

## **Adult Learners' Perceptions on Acquiring Communicative Malay Language Proficiency as a Foreign or Second Language and Attitude towards Mobile Learning: A Preliminary Study**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this study was to understand learners' perceptions of acquiring Communicative Malay Language (CML) proficiency as well as to explore the current use and potential of mobile-assisted language learning (MALL). This descriptive, qualitative, preliminary study involved a total of 10 randomly selected participants who had learnt CML beforehand. Questions for the semi-structured interviews used for data collection in the study were divided into four sections: demographic profile information, perceptions of language literacy, learning challenges, and attitudes towards learning technology. The interview data were reported using the thick description technique. Based on the findings, it was found that most of these learners preferred to learn only the communicative language over the formal language. In addition, all of the participants were able to read and write basic CML, but most of the participants were not able to communicate effectively. The findings

also show that most of the participants utilized mobile applications in learning CML. However, only a few useful mobile apps were available for this language, and most of the mobile apps focussed only on vocabulary acquisition and sentence structure and did not deliberately cater to their oral communication needs.

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## INTRODUCTION

Today, due to the rise of local and foreign investments, Malaysia is becoming one of the best selections for international expatriates seeking better education, healthcare, and accommodation (Yusof, 2018). This has led to the adaptation and assimilation of expatriates into the local community.

Conventionally, language has been the key factor for a better assimilation process. In Malaysia, there has been an emergence of courses for communicative Malay language (CML) as a foreign or second language. Based on De Bot et al.'s (1991) distinction in the definition of second and foreign language teaching, this study views second language as a non-native language that is learnt as a mean of second dominant communication outside the classroom, while a foreign language refers to a language that is learnt but not to be used as a dominant language.

Although the Malay language has been known as an easy communicative language to be learnt (Omar, 1998), for adult learners, learning language differs in some aspects. According to Kormos and Csizér (2008), adult learners typically have clearer goals in language learning compared to young learners. Generally, adults rely on self-directed learning (Boyer et al., 2014). The study of self-directed learning style has become more in-depth to the extent that the term andragogy was introduced. This term was proposed by Knowles (1978) in contrast to pedagogy which refers to the art and science of adult learning (Merriam, 2001).

In language learning, adults are able to choose and decide the level of language competency that suits their needs (Smith & Strong, 2009). Generally, adult learners' main objective in learning a language is to be able to master oral communication due to their needs in communicating with a second or foreign language community (Arthur & Beaton, 2000). In order to become competent in communication, these learners must acquire a certain level of language proficiency. Therefore, learner's proficiency to verbally communicate is considered as a natural outcome of language learning (Gorkaltseva et al., 2015). This proficiency is characterized by learners' fluency to speak like native speakers. Hence, the scope of this study is to understand adult CML learners' perceptions of acquiring CML proficiency which enables them to fluently communicate with locals.

In light of its importance in education, Blackley and Sheffield (2015) revisited the term andragogy and bound the term 'digital andragogy' with reference to the implementation of technology to facilitate adult learners who preferred personalized and flexible learning. Within the scope of language learning, the implementation of mobile application technology has led to an ever-growing number of innovations in making language learning cheaper and easier as it is accessible anytime and anywhere with the help of the internet (Kukulska-Hulme, 2012). Today, the enhanced features of smartphones have boosted mobile assisted language learning. The bite-size design of language activities has allowed students to

consider mobile applications as prominent revision tools for testing themselves (Qian et al., 2018). However, although increasing evidence on the effectiveness of mobile language learning is available, research is still lacking in regard to CML learning. Therefore, another aim of this study is to explore the trend of mobile-assisted language learning within the scope of CML learning.

### Literature Review

#### Fluency in Second or Foreign Language.

According to Sadiku (2015), fluency encompasses four language skills, which are reading, writing, speaking and listening. These skills are grouped into two main communication proficiencies which are oral and written communication. According to Sadiku (2015), despite the importance of these four skills, not all adult students are able to master them in foreign language learning. This is due to the values these learners put on each skill. Since adults tend to employ self-directed learning, they are free to choose which skills they need the most. Sadiku (2015), however, did not argue a comparison on the importance between the mentioned two groups of proficiencies among learners, notwithstanding the fact that a learner might be better at one proficiency group compared to another. For instance, some learners are able to speak a foreign language without disconcerting proper pronunciation (Afshar & Asakereh, 2016). Afshar and Asakereh's (2016) explanation has also led to the question of whether adults tend to acquire all four skills at different

levels. In the context of this study, it is possible for an adult learner to learn CML but still face difficulty in some language skills. In other words, a student may be able to read Malay, but not be able to write. As it was previously argued by Sadiku (2015) that not all of the four language skills learnt by a student can be mastered at the equivalent level, it is important for this study to reveal which among these four skills is the hardest to be acquired as well as to understand the challenges faced by students in striving to attain sufficient proficiency either in written or oral communication.

**Self-Directed Learning.** Self-directed learning refers to a learning process in which individuals take their own initiatives in diagnosing learning needs, formulating learning goals and finding ways to utilize resources in order to achieve learning outcomes (Boyer et al., 2006). According to Manning (2007), adult learners are keen to informal yet transparent learning, apart from opportunities to practice their new skills. They also favour immediate feedback on their learning process. This is based on Knowles's (1978) theory, which postulates that adults consider themselves to be successful in learning when they are highly motivated and able to instantaneously put the knowledge they have acquired into a practical application (Manning, 2007). Manning's (2007) explanation is parallel to the context of this study. Based on the explanation given, it can be said that adults' self-directed learning style may affect their level of language proficiency.

In other words, learners get to choose their preferred learning methods and resources in order to assist in their language acquisition process. Therefore, there is the possibility that an adult learner would put more focus and investment on the learning resources of certain skills over others. Thus, by conducting this study, we could understand which learning methods and resources they prefer to utilize in order to receive better outcomes in the language skills under consideration.

**Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL).** Cho et al. (2018) conducted a meta-analysis on the trend of Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) and concluded that mobile phones were now a daily life item and being used as hand-held computers to support learning activities and making it easier for language learning to take place anywhere. Besides that, Chinnery (2006) stated that the potential of mobile learning had been more extensive since it allowed learners to study or practice manageable chunks of information in any place on their own time and pace, thereby taking advantage of its convenience.

In the scope of MALL studies, most research was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of employing mobile devices in language learning and explored the design of mobile applications that can maximize the advantages of employing new technologies (Cho et al., 2018). Nonetheless, Godwin-Jones (2011) mentioned that not all language learning applications were high in quality. According to Godwin-Jones (2011), users should be the ones deciding what and how an app should be utilized in order to

achieve their learning goals. This would pave the way for application developers and educators to design productive language learning applications (Godwin-Jones, 2011). Thus, it is important in this study to determine the perceptions and preferences of learners in order to determine the ideal type of mobile app that suits their learning needs, especially in the context of CML learning.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The purpose of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of adult learners' experiences in learning CML which may impact their acquisition of the four language skills, as explained previously. It is also important to understand how learners view and experience the integration of technology, specifically mobile applications. Therefore, based on the previous literature discussed above, this study employed a qualitative method to scrutinize learner experiences in order to fulfil the following objectives:

1. Determine which language proficiency skill is needed the most among learners.
2. Determine which language skills learners struggle with the most.
3. Explore the current use and the potential of mobile applications in assisting CML learners.

This is a descriptive, qualitative research study involving a total of 10 participants who learnt CML beforehand. All of the participants were randomly recruited from various language centres in Kuala Lumpur via emails and phone calls. Since this research viewed the use of

mobile applications as assistive materials in language learning, purposeful sampling technique was employed in which the criterion determined for participation before launching the study was that all of the participants were voluntarily enrolled in CML classes. The participants were then individually interviewed at their preferred premises in a casual manner.

Essentially, The semi-structured interview was divided into four (4) main parts, beginning with the demographic section, followed by learners' perceptions of their own self-rated language literacy, which was divided into four (4) sub-section which are reading skill, speaking skill, listening skill, and writing skill. The third section comprised items pertaining to learners' motivation in learning CML, and the last section was on their attitudes toward learning technology. As for the last section, the interview session was extended for in-depth discussions on the potential and the usefulness of mobile applications to support a learner's learning process.

After the interview sessions were completed, the first step of data analysis was to transcribe all the interviews into text. The interview data was then reported using the thick description technique (Denzin, 1989). This study presents a detailed discussion of findings in order to provide a better understanding of the integration of mobile applications with CML lessons.

## RESULTS

The goal of this analysis was not to generalize the aforementioned phenomenon but to deeply understand the real needs of the learners. The term "informant" is used

here, as the learners in this study informed us of their perceptions and experiences in learning CML.

### Demographical Profile

Table 1 shows that most of the informants (N = 8) were professionals working in Malaysia, while only one informant was not working and another one was a homemaker. The data also shows that only one informant was from Asia, one informant was from Middle Eastern, while the rest were westerners.

Based on the interviews, it was found that Informant 2 and Informant 3 were born in Malaysia but were raised in Singapore and Britain, respectively. The informants also admitted that they still had some relatives living in Malaysia and this may have affected the way they learnt the Malay language compared to other informants. Informant 7, on the other hand, was not born in Malaysia but moved to Malaysia when he was a child. However, the informant mentioned that he was not able to speak the language as he was studying at the international school and lived in the international community, he then moved to the USA, where he lived for 10 years before coming back to Malaysia in 2017.

### Perceptions of Language Literacy

The following findings are associated with informants' perceptions on each language proficiency skill.

**Reading Skill.** For reading, most of the students perceived this skill as the easiest skill to master in learning CML. Most informants reported that they could read and

Table 1

*Demographic profile of informants*

Informant	Country	Age range	Career background	Duration of learning
Informant 1	Ireland (UK)	45-54 years	Professional	More than 9 months
Informant 2	England (UK)	35-44 years	Homemaker	More than 9 months
Informant 3	Singapore	45-54 years	Professional	More than 3 months
Informant 4	USA	35-44 years	Not-working	More than 3 years
Informant 5	Australia	45-54 years	Professional	More than 9 months
Informant 6	Scotland (UK)	35-44 years	Professional	More than 9 months
Informant 7	Yemen	25-34 years	Professional	More than 9 months
Informant 8	Switzerland	25-34 years	Professional	More than 9 months
Informant 9	USA	45-54 years	Professional	More than 3 years
Informant 10	Australia	25-34 years	Professional	More than 9 months

pronounce Malay words easily regardless of their ability to understand the meaning of the words. Nonetheless, Informants 2, 8, 9 and 10 were still working on reading and pronouncing words containing digraphs such as ‘*nga*’, ‘*ngi*’, ‘*nya*’ and ‘*nyi*’ as well as words with the ‘*kh*’ (/x/) and ‘*gh*’ (/ɣ/) sounds, which typically originate from the sounds of Arabic loan words.

Based on the interview, it was found that Informant 8 was aware of the mistakes he made whenever he had to pronounce words with digraphs. However, due to his unfamiliarity as well as lack of exposure to phonetic aspects of Malay language pronunciation (given that his native language was German), Informant 8 would only be able to pronounce the closest sound that he could produce. Informant 8’s difficulty in pronouncing Malay language digraphs can be explained by McLelland’s (2006) research on German digraph

sounds. According to McLelland (2006), digraph words in German also involve the concept of diphthongs, which makes the understanding of the sounds quite complicated to comprehend. This is due to the strong phonetic nature of the umlaut in German, which is typically described as an ‘intermediate sound’ and characterized as subtler, smaller and with rounded mouth movement. This is in contrast to Malay language digraphs, which typically involve nasal pressure and tongue movement rather than solid mouth movement, thus making it harder for learners to observe the source of the sound being produced.

Informant 6, who had reached the advanced level in learning CML, also agreed that he was also having difficulty in pronouncing digraphs. The word “*nyanyi*” (meaning: to sing) is a combination of two digraphs. Although Informant 6 reported a high frequency of reading practice, he

admitted that whenever he had to read aloud the digraph words, he sometimes pronounced them without the digraph letter, for example, the word “*nyanyi*” becomes “*nani*”.

Informant 9, on the other hand, specifically mentioned that he was still struggling with the sound of the letter ‘C’ in written Malay language, mistakenly using it with the ‘K’ pronunciation. For example, the ‘C’ in the word “*kecuali*” (meaning: except for) is a voiceless palato-alveolar affricate and thus pronounced as /č/ in Malay language. This contrasts with the sound of the letter ‘C’ in English that has the phonetic values of voiceless velar stop /k/ and voiceless alveolar fricative /s/.

Overall, the informants reported that they practised their reading skills with the textbook used in their classrooms, and four informants (N = 4) were able to read WhatsApp messages and signboards written in basic Malay language. Informant 6 reported that he was able to read magazines and newspapers as he was getting better at conjugating Malay words. Apart from that, all of the informants were able to recognize the words they had learnt when they read them, however, some of them were not able to instantaneously process the meanings of words when reading.

**Speaking Skill.** The interview data revealed that all of the informants believed that shops were the best locations to practice basic CML speaking skills. In addition, Informants 4, 6, 7, 9, and 10 mentioned that they managed to have simple conversations

with taxi or Grab drivers. As for Informant 6, he was able to practice this skill the most as he was working with a lot of local Malay subordinates. Informant 6 added that he used every opportunity he could find to speak the Malay language, and he insisted that his local acquaintances speak the Malay language with him. The situation had enabled him to speak spontaneously with a bit of slang and mixed language as practised by locals.

All of the informants were also able to have spontaneous conversations if they involved with less complex and simple responses, except for Informants 3 and 9, who reported that they were unable to have spontaneous conversations with the locals due to the fact that they were still in the process of acquiring the vocabulary and were not ready to use it yet as it would take time to put words into verbal actions. The transcription data also reveal that a few of the informants felt anxious when a local started to converse with them. In particular, Informant 2 felt anxious because she wanted to be able to respond with correct grammar, while Informant 8 only felt anxious when speaking to a local stranger who he had just met because he did not want to make any mistakes.

These findings were parallel to Krashen’s affective filter concept (Liu, 2015) that learners’ language development is affected by a psychological filter that can be symbolized as a ‘wall’ which either assists or hinders the acquisition process. From Informant 8’s statement, we can deduce that his filter was lowered when

he spoke with his close local friends, who did not make him worried about making mistakes. However, when he met a new local acquaintance, he would feel anxious to start a conversation in Malay.

It was the same situation with Informant 2, who was greatly concerned about good grammatical structure. She was aware that she looked like a local Malay since she had a Malay bloodline and still had some relatives living in Johor, Malaysia. This impression of her consequentially caused the locals to speak colloquial Malay with her although she had just met them for the first time. Informant 2 believed it was a good opportunity to practice speaking, but since she knew that she could not respond in colloquial Malay, which disregards formal grammatical structure, she refrained from immediately responding in Malay. This opportunity eventually became an imposing filter, which stopped her from speaking the language.

This experience contrasts with Informant 5's, who believed that making mistakes is part of the learning process. Apart from that, Informant 5 indicated optimism about his learning process during the interview session. Informant 5 reported that he relied on daily communication with his Filipino maid, who had lived in Malaysia for more than seven (7) years. Although she did not speak properly structured Malay language, Informant 5 believed that she had indirectly assisted him to acquire some vocabulary which he could replicate and accordingly integrate with the knowledge that he gained from the CML classes he joined.

The situation faced by Informant 5 matches the criteria of the imitative speaking technique known as shadowing (Hsieh et al., 2013). According to Hsieh et al. (2017), this technique has been shown to improve learners' phoneme acquisition as it requires learners to immediately vocalise them in speech. Hsieh et al. (2017) added that this technique was distinct from oral reading and rote repetition, which had been widely practised in many foreign language learning situations. This technique enables students to imitate the way the language is spoken, contextually.

However, imitating a non-native in order to speak Malay could produce a different result. This is said based on Chomsky's (1986) well-known linguistic theory which emphasizes the linguistic intuition of an ideal native speaker (Tsou & Chen, 2019). Tsou and Chen (2019), who conducted a study on learners' preferences between native and non-native educators, reported that most learners preferred to learn with native speakers as they provided more in-depth knowledge of language proficiency. Nonetheless, Informant 5's situation was not so much about proficiency but was more focused on the opportunity to see how his maid, who was a non-Malay, spoke with local Malays, which was significant as he socialised with a limited number of locals.

**Listening Skill.** The data revealed that Informants 1, 2, 5, and 9 were already able to listen to Malay language radio stations although they were not able to grasp all the words being spoken while Informant 4 was already able to listen to



Malay language songs. Informants 6, 7, 8 and 9 mentioned that they listened to random people talking, and although they could not grasp each word, they were still able to get the messages. Most of the informants reported that they used audio assistive material such as listening discs or online conversation audios either given by the teacher, or self-supplied in order to develop the skill. The informants were able to recognize each word they had learnt by repetitively listening to the audio.

Informant 6, who was at the advanced level, could listen to and instantaneously understand the meanings of each word being said. He also stated that he strengthened his listening skills by utilizing an online website. Informant 6 added that he depended on visual help in listening to people, thus he thought it was easier to listen to a local speaking during face-to-face interaction compared to a telephone conversation with nothing but the voice of the speaker.

Parallel to Informant 6's explanation, there were also some informants who were able to listen properly provided that the speed of the speech was slower than the usual. Informant 8, who thought he was able to sharpen his listening skill due to the fact that he was working with his local subordinates, also emphasized that he was only able to listen to local Malays speaking in the standard variety of the language and found it hard to listen to some other dialects of Malay language.

It was a different scenario for Informant 2, who was able to return to her hometown

in Johor every school break when she was growing up. The informant believed that her listening skill was easier to master due to her time spent listening to her Malay relatives speaking. During the interview, Informant 2 also reported that she could listen better when a non-local was speaking the Malay language. For example, she noticed that her Indonesian cleaners uttered the sounds of words more clearly than local people.

Across all of the responses given by all of the informants, there are some notable findings to be highlighted here. Firstly, it was found that clear, unambiguous pronunciation of local native speakers is crucial to assist in learner listening skill development. This clear pronunciation includes speed, dialects, and minimum external noise. The overall findings are aligned with Bloomfield et al.'s (2010) findings that speaker accent, pauses, speed rate, and noise distortion could affect second language learner comprehension. In this case, multiple hearing or repetition in listening improves understanding (Bloomfield et al., 2010). This correlates with most of the responses acquired from the informants involved in this study.

**Writing Skill.** The findings for this category of skill synchronizes with reading skills. It was fairly easy for all of the informants to write what they had already learnt. Informant 9 believed that he did not have any problem with spelling due to the phonetic basis of the spelling system used for the Malay language. Nonetheless, Informant 2 stated that she was still struggling with the spelling

and the sentence structure, while Informant 8 reported that he was not able to spell digraph words correctly.

Informant 1 and 4, who worked in a field that required them to associate with the government sector, reported that they were very anxious about the official language whenever they needed to write to government agencies. This was due to their writing skill, which they considered to be at the conversational level. However, Informants 8 and 10 were not concerned about writing mistakes. Informant 8 admitted that although he always made a lot of spelling mistakes when texting with his local friends, he never felt embarrassed due to their positive supports. Not only that, most of the informants also reported low levels of anxiety and concern in making mistakes. This was because most learners perceived that this skill was the least applied in their daily lives.

The findings for this skill reveal that all learners were aware of the distinction between formal Malay language and conversational Malay language. All of them also reported that they noticed the complexity of Malay language prefix and suffix conjugation but were not taught at the beginner level. Most of the informants also agreed that their main learning objective was to converse rather than for writing sentences, and this caused them to disregard proper conjugation as they were aware that the locals did not converse with conjugations in their sentences. Therefore, all of the informants perceived that formal language learning was not necessary.

This finding reflects the aforementioned self-directed learning style among adult learners who are responsible for their learning. This finding clearly shows that informants were able to decide which language proficiency they should neglect or focus on, based on their needs. The situation presented through the interview is empirical proof that adult learners' needs greatly impact their language proficiency level.

### **The Importance of Language Literacy Skills**

Table 2 shows the rank of Malay language literacy skills from the most important to the least important as perceived by the informants.

Based on Table 2, it is found that all of the informants considered their oral communication skills to be more important compared to their written communication skills. The table also shows that eight (8) informants perceived listening to be the most important skill that impacted their oral communication with the locals. In the context of this study, the finding could have been affected by the fact that the informants were adults, and a prominent defining characteristic of a productive adult is the ability to communicate effectively. According to McLaren (2019), effective oral communication plays a crucial role in enhancing self-confidence, assisting formulation, structuring and the presentation of successful and meaningful arguments.

In the scope of this study, it must be highlighted that most of the informants were attached to corporate and professional

Table 2

*The rank of the importance of language literacy skills*

Informants	The rank of the importance of language literacy skills (The most important to the least important)
Informant 1	Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing
Informant 2	Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing
Informant 3	Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing
Informant 4	Speaking, Listening, Reading, Writing
Informant 5	Speaking, Listening, Reading, Writing
Informant 6	Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing
Informant 7	Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing
Informant 8	Listening, Speaking, Writing, Reading
Informant 9	Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing
Informant 10	Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing

entities and oral communication was seen as required for daily interaction. This directly impacted the respondent rankings of language literacy skill as shown in Table 2. In addition, the overall finding is also aligned with Kurita (2012), who argued that listening is the most crucial skill to be developed in language learning. However, Kurita (2012) also mentioned that listening was the most challenging language skill to be learnt among second language learners. This could probably be due to inefficiency in the teaching process (Kurita, 2012). Kurita (2012) also added that listening involved more effort from students because of the overlapping purposes of listening, which were the acquisition of words and comprehension of the real meaning of utterances.

### Learning Challenges

The most prominent response received from all of the informants was that they

were all aware that they had to make time to learn CML despite their busy schedules. All of the informants agreed that they were responsible for the time spent on their learning and needed to allocate time to practice the language. However, they admitted that there were no strong, concrete forces acting on them to do so. This is an understandable situation as Malaysia is a country that does not impose the national language as a compulsory need for non-Malaysian residents.

Another crucial finding of the interviews is that most of the informants found it was hard to find opportunities to practice CML. This was due to the community they lived in. All of the informants lived in a city where everybody was able to converse in English. This situation hindered the learning process that was supposed to take place in public contexts.

Informants 6 and 7, however, provided different views on this matter. They were

aware of the fact that most locals would speak English to them given that they did not look like Malaysians. However, as for Informant 6, himself, he would ensure that the locals spoke the Malay language with him by responding to them in the Malay language. Informant 7 also reported that he would start having a small talk in Malay in order to hint to his friends that he wanted to speak in the Malay language.

This situation is empirical evidence supporting Ismail's (2017) study, who argued that although learners were given classroom drills, their ability to converse in real-world situations would still be very low. This is because they would only be able to acquire a certain degree of writing and reading skills in the language but would be lost regarding listening and speaking skills in contextual social discourse due to their lack of exposure to an authentic communicative environment. Ismail (2017) added that one of the contributing factors to the situation was the dominance of the social background in the community. For example, in Malaysia, all of the learners were categorized as expatriates, and it is common for local Malaysians to have the impression that they need to speak English with them, thus hindering the learning process.

### **Attitude towards Learning Technology**

Based on the conducted interviews, all of the informants had previously learnt other languages. This shows that these informants had experienced foreign language learning and therefore were able to apply their

previous personal learning strategies in learning CML. All informants reported that they had utilized assistive materials apart from the ones given in class such as tapes, and those available on the internet. However, when they were asked if they had used any mobile applications in learning previous languages, Informants 3, 5, 6, and 8 responded that they had not since mobile applications and smartphones did not exist at the time when they were learning those languages.

All informants, except for Informant 3, confirmed the use of mobile applications as one of their CML's assistive learning materials. Although Informant 3 did not use any mobile applications, he was open to any suggestions to use mobile applications as he was not aware if there were any applications available for CML learning. Table 3 shows the mobile applications used by the informants when they were learning foreign languages, including CML.

In-depth discussions were conducted during the interview sessions in order to deeply understand the most suitable mobile applications in assisting adult learners' language learning process. Overall, all of the informants were aware of the MALL technology and they were all positive about the use of mobile applications as part of their extramural learning activities. It was also found that most of the informants were utilizing mobile apps in order to improve their oral communication skills, especially listening skills. However, they believed that the existing mobile apps did not cater much to their needs in learning CML. Most of the

Table 3

*The mobile applications used in assisting CML learning*

Informant	The mobile application used in assisting CML learning
Informant 1	Dictionary App, CitCat
Informant 2	Duolingo
Informant 3	-
Informant 4	iTalki, Memrise
Informant 5	L-Lingo
Informant 6	L-Lingo
Informant 7	Duolingo
Informant 8	Flashcard App
Informant 9	Rosseta Stone, Duolingo, WordPower, Malaysia Vocabulary
Informant 10	L-Lingo, Duolingo

informants suggested that there should be a mobile app focusing on bottom-up listening comprehension which eventually builds up to common daily conversations.

The informants' suggestions are presumably based on the learning challenges they faced, as discussed previously. Since their main hurdle was to be able to participate in conversations among the locals, they were looking for alternatives that could replicate real-world conversations. It was also clear that most informants preferred situational dialogues to be key elements of the MALL. This could be the result of their perceptions of the importance of listening comprehension as they wanted to be able to listen and capture the meanings of the words effectively.

**DISCUSSIONS**

The findings from the conducted interviews found that most of the informants perceived that CML is easy to be learnt. However, all of the informants agreed that they needed

to put more focus on perfecting their oral proficiency, which comprises listening and speaking skills. The discussions that took place on the usefulness of mobile applications also provided insight into the research findings. Overall, none of the informants was negative about the utilization of mobile applications in CML learning. When they were asked to clarify more on the preferred strategies to develop a mobile application, all of the informants were more concerned about the functionality over the features and designs of the applications. Apart from that, the findings reveal that informants were looking forward to having any assistive-learning technology that would help them to develop their CML listening skill. The fact that they were surrounded by English speaking locals made it hard for them to practice their listening skill. Besides that, informants also noticed that locals in Malaysia are from various states with various dialects and speeds of speaking. At this point, most

of the informants agreed to have a sort of application that would expose them to daily conversations rather than learning words and short phrases. This finding is parallel to Kim's (2018), who stated that most of the current empirical studies on the usefulness of mobile applications had been limited to grammar learning, vocabulary acquisition, writing and speaking development, only.

Another prominent finding arising from this study is that all of the informants were aware of having self-determination in allocating time for perfecting their language fluency. This is an ironic finding as most of the informants admitted that it was hard for them to allocate time to practice their fluency as this was typically affected by other daily activities. This inability to manage their time to practice CML does not correlate to their motivation level, but to the obligatory nature of the learning.

### **Limitations**

This study, however, is limited to a small, voluntary sample of research informants. Since all informants were highly motivated in learning CML, this may have affected the findings of the research, narrowing the experiences and perceptions in learning CML. Therefore, it is suggested that future research include various motivational levels in understanding learners' experiences and perceptions. Besides that, other additional research on the usefulness of mobile applications in learning CML is also needed. Future research should also include the experiences of foreigners working in labour sectors in Malaysia, which would probably

result in a different scope of needs in self-directed learning.

### **CONCLUSION**

In summary, all participants were positive towards their learning process in acquiring Communicative Malay Language (CML). However, these learners preferred to only learn communicative over the formal version of the language. This was due to their personal needs to socialize and to promote a good impression among the local community. All of the participants were able to read and write basic Malay, but most of the participants were not able to communicate spontaneously and effectively. This is due to their inability to capture the words when they were listening to locals speaking. The findings also show that most of the informants utilized mobile applications in learning CML and other foreign languages to improve their proficiency, apart from the drills conducted in the classroom. This has shown that learners depend on the use of mobile applications when encountering challenges in their learning process. However, at the time of the study, there were only a few useful mobile apps for this specific language subject, and most of the mobile apps focussed on vocabulary acquisition and sentence structure, not catering to their current literacy needs, which was listening. Overall, this study concludes that:

1. Adult learners prefer to put more effort into acquiring oral proficiency in CML.

2. Adult learners accentuate their focal-point of learning in listening skills.
3. Adult learners positively perceive mobile-assisted language learning.
4. Adult learners prefer to have a mobile application catering to listening comprehension in CML.

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