learner needs to be. Students A, B, C and D agreed that M-learning help them so much because they could learn wherever and whenever they want. As long as their devices were on, also there were internet signals and mobile data, they could access the materials they need. Therefore, the concept of anytime and anywhere - capabilities of M-learning encourages learning experiences outside classroom-based environment as well as inside it.

Moreover, student A said that by using M-learning, she could communicate with her lecturers in an easier way, she also able to discuss the material not merely by face to face with her partner. It is suited with Sarrab, Elgamel, & Aldabbas (2012), that confirmed M-learning is efficient and effective that helps students to learn more without traditional restrictions. Using modern methods and techniques integrated in M-learning, help them to learn more interestingly, more interactively, and widely available and flexible. Student B as well as student D admitted that M-learning help them to manage time, because they could do something else while following the information flow in WhatsApp. Last but not least, student C said that in exchanging the assignments or materials was quite easy using email. Furthermore, the next advantage brought by M-learning is there are various materials in online sources.

However, M-learning also contributed some disadvantage for the respondents. Such as the explanation from student B. Actually her intention was to check the information of the discussion in FB messenger. In fact, she never directly did it but she surfed the timeline, checked someone account or sometimes had a chat with friends. Student D conveyed another disadvantage of M-learning, she said that because of the practicality of M-learning, she lazy to read printed references like book or newspaper. Then student E said that printed dictionary was not as practical as the online dictionary, because the printed dictionary was heavy and took time to find out the word meaning.

The next point was about the obstacles of M-learning. M-learning, of course closely related to the gadget itself, whereas the gadget has some limitations. In general, there were three main problems faced by respondents. They were the LCD size, signals availability, and battery. The first problem, as proved by student C and D, that the LCD of their mobile phone was not really wide. Sometimes their focus was distracted by the size of the LCD that was too small. Student D also added that her eyes were hurt because of the LCD light, if she used the mobile phone for a long time. Like Rius, Masip, & Clariso, (2014 p.195) stated that notable weaknesses were the limitations of mobile devices compared to computers, for example, a smaller screen size, an interface that is not well suited to entering large quantities of data, or fragmentation (different manufacturers, operating systems, screen sizes, etc.)

The second problem that often faced by the respondents were the availability of signals. Sometimes, they lost the internet signals so they cannot continue their learning process. As conveyed by student B, she said that it was irritating to wait an email from friends, while it was very important for her to finish her assignment. The last problem was told by student E. She said her main problem was battery of her mobile phone. Sometimes she has to stop her learning activity because the battery was low. The more often she used the internet connection, the faster the battery run out.

The last question explored the respondents' perspective around the usage of M-learning in the future. All of five respondents said that in the future they will use M-learning and try to minimalize the negative impacts of it. As the explanation of student A, she is a student now, so she needs to dig up more information about her material in her class. Moreover, she also sees from educators' perspective that need M-learning to bridge her and her students. Furthermore, students B, C, D, and E also agreed to keep using M-learning as the media to integrate teaching and learning process in the future.

CONCLUSION



This research is exactly exploring higher education Students' perception toward the usage of M-learning in fostering their learning activities. In this case, M-learning refers to mobile learning which means a learning process through handheld devices such as mobile phone. Moreover, there are three main findings of this research. To begin with, all of the students said that M-learning fosters their learning activity since it brings abundant advantages for them such as a media to share information and to discuss some issues regarding to their learning material. Secondly, they used various applications through their gadgets, and the most used application is WhatsApp.

Third, M-learning brings advantages and disadvantages. The primary advantage they got is the practicality of M-learning. Learning through M-learning is more practical because it uses handheld device which can be bought everywhere. This is also the reason why all the respondents are agree to continue the usage of M-learning as students and as prospective teacher. However, the respondents also mentioned the disadvantages of M-learning such as disturbed their focus in learning and become lazier to use printed references. Additionally, the obstacle are the LCD size of mobile phone is small and M-learning depends on the availability of signals.

Furthermore, M-learning is the newest technology in academic issues. Besides it is very practical and resourceful, M-learning is developing continuously. Consequently, the learning materials are always up to date. Moreover, the implication of this research is to assure students to continue the use of M-learning considering the abundant advantages brought by it. First, as a higher education students, they need to catch up their knowledge or to find more resources of their learning material. Second, for some who already became teachers, they can find more teaching materials through M-learning and even recommend M-learning to their students. Third, as the prospective teacher, they can prepare their self to face the next advancement of technology by using the newest one called M-learning.

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