

## The Students' Perceptions Toward Mobile-Based Learning in Learning Writing Skill

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### Abstract

*This research explored students' perceptions of the use of mobile-based learning in learning writing skill at an Islamic University. The participants were students from the English Education Department at the Faculty of Tarbiyah, State Islamic University Alauddin Makassar. A descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design was the research design. Data were collected through observations and interviews, and analysed using thematic analysis. The findings indicated that students had positive perceptions toward mobile-based learning, emphasizing its role in enhancing writing skills, offering flexibility and accessibility, promoting autonomous learning, and fostering engagement. Overall, learners expressed positive attitudes toward mobile-based learning, noting that it facilitates the process of learning English writing through the LMS platform and WhatsApp, while also providing access to additional resources related to writing.*

**Keywords:** Perception, Mobile-based Learning, Writing Skill.

### INTRODUCTION

In the last two decades, rapid developments in information and communication technology (ICT) have significantly influenced the field of education. One of the most remarkable innovations is mobile-based learning, which refers to the use of mobile technologies such as smartphones, tablets, and other handheld devices to support and facilitate the learning process. Mobile learning allows students to access learning materials anytime and anywhere, thereby creating new opportunities for flexible and personalized learning (Kukulkska-Hulme, 2009). This

concept has gained substantial attention among educators and researchers because of its potential to enhance teaching and learning, particularly in the field of language education.

Among the four English language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—writing is often considered the most complex skill to master, especially for learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Writing requires not only vocabulary and grammar knowledge but also higher-order skills such as organizing ideas, maintaining coherence and cohesion, developing arguments, and revising drafts. Many EFL learners struggle with writing because of limited exposure, lack of practice, and insufficient feedback. Traditional classroom instruction often provides limited time for extensive writing practice, while teachers may face challenges in giving immediate and individualized feedback to all students. In this context, mobile learning emerges as a promising approach to overcome these limitations by providing continuous access to writing resources, interactive applications, and collaborative platforms (Zaki & Yunus, 2015).

Mobile-based learning in the context of writing can take various forms. Learners can use mobile applications such as Grammarly, Google Docs, and language learning apps to check grammar, spelling, and vocabulary usage. Social media platforms and messaging applications like WhatsApp, Telegram, and Edmodo can facilitate collaborative writing, peer feedback, and discussions outside the classroom (Kukulska-Hulme & Shield, 2008). Mobile technologies also allow learners to engage in task-based writing activities that promote autonomy and motivation. For instance, learners can write blog entries, share reflections through mobile platforms, or participate in group projects that require collaborative drafting and editing. These activities not only extend writing practice beyond classroom walls but also foster learner engagement and interaction.

This research has shown that integrating mobile-based learning into English writing can have positive effects on both writing performance and learner motivation. According to Solikhah and Wirawati (2023), mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) provides learners with opportunities for self-editing, peer collaboration, and iterative improvement of their writing. Similarly, Robles Noriega (2016) reported that the use of mobile tools in writing instruction improved learners' ability to produce well-organized and accurate texts while also enhancing their confidence. Moreover, mobile learning environments encourage autonomous learning, as students can access resources independently, manage their own pace, and engage with authentic materials (Viberg & Grönlund, 2012). These aspects are crucial for developing writing competence, which requires continuous practice and self-regulation.

Despite its benefits, mobile learning in writing instruction is not without challenges. Learners and teachers may face technical barriers, such as unstable internet connections, small screen sizes, or limited device compatibility. Additionally, mobile devices may cause distractions due to social media or entertainment applications, reducing learners' concentration on writing tasks (Cavus & Ibrahim, 2009). Another challenge lies in the pedagogical integration of mobile tools: teachers need to carefully design tasks and provide clear guidance so that mobile learning supports, rather than hinders, writing development. Furthermore, the success of mobile learning depends heavily on learners' and teachers' attitudes, digital literacy, and readiness to adopt new technologies (Stockwell & Hubbard, 2013). Therefore, effective training and continuous support are essential to maximize the potential of mobile learning in English writing instruction.

In the Indonesian EFL context, the use of mobile learning is becoming increasingly relevant due to the widespread availability of smartphones and the growing need for flexible learning

environments. Studies conducted with Indonesian university students reveal positive perceptions toward mobile applications in supporting writing activities. Learners reported that mobile applications made writing more engaging, interactive, and accessible (Mutiarasari et al., 2023). In addition, platforms such as WhatsApp and Google Classroom have been widely used for writing assignments, peer reviews, and feedback, showing that mobile tools can effectively complement traditional instruction. However, these studies also highlight challenges such as limited teacher guidance and the risk of plagiarism, which call for careful pedagogical planning.

These considerations, it is evident that mobile-based learning has significant potential to transform English writing instruction. By integrating mobile tools with sound pedagogical approaches, lecturers can create learning environments that are more flexible, interactive, and learner-centred. At the same time, addressing the challenges of technology access, distraction management, and teacher preparedness is crucial for successful implementation. Thus, this research light to explore the learners' perception of mobile-based learning in English writing is not only timely but also necessary to support learners in developing one of the most demanding language skills in today's digital era.

### **Mobile-based Learning: Concept and Definition**

Mobile-based learning has emerged as a powerful innovation in the field of education, shaped by the rapid development of digital and mobile technologies. It is commonly defined as the use of portable devices—such as smartphones, tablets, and laptops—to facilitate learning across different contexts, enabling learners to access knowledge anytime and anywhere (Traxler, 2009). Unlike traditional e-learning, which often requires desktop computers and stable internet access, m-learning emphasizes mobility, flexibility, and contextualized learning. Kukulska-Hulme and Shield (2008) further explain that mobile learning is not only about accessing digital content but also about supporting social interaction, collaboration, and communication through mobile technologies. This characteristic makes it highly relevant for English language learning, particularly in writing, where interaction, feedback, and revision are essential.

### **Mobile-based learning in Learning Writing Skill**

Writing is one of the most challenging skills to master in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. It requires learners to integrate linguistic knowledge (grammar, vocabulary, and syntax) with higher-order skills such as idea organization, coherence, and cohesion. According to Hyland (2003), writing is both a product and a process: learners must produce a final text while engaging in multiple stages of drafting, revising, and editing. In traditional classrooms, these processes often face constraints, such as limited contact time with instructors and insufficient opportunities for peer review.

Several studies have demonstrated the value of mobile-based learning in English writing. Botero et al. (2018) reported that students using mobile applications for writing tasks showed increased engagement, motivation, and confidence in their writing. Applications such as WhatsApp, Zoom, and LMS platforms facilitate real-time communication and feedback, which are crucial for the recursive nature of writing. An et al. (2021) further found that mobile learning environments enhanced collaborative practices between learners and teachers, making writing more interactive and participatory.

Mobile-based learning also supports feedback mechanisms, which are essential in developing writing skills. Learners perceived mobile-assisted collaborative writing as effective because it promoted idea sharing and constructive feedback, leading to better writing outcomes. This supports the process-oriented approach to writing, where feedback is integrated into multiple stages of text production.

Furthermore, mobile applications encourage learner autonomy. Learners can access online dictionaries, grammar-check tools, and writing samples at their convenience. This aligns with Benson's (2011) notion of autonomous learning, where technology empowers learners to take responsibility for their progress. In writing, this autonomy translates into greater control over drafting and revising, allowing learners to identify and address their weaknesses independently.

### **Students' Perceptions**

Learners' perceptions play a crucial role in determining the success of mobile learning in learning writing. Studies generally reveal positive attitudes toward mobile learning, as learners appreciate its flexibility, accessibility, and interactive features. For instance, Pengel, Chen, and Shadiev (2021) discovered that students valued mobile-assisted collaborative writing because it encouraged idea sharing, improved communication, and ultimately enhanced the quality of their writing. Learners also reported that mobile devices allowed them to receive feedback more quickly, which contributed to more effective revisions.

Shadiev and Huang (2020) further argue that mobile learning not only improves linguistic competence but also develops learners' digital literacy, an essential skill in the modern academic and professional world. In addition, learners often perceive mobile learning as motivating because it integrates familiar technologies into educational settings, bridging the gap between formal learning and everyday digital practices.

However, despite these positive perceptions, learners also acknowledge challenges. Some report that typing long texts on small screens can be inconvenient and less efficient than using computers. Technical issues, such as unstable internet connections and limited device storage, also negatively influence learners' experiences (Vavoula & Sharples, 2008). Moreover, mobile devices may expose learners to distractions, such as social media notifications, which can reduce concentration during writing tasks. These challenges highlight the need for careful pedagogical planning when integrating mobile learning into writing instruction.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

This study employed a qualitative research design using a case study approach to explore how mobile learning supports the development of English writing skills among EFL learners. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows an in-depth investigation of learners' perceptions in using mobile devices for writing practice (Creswell, 2014).

### **Participants**

The participants of this study were undergraduate students enrolled in an English Education program at an Indonesian university. They were in their first and third year of study and had already taken a basic writing course. The participants were selected using purposive sampling, as

they represented learners who were actively engaged in writing tasks and were familiar with mobile applications commonly used in education, such as WhatsApp and Lentera. The group consisted of both male and female students, aged between 19 and 22 years old.

### Instruments

Two main instruments were employed in this study: interview and observation. The interviews were conducted to explore students' perceptions of using mobile learning tools in writing activities. Observation notes – The researcher observed classroom activities and online interactions through Lentera platform. These observations provided additional insights into how students engaged with mobile learning tools in real writing contexts.

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study present students' perceptions of mobile-based learning in the context of learning writing skill. Understanding these perceptions is essential, as they reflect how learners engage with technology-based platforms in developing their writing skills. The results highlight students' attitudes and experiences when utilizing mobile applications. This section sheds light on the extent to which mobile-based learning supports or hinders the writing process, as well as its role in fostering learner autonomy, and access to learning resources. The findings are organized thematically to provide a clear and comprehensive table of how mobile-based learning contributes to the learning of writing at the Islamic University, as in the following table:

Table 1. Students' Perceptions

Quote	Code	Sub-theme	Theme
<i>"Good, the use of mobile devices in teaching writing can help enhance my ability to write writing materials."</i>	Improved writing skills	Perceived learning benefit	Positive Attitude toward MBL
<i>"It is beneficial because, even in cases of health issues, we can still participate in learning. Mobile-based learning is flexible and allows access to Zoom sessions anywhere."</i>	Flexibility, learning continuity	Learning resilience and convenience	Learning Flexibility
<i>"The use of mobile devices in teaching writing offers many benefits that improve the accessibility and effectiveness of learning."</i>	Accessibility and effectiveness	Learning improvement	Positive Attitude toward MBL
<i>"Using mobile-based learning can enable us to learn by ourselves."</i>	Independent learning	Self-directed learning	Autonomous Learning
<i>"In my opinion, the use of mobile devices in learning English writing is highly effective and beneficial. [...] They can access materials and complete exercises anytime and anywhere, which helps improve</i>	Flexible access, skill development	Efficiency and skill enhancement	Learning Flexibility

<i>their writing skills."</i>			
<i>"In my opinion, mobile-based learning is good because it helps me to take the answer."</i>	Easy access to answers	Task support	Positive Attitude toward MBL
<i>"In my opinion, a lecturer can use mobile devices in learning, especially when facing challenges that prevent direct interaction with students."</i>	Alternative to face-to-face	Pedagogical adaptability	Learning Flexibility
<i>"For me, it is very engaging because it allows access to educational resources anytime and anywhere, providing a more interactive and exciting learning experience."</i>	Engaging and interactive	Enhanced student experience	Engagement and Motivation

The analysis revealed four main themes:

- a. **Positive attitude toward MBL**  
 Students acknowledged that mobile devices support their writing development. They reported that m-learning enhances accessibility, provides task support, and makes the learning process easier. These findings support Botero et al. (2018), who argue that m-learning promotes effective and meaningful engagement in higher education.
- b. **Learning Flexibility**  
 Students emphasized the convenience of accessing learning materials and joining classes despite health issues or geographical limitations. M-learning ensures continuity of learning, reflecting Vavoula and Sharples' (2008) claim that mobile learning bridges formal and informal education.
- c. **Autonomous Learning.**  
 Mobile-based learning enables learners to manage their own learning process by accessing resources independently. Students perceived this autonomy as an opportunity to develop self-directed learning, consistent with constructivist perspectives (Sharples et al., 2010).
- d. **Engagement and Motivation.**  
 Students described m-learning as interactive and engaging, motivating them to participate more actively in writing activities. This resonates with Hidi and Renninger's (2006) four-phase model of interest development, where mobile learning enhances situational and sustained interest.

The findings of this study reveal that students generally hold positive perceptions of mobile-based learning (MBL) in the context of English writing instruction. Their responses highlight several important themes, including positive attitudes toward MBL, learning flexibility, autonomous learning, and increased engagement and motivation.

First, the theme of positive attitudes toward MBL is evident in students' recognition of its benefits in improving writing skills and providing easier access to materials and tasks. For example, students acknowledged that the use of mobile devices supports their ability to develop writing skills and obtain answers more efficiently. This finding aligns with previous studies that

emphasize the role of MBL in promoting more effective and accessible learning experiences (An et al., 2021; Botero et al., 2018). Such positive attitudes indicate that learners perceive MBL not only as a supportive tool but also as a meaningful approach that enhances their writing performance.

Second, learning flexibility emerged as a central perception among learners. Mobile learning was described as convenient, allowing students to continue their learning despite health-related challenges or the inability to attend face-to-face sessions. The ability to access Zoom and other platforms from any location underscores the resilience of mobile learning in maintaining continuity of education. This echoes the arguments of Vavoula and Sharples (2008), who emphasized that mobile learning supports anytime, anywhere learning, thus bridging classroom and out-of-class learning environments. Such flexibility highlights the pedagogical adaptability of MBL, particularly during disruptions.

Third, students pointed out the importance of autonomous learning in mobile-based contexts. The ability to learn independently through mobile devices fosters self-directed learning habits, as students gain control over their pace, access, and use of materials. This supports the constructivist view that learners build knowledge actively and independently, facilitated by digital resources (Sharples et al., 2010). By promoting autonomy, MBL empowers students to take greater responsibility for their own writing development.

Finally, engagement and motivation also surfaced as key perceptions. Students noted that MBL makes the learning process more interactive, engaging, and enjoyable, especially through access to diverse resources. This reflects the motivational affordances of mobile learning, where students are more likely to participate actively and sustain interest when technology enhances interaction (Hidi & Renninger, 2006). Increased engagement is particularly important in learning writing, as it fosters deeper involvement in the learning process and encourages students to practice more consistently.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

This study has explored the students' perception toward mobile-based learning (MBL) in supporting the development of English writing skills among EFL learners. The findings revealed that the integration of mobile devices into learning writing offers several important benefits. First, mobile tools (WhatsApp, Google Docs, and Grammarly) provided learners with flexible access to resources, enabling them to write, edit, and collaborate anytime and anywhere. This flexibility significantly enhanced opportunities for practice and fostered learner autonomy, which is essential for improving writing skill.

The study concluded that the students had positive perception toward mobile-based learning (MBL) in learning writing skill. It is effectively integrated into instructional design, can significantly enhance students' writing skill. It promotes flexibility, learner autonomy, and collaborative engagement while also improving writing quality. At the same time, it is also necessary to pay attention to how to overcome technical and pedagogical challenges to maximize the benefits of this approach.

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