

Mobile learning



Mobile Learning Mobile learning can be defined as any sort of learning which employs wireless handheld technology. The recent development in mobile technology allows students to access information and learning materials from anywhere and at any time. With some great benefits, mobile learning is becoming more important in the current educational system. However, there are some limitations which cannot be omitted. One major advantage of mobile learning is its high flexibility. This mainly stems from the advances of size and weight of mobile devices.

Compared to books and personal computers, mobile devices are easier to hold and have higher portability [1]. According to Kukulska-Hulme and Traxler [1], learners are able to use mobile devices in dissimilar learning settings, ranging from informal situations to more formal situations. In other words, students can use their phones during spare moments. Boyes [4] believes that this property can allow them to make good use of ‘dead time’ for studying. In addition, the touch screen display, as the main interface by which students control the mobile devices, might improve their efficiency of study.

However, this could as well be a shortage of mobile learning, which will be mentioned afterwards. Last but not least, the mobile devices can be useful tools for assisting disabilities in studying. Although mobile technology is developing rapidly, there is no specialized device which is designed for learning. Ally [3] indicates that mobile devices are mainly designed for occupational purposes but not educational and training purposes at present. Consequently, these tools may not satisfy all the educational needs.

For instance, the small screens of the devices, with poor readability, are inconvenient for students to read articles. In the meanwhile, long term usage can possibly cause serious health problem, such as short sight and blood-brain barrier. According to Boyes [4], battery consumption and storage capacity are also inevitable limitations of mobile devices. Moreover, Ally [3] thinks that connectivity might be another considerable hindrance to mobile learning. With limited bandwidth and wireless capabilities, learners can hardly access learning materials on mobile devices.

The good capability is another compelling advantage of mobile learning. Nowadays, mobile devices are compatible with audios, images and even videos. Ally [3] maintains that learning materials in multimedia format are more stimulating for learners. To put it differently, these elements probably improve the originality of students. Besides, including multimedia components prevents the learning materials to be too dull. This can increase the motivation of students. Additionally, students can easily find numerous supportive applications using their devices.

For example, students can find and learn some difficult words with the help of dictionary applications. Furthermore, online search engines are excellent assistants for information collection. All the above mentioned tools can improve learning efficiency. Even though mobile learning has tremendous benefits due to its high flexibility and multimedia compatibility, it poses an underlying problem at the same time – lack of communication. In real life lectures, students are doing face to face interaction with the lecturers.

They may raise questions or give feedbacks instantly while they do not have the same opportunity in virtual lessons. O’Driscoll [5] suggests that this may

cause a suppression of creative thinking and developed ideas. Moreover, as noted by Kukulska-Hulme and Pettit [2], it can be easy for students to get distracted. Furthermore, as one-way communication does not promote mutual understanding between people, misunderstanding and conflicts may easily occur. This deficiency can lead to poor team work. Also, mobile learning cannot help improve specific skills, especially presentation skills.

This is because students must practice this skill in front of audience in real life. In conclusion, the high flexibility and excellent capability are two advantages of mobile learning. Some aspect of learning can be improved through implementing this innovative learning method. Nevertheless, some substantial limitations show that it is definitely impossible for mobile learning to replace the traditional learning. Instead of a replacement, mobile learning should be considered an integral to the current educational system. In my opinion, mobile learning is important presently.

However, there is room for improvement. Battery consumption and health problem might be ameliorated by the future technologies. Mobile devices should adapt to the needs of learners, in order to be an ideal tool foreducation. Apart from that, infrastructures for high bandwidth and wireless capabilities have to be built to enhance connectivity for better access. References 1. A. Kukulska-Hulme and J. Traxler, *Mobile Learning: A handbook for educators and trainers*. New York, NY: Taylor & Francis Inc, 2005. 2. A. Kukulska-Hulme and J.

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