Mobile Learning: Malaysian Initiatives & Research Findings
Mobile Learning: Malaysian Initiatives & Research Findings

Editors:
Mohamed Amin Embi
Norazah Mohd Nordin

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Mobile Learning: A Quasi-Experiment on Using SMS to Support Reading Comprehension Programme

Nuraini Mat Daud & Zainah Husin
International Islamic University of Malaysia

Introduction

Studies have shown that the ability to read and comprehend is closely correlated to students’ academic performance and achievement (Bishop, 2003; Lei, Rhinehart, Howard & Cho, 2010; Brown, 2007; White, 2004). Research on reading reflects that an effective learning approach or method leads to the development of good reading skills (Brantmeier, 2005). The literature has shown the potential of including extensive reading into reading instruction as part of an attempt to develop students’ language and reading comprehension skills. Studies on extensive reading indicate that students found the activity worthwhile (Macalister, 2008; Tanaka & Stapleton, 2007).

Extensive reading (ER) is defined as reading “materials in the target language in a rapid and casual way with a focus on quantity rather than quality” (Tanaka & Stapleton, 2007, p. 115). Extensive reading involves reading a large number of reading materials, with focus on meaning rather than on language use (Tran, 2006). Generally, an extensive reading programme is carried out to develop good reading habits, to build up knowledge of vocabulary and structure, and to encourage a penchant for reading (Shen, 2008). Studies have revealed the positive effect of ER on reading comprehension and speed, vocabulary learning, and learners’ motivation and attitude towards reading (de Morgado, 2009; Macalister, 2008; Shen, 2008; Tanaka & Stapleton, 2007; Tran, 2006).

Extensive reading is not limited to hardcopies. Reading materials can also be read on a mobile phone. The many benefits of utilising mobile phones in an informal learning setting have sparked interest among educationists. A feature of the mobile phone known as “texting” or “short message service (SMS)” is fast becoming one of the popular communication modes (Librero et al., 2007; Goh & Kinshuk, 2006). Research has cited that students are frequently engaged in text messaging. Thorton and Houser (as cited in Caverly et al., 2009) discovered that 71% of Japanese college students preferred the use of text messages to email and 93% appreciated receiving English lessons sent to their mobile phones. Students are found to be