ESL Lecturers' Perceptions on using i-MoL as a Mobile-Based Tool for Teaching Grammar

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ABSTRACT

Having a good grasp of the English grammar is vital especially for students at the tertiary level as accuracy in speech and writing is highly important when engaging in academic activities. In the 21st century, also known as the digital age, pedagogical approach to teaching grammar is changing dynamically in relation to factors that encompass social, economic and technological entities. The traditional approach to teaching grammar using 'chalk and talk' is becoming irrelevant as technology pervades students' learning environment. Learning grammar via mobile phone is seen as a potential solution that will enable language learners to enhance their skills as they are digitally designed, flexible and mobile. This study facilitated the development of grammar modules for the purpose of a mobile learning reinforcement tool for English grammar, known as an intelligent mobile learning tool (i-MoL). Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with five ESL lecturers in order to gain an in depth perception on the feasibility of using grammar modules via i-MoL to promote the learning of grammar. Three themes were identified through phenomenological qualitative analysis. Lecturers perceived the grammar modules as having the potential to improve student proficiency in a flexible and convenient manner. The i-MoL could be both a barrier and motivator for learning grammar. Lecturers also reported that i-MoL could be a useful supplementary tool for them to deliver effective grammar lessons which engage students and motivate them to learn in an interesting environment. Findings suggest that grammar modules can be advocated via i-MoL for teaching and reinforcing student grammar learning.

INTRODUCTION

In today's knowledge-driven economy, it is essential to acquire good communication skills in English, considered a global language. The rise of English as the 'language of opportunity' has created a necessity for Malaysians to master the language to survive and compete in the 21st century. Scholars noted that mastering English enables Malaysia to achieve a cosmopolitan identity (Dumanig et al., 2012). In this regard, the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MoE) is in tune with the demand to enhance language proficiency to produce better human capital with necessary language knowledge, competency and skills to guide a knowledge-based economy. The ministry is aiming to raise the standard of English among students by imposing a ruling that from 2016, it becomes a mandatory passing subject for all students sitting for their Malaysian Certificate of Education (SPM) examination from 2016; it is also part an initiative to raise the level of knowledge among Malaysian students and the community at large (Singh, 2013). Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin, who is also Education Minister announced today.

He said the government has placed emphasis on English to strengthen students' grasp of the subject, with an intention of producing a globalised generation.

"English will be given emphasis and as announced earlier this year, it will be made a compulsory passing subject for SPM students by 2016," Muhyiddin said today during the launch of the National Education Blueprint (PPPM) 2013-2025 here.

According to the then Deputy Prime Minister (DPM), who was also the Education Minister, "the ministry is currently in the process of increasing contact hours (between teachers and students) in classes so deeper immersion in the English language for the students". The DPM also said it will be compulsory for English teachers undergo the Cambridge Placement Test (CPT) to gauge their knowledge in the language. (http://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2013/09/06/english-to-be-made-compulsory-passing-subject /)

Nevertheless, despite efforts to raise the level of English language proficiency, the standard of English among Malaysian undergraduates is still considerably declining (Shuib et al., 2015). Even though students have been learning the language for approximately 11 years in schools, studies reported that many still fail to achieve a reasonable level of English literacy (Naginder, 2006; Jalaludin et al., 2008; Pawanchik & Kamil, 2010). This further affects their employability as reported by JobStreet.com, a Malaysian recruitment agency, in 2005. The survey by JobStreet.com indicated that the main reason for unemployment is due to weakness in English language (Omar et al., 2012). Thus, there is a need to revisit the teaching and learning process, policies and curriculum

to ensure future generations of Malaysians are well-versed in the language to enhance their employment opportunities. In order to communicate well, non-native English speakers need to have a proper command of English by understanding and using the grammar correctly in its proper form and function.

In the Malaysian context, English is considered a second language. Therefore, it is expected students would encounter some difficulties in acquiring the language compared with native English speakers. According to Md Yunus et al. (2013), Malaysian students struggle with low levels of English literacy and that ESL (English as Second Language) students in particular face cultural and linguistic challenges in their efforts to master the language. Studies have revealed that this problem occurs due to Bahasa Malaysia being the first language (Maros et al., 2007) and its "interference" in student ability to acquire good English grammar skills (Ghabool et al., 2012). Che Musa et al. (2012) reported that factors contributing towards low or limited English literacy achievement among Malaysian learners were due to the strong "influence" of Bahasa Malaysia when learning English and neglecting sociocultural elements of language learning. Findings from a study conducted by Ghabool et al. (2012) showed that Malaysian ESL learners face writing problems particularly in using correct grammar and punctuation.

Learning English can be a frustrating experience as it requires persistent effort to master the language (Metom et al.,

2013). Hence, it is essential to identify the right teaching method to deliver effective grammar lessons in the classroom. The teaching approach has change from a traditional "teacher-centred" one to a more collaborative and interactive style so that the learning process will be livelier and interesting. This would attract student attention to appreciate the language. Studies conducted by Bligh (1998) and Gabbin (2002) found students fail to master language learning skills, thinking skills, problem-solving skills and communication if that approach is "lecturer-centred". Innovative approaches have to be incorporated into the teaching process in accordance to current style of learning among young learners.

Teaching languages using traditional methods will only disappoint learners who need constant motivation, inspiration, and guidance to express their creativity and innovation using technology (Eaton, 2010). Traditional face-to-face classroom setting alone is inadequate to help students retain existing knowledge, in particular pertaining to mastering English grammar. In this vein, Maarof and Munusamy (2015) reiterated that Malaysia's tertiary education is still lacking in terms of critical thinking and creative learning approach for ESL learners, and thus, educators needs to be versatile in their use of teaching strategies by incorporating new learning methods and materials. For this reason, teaching a language using mobile applications would be interesting, providing enhanced motivation for learners, as well as sustain their interest and focus in learning. Teaching and learning of English

grammar via mobile phone application would be an innovative approach due to its unique flexibility, ubiquity, and convenience that allows anywhere-and-anytime learning experience creating a lively environment for learners. Therefore, this study aimed at gaining insights into lecturers' perceptions with regards to the feasibility of employing a mobile-based tool for grammar learning, namely the Intelligent Mobile Learning Tool (i-MoL). The i-MoL is a mobile learning application developed by a mobile learning research team from Universiti Sains Malaysia. The application consists of grammar learning modules which are developed and disseminated based on students' identified learning styles.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mobile Learning

Effective and interesting English language teaching-learning approaches should be considered in order to address the issue of low English proficiency among Malaysian students. Nowadays, traditional face-to-face classroom setting alone is inadequate to help students retain their knowledge. Today's students are generally digital natives who prefer digital motivation, flexibility and mobility in their learning (Shuib et al., 2015) experience. Technology has been part and parcel of everyday life as they are often considered inseparable entities, particularly among today's younger generation.

Currently, mobile devices, particularly mobile phones, have become the must-have gadget of the 21st century (Mun et al., 2011). A report by Smartphone Futures (2012)

stated that smartphone shipment worldwide is expected to achieve 823 million units in 2013 to reach 1.3 billion in 2017. Nielsen's survey (cited in Azman et al., 2014) showed a trend in ownership of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) devices in 2013 in almost all ASEAN countries whereby there was a shift to smartphones and tablets from desktops and laptops. The Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) reported that the highest percentage of mobile phone users those in the age range of 20 and 49 years which make up 73.3% of all users (MCMC, 2012). In terms of mobile phone ownership, the report revealed that 63.3% of users possess one phone, 29.6% have two, 5.0% have three and 2.1% own four or more. This shows that mobile phone usage among youths in Malaysia has been increasing exponentially. In 2012, there was a dramatic increase in smartphone usage among Malaysians compared with 2010 and 2011. This indicates preferences towards mobile applications (MCMC, 2012).

Mobile learning offers several benefits to learners, particularly in terms of its ubiquitous and convenient qualities for education. Mobile learning is beneficial to learners for two primary reasons: it is personal and it is connected (Trucano, 2014). It combines practices, strategies, tools, applications and resources with proven advances in technology which can support learning at anytime and anywhere (Wagner, 2005). Mobile learning has the potential to enhance learning with the introduction of new education strategies in

the context of new learning environments (Romero et al., 2000), particularly where the learning process occurs in isolated contexts.

Additionally, mobile learning can motivate students to learn more efficiently an acquire knowledge in their field. Studies have shown that contents delivered via mobile devices can better engage students to learning a meaningful, organised and enjoyable way (Mockus et al., 2011; Mohd Johari & Ismail, 2012). Thus, mobile devices can be an invaluable tool offering students a conducive learning environment. Realising the educational benefits of mobile technologies, researchers have initiated efforts to develop learning applications through mobile learning (Thornton & Houser, 2005; Levy & Kennedy, 2005; Stockwell, 2007; Rahimi & Miri, 2014).

Mobile-based English Language Learning

A current technological phenomenon is the increasing use of mobile technologies evidenced by a drastic increase in the number of mobile devices used nowadays (Hashim et al., 2010). Mobile learning undoubtedly holds potential to improve language teaching as well as enhance learning, and development. It exposes learners to a flexible and convenient environment to learn the language on the go, especially when learners have geographical limitations that preclude campus-based learning. The flexibility and convenience of mobile learning have been supported by several studies which explored the potential of mobile technologies in assisting students to learn various aspects of the English language (Cavus & Ibrahim, 2008; Miangah & Nezarat, 2012; Liu et al., 2014).

Studies have also revealed effectiveness of mobile-based approach for teaching and learning of the English language. Başoğlu and Akdemir (2010) conducted a comparative study on English vocabulary learning involving two groups of learners: the experimental group with mobile phones and the control group with paper flash cards. It was reported in their study that the mobile-based vocabulary learning programmes improved students vocabulary more than the flash cards method. Wang and Smith's study (2013) lends support to this finding. The researchers studied the feasibility of an on-going language learning project called "Ubiquitous English" in which research involved the development and dissemination of short English essays and grammar quizzes to student mobile phones. Their study found that mobile phone-assisted learning is perceived positively by respondents as an effective method for improving their reading and grammar abilities in English. However, Wang and Smith (2013) cautioned on the security and privacy concerns for mobile learners since the application involves internet connectivity.

Mobile technologies have the potential to benefit language learners in the community. Surveys conducted by the MCMC have shown that mobile phone ownership per 100 inhabitants in this country exceeds 100% (MCMC, 2013) and furthermore, mobile phone usage has grown tremendously in most states in the country (MCMC, 2008).

In recent years, studies have been focused on the potential of mobile learning in the Malaysian educational setting (Siraj, 2004; Mohamad & Woollard, 2009; Abd Rahman & Mohd Hashim, 2011; Lim, et al., 2011; Ismail et al., 2013). According to Mohamad and Woollard (2009), mobile phones offer educational benefits in developing countries like Malaysia since they are relatively low in cost and accessible to all, especially in the lower-income group. Siraj (2004) claimed that Malaysia has a huge potential to implement mobile learning in its curriculum since the approach is generally accepted and feasible for students and teachers. Therefore, the use of mobile technologies could be the next boon as new educational approaches or methods in Malaysian educational institutions.

Despite the numerous benefits and potentials of mobile learning for the teaching and learning of English language, there are challenges that need to be overcome. According to Liu et al. (2014), "none of the hand-held mobile devices were specifically designed with education in mind and usage in an educational setting can present difficulties" (p.5). Mohamad et al. (2012) reported challenges in implementing mobile learning include device misuse, existing prohibitive policy, issues of management and maintenance, stakeholder attitude, digital divide and personal space invasion. Moreover, researchers have agreed that Malaysia is still in its embryonic stage in terms of employing mobile approaches for English language learning and there is still more space to accommodate for diversity of research trends in this area (Mohamad & Muniandy, 2014). In fact, little is known about the pedagogical effects of integrating mobile learning in English language courses (Hussin et al., 2012).

There is a dearth of studies to determine the effectiveness and feasibility of using mobile applications in the teaching and learning of English grammar (Wang & Smith, 2013; Jin, 2014), especially in Malaysia (Shuib et al., 2015). Grammar determines student good proficiency in English language. Scholars reiterate that one of the most important elements in mastering English is the acquisition of good grammar skills (Sawir, 2005; Zhang, 2009; Shuib et al., 2015). There is a need to move away from traditional teaching methods to one that employs methods which are fun, meaningful, and memorable (Wu, 2008). Yet, making grammar learning interesting and useful is always challenging for practitioners (Gunawardena, 2014). According to BaSaeed (2013), "the question is not whether grammar should be taught to students, but rather how it should be taught" (p.21).

In addition to that, Malaysian ESL learners face challenges that might deter their efforts in enhancing their English language proficiency level. A study by Zare and Othman (2013) revealed that Malaysian ESL learners are high-strategy users who would resort to a frequent use of strategies in order to learn the language effectively. A study by Hiew (2012) noted ESL learners' perceptions pertaining to their experience in learning English language

in secondary schools, colleges and local universities. The author highlighted that one of the reasons that led to students' negative perceptions towards learning English is due to the teaching approaches that are less interactive and more textbook-based. Respondents suggested that ESL teachers and lecturers incorporate more creative, fun and interactive teaching approaches in their lessons, rather than merely using the conventional 'chalk-and-talk', PowerPoint presentation, and relying on the textbook. A study by Maarof and Munusamy (2015) identified why ESL undergraduates face difficulties in the classroom. Findings suggested that ESL learners face challenges in terms of the learning environment which needs improvement, the quality of education, the role of educators and the teaching approach.

Therefore, the above studies point to the need for innovations in ESL teaching approaches as well as the environment in which new and interactive learning methods and materials are a must. Taking this into consideration, mobile learning could be a potential approach to enhance English grammar teaching and learning for Malaysian ESL learners. This study seeks to present ESL lecturers' perceptions on the feasibility of employing a mobile-based tool, namely i-MoL, to promote the teaching and learning of grammar for undergraduate students in the ESL programme.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1.) To what extent is the use of i-MoL feasible in the learning of grammar?

2.) What are ESL lecturers' perceptions of using i-MoL to promote the learning of grammar?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The design is an exploratory study which employed in-depth semi-structured interviews to provide reliable, detailed and accurate observation of the feasibility of using i-MoL to enhance the learning of grammar and gain insights into ESL lecturers' perceptions of using i-MoL to promote the learning of grammar.

Research Sample

The research sample was five ESL lecturers from a research university in Malaysia. As a measure of safeguarding the privacy of the lecturers involved in this study, their names will not be revealed. Instead, they will be named Lecturer A, Lecturer B, Lecturer C Lecturer D and Lecturer E respectively. The lecturers were chosen based on purposive sampling where their teaching experience (10 years above) was taken into account. One lecturer was selected from the School of Humanities, two from the School of Education and another two from the School of Languages, Literacies and Translation at the said university. The interviews were conducted for one hour at the respective lecturer's office and this venue was the preferred choice by all respondents.

Research Instrument

The research instrument used in this study was a semi-structured interview adapted from Shuib et al. (2012). An interview schedule was designed to enable the formulation of appropriate questions to facilitate data collection; this will allow the research questions to be answered. The construction of interview questions for the ESL lecturers was given due consideration in regards to the research questions, objectives and VARK's theoretical framework of this study. This procedure involved segregating themes and issues in relation to the area of study which is closely aligned to the teaching and learning of grammar using modules via the i-MoL approach. A phenomenological qualitative method was used to analyse data gathered from interviews. This emergent strategy; was vital to allow the method of analysis based on the type of data. The responses provided by the lecturers were transcribed and analysed deductively.

Procedure

This study is part of a larger scale study that focused on the feasibility of using i-MoL to promote the learning of grammar. It was vital that lecturers were informed of related information pertaining to the development of i-MoL tool before they were interviewed. They were also briefed on features and application of i-MoL. The grammar modules were developed by five experienced senior Malaysian TESL lecturers specialising in grammar and were distributed among the five lecturers one month prior to the interview sessions; this approach taken was to ensure that they had sufficient time to review the content. The grammar modules encompassed Tenses, Interrogatives, Verbs and Sentences.

Figure 1 shows the i-MoL's architecture as an intelligent mobile learning application which is supported through low-end to high-end mobile platforms including Android, iPhone and even basic mobile phones with SMS and MMS capabilities. The i-MoL tool is equipped with several mobile-based applications for grammar learning including notes, quizzes, enrichment, and forum. The i-MoL tool is available in the form of web-based portals and mobile learning applications providing ready-to-use templates for lecturers to help and reinforce grammar learning among students. The intelligent part of the application provides interfaces for lecturers to automatically send the reinforced contents according to students' identified learning styles and the interface of the learning style mechanism is available for all visual, kinaesthetic, reading, writing and auditory learners, which relate to the VARK's learning style model (Fleming, 1992). This study was grounded on VARK's (Visual, Aural, Reading or Write and Kinesthetic) model to ensure that when i-MoL is used to teach grammar, lecturers are able effectively promote diverse learning styles in the teaching of grammar.

The following features (Figure 1) of the i-MoL tool were also conveyed to the lecturers where various elements of VARK's model were embedded in each of the features:

- Reinforces content: ready-to-use notes dissemination template with scheduling, header and footer, grouping and reinforcement setting interface.

- Game-based application: a selection of interactive game-like mobile modules that incorporate quiz, enrichment, inquiry-based and ranking games.

- Discussion room: forum application to facilitate group-based learning

- Alert and reminder: a reinforcement tool to help students obtain instant information on grammar learning content that include:-

a.) Learning style identifier: SMS-based and mobile application that can automatically identify students' learning style through a series of questions

b.) Query: a student-centred mobile application that helps students to get instant feedback from their lecturer regarding the subjects.

RESULTS

The majority of the respondents perceived i-MoL as having the potential to promote the learning of grammar via various grammar modules. Three themes were identified
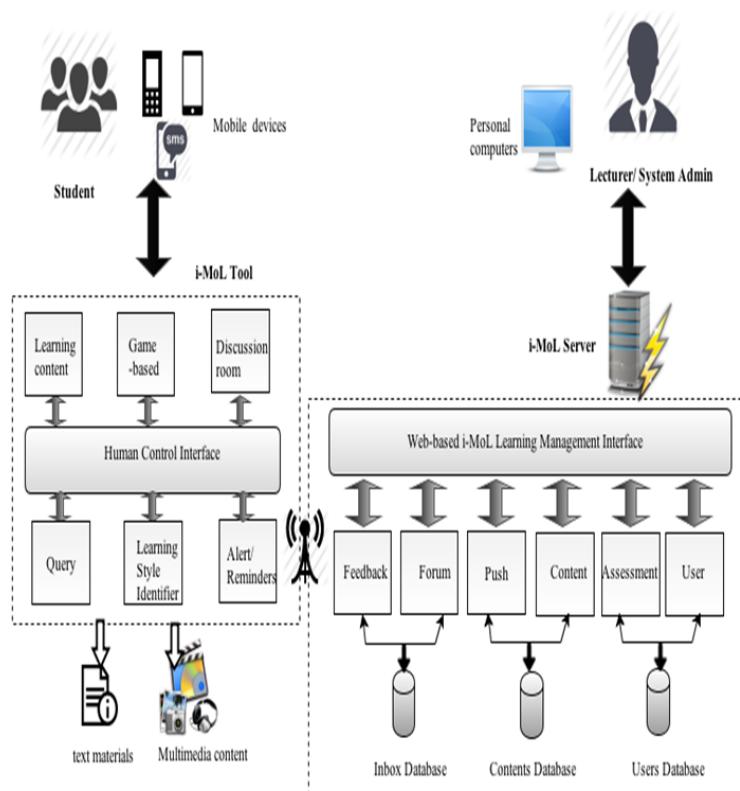

Figure 1. i-MoL System Architecture (source: Shuib et al., 2015)

using a phenomenological approach that articulates the influence of i-MoL in the learning of grammar. The themes are: (a) the perceived potential of grammar modules to improve students' proficiency, (b) i-MoL as a barrier and motivator for learning grammar, (c) the perceived potential of i-MoL as a supplementary tool to deliver effective grammar lessons.

The Perceived Potential of Grammar Modules to Improve Students' Proficiency

Results from the semi-structured interview revealed that grammar is an "important aspect" of language to be taught but a "great hurdle to teach". Lecturer A and lecturer B explained that:

> It's frustrating to teach and so much so that I am on the brink of giving up as students don't understand their mistakes. Even after lengthy explanation, students repeat their mistakes. These modules that range from Modals, Sentences, Tenses and Verbs will serve as effective reinforcement exercises for students which they can do at their convenience. I'm sure these modules will have the ability to improve students' proficiency.

Lecturers D and E shared the same perspective where they stressed that the modules are very thorough delving into intensive exercises for each sub-section of grammar component. They added that the quiz section in the modules is pivotal in reinforcing students' grammar understanding where the three levels ranging from easy, average and difficult are deemed "excellent" in catering for the different proficiency levels. Lecturer C said, *"I bet students will improve on these four main grammar components as the modules are user-friendly."*

All lecturers shared the same perception that the enrichment exercises will promote student understanding of the various grammar components and build student confidence in terms of engaging in reinforcement exercises. Lecturer C pointed out:

> *The modules systematically represent the important grammar components. Using the modules independently by students will not be an issue as it is well laid out clearly.*

Lecturer B added, "*I am confident that the modules can help students build their proficiency and at the same time improve tremendously if well utilised through their mobile devices.* Majority of the lecturers suggested that language games should be incorporated in the modules as "*it will have the potential to engage students in a fun and exciting way using their mobile devices.*"

i-MoL as a Barrier and Motivator for Learning Grammar

The majority of participants explained that mobile learning, like every other technological devices, has pros and cons.

Participants perceived that learning grammar via i-MoL could be both a motivator and a barrier.

Lecturers A, C and D indicated that mobile learning could serve as a barrier to learning in terms of displacing learning time, being distracted during learning and dependent on the answer key when completing exercises. Lecturer A described how students who have no discipline "*will have the tendency to go on social media and get carried away and procrastinate on attempting the modules through i-MoL.*" Lecturers C and D agreed in unison that i-MoL could "*distract students from concentrating on their tasks as they may rather choose to indulge in their social media platforms while engaging on their tasks.*" Lecturer A had also pointed out that, "*there may be a high tendency for students to rely on the answer key without attempting the exercises on their accord.*"

However, all lecturers acknowledged that i-MoL will serve as a motivator in spurring students to learn grammar in an "*exciting and interesting manner.*" The following are extracts of the lecturers' responses:

> *I am very certain that mobile phones will play a role in helping students to learn grammar effectively because I'm very sure that they will be interested and excited to use their smart phones to learn during their classroom activity.*
>
> (Lecturer C)

> *Students will surely be motivated to reinforce their learning of grammar experience and this will promote the achievement of learning objectives.*
>
> (Lecturer B)

> *Over the years, my students have perpetually bugged me to integrate learning through mobile phones which I have resisted due to time constrain. Now when I look at these very structured grammar modules, I look at it in a positive light as to cater to students' interest and motivation to learn grammar via i-MoL.*
>
> (Lecturer E)

Perceptions of i-MoL as a Supplementary Tool to Deliver Effective Grammar Lessons

The lecturers believed that majority of university students are likely to own a smartphone nowadays and in this way, mobile learning can complement the traditional teaching and learning method. Lecturer D conveyed that "*the content structure of the modules are excellent to be used in the classroom via i-MoL as each grammar component and sub-sections encompass definitions, forms and functions and activities. The sections on quiz and enrichment can be administered as reinforcement tasks that can be done at students' flexible phase of learning.*"

Lecturers A and E pointed out that i-MoL is an "*effective tool to engage students in learning grammar based on their*

own interest." Mobile learning is perceived as flexible and convenient for students to use in the classroom to engage in the various activities of the grammar modules while having the opportunity for reinforcement at their own pace (Lecturers B, D and E). According to Lecturer C. "*I am confident that by using the modules in the i-MoL, my grammar lessons will be interesting and effective. Learning outcomes will be achieved as targetted*". However, they stressed that the barriers of using mobile phones have to be "*kept in mind*" in order to ensure that they *"don't pose challenges"* in the teaching and learning process.

DISCUSSION

Technology connotes a fluid notion, and any attempts of understanding this notion, at its very best, vary across different contexts of discussion, both in academic, professional and personal practices. With the advent of rapid digital technological development especially in the educational landscape, there are bound to be varying degrees in the manner in which a lecturer perceives and interacts with technological tools in the teaching of grammar.

This study discussed ESL lecturers' perceptions of using modules via i-MoL to promote the learning of grammar. The lecturers perceived grammar as an "important aspect" to be taught in the ESL classroom and the grammar modules via i-MoL "will serve as effective reinforcement exercises for students which they can do at their convenience". In this regard, the modules are deemed feasible as supporting

materials and this finding is consistent with other studies (Cavus & Ibrahim, 2008; Miangah & Nezarat, 2012; Liu et al., 2014) where the quality of pedagogical design is more important than the medium of communication being used. As such, mobile learning needs to be properly planned based on a pedagogical outline so that the system would benefit both learners and instructors.

The finding related to the lecturers' concerns about mobile learning being a barrier to student learning is pertinent. They pointed out the barriers when using mobile technology in the classroom such as student displacing learning time, being distracted during learning and depending on the answer key when attempting exercises. This finding further strengthens the claim that in the classroom, the lecturer's role is a facilitator and thus, students must be guided, monitored and closely supervised when engaged in mobile learning (Wang & Smith, 2013).

Interestingly, even though not entirely unanticipated, the findings also corroborated with other studies where mobile learning is perceived as having the potential to promote effective learning of grammar where students are motivated to learn in a different way when they use their favourite gadgets (Siraj, 2004; Mohamad & Woollard, 2009; Lim et al., 2011; Abd Rahman & Mohd Hashim, 2011). In general, the findings reflected positive perception of lecturers in using grammar modules via i-MoL, to engage their students in enrichment and reinforcement activities respectively where students are able to effectively utilise

technology in a meaningful and comfortable manner to enhance their learning process. To this effect, the lecturers pointed out that "students will be motivated to learn grammar based on their own interest of using mobile gadgets" and this is in line with Wang and Smith's study (2013) where mobile phone-assisted learning is perceived positively as an effective method for improving students' grammar abilities.

Lecturers A and E pointed out that i-MoL was an "*effective tool to engage students in learning grammar based on their own interest*" and this finding supports the VARKS's model as being the underlying theoretical framework of i-MoL." Mobile learning is perceived as flexible and convenient for students to use in the classroom to engage in the various activities of the grammar modules while having the opportunity for reinforcement at their own pace of time (comments from lecturers B, D and E)

The findings are consistent with other studies where mobile learning is deemed a useful complement to the traditional teaching and learning method. Thus, ESL lecturers have to diversify their approaches in teaching to address challenges especially in higher learning institutions (Shuib et al., 2012; Tayebinik & Puteh, 2012; Mohamad & Muniandy, 2014; Shuib et al., 2015).

CONCLUSION

This study investigated ESL lecturers' perceptions of using i-MoL to promote the learning of grammar and the feasibility of using i-MoL to teach it. Interview findings indicated positive perceptions of using grammar modules via i-MoL as a learning tool to engage students in the ESL teaching environment. This suggests lecturers are enthusiastic in utilising technology to enhance their second language teaching and learning process.

The results indicate that students will be motivated to learn grammar in a manner that interests them which will facilitate positive learning outcomes. However, concerns were raised for mobile technology being a barrier to student learning in terms of displacing learning time, being distracted during learning and depending on the answer key when attempting exercises. Findings however, show grammar modules can be advocated via i-MoL specifically, to teach and reinforce grammar learning and which has been proven by several studies which explored the potential of mobile technologies in assisting students' learning in various areas of English language (Cavus & Ibrahim, 2008; Miangah & Nezarat, 2012; Liu et al., 2014).

This study was not without limitations. As an exploratory study, a small purposive sampling procedure was appropriate, but this limits the generalisation of the results. First, the reported study involved five ESL lecturers from one public research university in Malaysia only. Future research should attempt to involve a bigger number of interview participants which could be purposively selected from a number of other universities in order to present a clearer picture about the feasibility of using mobile-based application for Malaysian ESL

English grammar teaching and learning. Additionally, this paper did not specifically focus and investigate the feasibility mobile learning which could be tackled through quantitative survey.

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