# FROM PAGE TO SCREEN: EXPLORING MALAYSIAN TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE FEASIBILITY OF A MOBILE READING MODULE

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## ABSTRACT

Among the significant challenges several Malaysian teachers face, especially those teaching in primary school, is the need for more resources to teach reading comprehension. The implementation of mobile technologies provides favourable opportunities to facilitate teachers' teaching competencies in teaching reading comprehension instructions. Nevertheless, the successful implementation of the mobile reading module depends on the perceptions and contributions of teachers. This study investigates the viewpoints of Malaysian primary school teachers regarding the needs and development of a mobile reading module. A survey with open-ended questions was sent to nine Year 5 teachers in Sabah, Malaysia, to collect their perspectives. All the teachers who participated in the activity provided constructive opinions regarding a mobile reading module, highlighting the potential advantages of using the mobile reading module to facilitate teaching instructions. The findings offer significant viewpoints from Malaysian primary school teachers regarding developing and implementing mobile reading initiatives. These findings may influence the development of mobile reading materials that are both relevant to the context and coordinated with teachers to improve teaching comprehension skills among teachers in Malaysia.

Keywords: mobile learning, reading comprehension, teacher perspectives, primary education Malaysia

## INTRODUCTION

English has been emphasised as one of the most important languages to acquire. Despite the changes in Malaysia's curriculum policies over the years, English continues to be a compulsory subject taught at primary and secondary schools (Bakar et al., 2021). According to Sivalingam (2020), the Malaysian education system has undergone many significant changes since it began in 1824. The education system in Malaysia has experienced three significant transformations. The Integrated English Language Syllabus for Primary Schools (KBSR) was introduced in 1982, followed by the Standard English Language Curriculum for Primary School (KSSR) in 2002. The current policy, Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025, introduced in 2012, lays out the vision and plans to shape the future direction of education in Malaysia (C. Alih et al., 2021). The nation's aspirations are for a better future learning system, holistic development of students, and better English proficiency.

The changes in the education system in Malaysia include reform initiatives and rising realities of future endeavours (Bakar et al., 2021). The current changes in our education system, especially in the changes in syllabus and framework for primary school students around the country, have influenced the pedagogical approach. There have recently been more changes in textbooks used for Year 5 students. The usual textbook produced by our

Ministry of Education (MOE) is then changed to another new textbook produced through collaboration with Cambridge University. Deputy Education Minister Datuk. P Kalamanathan mentioned that only imported textbooks have been used since 2018. This change must be clarified among the teachers since this new framework is new. By referring to the second shift of the Preliminary Report Malaysia Education Blueprint (2013-2025), every student who studies in Malaysia should be able to master the English Language and Bahasa Malaysia.

Fluency is a solid foundation in reading skills that develops readers' comprehension skills. According to Connor et al. (2022), fluency is a benchmark for reading achievement, and research has been conducted to show the connection between reading fluency and reading comprehension. To summarise, proficient reading comprehension is essential for primary school students as it enables them to achieve academic excellence and thrive throughout their lives. Therefore, developing this skill early in literacy with the teachers' relevant teaching instructions and materials is crucial.

Educational administrators have conducted many courses to teach teachers how to drive lessons pedagogically as the curriculum landscapes change. However, there are limited courses and studies regarding the pedagogical impact of integrating mobile phones as a medium of learning sessions to learn the English language in our country (Kassim et al., 2020). Therefore, this paper is for needs analysis purposes to help teachers with suitable teaching materials to enhance teaching instruction of reading comprehension for Year 5 primary teachers. In a case study by Ahmad and Abd Samad (2018), Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) Teachers in Malaysia, the researchers identified teachers as knowledge providers because of young learners' curiosity. Participants in this study emphasised the importance of having the necessary applications using a smartphone to get quick answers within seconds. As a knowledge provider, the teacher's primary function in the learning session is to make the students trust the teacher's credibility as their most crucial reference while learning the language. The study shows the importance of having practical mobile phone applications that guide teachers during English lessons. Occasionally, a suitable platform will help the teacher as a knowledge provider to give the students experience in real-life situations by providing the knowledge and guidance required to assist the lesson.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

It is necessary to utilise abundant study materials to enhance our language skills. According to Crompton et al. (2020), some scholars suggest that mobile devices can be implemented to modify the learning process. The technology used in this era implied the changes in our education system as it parallels modernisation. This freedom to find more knowledge and information with fewer restrictions through the internet has helped students from various stages of the learning process (Lehman, 2020). The learning process was more smoothly conducted than in the past. Thus, it is another advantage for today's generation to learn anywhere as long the devices are connected to the internet.

The similarity between m-learning and e-learning is the practicality of learning that can occur anywhere or anytime. Ozdamli and Cavus (2011) listed the essential elements of mobile learning as teachers, learners, content, assessment, and environment. Meanwhile, the characteristics of mobile learning include blended learning, interactive, collaborative, private, and portable mobile tools to carry around. If all the elements and attributes are fulfilled, the learners can experience authentic learning anywhere or anytime.

A study conducted by Hussin et al. (2020) on the effectiveness of web systems and mobile applications for their end-users describes that mobile applications are more effective in terms of end-users effectiveness compared to web systems. The participants of the study state that the web system has too many items, making it more crowded than mobile applications. However, they also feel exasperated due to the need to install mobile applications

that take quite a large amount of storage. Therefore, it is essential to develop mobile applications with less storage and simple items for this study to reach end-user effectiveness.

The accelerated progress of mobile technology has created new opportunities for language learning, especially in English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction. Mobile-based ESL modules are an appealing resource for teachers to improve their teaching methods and help students improve their language skills. Despite the increasing interest, substantial gaps exist in the current literature about mobile-based ESL courses for teachers. Kamal et al. (2021), in their study to assess teachers' perspectives on using guided mobile learning using the Mobile Intervention Module (MIM) in English language instruction, found that all instructors positively perceive assisted mobile learning through the MIM, as indicated by the results. This study suggests that guided mobile learning can help transition teaching methods from traditional to technology-assisted, incorporating interactive activities in learning, improving language abilities, and increasing engagement. As for future research suggestions, it is advised that mobile learning should be incorporated into lessons in a guided approach for optimal outcomes. This study suggests a well-structured module integrating the curriculum with mobile applications is required.

## METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted as a qualitative study to find the answer to a research question: *What is needed to develop an m-reading ESL module for the Year 5 primary ESL teachers?* This study aims to explore the need to develop an m-reading ESL module for Year 5 primary school teachers. A qualitative study was employed as the research methodology to focus on teachers' points of view. A questionnaire consisting of open-ended questions was distributed through Google Forms to a group of primary school teachers in Sabah, Malaysia. The items are as the following:

1. What is your opinion on developing an m-reading module for year five primary ESL teachers to support reading comprehension instruction?
2. What gadgets are suitable for developing m-reading modules for Year 5 primary ESL teachers?
3. What features or components would you like to be included in an m-reading module to support reading comprehension instruction effectively?
4. What kinds of training, support, or resources would you need to use an m-reading module for teaching reading comprehension effectively?
5. How could an m-reading module be integrated into your reading comprehension curriculum or instructional approach?
6. Would you prefer the topic based on the Year 5 textbook or random topics?
7. What types of assessments should be included in an m-reading module for students?

According to Creswell (2018), open-ended questions encourage participants to generate responses, allowing the researcher to understand the investigated subject more deeply. The participants' contribution was significant in determining the components and features needed for an efficient mobile reading module intervention.

Purposive sampling is a method researchers use to deliberately choose individuals who have direct experience with the significant occurrence or concept being investigated in the study ( Creswell & Plano, 2011). Hence, this study employs a purposive sampling of nine primary school teachers in Sabah, Malaysia, who were responsible for teaching English to Year 5 students. Table 1 displays the demographic characteristics of the sample.

**Table 1:** Demographic characteristics of participants

| No. | Characteristic | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Gender | |
| | Female | 33.3 |
| | Male | 66.7 |
| 2. | Age Group | |
| | 25 - 34 | 33.3 |
| | 35 - 44 | 11.1 |
| | 44 - 54 | 55.6 |
| 3. | Highest Academic Qualification | |
| | Bachelor's Degree | 77.8 |
| | Master's Degree | 22.2 |
| 4. | Teaching Experience | |
| | 0-5 years | 22.2 |
| | 6-10 years | 11.1 |
| | 16 years and above | 66.7 |

The participants were selected using a purposive sampling method. Based on purposive sampling methods, participants in a research study were selected when the researcher intentionally chooses individuals based on specific needs (Etikan et al., 2016). Teachers who teach Year 5 students in primary schools in Sabah are the main selection criteria for this study. Therefore, the sample approach was selected to ensure that the participants acquired the skills and knowledge required to offer valuable insights regarding the feasibility of a mobile reading module for Year 5 ESL teachers. Based on the table above, most participants (66.7%) were male teachers willing to answer the survey. As for the age range, most of the participants with 55.6% of the participants are between 44 to 54 years old. Parallel to this, the highest percentage of teaching experience is 66.7%, which shows more than 16 years of teaching experience. By examining the demographic table, 77.8% of the participants earned a Bachelor's Degree as their highest qualification, while only 22.2% earned a Master's Degree.


## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

It is imperative to ask teachers' opinions regarding the relevance of the module, whether there is a need to develop any module that will help the teachers with teaching instructions or merely just for an additional intervention. Table 2 below summarises participants' feedback on the open-ended questionnaires.

**Table 2:** Findings from the open-ended questionnaire

| Feedback Theme | Participant Quotes |
|---|---|
| Needs to Develop Mobile Reading Module for Teachers | *"This can facilitate teachers with teaching instructions to guide them."*<br>*"It is truly a great idea as the module able to ease as well as improve the teaching and learning process for ESL teachers. It helps ESL teachers to determine which learning style is suitable for the students."*<br>*"Good idea."*<br>*"Interesting apps or activity."*<br>*"Should be developed."*<br>*"It's an effort to support other teachers."* |

| | "Its compulsory to cope with current challenges in education and to get in line with rapidly developing technologies." |
|---|---|
| Suitable Gadgets | "Mobile phones, tablets, laptop."<br>"E-reader and books."<br>"Ipad"<br>"Mobile phone, tablet, iPad and laptop." |
| Features or Components in The Module | "Lesson plan with instructions provided."<br>"Videos."<br>"Audio."<br>"Lesson plan and supporting from meddle leader."<br>"Reading text."<br>"Lesson plan, videos, reading text, flash cards and exercises"<br>"Visualise materials."<br>"Suggestion text of different level of students, video or audio of related topics, suggestion worksheet." |
| Resources to Implement The Module | "Courses, video explanation, complete modules."<br>"Digital training."<br>"Courses."<br>"Ebook."<br>"Teacher's training about m-reading contents." |
| Mobile Reading Module Integration | "By using the module as additional or main activities in classroom."<br>"The module should integrate with local culture of Malaysians."<br>"Incorporate reading and writing instructions."<br>"Learn about skill on instructional."<br>"Using multimedia reading materials."<br>"Broaden the topic."<br>"By adding some materials from the DSKP."<br>"I will have the idea on how to choose the suitable instruction to teach reading comprehension." |
| Module's Topics | Based on Year 5 topics – 55.6%<br>Random topics – 44.4% |
| Types of Assessments | Differentiated level of worksheets – 77.8%<br>Online based assessments – 22.2% |

The participants' responses were analysed using a thematic analysis approach to identify the key themes that emerged from the open-ended feedback. By referring to Table 2 of participants' feedback, there is a need to develop a mobile reading module for teachers as it is aligned with current challenges and educational needs. The teachers acknowledged the mobile reading module as a timely and pertinent project that may efficiently cater to the changing requirements of ESL teaching methods in the digital era. Participants stressed the significance of creating technical solutions that may address current educational challenges and align with rapidly shifting educational technologies. All this feedback supports Shofi and Wardatul (2022), who believe teachers should implement mobile applications to teach reading comprehension.

Moreover, integrating the m-reading module with existing curricula is essential for its relevance and applicability. Participants expressed a strong desire for the module to reflect local cultural contexts and incorporate instructional elements that support both reading and writing skills. This integration not only makes the module more relatable for students but also

ensures that it complements the Malaysian education framework (DSKP). By aligning the module's content with national standards and incorporating culturally relevant topics, the module can significantly enhance its effectiveness as a teaching tool.

The choice of technology is a critical component in the development of the m-reading module. Feedback from participants indicated that a variety of devices—such as mobile phones, tablets, laptops, and e-readers—should be supported. This diversity is crucial, as it allows for broader accessibility among both teachers and students, accommodating different levels of technological access within classrooms. By ensuring compatibility across multiple platforms, the module can facilitate more effective learning experiences, allowing educators to engage students in meaningful ways regardless of the devices they have on hand. Participants also expressed enthusiasm regarding the potential of the mobile reading module to incorporate engaging and interactive features, such as lesson plans, videos, reading text, audio, visual materials, and worksheets. For the resource to function as the module's reference for the teachers, the participants suggested that the researcher provide related courses, training, or e-books to explain how to use the module.

A mobile reading module could also provide opportunities for continuous improvements for ESL teachers to facilitate suitable teaching instructions and guide them in the implementation process. Moreover, integrating the m-reading module with existing curricula is essential for its relevance and applicability. Participants expressed a strong desire for the module to reflect local cultural contexts and incorporate instructional elements that support both reading and writing skills. This integration not only makes the module more relatable for students but also ensures that it complements the Malaysian education framework (DSKP). By aligning the module's content with national standards and incorporating culturally relevant topics, the module can significantly enhance its effectiveness as a teaching tool.

Other feedback on module integration is that it should be relevant to Malaysia's cultural context and diversity. In line with the statement from Hernandez et al. (2020), teachers and students had favourable thoughts regarding the importance of acquiring cultural knowledge to acquire the English language. The study's findings may encourage teachers to incorporate culturally-oriented resources into their instructional practices. There is a slight preference for basing the module's topics on the Year 5 curriculum (55.6%), but a significant portion also supports including random topics (44.4%). For assessments, most participants (77.8%) preferred using differentiated-level worksheets as an appropriate evaluation approach for the mobile reading module. Participants also suggested the incorporation of essential elements such as comprehensive lesson plans, multimedia resources (including videos and audio), and interactive exercises.

The emphasis on visual materials and differentiated content highlights the importance of catering to various learning styles and abilities, ensuring that all students can engage meaningfully with the reading materials. Additionally, providing clear instructional support for teachers is vital, enabling them to implement the module effectively within their classrooms and enhance their overall teaching strategies. The teachers strongly prefer assessment products that may be customised to meet the students' different learning needs and competence levels.

## CONCLUSION

By referring to the feedback summary, teachers significantly support the development of a mobile reading module, acknowledging its potential to improve learning and instruction, specifically for English as a Second Language (ESL) teaching. They perceive it as an essential instrument to tackle existing educational barriers and endure technological progress. As for device compatibility, it will be best to be compatible with a range of devices to ensure accessibility for all users. The participants prefer a comprehensive module encompassing

lesson plans, instructional videos, audio content, reading texts, and interactive exercises. Next, in order to effectively implement the module, teachers require adequate training and support. The emphasis should be on aligning the content with local Malaysian culture and incorporating reading and writing instructions. The majority of the participants voted for differentiated worksheets to cater to students' different levels of proficiency. In order to successfully deploy the module, it is necessary to carefully examine device compatibility, complete features, sufficient training materials, and strategic integration into existing curricula. Additionally, it is essential to ensure that the content is relevant and that proper assessment methods are used.

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