Mobile Learning Environments for Diverse Learners in Higher Education

R. S. Shariffudin, C. H. Julia-Guan, T. Dayang, N. Mislan, and M. F. Lee

Abstract—ML (mobile learning) has extended e-learning to a new paradigm of “anywhere, anytime learning” [1][2]. The potential of ML in individualization of learning process for the diverse learners [3] should be optimized as learners learn in different ways and usually have their own styles and preferences for learning environment [4]. Research in ML should include of adaptive features to enable more personalized and successful learning outcomes for students. Matching the main m-learning environment constructs with the learners’ preferred learning styles offers an advanced form of learning environment that attempts to meet the needs of different students. Such matrices capture and represent, for each student, various characteristics such as knowledge and traits in an individual learner model. Subsequently, when ML is delivered in an interactive environment, with the right tools and support, studies show that students can retain significantly more and achieve a greater level of skill and performance. The secret and the key to realizing these gains is the environment. However, such matching is still in its infancy in Malaysia higher education.

The purpose of this study is to identify the main m-learning environment constructs for learners in Malaysia higher education. A survey using questionnaires will be conducted to the IT experts and university students in Malaysia. The development of the survey items relies extensively on literature pertaining to high-quality higher education, expert content validation techniques and learners’ learning styles by Myer-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). Expected result includes a matrix recommendation matching the m-learning environment constructs with students’ MBTI learning styles.

Index Terms—Mobile learning environment, learning style and MBTI.

I. INTRODUCTION

Mobile learning (ML) with the advent of third generation phones and the advancement of increased speed in data transfer has developed further opportunities for both learners and teachers to meet together, access and exchange information in virtual spaces whilst on the move [5]. ML can increase and maintain the students’ motivation and allows a more efficient use of time and resources, hence students are more likely to learn more effectively and learning at a time or location that they need or want, and can enhance the learning process in situated learning scenarios [4], [6]. Hence, mobile technologies such as mobile phones, smart phones and personal digital assistants (PDAs), Pocket PCs or Palmtop devices are being used to aid learning.

However, while mobile devices are approaching ubiquity today, the ML industry, especially in Malaysia, is still in its infancy. Many issues have yet to be resolved and one of these issues is the potential of individualization of learning process for the learners [3]. ML is causing educators to rethink how learning happens and how specific learning needs and styles are expanded and enabled with multifunctional hand-held devices. There has not been much work done on how learning styles can be incorporated into different learning scenarios facilitated by mobile devices [4]. Using learning styles to personalize web-based learning is more prevalent than using them to personalize ML [4], [7], [8]. Though most of the higher institutions are successful with its e-learning implementation, it is now time for the universities to embark on ML for academic purposes with the primary objective to enrich the learning environment and to offer greater flexibility in learning to their learners.

II. MOBILE LEARNING IN MALAYSIA HIGHER EDUCATION

While most of our higher education institutions are starting to embark ML as one their pedagogies for delivery of instruction for their learners, it is crucially important to construct and validate a ML preferences-oriented model to identify the main constructs in ML environments with the aims to ensure the effectiveness and quality of ML environment and experience for diverse learners. ML can act as a form of performance support system for educational and training purposes in higher education [9]. Some of the well-known local universities, such as UTM (Universiti Teknologi Malaysia), USM (Universiti Sains Malaysia), OUM (Open University Malaysia) and other institutions have started their initial steps by looking into aspects of readiness of learners, and considerations for technology and pedagogy for ML [10], [11], [12]. Their surveys received positive feedbacks where the students are willing to invest their time and money in it [10].

To cater for diverse learners’ need, an instrument to identify the main constructs of ML environments in Malaysia higher education setting will be developed and map with the students’ main learning styles based on MBTI inventory. It aims to report on an empirical study examining the possible relationships between the dispositional factors measured by MBTI and main constructs of ML environments. Such instrument will provide insights and suggest a matrix that merges the ML environments constructs with diverse learners’ preference. Students are expected to be able to learn more efficiently and more effectively by providing the ML environment that suit the student’s individual learning style and access device, [3], [4], [13].

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III. MBTI (MYERS-BRIGGS TYPE INDICATOR)

Contributions to the congress are welcome from throughout the world. Manuscripts may be submitted to The students’ personality traits are measured using the MBTI instrument which is often described as “one of the world’s most widely used tools to describe personality,” [14], [15], [16]. The MBTI is a typology of personality preferences based on Jungian psychology whom Jung (1971) asserted that individuals have distinctive, unlearned but enduring tendencies to experience the world in particular ways. Myers and Briggs designed the MBTI to reflect individual behavioral preferences across four dimensions:

1) Orientation of energy – extraversion vs. introversion.
2) Preferred modes of perception – sensing vs. intuition.
3) Decision making – thinking vs. feeling.
4) Preferences for dealing with the outer world – judging vs. perceiving.

In this study, the students are categorized into EN (Extravert-Intuitive), IN (Introvert-Intuitive), IS (Introvert-Sensing) and ES (Extravert- Sensing). Myers explained that the EI (Extravert-Introvert) dimension is concerned with the way people tend to “recharge their energy”. Extroverts will focus their attention on other people through the external environment, while introverts will be fully recharged after staying with close friends or family (or by being alone) in an internal environment. This then has an influence on ML choice in that this dimension influences people to choose the sort of ML environment related to their style: extroverts need contact with people while introverts get stressed when they have too much contact with people as they would prefer to work with impressions and ideas. The (SN) Sensing-Intuition dimension is related to how people prefer to acquire information. Sensing learners gather their information through the five senses in a concrete manner while Intuition learners are through intuition using imagination, impression and inspiration, from the unconscious “sixth sense”.

IV. MBTI (MYERS-BRIGGS TYPE INDICATOR)

A. The Rational Analysis of Mobile Education (FRAME) Model by Koole and Ally (2006)

The FRAME model [17] provides a basic yet comprehensive guidance of the understanding of ML and is often being used as a framework for research review of the literature on ML [18], [19]. In her model, Koole describes ML as a process resulting from the convergence of mobile technologies, human learning capacities, and social interaction. This model can be represented as an intersecting set of three circles representing device usability, learner, and social aspects of learning (see Figure 1). As such, ML can afford diverse learners access to a variety of human, system, and data resources, as well as to assist them to assess and select relevant information and redefine their goals in ML environments.

A. Hexagonal E-learning Assessment Model (HELAM) by Ozkan, Koseler and Baykal (2008)

Hexagonal E-learning Assessment Model (HELAM) [20] is a conceptual e-learning assessment model that provides guidelines for evaluating the success level of an e-learning environment in higher education. Each significant e-learning success assessment aspect and criteria have been combined in this e-learning effectiveness evaluation tool, which altogether have formed a comprehensive e-learning success assessment method. HELAM has been developed for assessing the e-learning effectiveness according to 6 dimensions of e-learning: (i) Technical Issues: System Quality, (ii) Technical Issues: Service Quality, (iii) Technical Issues: Content Quality, (iv) Social Issues: Learner Perspective, (v) Social Issues: Instructor Attitudes, and (vi) Supporting Issues (see Fig. 2).
B. Other Models

ML design requirement by Parsons, Ryu and Cranshaw (2007) is actually a conceptual framework for ML experience design [13], for assessing the quality of ML [21] and for professional ML development [22]. The purpose of the framework is to encapsulate best practice, drawn from the literature, for building quality and professional ML systems, in terms of product quality and in terms of the quality of the learning experience. They map five design issues that are critical in professional ML: user roles and profiles, working environment model which needs future validation (See Appendix I: Theoretical Framework).

V. PROPOSED MOBILE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS MODEL

Important construct items from previous models will be studied, identified and compiled to be assessed by IT experts and university students in Malaysia to develop the proposed ML environment model which needs future validation (See Appendix I: Theoretical Framework).

VI. CONCLUSION

Based on these models, the main constructs items in ML environments in higher education for different learners will be developed and map onto the learners’ learning preferences based on MBTI inventory. It aims to report on an empirical study examining the possible relationships between the dispositional factors measured by MBTI and main constructs of ML environments. Recommendation of a matrix matching the ML environment constructs with students’ learning styles and suggestion of a conceptual framework that is suitable to relate the diverse learners’ learning styles and their ML environments will be achieved after the results of this research. The results will be discussed in the next paper.

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REFERENCES


Fig. 2. HELAM (hexagonal e-learning assessment model) by ozkan, koseler and baykal (2008).


