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## *Innovative Solutions to New Challenges in English Language Education: Aligning National Outcomes to Global Standards*

EDITORS

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## **THEME 1**

SPEAKING, LISTENING  
& COMMUNICATION

# **The Effect of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning on ESP Students' Communicative Competence**

Suparmi

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## **Introduction**

In recent years, there has been a growing interest on the use of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) in the field of English language teaching and learning. MALL is a teaching and learning strategy that uses mobile phone or other handheld devices with some form of wireless connectivity, such as phones, MP3/MP4 players, PDAs, tablets, etc that might have an effect on the language learning. Moreover, it is also identified as a learning mediated via handheld devices and potentially available anytime and anywhere (Kukulka-Hulme et al. (2008). With mobile phone, language students are able to access learning materials and to communicate with their teacher and friends with fewer times. As stated by Klopfer et al. (2002) that unlike computer instruments and devices, mobile phones are portable, socially interactive, context sensitive, connective and individual to language students. Thus, it can be argued that MALL can offer learning opportunities that are personal, spontaneous, informal, and contextual.

The use of mobile phone as a learning tool can be one of the innovative and exciting strategies that has been claimed to give advantages for EFL university students when it comes to learning English. One of the advantages of using mobile phone, teachers can provide a rich learning environment for students and move students out of the classroom setting into the real world. In addition, it fosters the language students to be an independent or autonomous student. It is in line with the statement of Pilar (2013) that MALL promotes independent and collaborative learning, interactivity, efficiency, and usability that engage the learning environment, develop language skills, and encourage learning.

A number of researchers have discussed the effects of MALL in the teaching and learning English. The result indicates that MALL offers language students a chance to improve their language skills and language components (Mohammed, 2014; Pilar et al., 2013; Tai, 2012). Another study concerning the use of MALL in English classroom is done by Azar & Naziri (2014). They investigate the use of MALL instruction in listening classrooms. The result of their study is that the application of MALL in listening classrooms can improve the students' listening ability. In addition, they



suggest that collaborative speaking and listening skills can be successfully done by mobile phone capabilities.

All in all, a conclusive decision can be drawn based on the previous research studies that MALL has significant effect on improving students' English proficiency. However, the effect of MALL in L2 communicative competence in the level of university has not been clarified in the literature, particularly in ESP context. With this regard, this study aims to fill this gap by focusing on investigating the effect of MALL on Indonesian ESP students' communicative competence and also trying on assessing the students' perceptions toward MALL.

### **Statement of Problems**

In light of the background of the study presented earlier, this title is chosen because there has not been comprehensive research in this area in terms of ESP in Indonesia. Therefore, to justify ESP students' needs in improving their communicative competence, it seems that MALL plays an important role. The main purpose of this study, thus, is to empirically investigate the effects of MALL on Indonesian ESP students' communicative competence and also assess the students' perceptions toward MALL. Hence, the research questions are posted as follows.

1. Does MALL have any effect on Indonesian ESP students' communicative competence?
2. What are the Indonesian ESP students' perceptions toward MALL?

### **Methodology**

#### *Method*

A quantitative research design by means of experimental has been used in this study. The participants of this study were 44 Chemistry students taking English for Specific Purposes at State Islamic University of Malang – Indonesia who enrolled into even semester in 2015. They were randomly selected and randomly assigned into 2 groups. The total number of participants in the experimental group was 22 and 22 in the control group.

#### *Instruments*

In reference to the instruments in this study, MP3 soft files, rubric for oral communication competence, and MALL questionnaire have been used. The MALL questionnaire contained 5 Likert-scale of 8 statements, in which students were asked to indicate whether they strongly agreed, agreed, neutral, disagreed, or strongly

disagreed on the use of MALL has been used. These statements elicited information about students' perceptions in three categories: a), perception on interest and relevance, b) perception concerning effect on learning, and c) perception concerning effect of confidence to use English and to be an independent student.

### *Procedures*

Since this study aiming at investigating the effects of MALL on students' communicative competence, in order to accomplish its aims then, this study used two groups, each consisting of 22 participants. The first group was experimental group; they were given the MP3 soft files of listening materials to input in their mobile phones. In regard to the second group, it was the control group, they received the traditional way which using CD – ROM/audio cassette and printed materials. During the treatment session, the students in experimental group were encouraged to do autonomous listening. In this session, the lecturer; 1) letting students know how listening improve their communicative competence, it was done by giving the reasons and evidences of previous studies, 2) explaining how to do listening on their own time and modeling it, 3) making sure that every students has listening file in their mobile phones, 4) during class sessions, checking regularly that they have listened enough on their own time by asking them question whether they have listened enough, the lecturer made note of their answers.

After giving the specified treatments to each group, a speaking test or post-test was administered to both groups to evaluate the effectiveness of the treatment. Thus, the data of this study are 44 scores derived from speaking test at the beginning (pre-test) and 44 scores derived from post-test. In addition, MALL questionnaire was distributed to the experimental group to see their perceptions toward MALL.

### **Results**

Using statistical computation, independent sample t-test results showed that the performance between the control and experimental groups on pre-test and post-test are as shown in the Table 1 and 2 below.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Control and Experiment Groups on the Pre-test

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Control	22	64.3636	7.30652	1.55771
Experimental	22	63.1818	5.35987	1.14271

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Control and Experiment Groups on the Post-test

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Control	22	68.7273	10.42973	2.22363
Experimental	22	82.8182	6.89815	1.47069

Table 1 presents that mean score of 64.3636 with a standard deviation of 7.30652 is obtained for the control group, while the mean score of 63.1818 with a standard deviation of 5.35987 is gained for experimental group. Thus, it can be said that there is no significant different on the students' communicative competence between the control group and experimental group before treatment.

In regard to the result of post-test as shown in Table 2, the independent sample t-test indicated that the difference between the two means of control and experimental group is statistically different. The findings for the post-test show that the mean score for experimental group is higher than control group, which is 82.8182; whereas for control group, the mean score is 68.7273 where the Sig. (2 Tailed) is .000. Therefore, the results of the study reveal that MALL is effective in improving the students' communicative competence.

Concerning to the students' perceptions on the use of MALL, the MALL questionnaire was administered. In this section, the findings are organized according to the students' perception of the use of MALL in which the questionnaire comprises of three dimensions or categories; 1) perception on interest and relevance, 2) perception concerning effect on learning, and 3) perception concerning effect on confidence to use English and to be an independent student. In reference to students' perception on interest and relevance, 100% of the students agreed and strongly agreed that they feel comfortable in learning using mobile phones. Further, over 85% of them agreed and strongly agreed that they feel motivated to master oral communication competence. On the other hands, 100% all of the students agreed and strongly agreed that they are interested more in improving their oral communication competence. Thus, it can be concluded that the students were interested and enjoy more in learning. The frequency of students' perception in reference to the students' interest and relevance as demonstrated in the following Table 3.

Table 3: Frequency of Students' Perception on Interest and Relevance

No	FEEDBACK ITEM	5	4	3	2	1	M	SD
1	I feel comfortable	55.0%	45.0%	0%	0%	0%	4.55	0.504
2.	I feel motivated	30.0%	65.0%	2,5%	2.5%	0%	4.22	0.619
3.	I am interested more	40.0%	60.0%	0%	0%	0%	4.40	0.496

In regard to the students' perception concerning effect on learning, it is reported that over 89% of the students agreed and strongly agreed that they can understand the topic given easily when learning through mobile phones; about 75% of them agreed and strongly agreed that they can remember the correct pronunciation a lot. In addition, 85% of them believed that mobile phone can improve their communicative competence. Therefore, these finding showed that MALL perceived effect on the learning. The frequency of students' perception in relation to effect on learning as seen in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Frequency of Students' Perception Concerning Effect on Learning

No	FEEDBACK ITEM	5	4	3	2	1	M	SD
4.	I can understand the topic given	32.5%	57.5%	5.0%	5.0%	0%	4.17	0.747
5.	I can remember how to pronounce words	5.0%	70.0%	25.0%	0%	0%	3.80	0.516
6.	My oral communication improved	10.0%	75.0%	12.5%	2.5%	0%	3.90	0.671

In reference to the students' perception concerning effect on confidence to use English and to be an independent student, based on the results of questionnaires indicate that over 92% of them believed that they gained confidence to use English to communicate with their friends and English lecturer. However, about 82% of them agreed that they gained confidence to be an independent student. These results showed that learning through mobile phones, the students perceive that they gained confidence to use English for communication and they gained confidence to be an independent students. The students' perception concerning effect on confidence as a student is exhibited in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Frequency of Students' Perception Concerning Effect on Confidence to Use English and To Be an Independent Student

No	FEEDBACK ITEM	5	4	3	2	1	M	SD
7.	I gained confidence to use English to communicate with frieands and teacher	32.5%	60.0%	7.5%	0%	0%	4.25	0.588
8.	I gained my confidence in my abilities as an independent student	0%	82.5%	12.5%	5.0%	0%	3.77	0.530

All of the three Tables in reference to the students' perception above show that the implementation of MALL has changed the students' perception. It also presents that there was a prodigious majority of ESP students with positive perceptions of the use of MALL in assisting their learning, improving their communicative competence, and encouraging the students to be an independent students.

### Discussion

This study was an attempt to investigate the effects of MALL on students' communicative competence and to examine the students' perceptions toward MALL. The results of this study showed that the usage of mobile phones had an effect on the student's communicative competence. In other words, the implementation of MALL is effective in improving the students' communicative competence. This strategy, then, can be practically applied for solving the existing problems when the students are encountered with a particular problem in speaking or oral communication in English. Moreover, the result of this study confirmed previous study by Muhammed (2014) who pointed out that mobile phone is effective tools for learning English.

Mobile phone is highly possible to engage language students to improve their language competence particularly their communicative competence when they are connected with the applications, which relevant for the purposes of English language learning. Some of the applications that students can use are audiobooks, MP3/MP4, audiovisuals, and ect. By using these applications, language students can improve their communicative competence, which involves not only knowing the grammatical rules of a language but also knowing when, where, and with whom to use the language in a contextually appropriate way (Ellis, 1994; Hymes, 1971; and Richard, 1985). Thus, communicative competence requires more knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. It also requires skill on how to use English in communicative conditions.

In line with this, Canale & Swain (1980), Canale (1983), and Savignon (1997) mention that communicative competence comprises of grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence.

Based on the explanation above, when skillfully combined, the result is successful communicative competence in which one can express, interpret, and negotiate meaning (Savignon, 1997). Furthermore, according to Mohammed (2014), mobile phone is highly influential with regard to the English language students' learning experience. This indicates that many applications related to language learning can be a good addition to the traditional ways of learning. As suggested by Clifton (2006) that for classroom interaction must break from the traditional way where teachers are dominant over discussion by offering language students greater participation rights and giving them the potential to take more initiative and hence responsibility for learning. Hence, by giving the responsibility of learning to language students and also engaging them to be an independent student might be one of the reasons for success of this study.

Referring the result of students' perceptions on the use of MALL, generally, the finding indicated a great majority of students had positive perceptions toward the use of mobile phones in assisting their learning. Most all of the students mentioned that mobile phones give great impact on their communicative competence when they were asked about the effect of mobile phone on their communicative competence. In other words, this study shows how the mobile phones helped them in improving their communicative competence. Besides, it also shows that mobile phones motivated them to select resources, tools and communication methods with their friend and lecturers outside the classroom. This statement gives support to finding reported by Hockly (2012) that mobile phones might lead to motivation and encouragement for the students, as it is highly likely that the mobile phone applications improve their English language production. In line with this, Azar & Nasiri (2014) who study on investigating the students' attitude toward the effectiveness of MALL in L2 listening comprehension concludes that mobile phones is believed more effective than CD-ROM in the students' listening comprehension. Accordingly, it is possible to believe that mobile phone can reinforce students' listening and speaking skills. As a result, mobile phone has a main impact on listening and speaking skills.

The next finding in regard to the students' perceptions on the effect of confidence to be an independent student, mobile phone gives them more opportunity in learning independently and finally they have a big confidence to be an independent student. Even though this statement might be considered a big claim, the discussion dealing the effect of various application which relevant to build students' communicative

competence and speaking tests in the classroom may prove the effectiveness of mobile phone to lead them as independent students from the point of view of EFL students. Independent refers to a person's ability to think, feel, and make decision on his/her own (Russell & Bakken, 2002). Therefore, mobile phone can be a good step to support and extend the students' learning independently to develop their communicative competence.

### **Conclusion**

This research was an attempt to examine the effects of MALL on Indonesian ESP students' communicative competence. It also investigates Indonesian ESP students' perceptions toward MALL in optimizing their communicative competence. The results of this study indicated that mobile phone had a great effect on improving ESP students' communicative competence. The ESP students mentioned that mobile phones are an interesting and innovative way for learning English. They also believed that mobile phone has a prodigious impact in language learning and help them to be an independent student. Moreover, it can give them opportunities to learn and listen to their interest topic beyond the classroom.

Therefore, the outcomes and the findings of this study might be helpful in terms of future trends dealing with Mobile-learning, for both teachers and students.

For the teachers, it recommends taking into consideration and using MALL in speaking classrooms. For students, it is suggested to use their mobile phone since it not only provides a rich educational experience helping them to improve their communicative competence, but it also makes language learning more interesting and stimulating rather than only using their mobile phone for everyday life. Finally, further investigation may be carried out with more diverse demographics to confirm the findings.

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