

## **Full Length Research Article**

### **LEARNING PREFERENCE AMONG ARABIC LANGUAGE LEARNERS VIA MOBILE LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM PLATFORM (MOBILE LMS) USING I-TALEEM**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

In the new era of digital technology especially in the use of mobile learning among youth learners such as mobile gadgets, smart phones, I-Pads and so on, the learners are also affected by the mobile revolution in their learning preference of various educational platforms. As such, the implementation of learning management system (LMS) in a university through normal web-based platform should be exploring the potential use of mobile technology and gadgets in mobile learning platform. This paper aims to investigate the learners' preference of using mobile devices in learning Arabic in IIUM in order to explore their inclination towards using mobile learning technologies in a learning institution. The respondents were selected from an undergraduate learners in two sections of a course who were learning computer applications theoretically and practically in Arabic language for the Bachelor of Revealed Knowledge (Arabic Language and Literature) in International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). The respondents have been using both platforms of web-based and mobile-based LMS of IIUM I-Taleem for an academic semester in 2015 before responding to this online survey of 5 Likert-scale and an open ended questionnaire. General results of this study revealed that the learners are enjoying learning by using mobile devices although the web-based platform is still available. The use of mobile LMS among learners is found to provide extra learning support, motivation and self-learning option. Among the suggestions for improvement are improving the internet connection facility for student via Wifi and providing mobile devices for learners to use for better implementation of mobile I-Taleem in IIUM.

**Key words:** Mobile learning, Learning management system, Learning preference, Technology, Education.

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The importance of using learning management system or LMS in an educational or learning institution nowadays is undeniably very due to its crucial role and support for the learners especially in this digital era. It is clearly observed that almost every university has its own LMS as part and parcel of e-learning support for learning platform. LMS systems are known by various names, including course management system (CMS), learning content management system (LCMS), virtual learning environment (VLE), virtual learning system (VLS), learning portal, or e-learning platform. Each term might have a slightly different meaning, depending on your interpretation. An LMS is comprehensive, integrated software that supports the development, delivery, assessment, and administration of courses in traditional face-to-face, blended, or online learning environments.

The LMS is also found to support blended learning environment as reported by Grace, Suleman and Marsden (2013). The web-based or software application that allow educational institutions to deliver learning contents and resources to their learners, and conduct various learning activities through computers and internet. However, the researchers and educators need also to think of the implementation of LMS in a mobile environment as stressed by Xun, Lubin and Zhang (2010) who have raised the need for an easy interface design for mobile LMS. The effective use of mobile devices is important to provide easy ways and means for teachers, instructors and facilitators in creating, delivering and conducting their learning contents and activities while simultaneously monitoring learning participation and assessing the performance through mobile gadgets. The technical and pedagogical aspects are the most important elements that need to be considered when dealing with the migration of LMS to a new system as pointed out by Dzuiban et al. (2006) and Xun, Lubin and Zhang (2010). The influence of lecturers' willingness to adopt technology in their teaching and learning process is also found to be among the success

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factor of implementing technology in an educational setting as studied by Mohd. Feham, Nuraihan and Muhammad Sabri (2014).

## Literature Review

Most educators in the English-speaking higher education market are using LMS software such as Blackboard, Desire2 Learn, Instructure Canvas, Moodle, Pearson Learning Studio and Sakai (Hill, 2013). However, according to Weiss (2013), 552 companies/developers are found to be offering various LMS software in the market. Nevertheless, the Weiss list does not include LMS software such as Edmodo, an LMS developed primarily for use in K-12, or international software, such as the Thailand Cyber University (TCU) LMS or the Knowledge Environment for Web Learning (KEWL) software developed at the University of the Western Cape in South Africa. The LMS in IIUM for a long time and it is currently using the Moodle as the new platform of e-learning support since February 2012. The new LMS system in IIUM is known as I-Taleem which is the origin Arabic word for education and e-learning. I-Taleem is initially introduced in a web-based platform with various improvements since 2012 until now in order to support the needs of digital learning environment and 21<sup>st</sup> century of learning style. The use of mobile technologies, devices and applications is found to be an increasing trend in this century especially among the youth learners who are living in the era of mobile transformation and revolution.

The explosion use of various mobile gadgets such as PC tabs, smartphones, I-Pads and so on has tremendously affected learning process and delivery of content and messages faster and faster including the creation of a new field of research that relates to language learning and mobile technologies called Mobile Assisted Language Learning or MALL as mentioned by Colpaert (2004) and Beatty (2003). MALL is defined as “the processes of coming to know and being able to operate successfully in, and across, new and ever changing contexts and learning spaces with an emphasis on understanding and knowing how to utilize our everyday life-worlds as learning spaces” (Pachler, Bachmair & Cook, 2010, p. 6).

Although there are pros and contras of these emerging mobile technologies in their social human interaction, mobile devices are finding their way into classrooms in children’s life, and it is important for the researchers and educators to ensure that educational practice can include these technologies in productive ways (Atef Odeh, 2014). According to Kukulska-Hulme & Shield (2008), the educators should understand how mobile technologies and devices can be efficiently used to support the effective process teaching and learning. In order to ensure effective use of mobile devices in an educational setting, there are five features of MALL such as, accessibility, interactivity, immediacy, permanency, situating of instructional activities that should be considered into the account (Ogata & Yano, 2010). In addition to that based on Huang & Lin (2012), some merits of mobile technologies such as flexibility, low cost, small size and user-friendliness should also be considered in order to ensure good integration between the mobile devices and learning environment. Although a computer is more excellent than a mobile phone “for handling various types of information such as visual, sound, and textual information, but mobile phone is superior

to a computer in portability (Yamaguchi, 2005) and its wide access (Tayebinik & Putih, 2012). Mobile learning is found to be providing more flexible learning environment and activities for learners in addition to a traditional and face-to-face instruction. It is also supporting the use of PC desktop-based learning and as well as web-based learning between the instructors and learners in a normal classroom. Although the previous studies and research highlighted positive effects of using mobile technologies and application in learning process, it is also important to investigate the learners’ preference of using mobile devices and explore their feedback and suggestions as conducted in this paper. The use of mobile version of I-Taleem is investigated the positive and negative aspects of practical implementation of mobile learning platform in IIUM. In term of teaching Arabic language in particular, a workable mobile devices is pertinent to the due to the need for the mobile technology to integrate with the Arabic characters as studied by Mohd. Feham, Haslina, Muhammad Sabri, Nuraihan, Mohaida and Media Anugerah (2014). This will ensure the learning process is not only efficient but also engaging and enjoyable to the Arabic learners.

## Research Objectives

The objectives of this paper are as listed below:

- To investigate the learner’s preference of learning through mobile devices and applications.
- To explore the learner’s style of use for mobile internet surfing
- To understand the learner’s level of preference towards using I-Taleem as a mobile learning platform in learning technology through Arabic language.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The respondents in this paper were selected from undergraduate learners in two sections of a course who were learning computer applications theoretically and practically in Arabic language for the Bachelor of Revealed Knowledge (Arabic Language and Literature) in International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). The number of them was 73 students from the total of 80 learners in semester 2, 2014/2015 from February to May 2015. The respondents have been using both platforms of web-based and mobile-based LMS of IIUM I-Taleem before responding to the mix-method surveys of online 5 Likert-scale and an open ended questionnaire via Google Form platform.

## RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The results and findings of the study are reported in this section. The demographic profile of the respondents is presented before delving into the respondents’ descriptive quantitative analysis and qualitative open-ended from Table 1 to Table 10 feedback as shown below:

### Demographic Background

#### Gender

**Table 1**

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	14	19.2
Female	59	80.8
TOTAL	73	100

The majority respondents involved was female with 80.8% and it is a normal phenomenon of imbalance portion of gender in the Malaysian universities where the female is more in terms of numbers compared to male.

### Year of study

**Table 2**

Year	Frequency	Percentage
1 <sup>st</sup> year	45	61.6
2 <sup>nd</sup> year	23	31.5
3 <sup>rd</sup> year	3	4.1
4 <sup>th</sup> year	2	2.7
TOTAL	73	100

The majority respondents involved was coming from the first and second year students, and it is clear that this course is a university required course in IIUM which is usually taken by the juniors rather than seniors.

### Nationality

**Table 3**

Nationality	Frequency	Percentage
Malaysian	70	95.9
Non-Malaysian	3	4.1
TOTAL	73	100

The majority respondents were Malaysians with 95.9%, while the minority was found to be non-Malaysians and more specifically they are Singaporeans.

### Descriptive Results and Findings

The results and findings below were investigating the learners' style of use internet surfing through their mobile devices, and how was their preference of learning through mobile I-Taleem as a platform in learning technology through Arabic language.

### Internet access used by students

**Table 4**

Internet Access	Frequency	Percentage
IIUM WiFi	60	82.2
Other Broadbands	13	17.8
TOTAL	73	100

The highest respondents were found to be using IIUM internet Wi-Fi support rather than their own broadbands. This result explained why the learners were suggesting the facility is to be improved due to slow speed of internet connection within the inner radius of campus.

**Table 5.**

No.	Types of mobile applications	Frequency	Percentage
1	Surfing internet	71	97.3%
2	Making video call	36	49.3%
3	Sending/receiving of e-mail	53	72.6%
4	Sending/receiving instant messaging services such as WhatsApp, Telegram, Viber, etc.	70	95.9%
5	Accessing social networking sites like Facebook, Friendster, Twitter	69	94.5%
6	Sharing photos/videos using YouTube, iCloud, Flickr, Google+	45	61.6%
7	Downloading files from the Internet using their phones	55	75.3%
8	Sharing internet connection using personal hotspot	40	54.8%
9	Others	15	20.5%

### External access of internet outside IIUM

This question revealed the learners' preference of using external broadband support for internet connection where the majority was using CELCOM, followed by MAXIS and others.

**Table 6**

Type of Broadband	Frequency	Percentage
CELCOM	25	34.2
DIGI	4	5.5
MAXIS	17	23.3
U-Mobile	5	6.8
Streamix/Unifi	5	6.8
Others	17	23.3
TOTAL	73	100

### Number of students using smart phones

**Table 7.**

Using Smart phones	Frequency	Percentage
With Smart phones	72	98.6
No Smartphone	1	1.4
TOTAL	73	100

Table 6 showed that the respondents are possess the smartphones with the percentage of 98.6%, and it is important device for accessing mobile I-Taleem.

### Types of smartphone systems used by students

**Table 8.**

Smartphones' Processor	Frequency	Percentage
iOS	5	7.1
Android	61	87.1
Blackberry	0	0
Windows	2	2.9
Others	2	2.9
Not responded	2	2.9
TOTAL	70	100

Table 7 showed that the majority of respondents were using Android-based smartphones compared to others with percentage of 87.1% or 61 respondents.

### Type of applications used students in their smart phones

Table 8 above indicated the types of activities that they prefer to use in their smart phones. It was obvious that the respondents were preferring the internet surfing with 97.3%, followed by two highest responses such as sending instant messages with 95.9%, accessing social media networks with 94.5%.

### Learner's preference towards using I-Taleem as a mobile learning platform in learning technology through Arabic language

Table 9 above indicated that the learners' preference of using I-Taleem as a mobile learning platform was highly positive and accepted according to combination of responses between 'agree' and 'strongly agree'. However, it was found that the 'neutral' response was also quite high which required specific answer. The answer is explored further in this paper by the open-ended questionnaire which is to be analysed in the last part of this survey.

**Table 9. Learner's preference towards using I-Taleem**

No.	Item(s)	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	Mobile I-Taleem helps me to manage mobile learning time better.	0 (0%)	7 (10.1%)	25 (36.2%)	32 (46.4%)	5 (7.2%)
2	Mobile I-Taleem motivates me to learn (Example: learn in multimedia mode).	0 (0%)	5 (6.8%)	30 (41.1%)	32 (43.8%)	6 (8.5%)
3	Mobile I-Taleem attracts my attention in learning.	0 (0%)	6 (8.5%)	25 (35.2%)	34 (47.9%)	6 (8.5%)
4	Mobile I-Taleem provides flexible learning time for me.	0 (0%)	5 (6.8%)	30 (41.1%)	29 (39.7%)	9 (12.3%)
5	Mobile I-Taleem helps me to complete my assignments faster.	0 (0%)	5 (6.9%)	18 (25%)	42 (58.3%)	7 (9.7%)
6	Mobile I-Taleem can improve my productivity.	0 (0%)	1 (1.4%)	28 (38.9%)	37 (51.4%)	6 (8.3%)
7	Mobile I-Taleem helps me greatly in the course I am taking.	0 (0%)	3 (4.2%)	28 (39.4%)	33 (46.5%)	7 (9.9%)
8	Mobile I-Taleem makes learning more interesting and enjoyable.	0 (0%)	3 (4.1%)	22 (30.1%)	37 (50.7%)	11 (15.1%)
9	Mobile I-Taleem helps me with better understanding with learning materials.	0 (0%)	3 (4.2%)	24 (33.3%)	40 (55.6%)	5 (6.9%)
10	Mobile I-Taleem adds value to e-learning.	0 (0%)	5 (7.1%)	22 (31.4%)	34 (48.6%)	9 (12.9%)
11	Mobile I-Taleem allows instant access regardless of your location.	0 (0%)	3 (4.2%)	8 (38.4%)	23 (43.8%)	10 (13.7%)
12	Mobile I-Taleem is useful to supplement to an existing course.	0 (0%)	5 (7%)	30 (42.3%)	27 (38%)	9 (12.7%)
13	Mobile I-Taleem is an effective learning aid or assistant for students.	0 (0%)	3 (4.2%)	24 (33.3%)	37 (51.4%)	8 (11.1%)
14	Mobile I-Taleem is an effective method of providing personalized information.	0 (0%)	5 (6.9%)	32 (44.4%)	29 (40.3%)	6 (8.3%)
15	Mobile I-Taleem allows to convert any wait (dead) time into productive.	0 (0%)	6 (8.5%)	30 (42.3%)	32 (45.1%)	3 (4.2%)
16	Mobile I-Taleem allows convenient access to discussions – anywhere and anytime.	0 (0%)	4 (5.5%)	22 (30.1%)	40 (54.8%)	7 (9.6%)
17	Mobile I-Taleem that sends the information via messages may be better.	0 (0%)	5 (6.9%)	26 (36.1%)	33 (45.8%)	8 (11.1%)
18	Mobile I-Taleem that also allows access to information from the website.	0 (0%)	3 (4.2%)	23 (32.4%)	38 (53.5%)	7 (9.9%)
19	Mobile I-Taleem can be used as a supplemental tool for any existing course.	0 (0%)	2 (2.7%)	26 (35.6%)	40 (54.8%)	5 (6.8%)

**Table 10. Further Comments and Suggestions**

Main Theme	Comments and suggestions
Motivation	Provide convenient learning environment. Motivate students to learn better and faster.
Support	The university should provide mobile devices such laptops, I-Pads for students for learning purpose. Provide better internet facilities and access to students including Wifi. The system should be sending an email notification to students once the I-Taleem content is updated. Need for latest support of technology facilities.
Ease of use	Motivate students for mobile learning.
Value-addedness and variety	Students have faster access of information from lecturers. Using more elements of multimedia such as images and videos. Has more space for further improvement. Beneficial for students' learning process.
Implementation	Some lecturers do not provide lecture notes in I-Taleem, thus they need to be trained first before the students. Should be used by all lecturers.

**Figure1. Web-based Interface of I-Taleem in IIUM**



**Figure 2. Mobile Interface of I-Taleem in IIUM**

#### Suggestions and Comments from Open-Ended Questionnaire

The respondents were asked to give their comments and suggestions in an open-ended questionnaire with regards to the further improvement of using mobile LMS of I-Taleem in IIUM. The feedback is as important as the descriptive results and findings due to its in-depth responses and explanation by the respondents. They are analysed and grouped accordingly based on specific themes as shown in Table 10 below: The comments and suggestion from previous open-ended questionnaire indicated the positive and negative of learners' preference in using mobile I-Taleem. There are two (2) major spaces for further improvement which have been highlighted: improvement of internet access, facilities and speed inside the campus as well ensuring the lecturers to implement the use of mobile I-Taleem in their teaching process in more creative and attractive elements of multimedia learning.

#### Interface IIUM LMS of I-Taleem (web-based and mobile)

As mentioned before, the learners in this study have been undergone into the use of LMS in both modes of web-based and mobile-based platforms. The samples of screenshot for the both interfaces of I-Taleem LMS in IIUM are shown in Figure 1 and 2 for comparison purpose:

#### DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The above results and findings of this paper have shown a promising and positive responses among learners' preference

towards using I-Taleem as a mobile learning platform in learning technology through Arabic language. The comments and suggestions to improve technical supports and facilities of internet access as well as the ensuring effective implementation by the lecturers are the major issues raised by the learners that may interpret quite number of 'neutral' responses in the previous descriptive results. The improvement of I-Taleem system and support as required in this paper is between the jurisdiction and control of the university support of e-learning unit.

#### Conclusion

This paper studied the potential use of mobile LMS of I-Taleem in IIUM as presented before. Although the overall results and findings have shown positive feedback of learner's preference of using mobile learning platform in their learning process, the university should be aware of continuous aspects of improvement such as mentioned by the learners in order to ensure effective use of mobile LMS in the future.

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